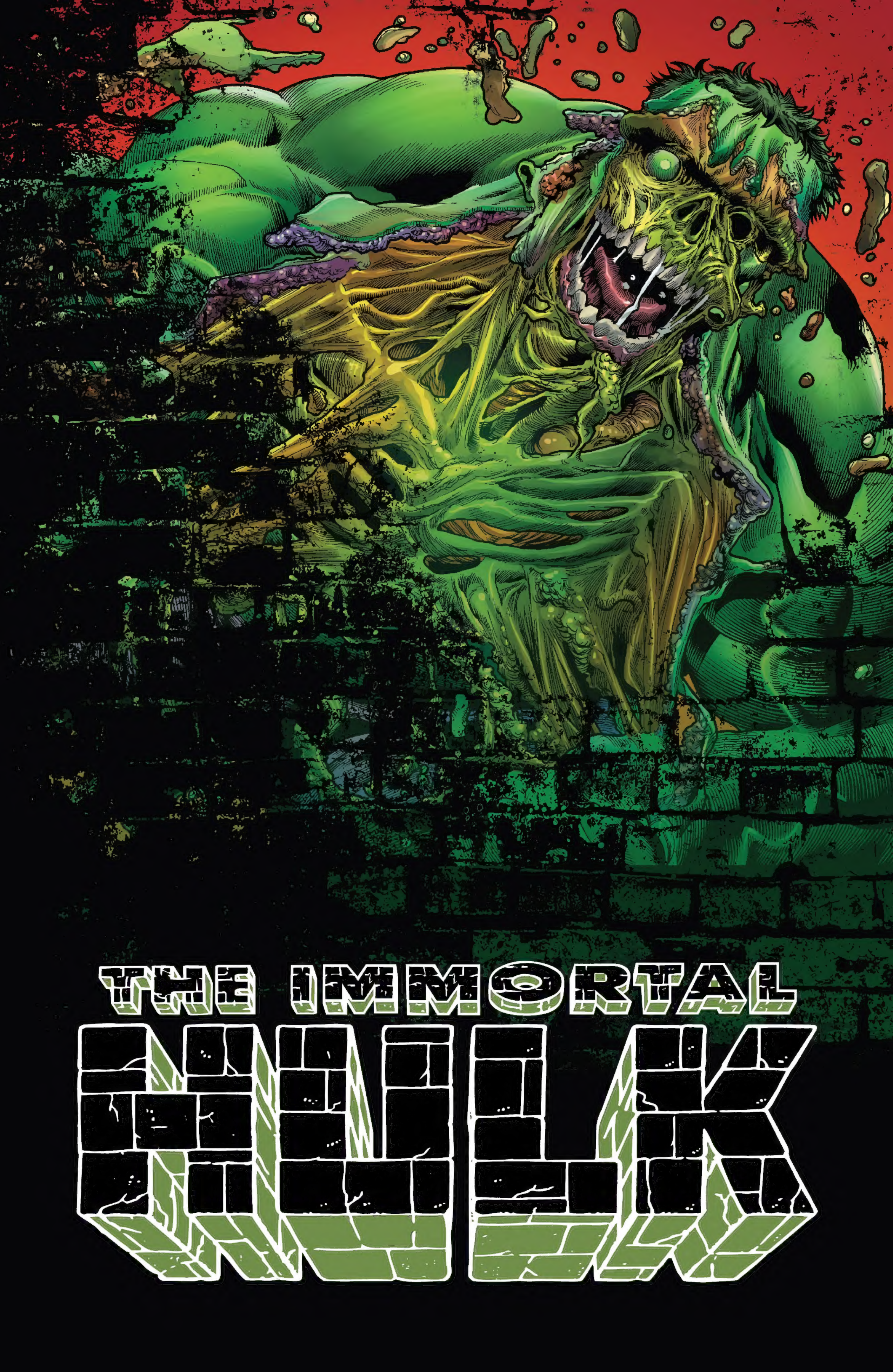
MARVEL

THE IMMORTAL HULK

EWING
BENNETT
JOSÉ
BRABO
MOUNTS

"The greatest run in the history of the Incredible Hulk."
— Comicon


THE IMMORTAL
HULK

THE IMMORTAL HULK

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IMMORTAL HULK: TIME OF MONSTERS
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HULK CREATED BY **STAN LEE** & **JACK KIRBY**

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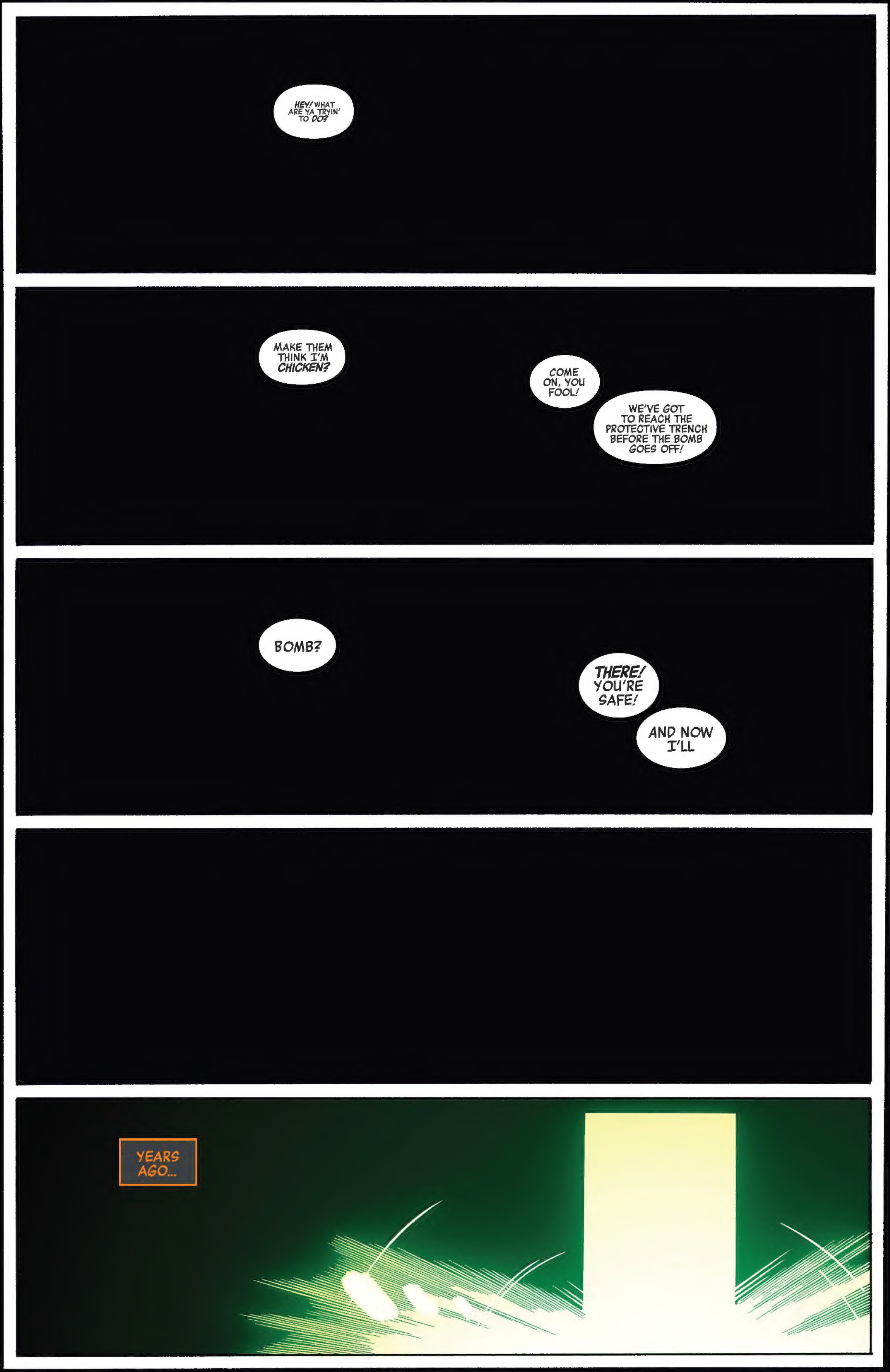
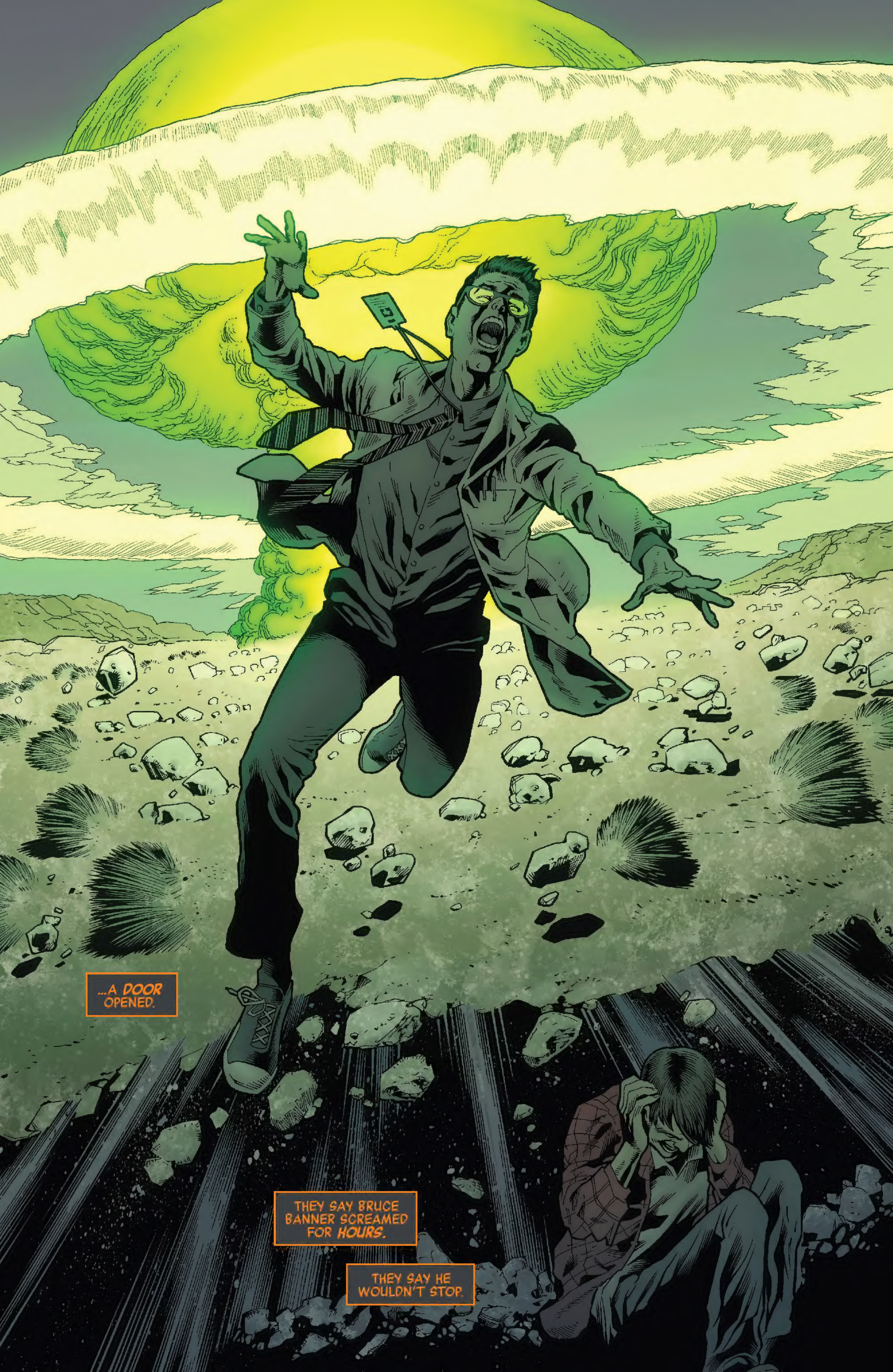
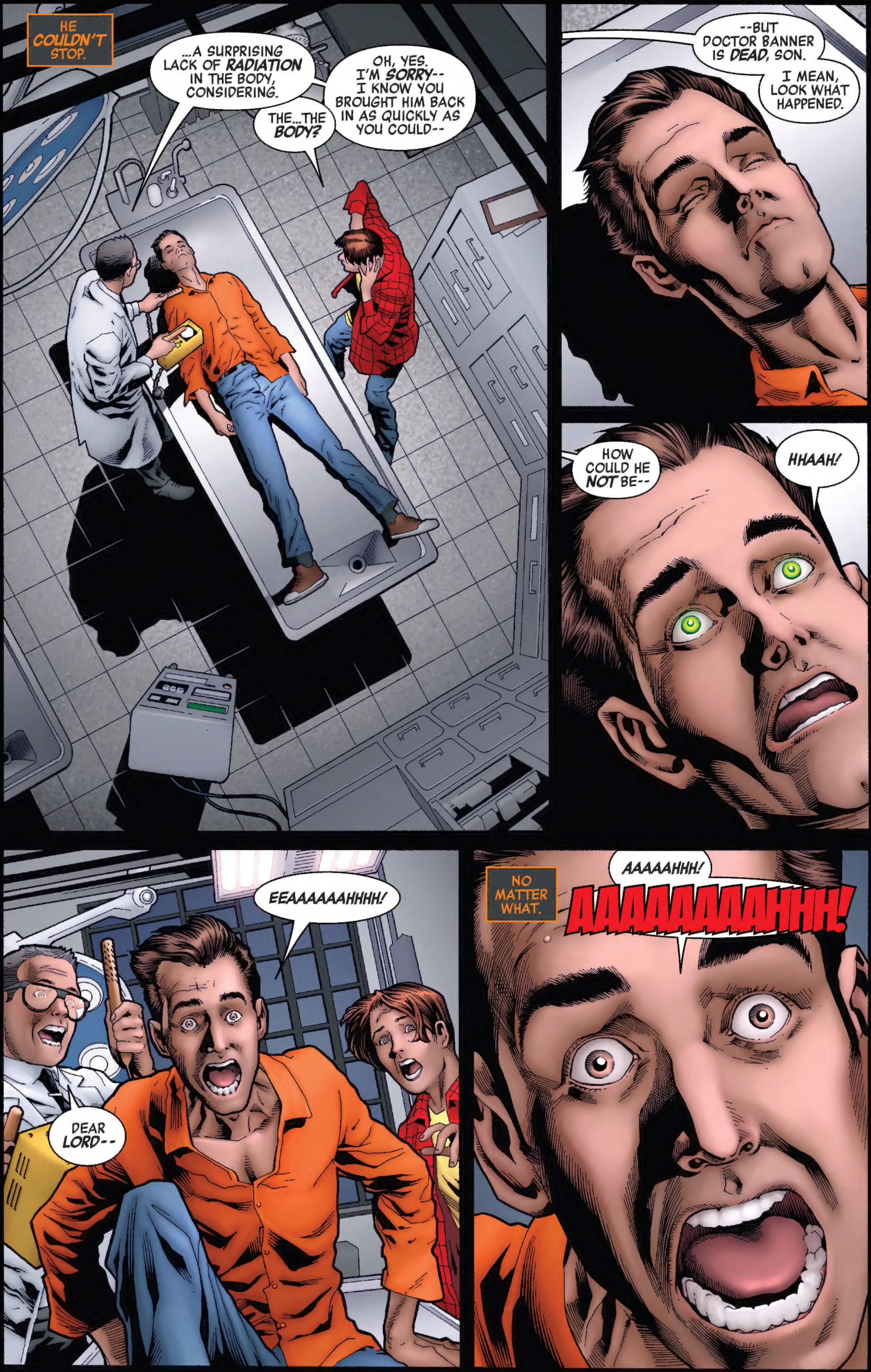
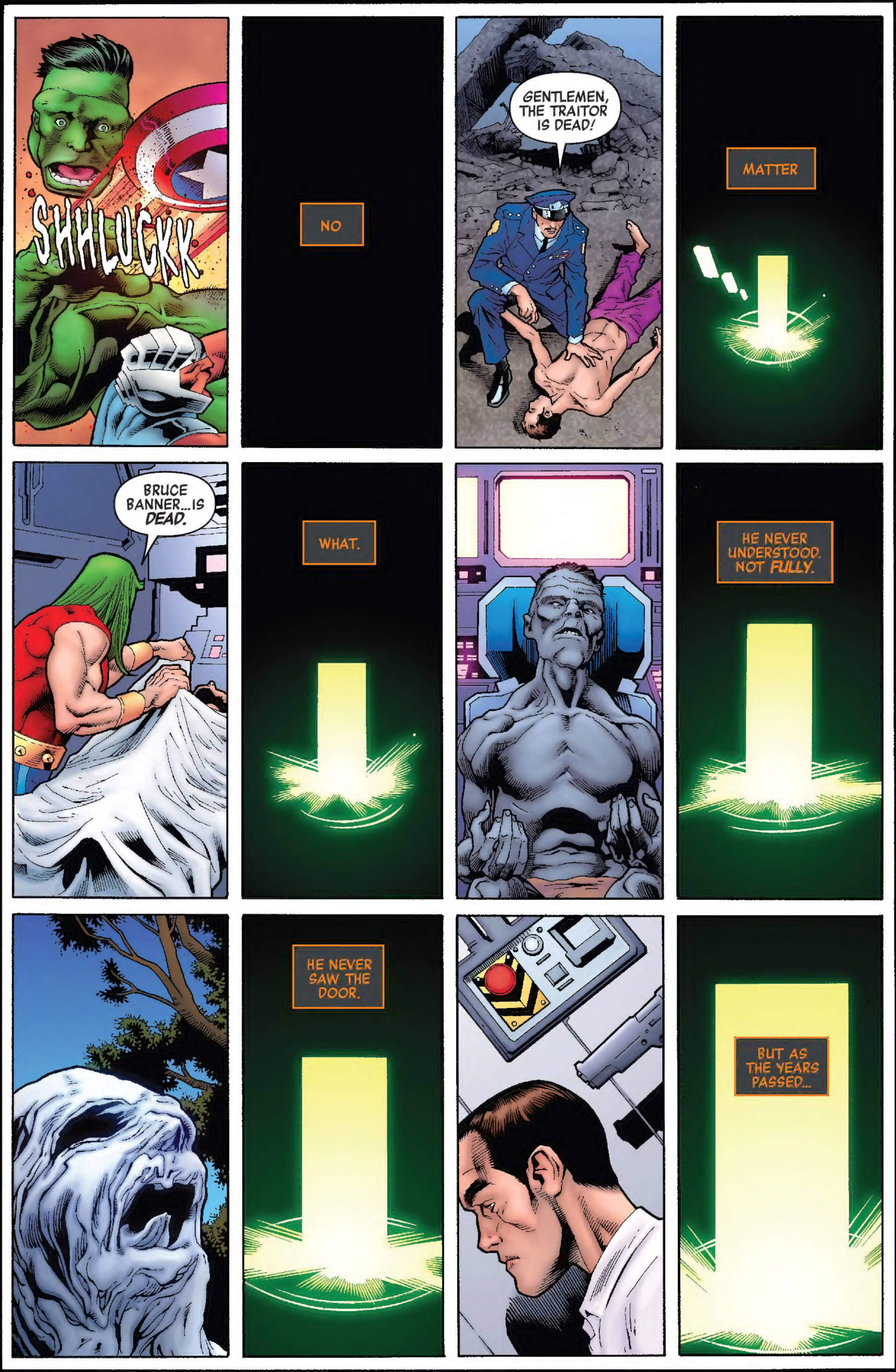
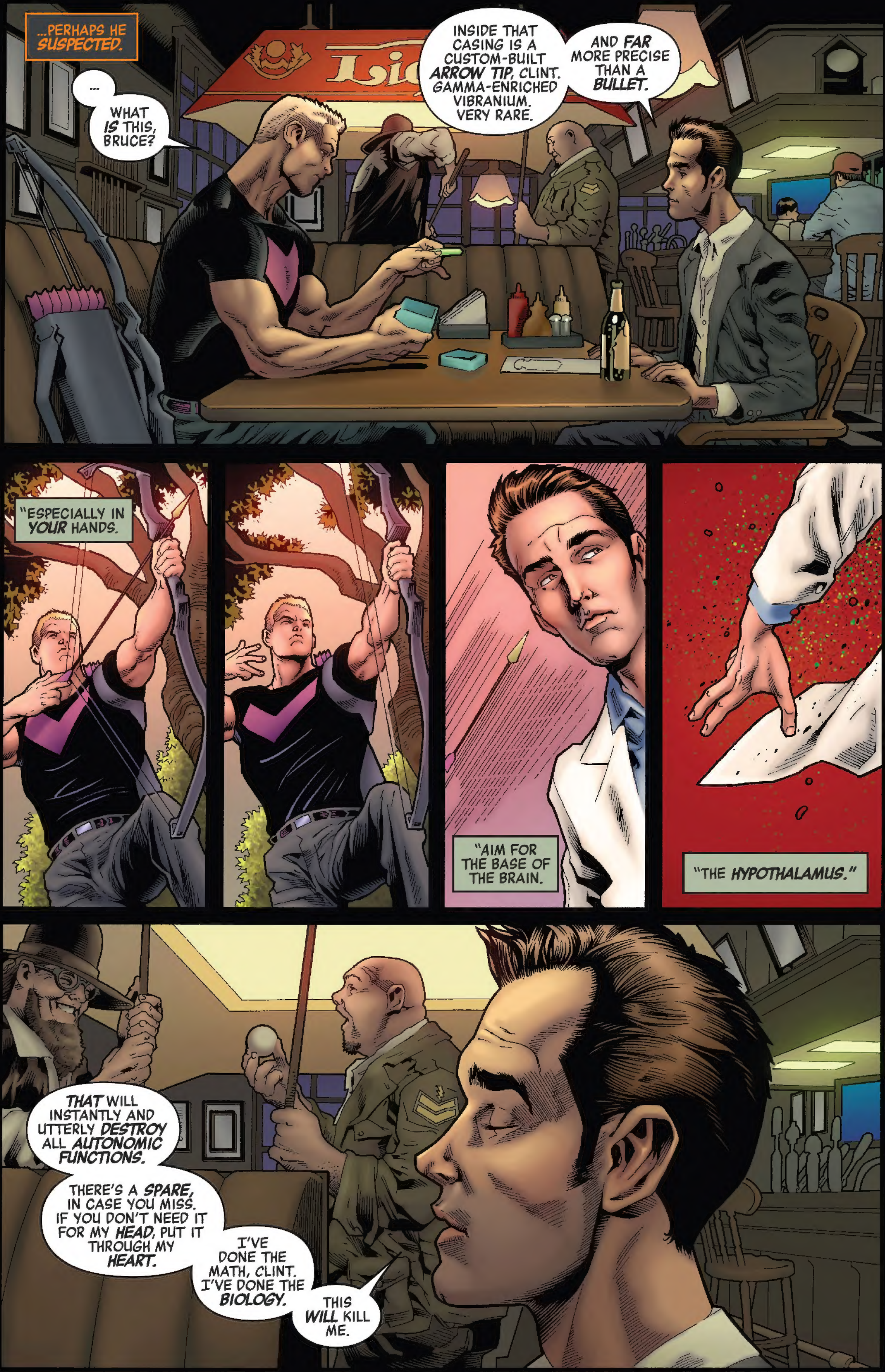
AVENGERS
684

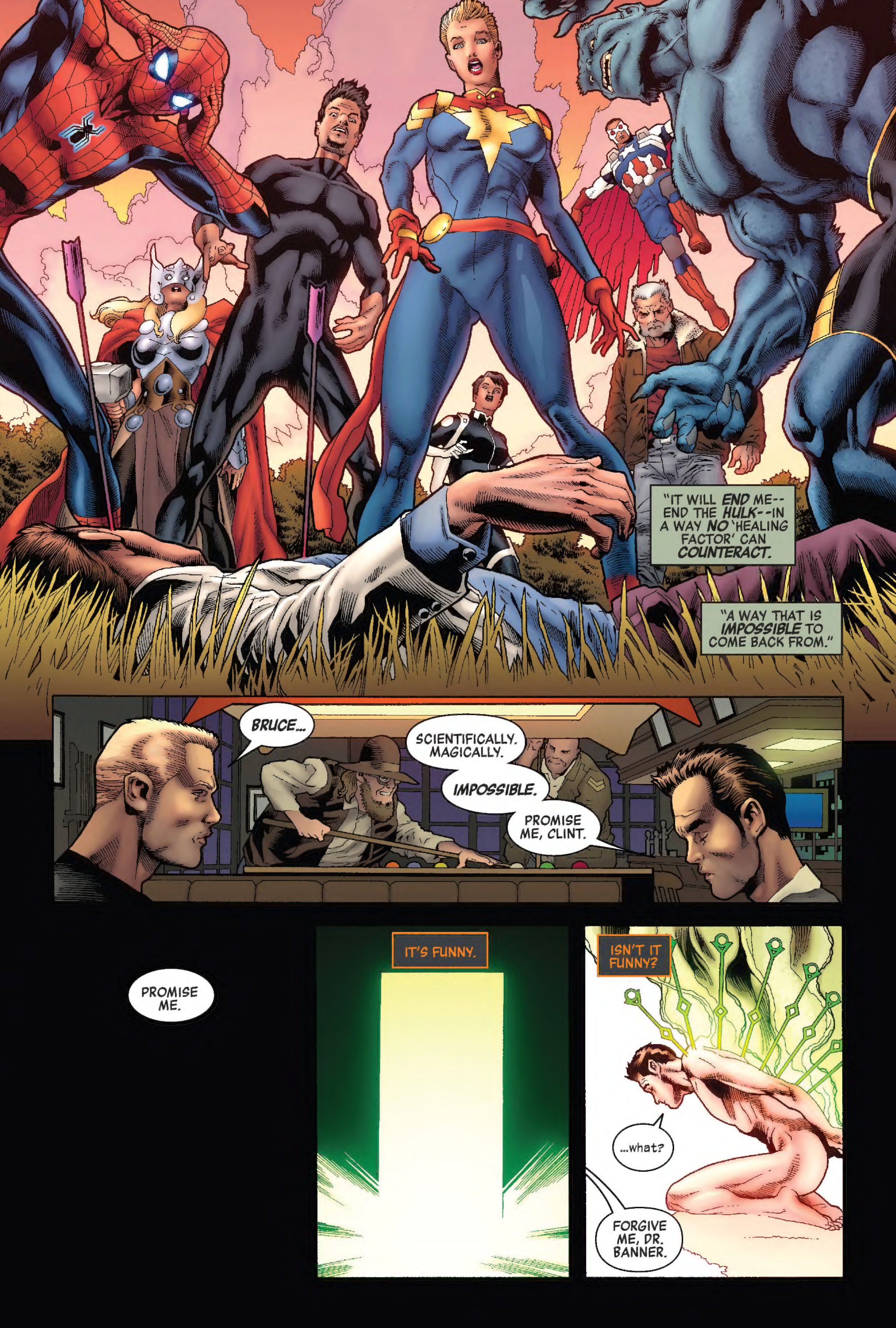

HEY! WHAT ARE YA TRYIN' TO DO?
MAKE THEM THINK I'M CHICKEN?
COME ON, YOU FOOL!
WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE PROTECTIVE TRENCH BEFORE THE BOMB GOES OFF!
BOMB?
THERE! YOU'RE SAFE!
AND NOW I'LL
YEARS AGO...

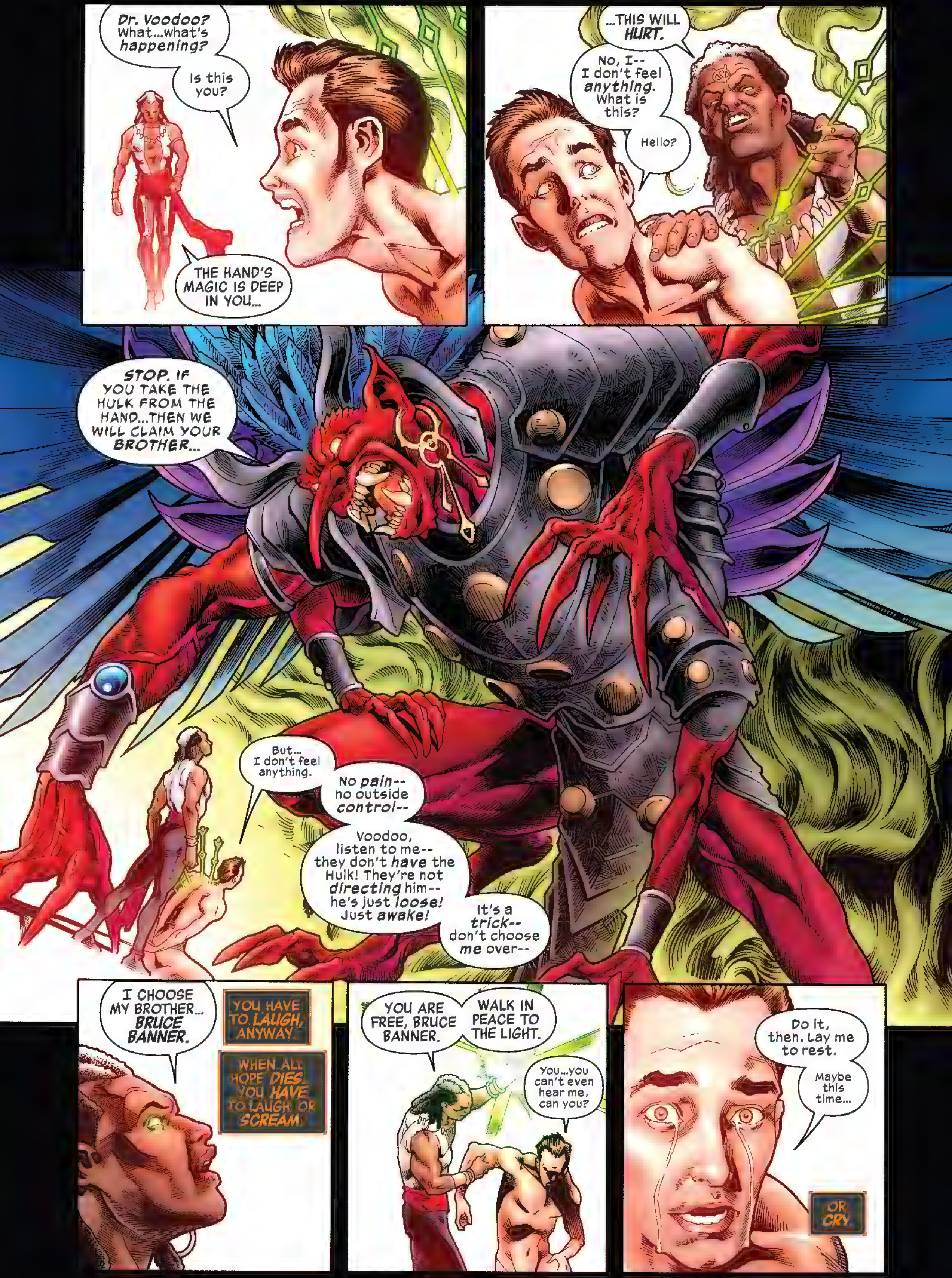

...A *DOOR* OPENED.
THEY SAY BRUCE BANNER SCREAMED FOR *HOURS.*
THEY SAY HE WOULDN'T STOP.

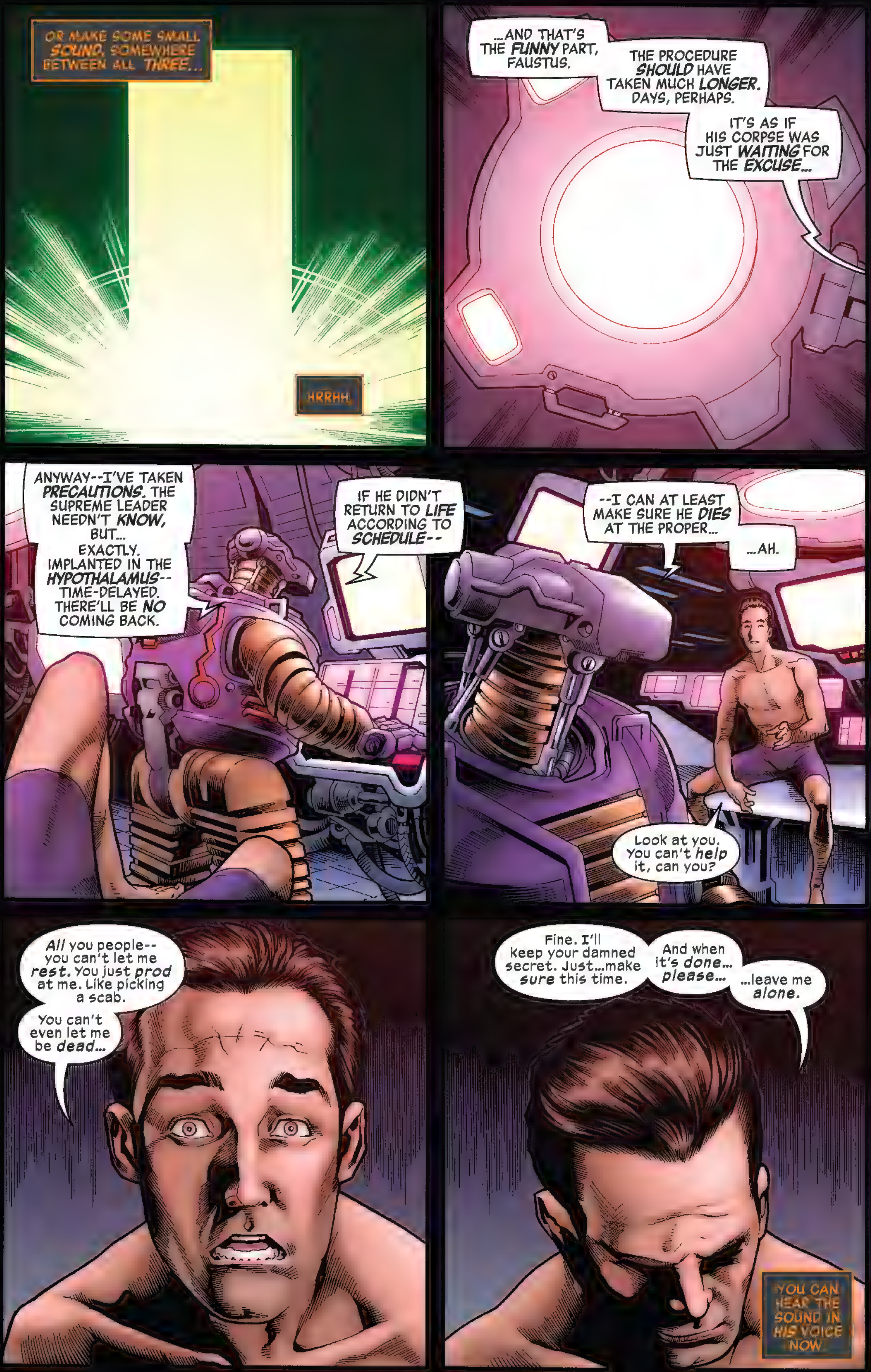

HE *COULDN'T* STOP.
...A SURPRISING LACK OF *RADIATION* IN THE BODY, CONSIDERING.
THE...THE *BODY?*
OH, YES. I'M *SORRY*-- I KNOW YOU BROUGHT HIM BACK IN AS QUICKLY AS YOU COULD--
--BUT DOCTOR BANNER IS *DEAD*, SON.
I MEAN, LOOK WHAT HAPPENED.
HOW COULD HE *NOT* BE--
HHAAH!
EEAAAAAAAHHHH!
DEAR *LORD*--
NO MATTER WHAT.
AAAAAHHH!
AAAAAAAAHHH!

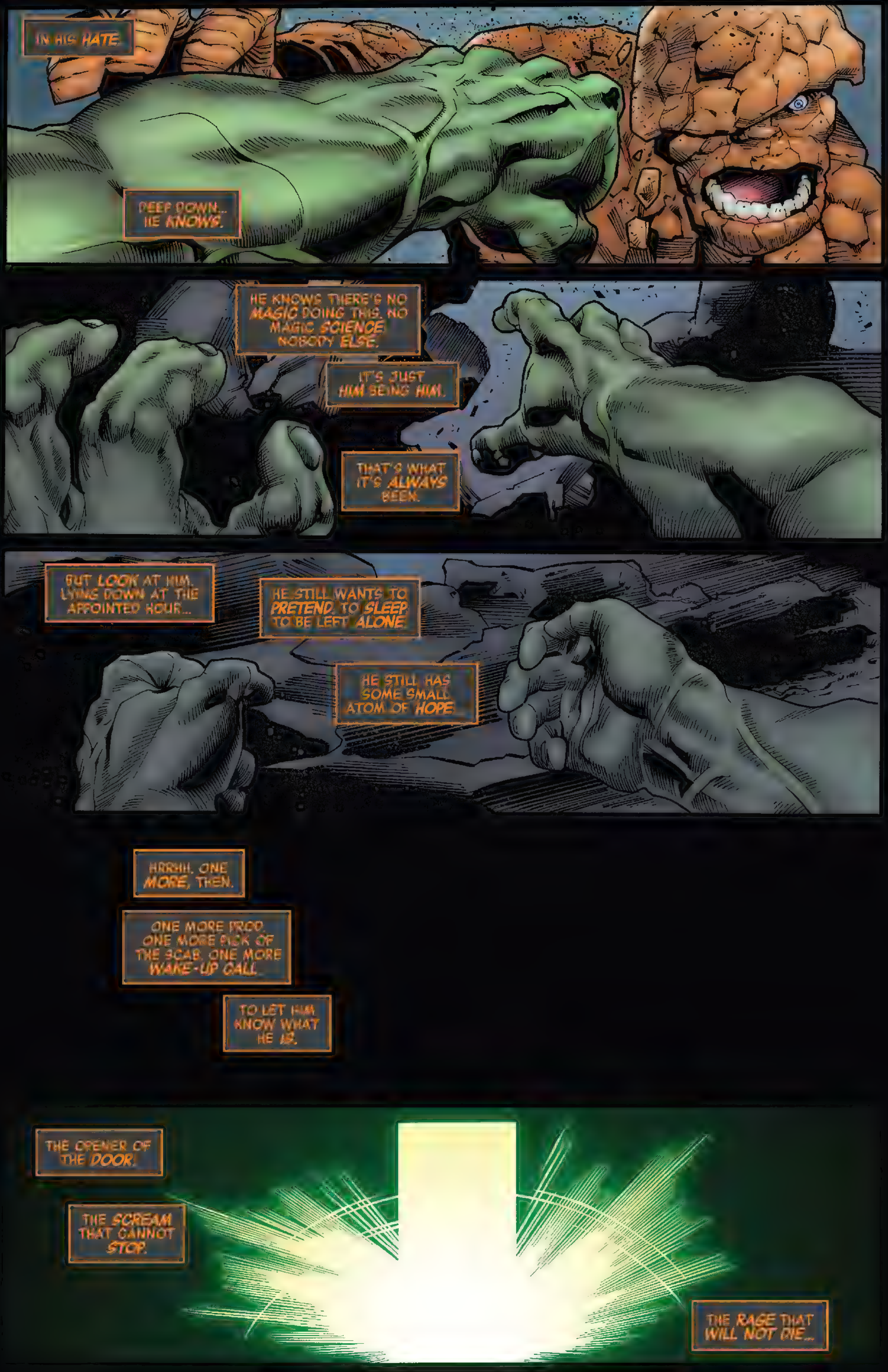

SHHLUCKK
NO
GENTLEMEN, THE TRAITOR IS DEAD!
MATTER
BRUCE BANNER...IS *DEAD.*
WHAT.
HE NEVER UNDERSTOOD. NOT *FULLY.*
HE NEVER SAW THE DOOR.
BUT AS THE YEARS PASSED...


...PERHAPS HE SUSPECTED.
... WHAT IS THIS, BRUCE?
INSIDE THAT CASING IS A CUSTOM-BUILT ARROW TIP, CLINT. GAMMA-ENRICHED VIBRANIUM. VERY RARE.
AND FAR MORE PRECISE THAN A BULLET.
"ESPECIALLY IN YOUR HANDS.
"AIM FOR THE BASE OF THE BRAIN.
"THE HYPOTHALAMUS."
THAT WILL INSTANTLY AND UTTERLY DESTROY ALL AUTONOMIC FUNCTIONS.
THERE'S A SPARE, IN CASE YOU MISS. IF YOU DON'T NEED IT FOR MY HEAD, PUT IT THROUGH MY HEART.
I'VE DONE THE MATH, CLINT. I'VE DONE THE BIOLOGY.
THIS WILL KILL ME.

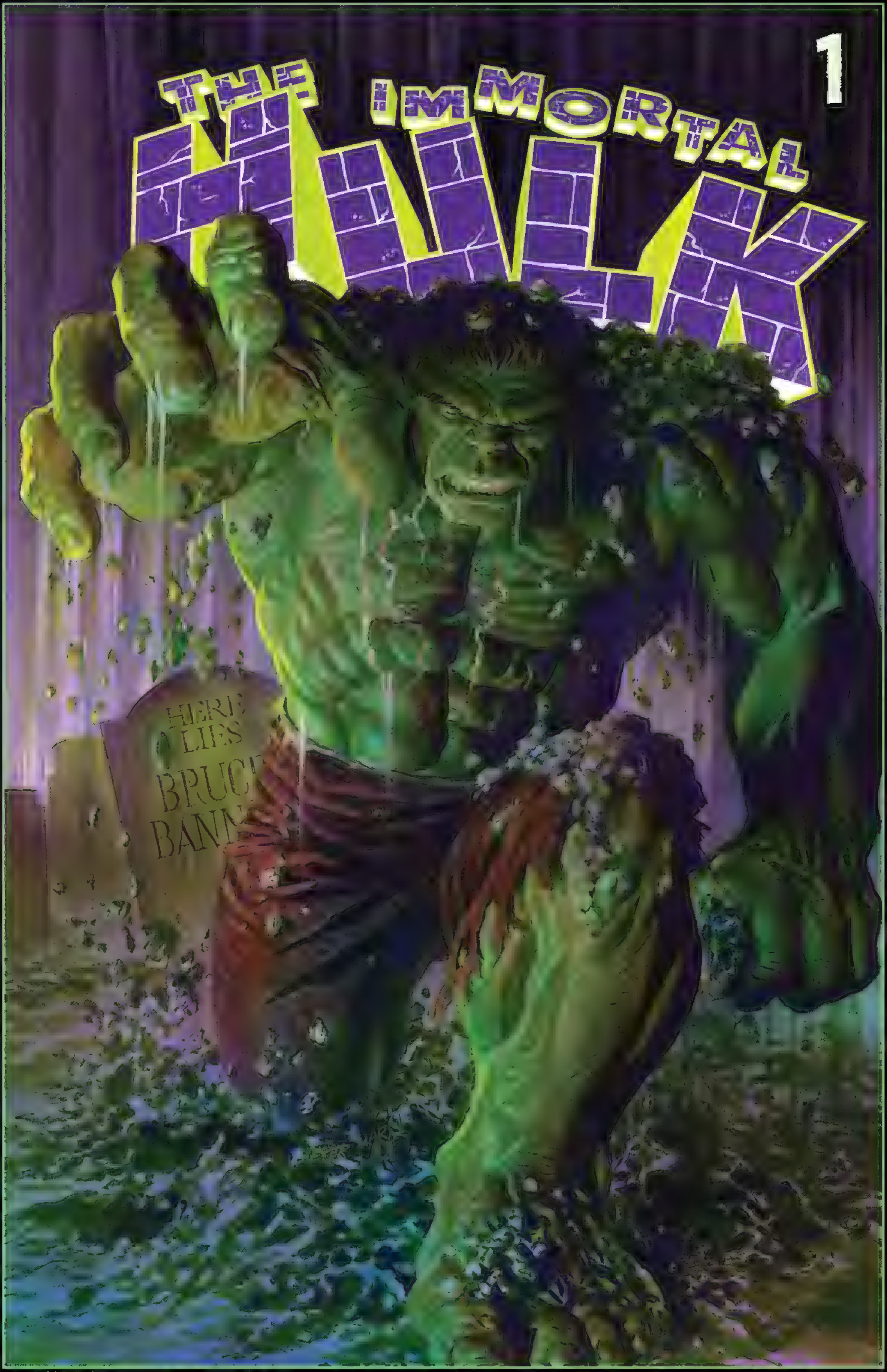

"IT WILL END ME-- END THE HULK--IN A WAY NO 'HEALING FACTOR' CAN COUNTERACT.
"A WAY THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO COME BACK FROM."
BRUCE...
SCIENTIFICALLY. MAGICALLY.
IMPOSSIBLE.
PROMISE ME, CLINT.
PROMISE ME.
IT'S FUNNY.
ISN'T IT FUNNY?
...what?
FORGIVE ME, DR. BANNER.


Dr. Voodoo? What...what's happening?
Is this you?
THE HAND'S MAGIC IS DEEP IN YOU...
...THIS WILL HURT.
No, I-- I don't feel anything. What is this?
Hello?
STOP. IF YOU TAKE THE HULK FROM THE HAND...THEN WE WILL CLAIM YOUR BROTHER...
But... I don't feel anything.
No pain-- no outside control--
Voodoo, listen to me-- they don't have the Hulk! They're not directing him-- he's just loose! Just awake!
It's a trick-- don't choose me over--
I CHOOSE MY BROTHER... BRUCE BANNER.
YOU HAVE TO LAUGH, ANYWAY.
WHEN ALL HOPE DIES, YOU HAVE TO LAUGH OR SCREAM.
YOU ARE FREE, BRUCE BANNER.
WALK IN PEACE TO THE LIGHT.
You...you can't even hear me, can you?
Do it, then. Lay me to rest.
Maybe this time...
OR CRY.


OR MAKE SOME SMALL SOUND, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN ALL THREE...
HRRHH.
...AND THAT'S THE FUNNY PART, FAUSTUS.
THE PROCEDURE SHOULD HAVE TAKEN MUCH LONGER. DAYS, PERHAPS.
IT'S AS IF HIS CORPSE WAS JUST WAITING FOR THE EXCUSE...
ANYWAY--I'VE TAKEN PRECAUTIONS. THE SUPREME LEADER NEEDN'T KNOW, BUT... EXACTLY. IMPLANTED IN THE HYPOTHALAMUS--TIME-DELAYED. THERE'LL BE NO COMING BACK.
IF HE DIDN'T RETURN TO LIFE ACCORDING TO SCHEDULE--
--I CAN AT LEAST MAKE SURE HE DIES AT THE PROPER...
...AH.
Look at you. You can't help it, can you?
All you people--you can't let me rest. You just prod at me. Like picking a scab.
You can't even let me be dead...
Fine. I'll keep your damned secret. Just...make sure this time.
And when it's done... please...
...leave me alone.
YOU CAN HEAR THE SOUND IN HIS VOICE NOW.


IN HIS HATE.
DEEP DOWN... HE KNOWS.
HE KNOWS THERE'S NO MAGIC DOING THIS. NO MAGIC SCIENCE. NOBODY ELSE.
IT'S JUST HIM BEING HIM.
THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALWAYS BEEN.
BUT LOOK AT HIM. LYING DOWN AT THE APPOINTED HOUR...
HE STILL WANTS TO PRETEND. TO SLEEP TO BE LEFT ALONE.
HE STILL HAS SOME SMALL ATOM OF HOPE.
HRRHH. ONE MORE, THEN.
ONE MORE PROD. ONE MORE PICK OF THE SCAB. ONE MORE WAKE-UP CALL.
TO LET HIM KNOW WHAT HE IS.
THE OPENER OF THE DOOR.
THE SCREAM THAT CANNOT STOP.
THE RAGE THAT WILL NOT DIE...

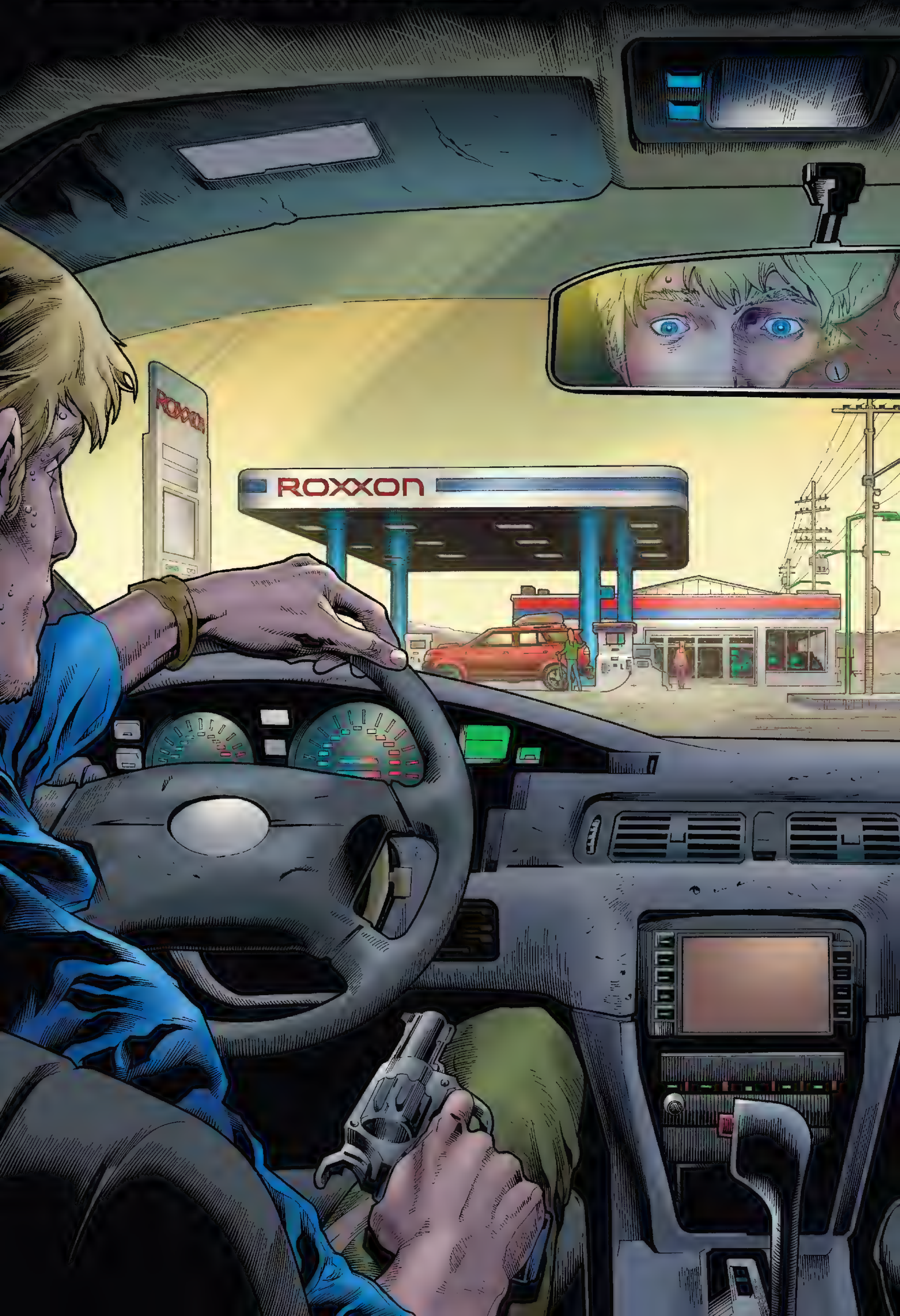
THE IMMORTAL
HULK

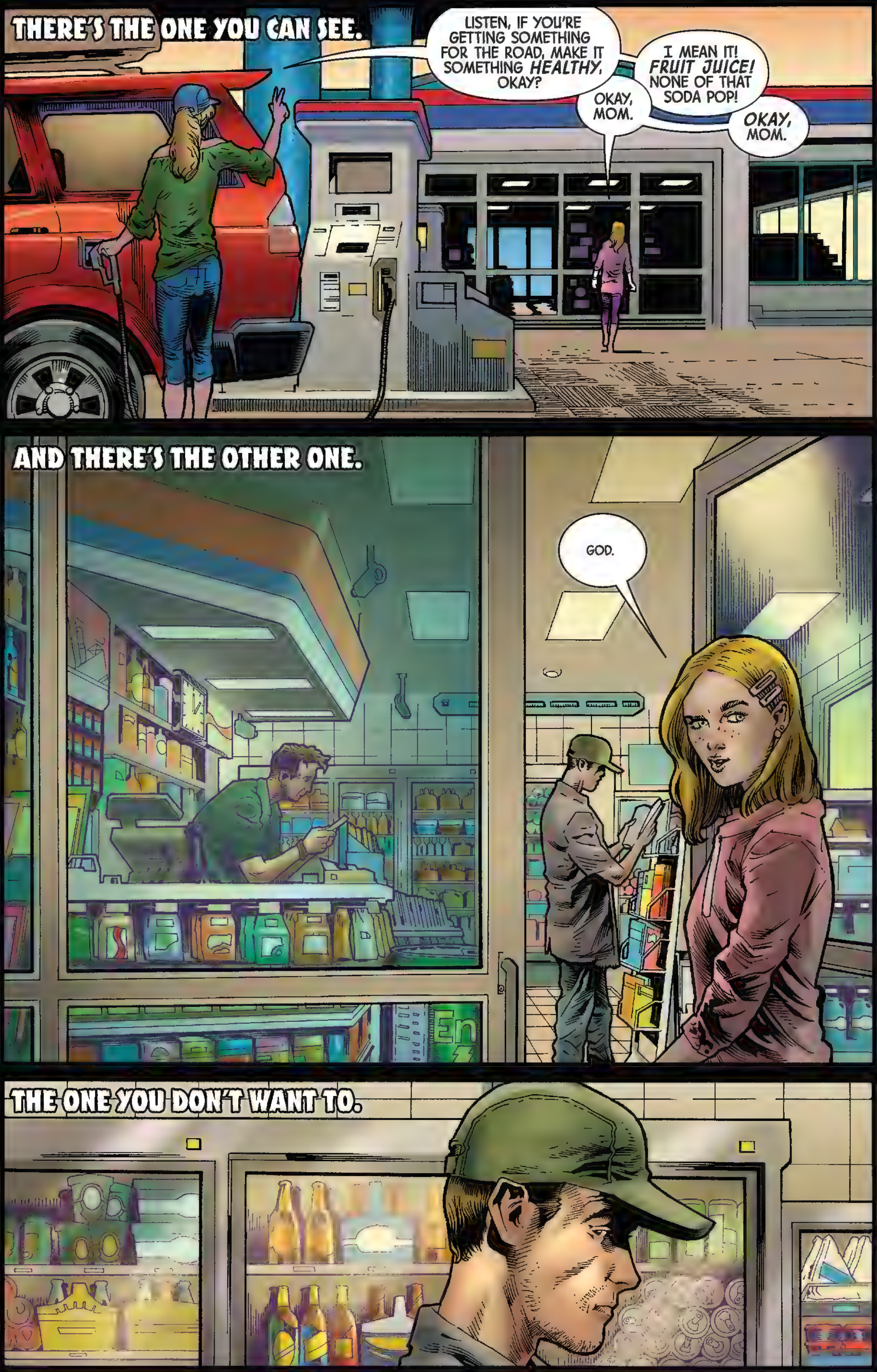

1
THE IMMORTAL HULK
HERE LIES BRUCE BANN

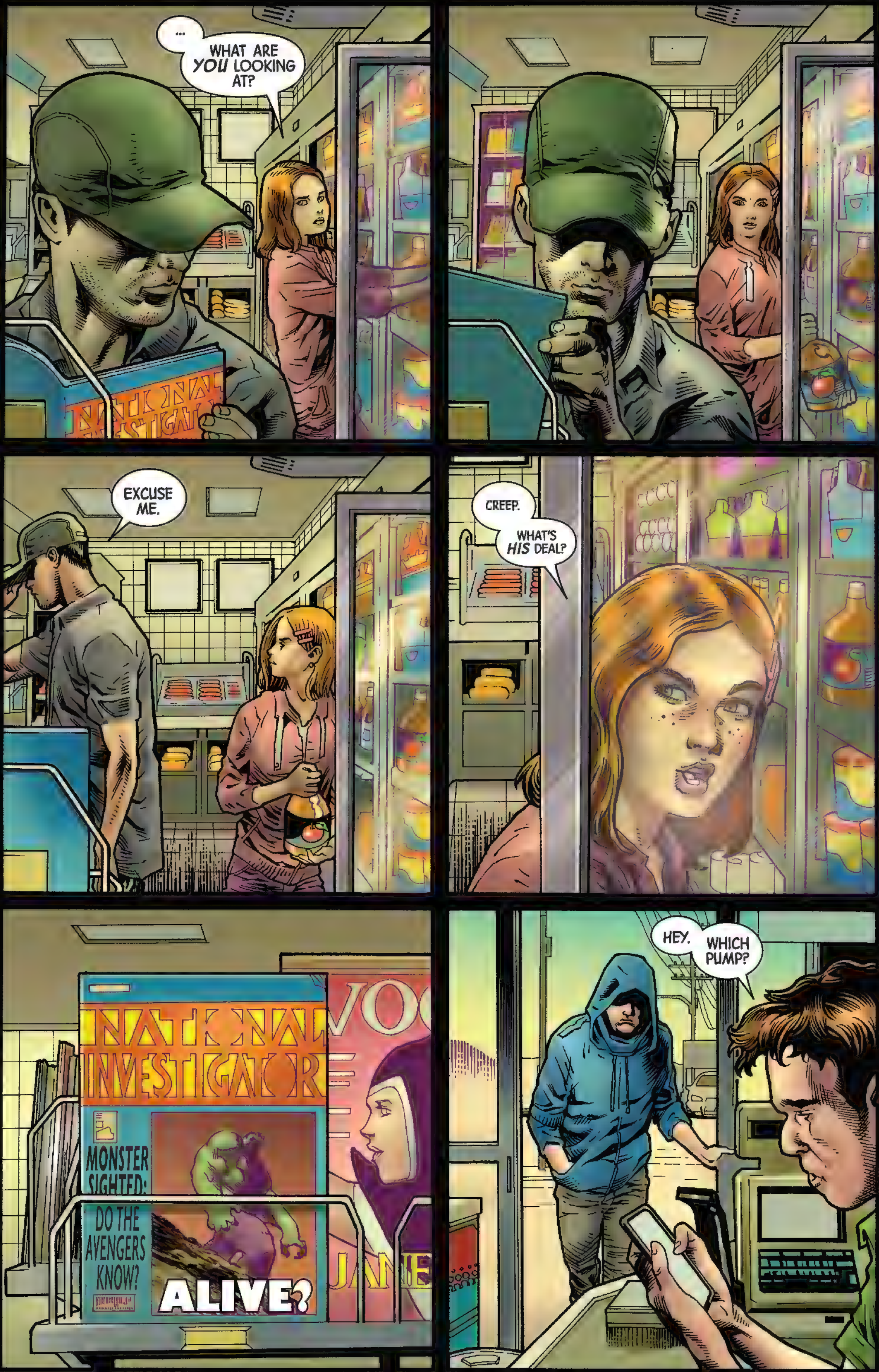
“MAN IS, ON THE WHOLE,
LESS GOOD THAN HE IMAGINES
HIMSELF OR WANTS TO BE.”

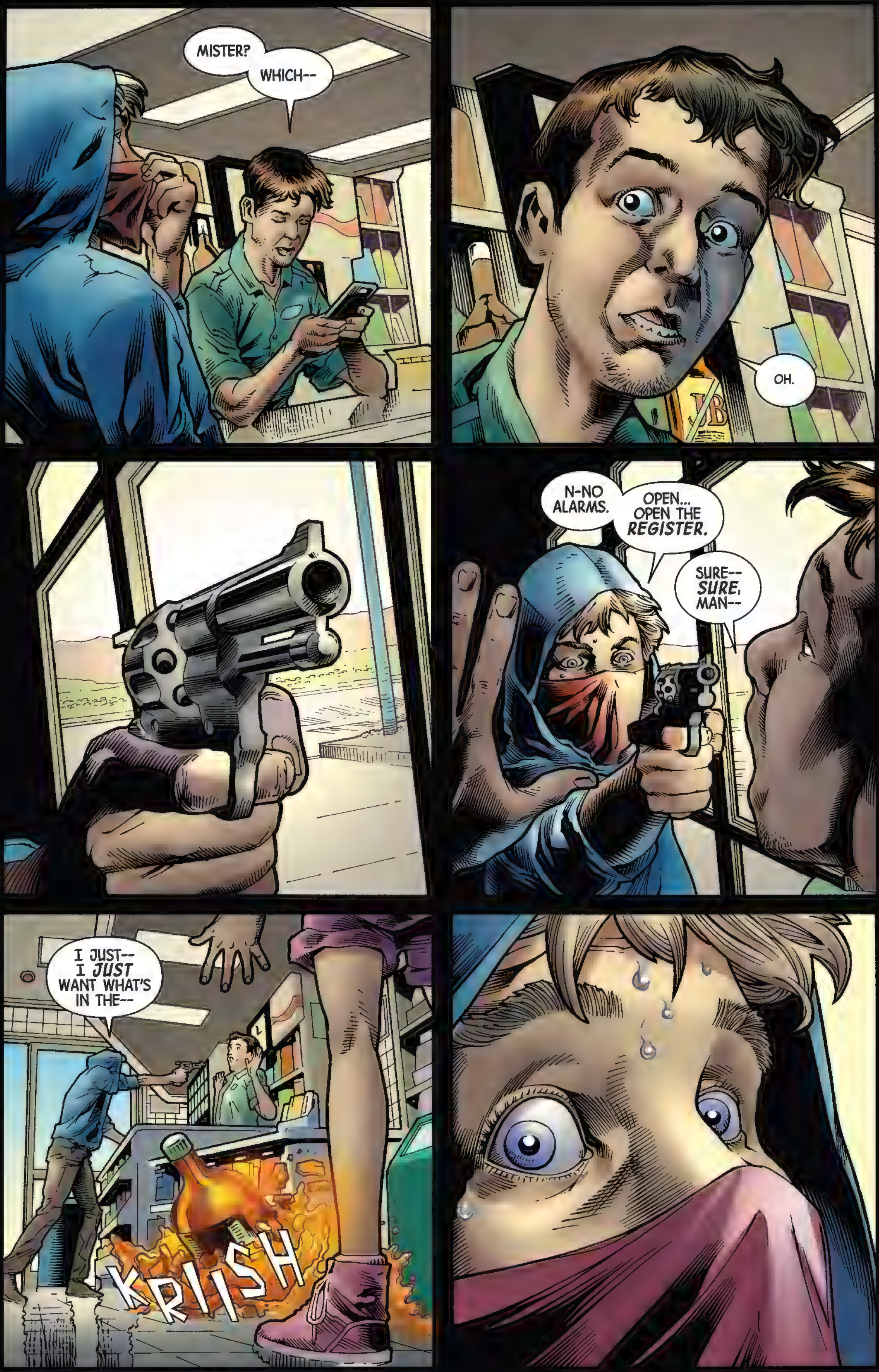
– CARL GUSTAV JUNG
PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

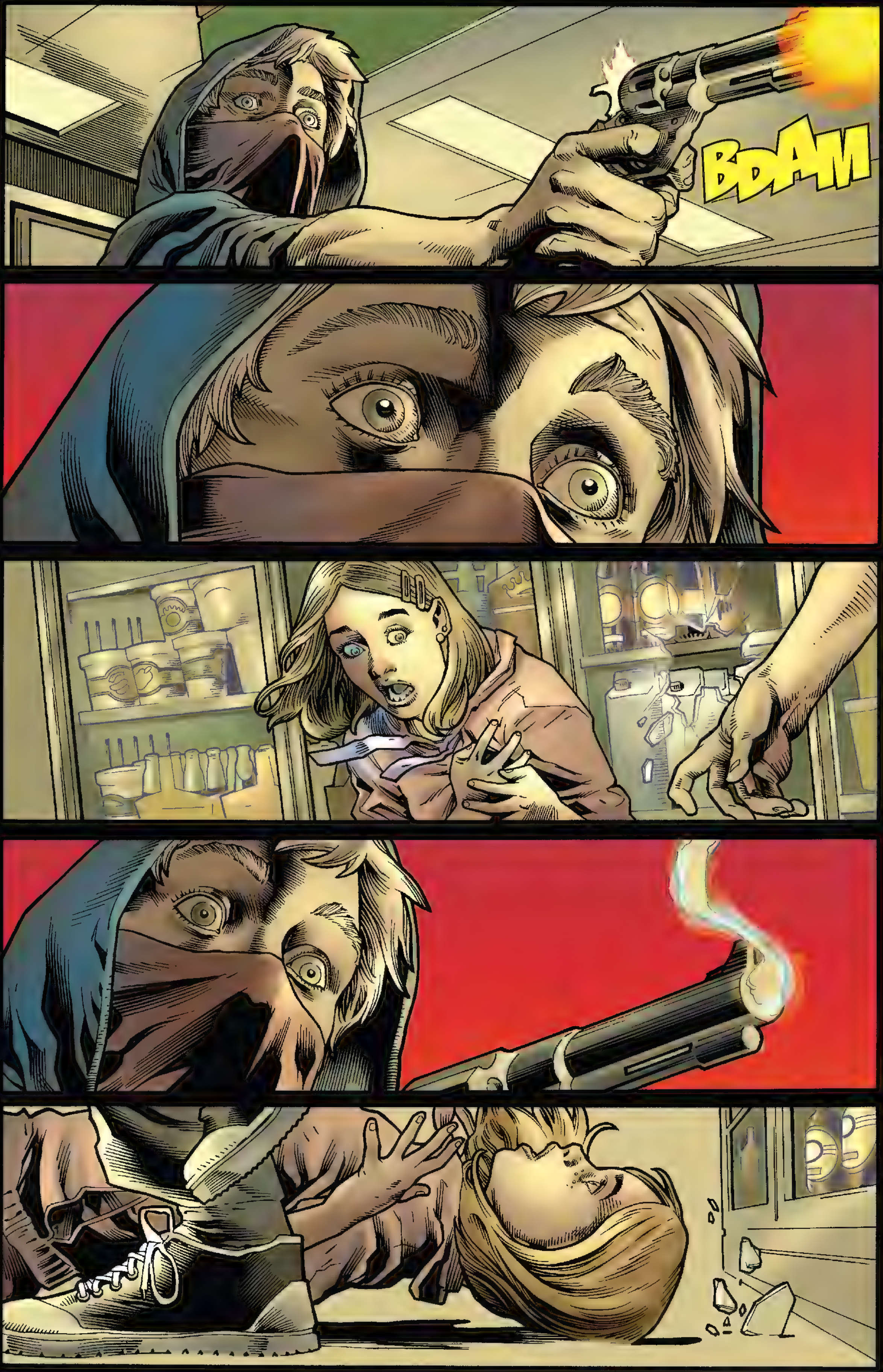
THERE ARE TWO PEOPLE IN EVERY MIRROR.

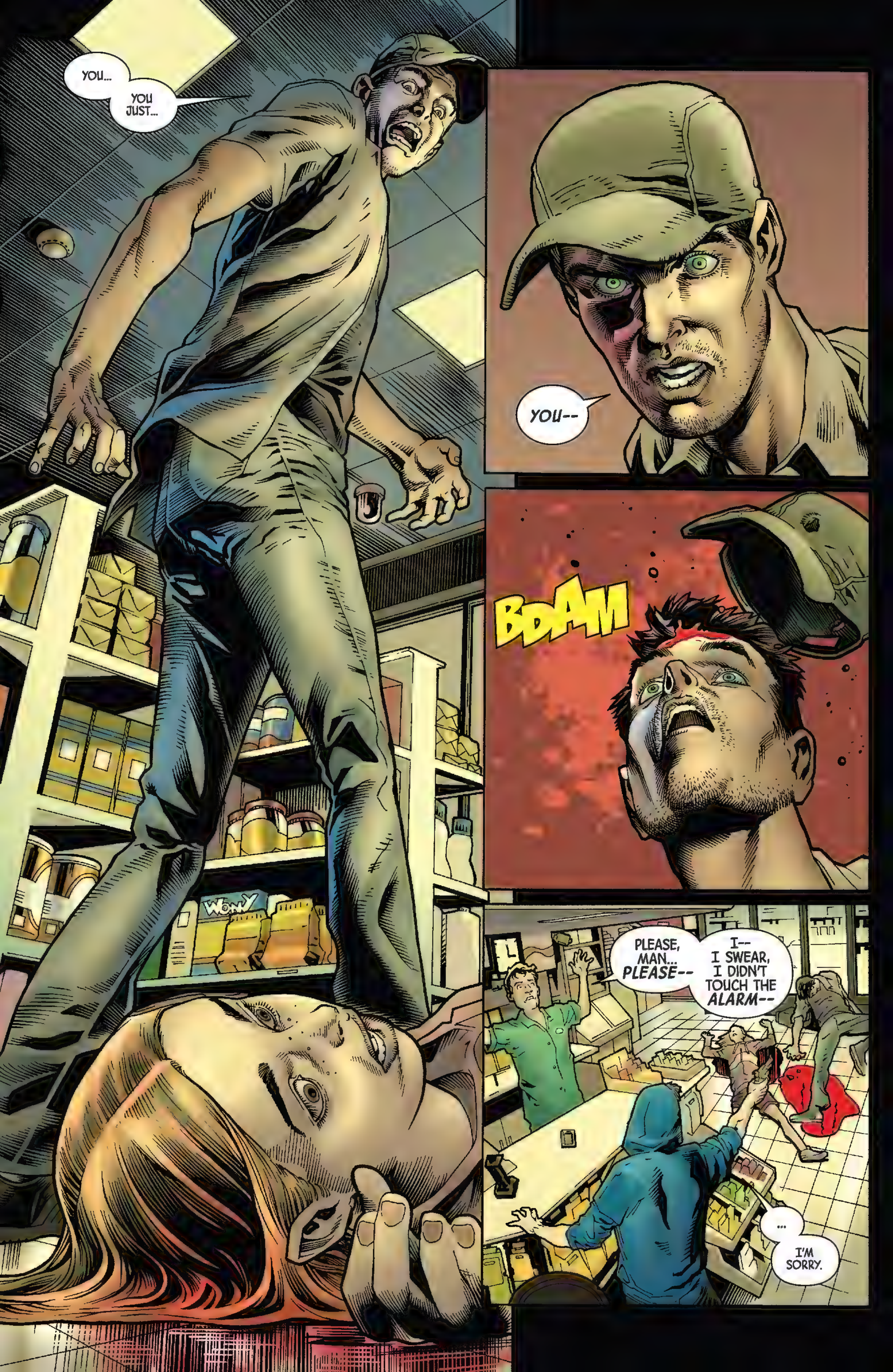

ROXXON
ROXXON

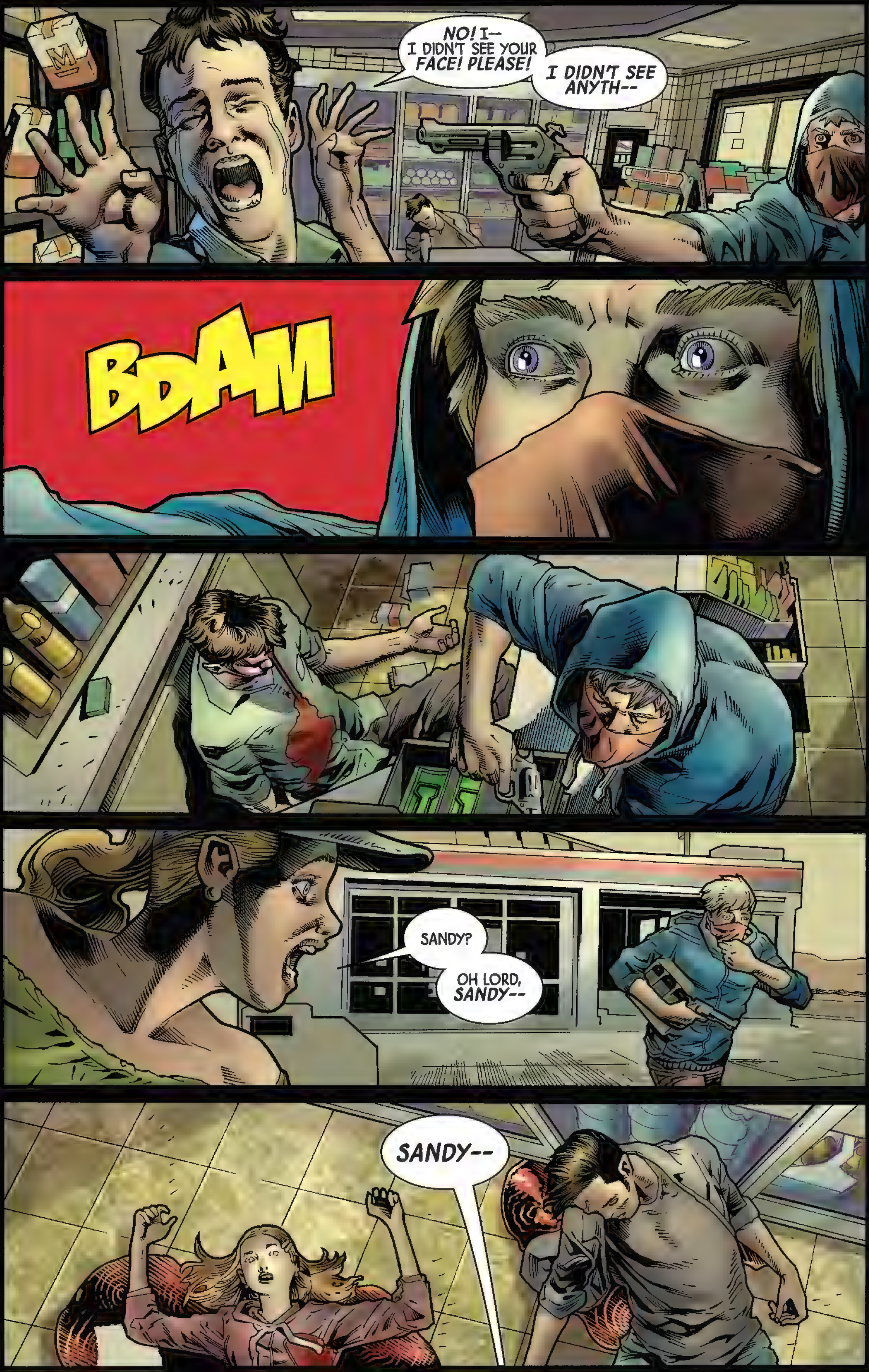

THERE'S THE ONE YOU CAN SEE.
LISTEN, IF YOU'RE GETTING SOMETHING FOR THE ROAD, MAKE IT SOMETHING *HEALTHY*, OKAY?
OKAY, MOM.
I MEAN IT! *FRUIT JUICE!* NONE OF THAT SODA POP!
OKAY, MOM.
AND THERE'S THE OTHER ONE.
GOD.
THE ONE YOU DON'T WANT TO.

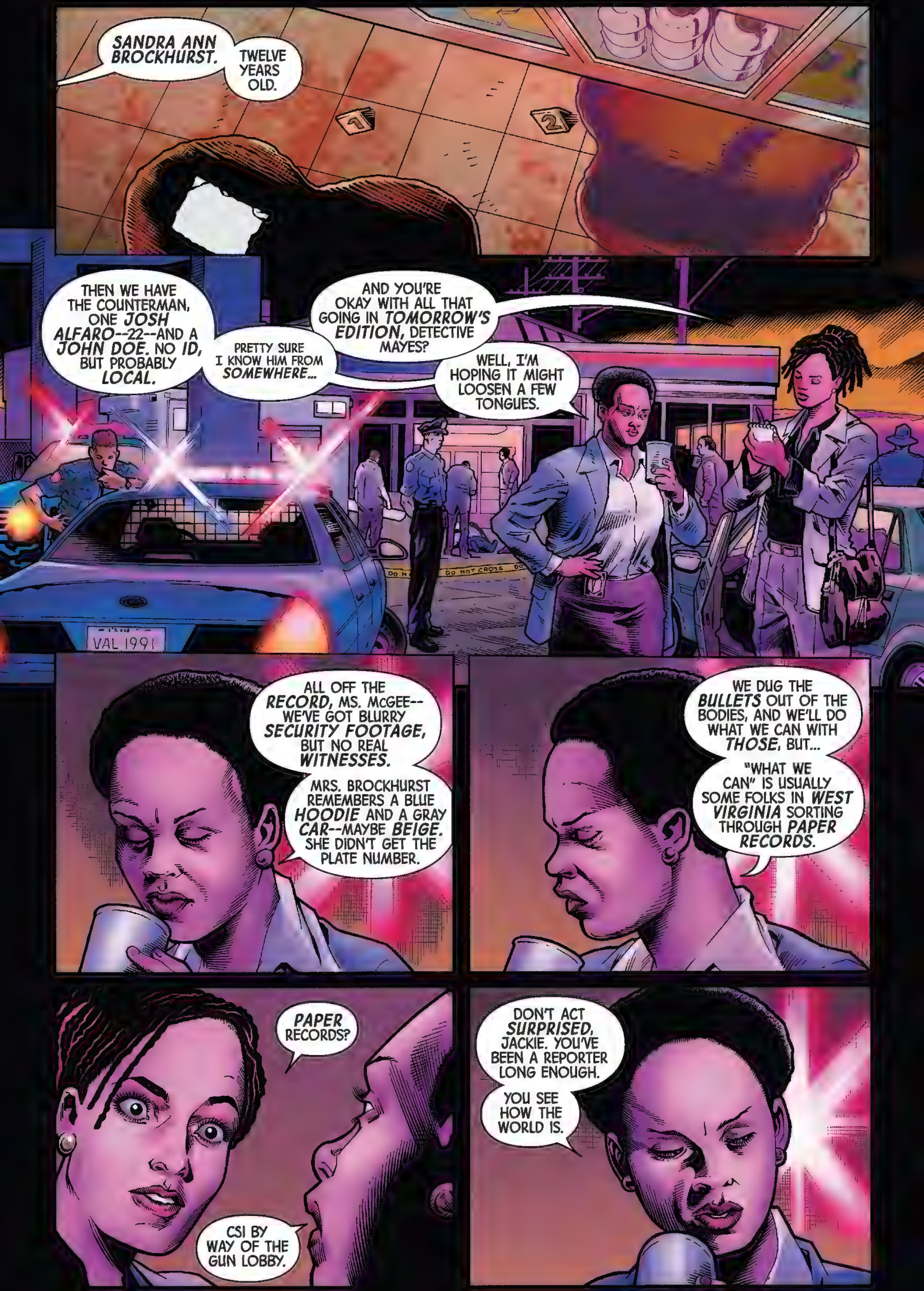

...
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?
EXCUSE ME.
CREEP.
WHAT'S HIS DEAL?
NATIONAL INVESTIGATOR
MONSTER SIGHTED:
DO THE AVENGERS KNOW?
ALIVE?
VOG
JANE
HEY.
WHICH PUMP?

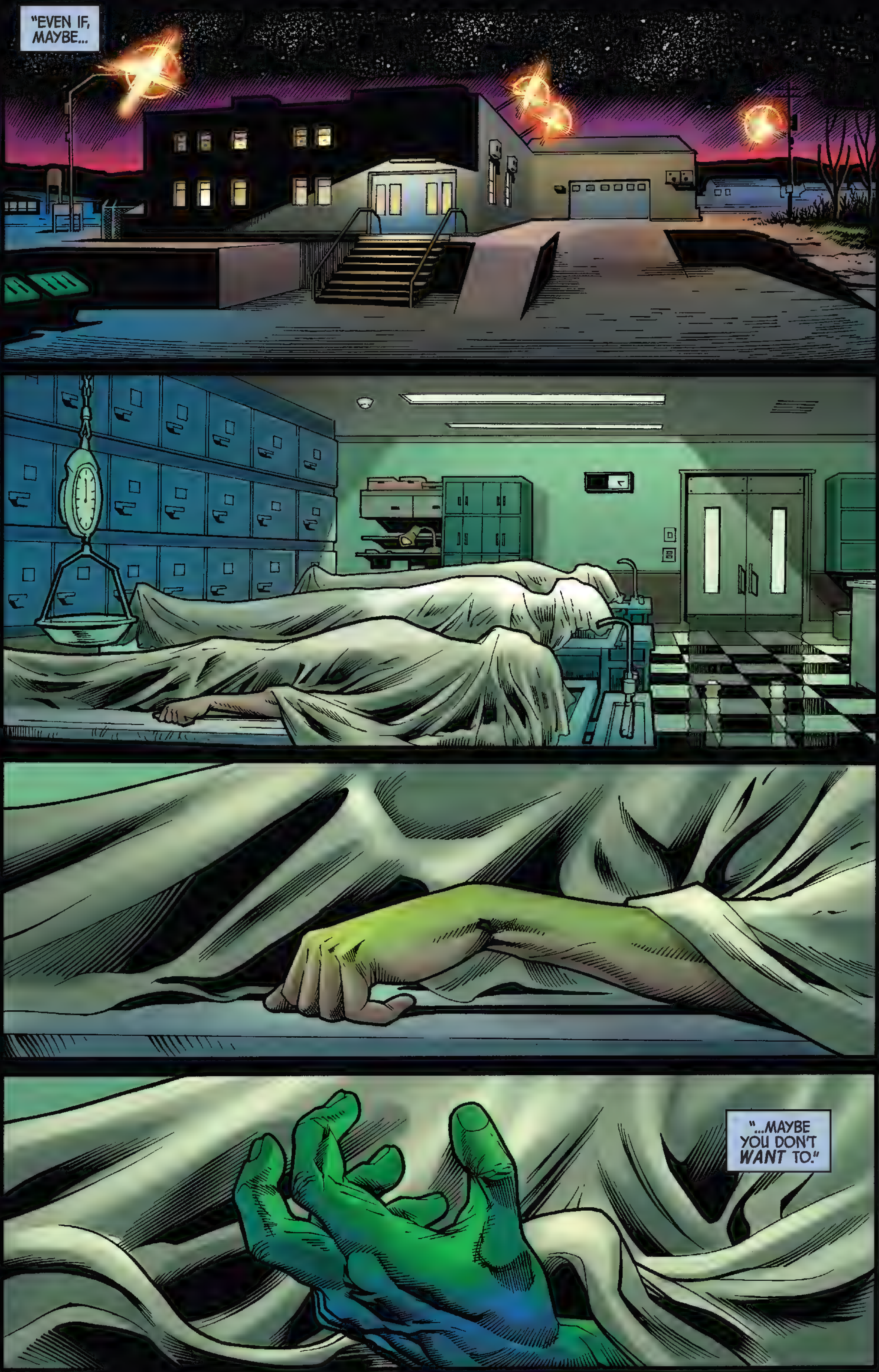

MISTER?
WHICH--
OH.
N-NO ALARMS.
OPEN... OPEN THE *REGISTER.*
SURE-- *SURE,* MAN--
I JUST-- I *JUST* WANT WHAT'S IN THE--
KRIISH

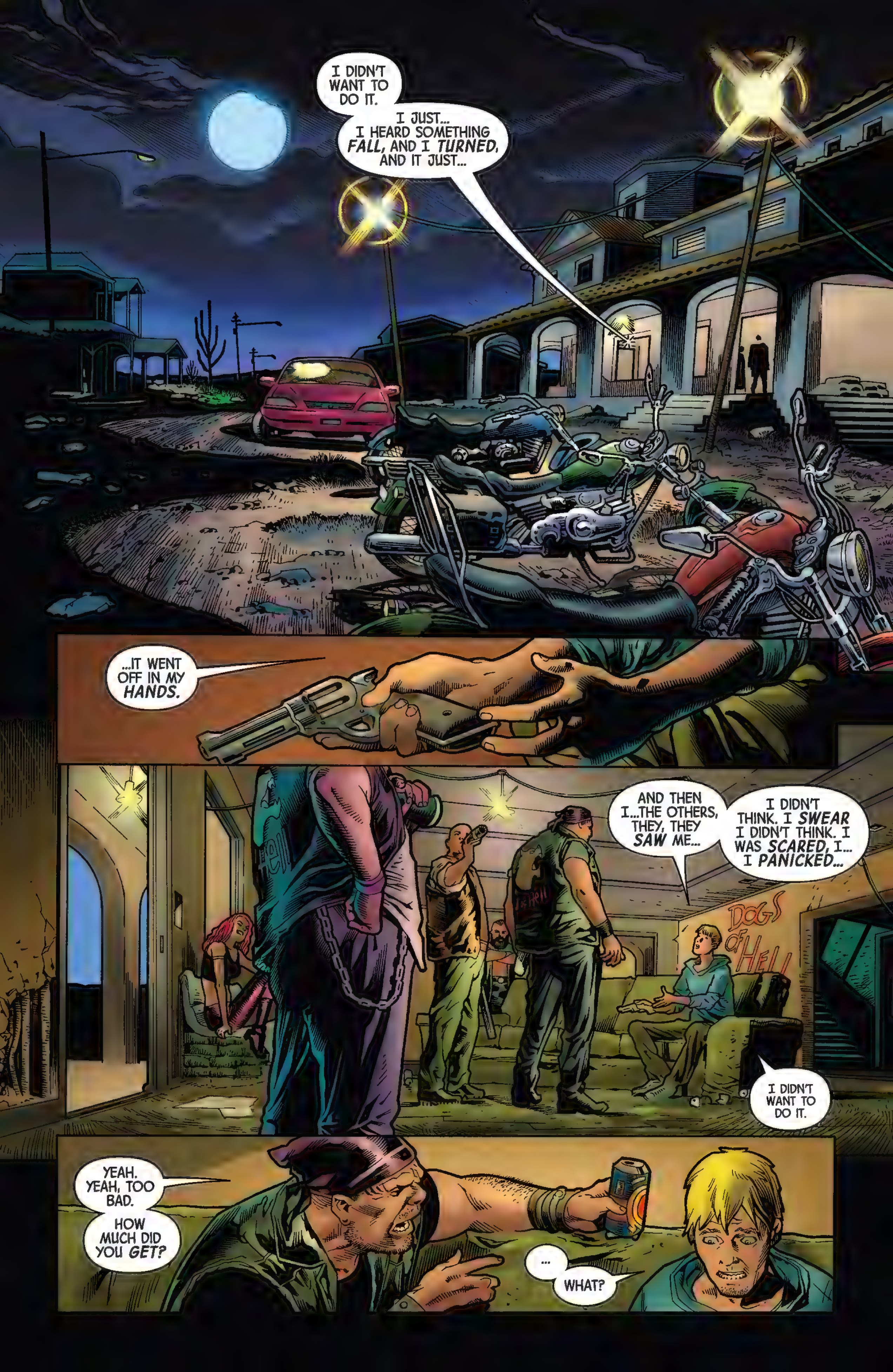

BDAM

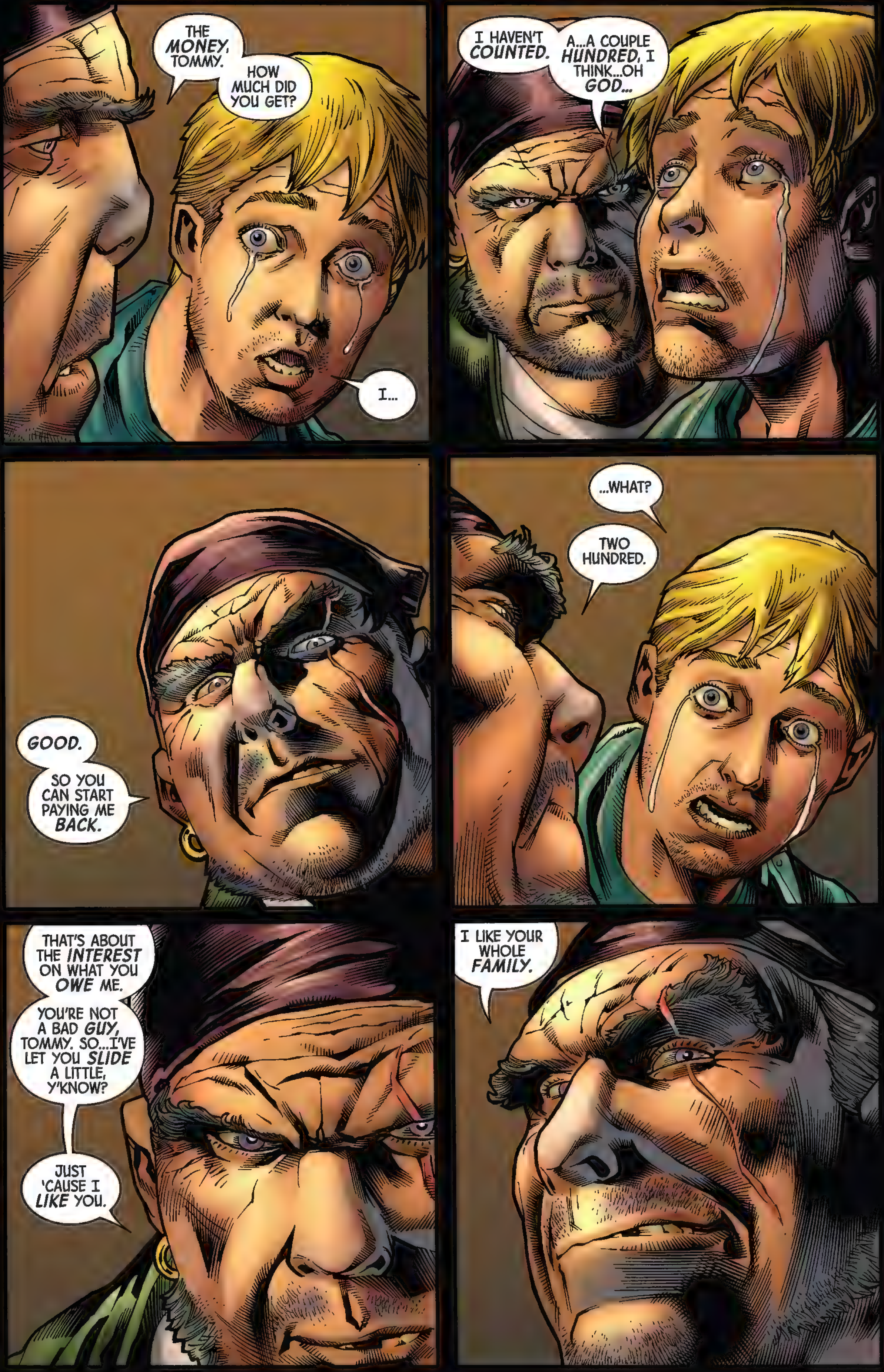

YOU...
YOU JUST...
YOU--
BDAM
PLEASE, MAN... *PLEASE--*
I-- I SWEAR, I DIDN'T TOUCH THE *ALARM--*
...
I'M SORRY.

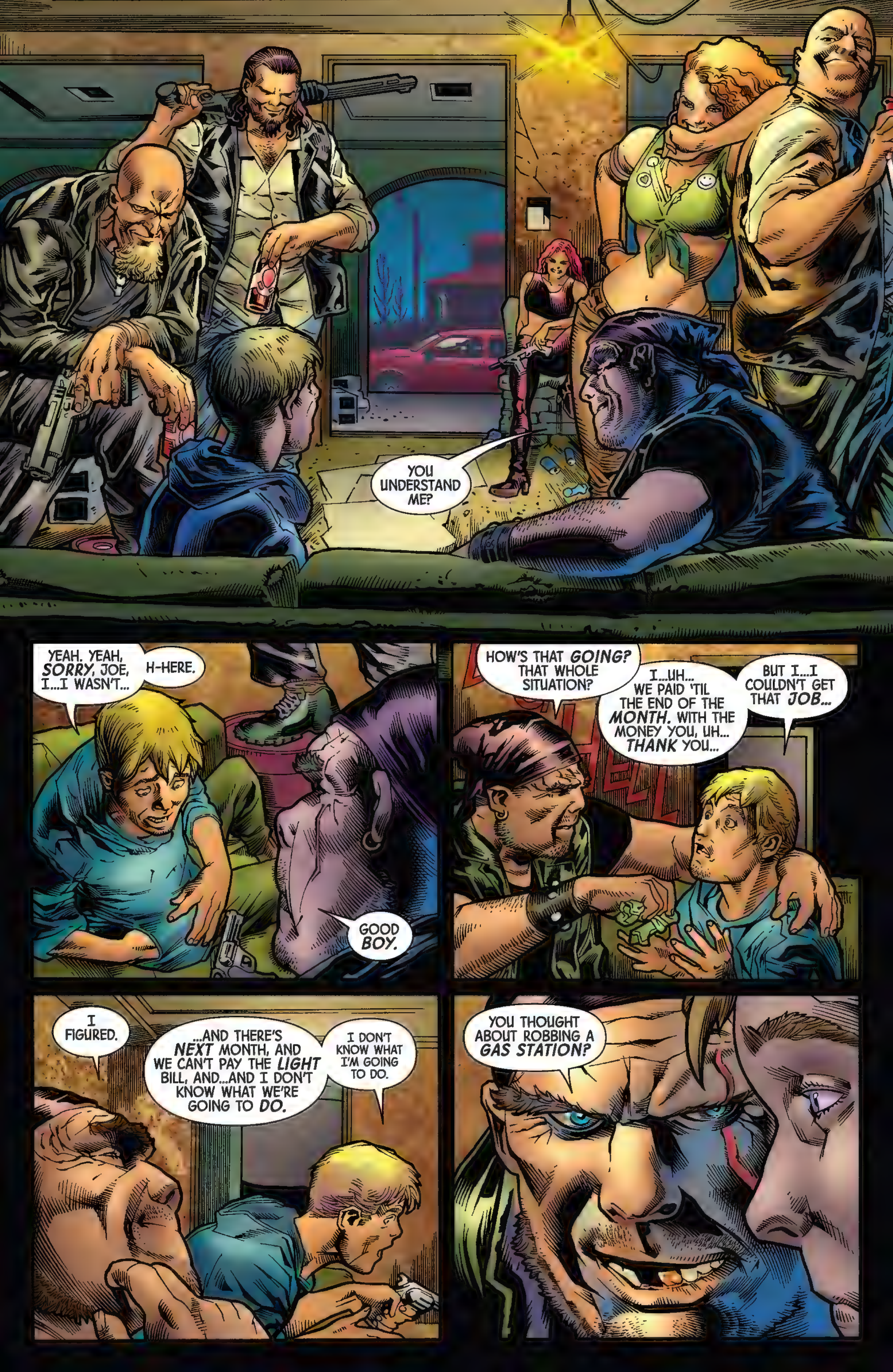

NO! I-- I DIDN'T SEE YOUR FACE! PLEASE!
I DIDN'T SEE ANYTH--
BDAM
SANDY?
OH LORD, SANDY--
SANDY--

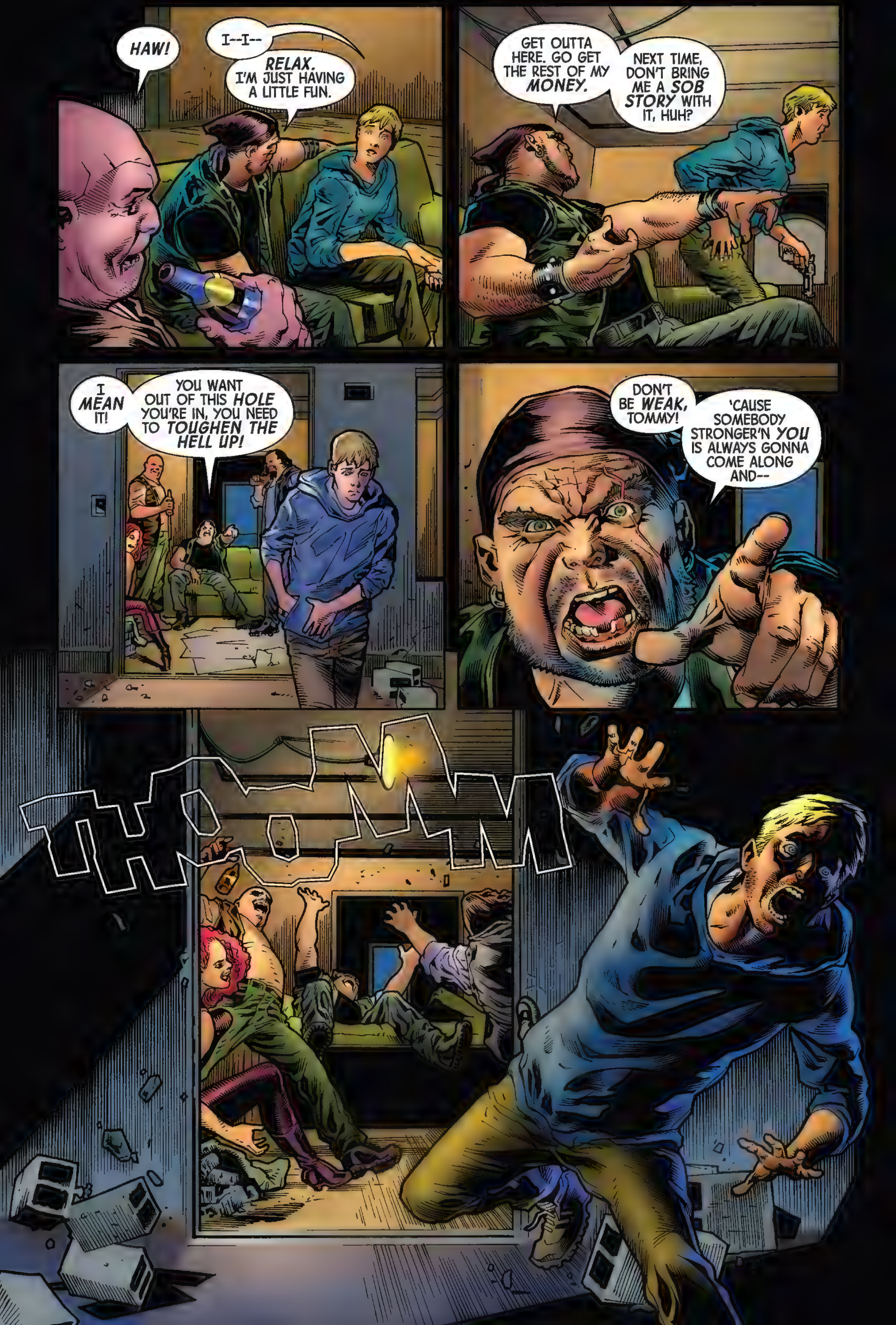

SANDRA ANN BROCKHURST.
TWELVE YEARS OLD.
1
2
THEN WE HAVE THE COUNTERMAN, ONE JOSH ALFARO--22--AND A JOHN DOE. NO ID, BUT PROBABLY LOCAL.
PRETTY SURE I KNOW HIM FROM SOMEWHERE...
AND YOU'RE OKAY WITH ALL THAT GOING IN TOMORROW'S EDITION, DETECTIVE MAYES?
WELL, I'M HOPING IT MIGHT LOOSEN A FEW TONGUES.
DO NOT CROSS
VAL 1991
ALL OFF THE RECORD, MS. McGEE--WE'VE GOT BLURRY SECURITY FOOTAGE, BUT NO REAL WITNESSES.
MRS. BROCKHURST REMEMBERS A BLUE HOODIE AND A GRAY CAR--MAYBE BEIGE. SHE DIDN'T GET THE PLATE NUMBER.
WE DUG THE BULLETS OUT OF THE BODIES, AND WE'LL DO WHAT WE CAN WITH THOSE, BUT...
"WHAT WE CAN" IS USUALLY SOME FOLKS IN WEST VIRGINIA SORTING THROUGH PAPER RECORDS.
PAPER RECORDS?
CSI BY WAY OF THE GUN LOBBY.
DON'T ACT SURPRISED, JACKIE. YOU'VE BEEN A REPORTER LONG ENOUGH.
YOU SEE HOW THE WORLD IS.

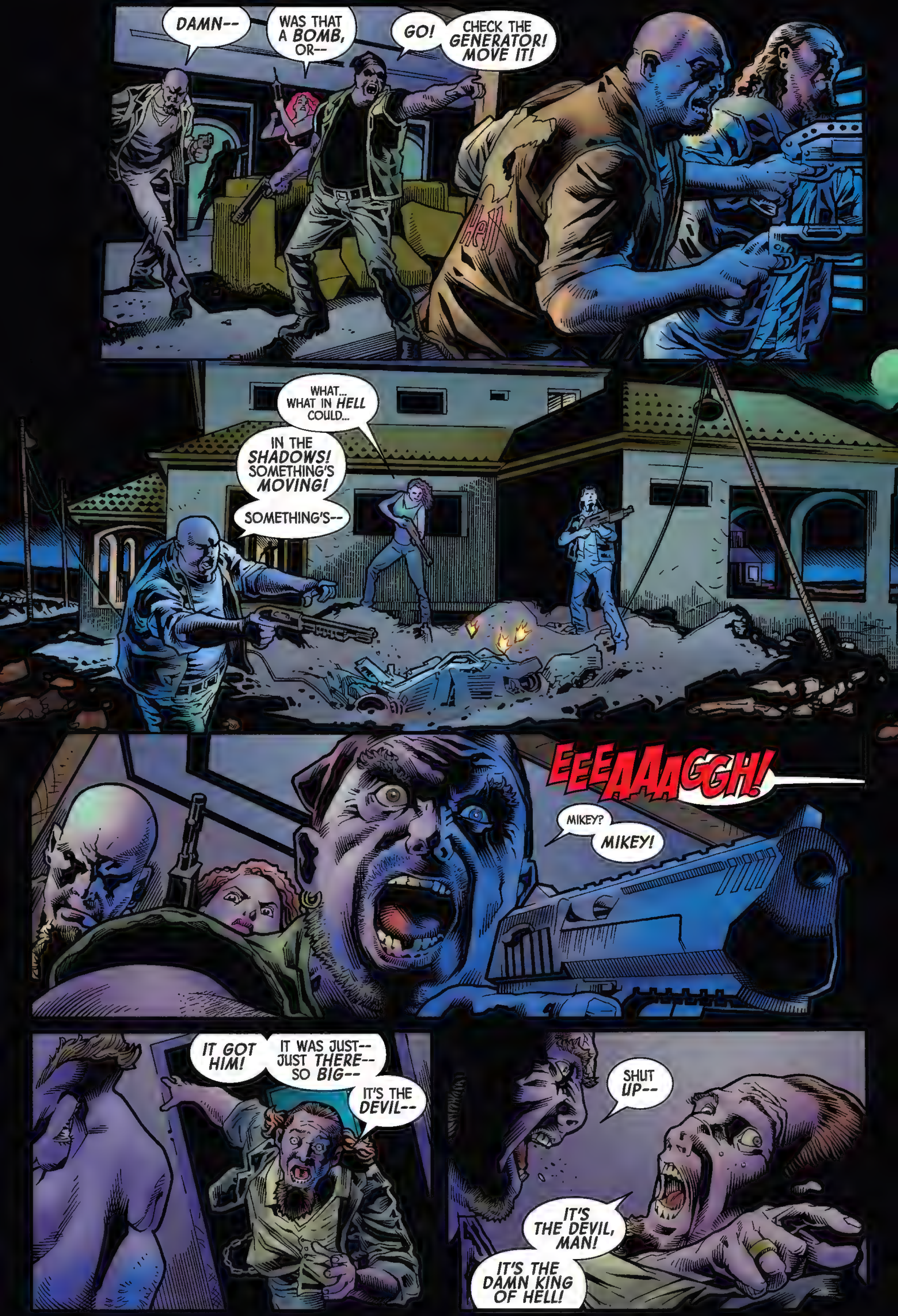

"EVEN IF, MAYBE...
"...MAYBE YOU DON'T *WANT* TO."

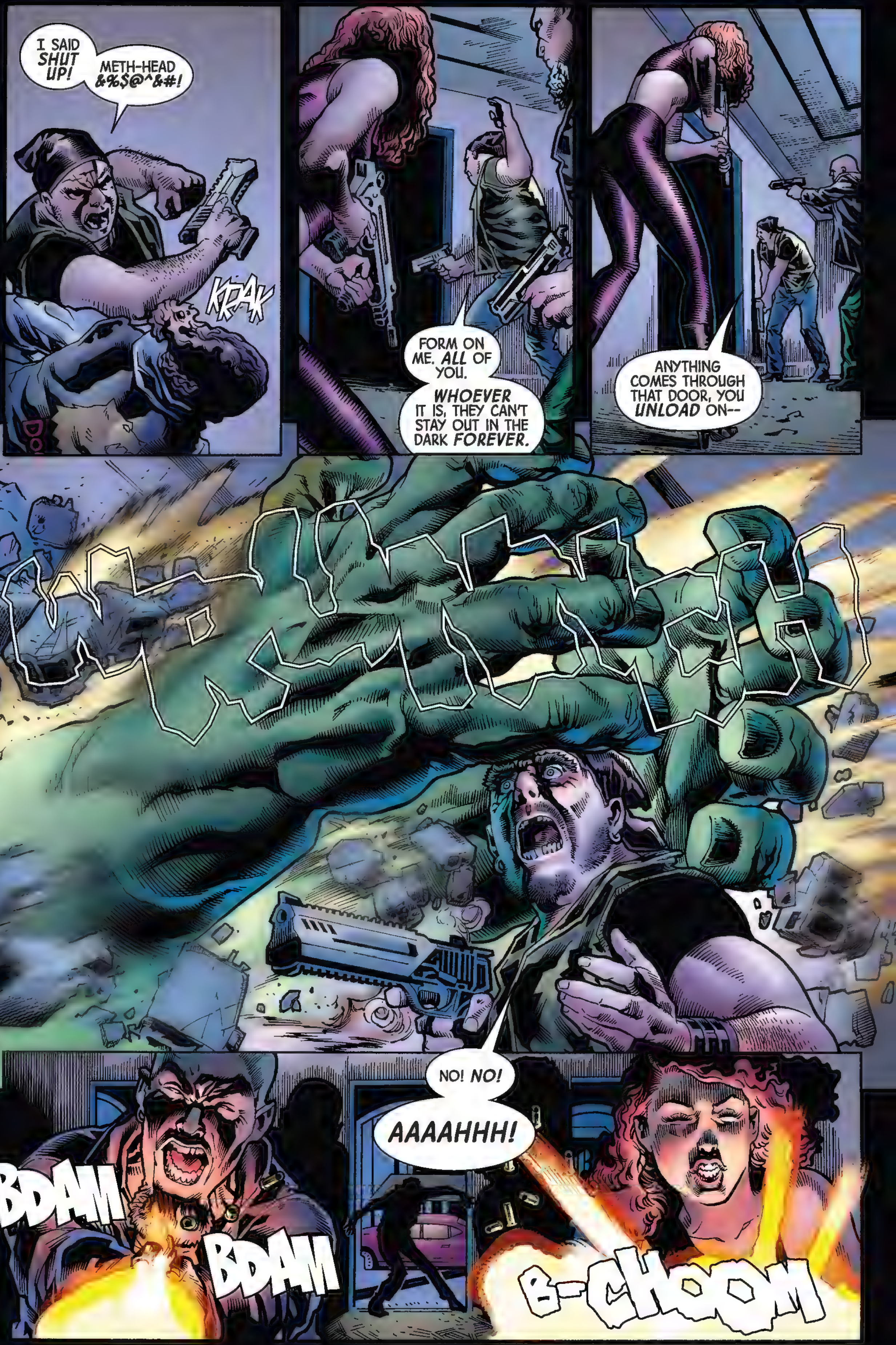

I DIDN'T WANT TO DO IT.
I JUST... I HEARD SOMETHING *FALL*, AND I *TURNED*, AND IT JUST...
...IT WENT OFF IN MY *HANDS*.
AND THEN I...THE OTHERS, THEY, THEY *SAW* ME...
I DIDN'T THINK. I *SWEAR* I DIDN'T THINK. I WAS *SCARED*, I... I *PANICKED*...
DOGS OF HELL
I DIDN'T WANT TO DO IT.
YEAH. YEAH, TOO BAD.
HOW MUCH DID YOU *GET?*
...
WHAT?

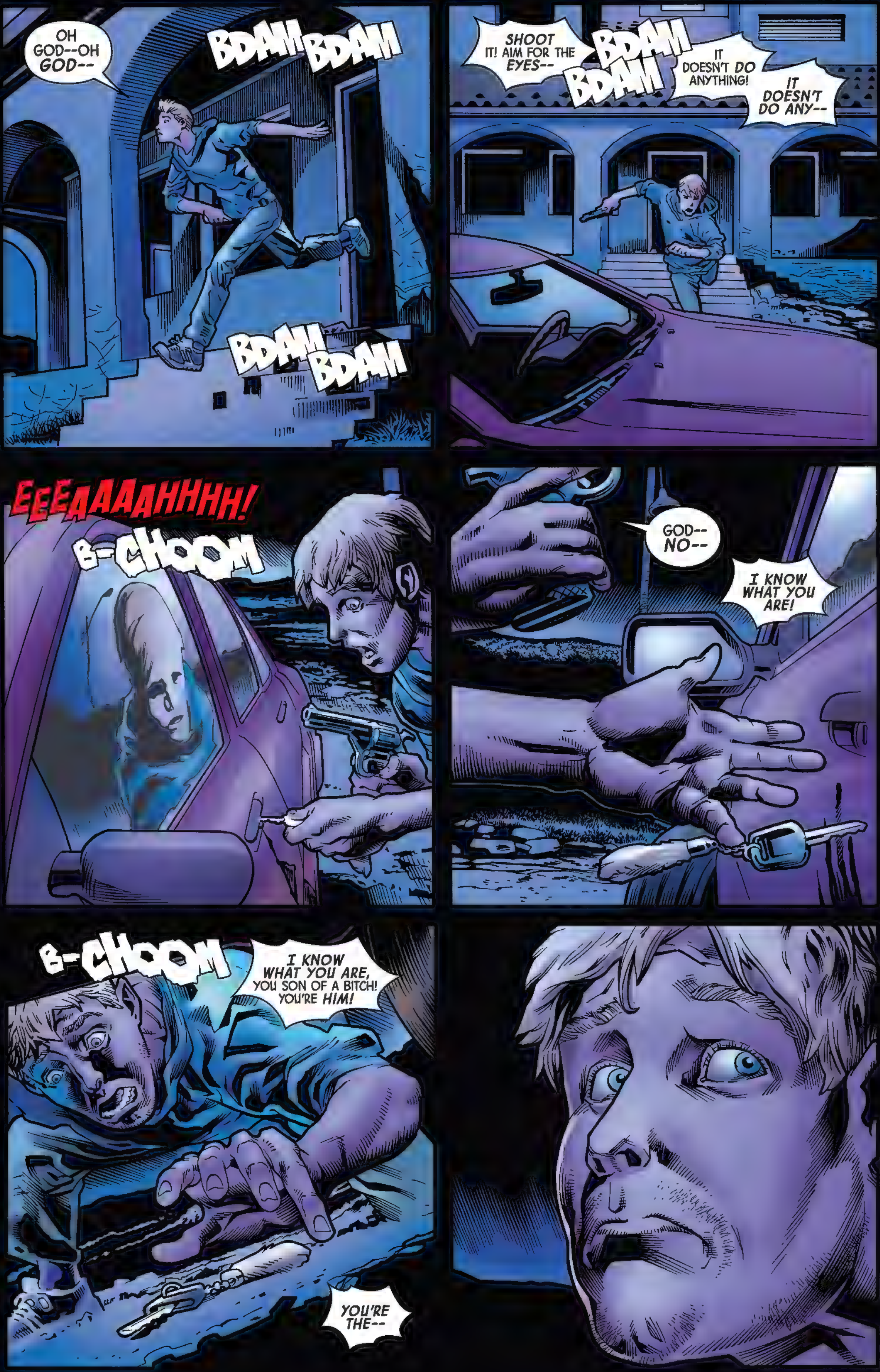

THE MONEY, TOMMY.
HOW MUCH DID YOU GET?
I...
I HAVEN'T COUNTED.
A...A COUPLE HUNDRED, I THINK...OH GOD...
GOOD.
SO YOU CAN START PAYING ME BACK.
...WHAT?
TWO HUNDRED.
THAT'S ABOUT THE INTEREST ON WHAT YOU OWE ME.
YOU'RE NOT A BAD GUY, TOMMY. SO...I'VE LET YOU SLIDE A LITTLE, Y'KNOW?
JUST 'CAUSE I LIKE YOU.
I LIKE YOUR WHOLE FAMILY.

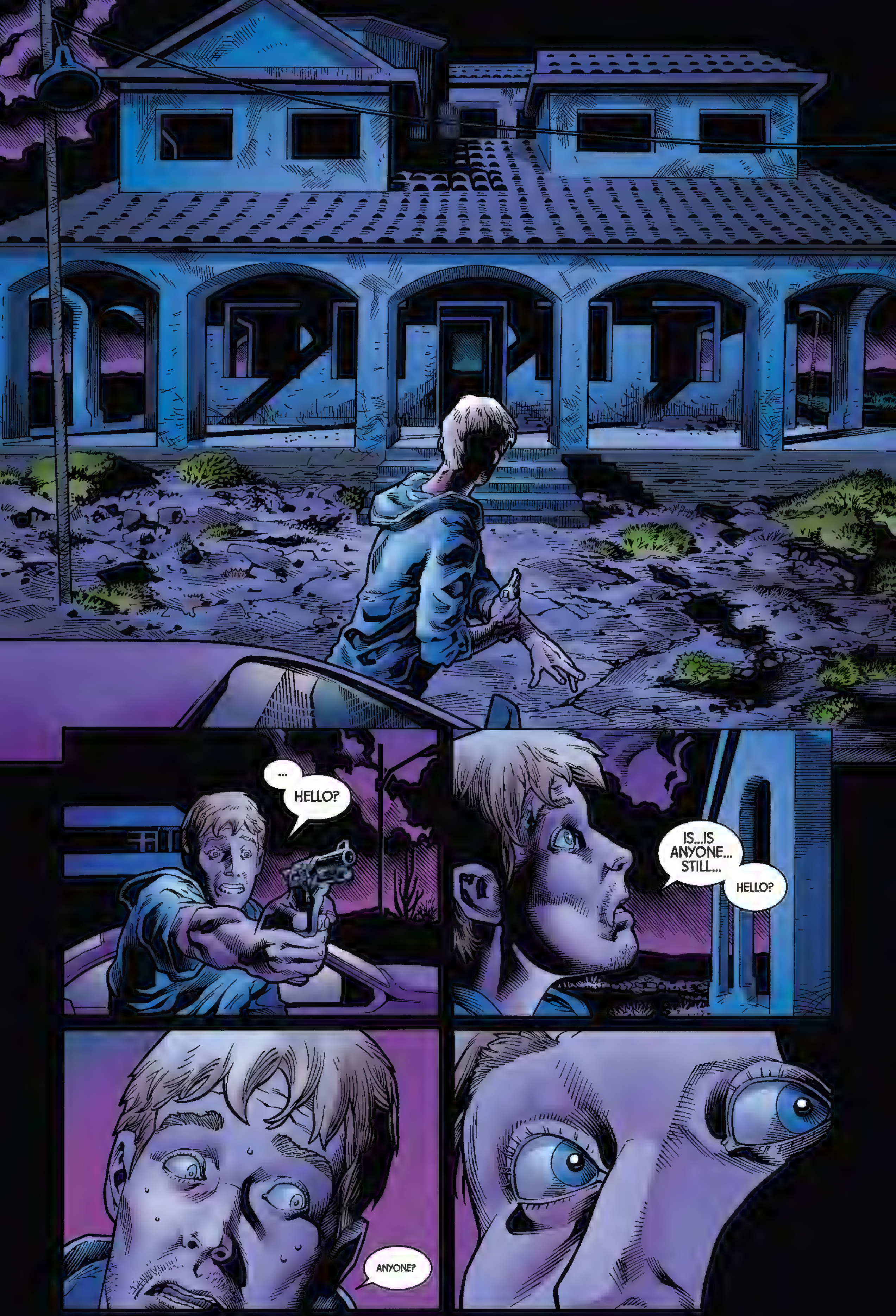

YOU UNDERSTAND ME?
YEAH. YEAH, *SORRY*, JOE, I...I WASN'T...
H-HERE.
GOOD *BOY*.
HOW'S THAT *GOING?* THAT WHOLE SITUATION?
I...UH... WE PAID 'TIL THE END OF THE *MONTH*. WITH THE MONEY YOU, UH... *THANK* YOU...
BUT I...I COULDN'T GET THAT *JOB*...
I FIGURED.
...AND THERE'S *NEXT* MONTH, AND WE CAN'T PAY THE *LIGHT* BILL, AND...AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE GOING TO *DO*.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO.
YOU THOUGHT ABOUT ROBBING A *GAS STATION?*

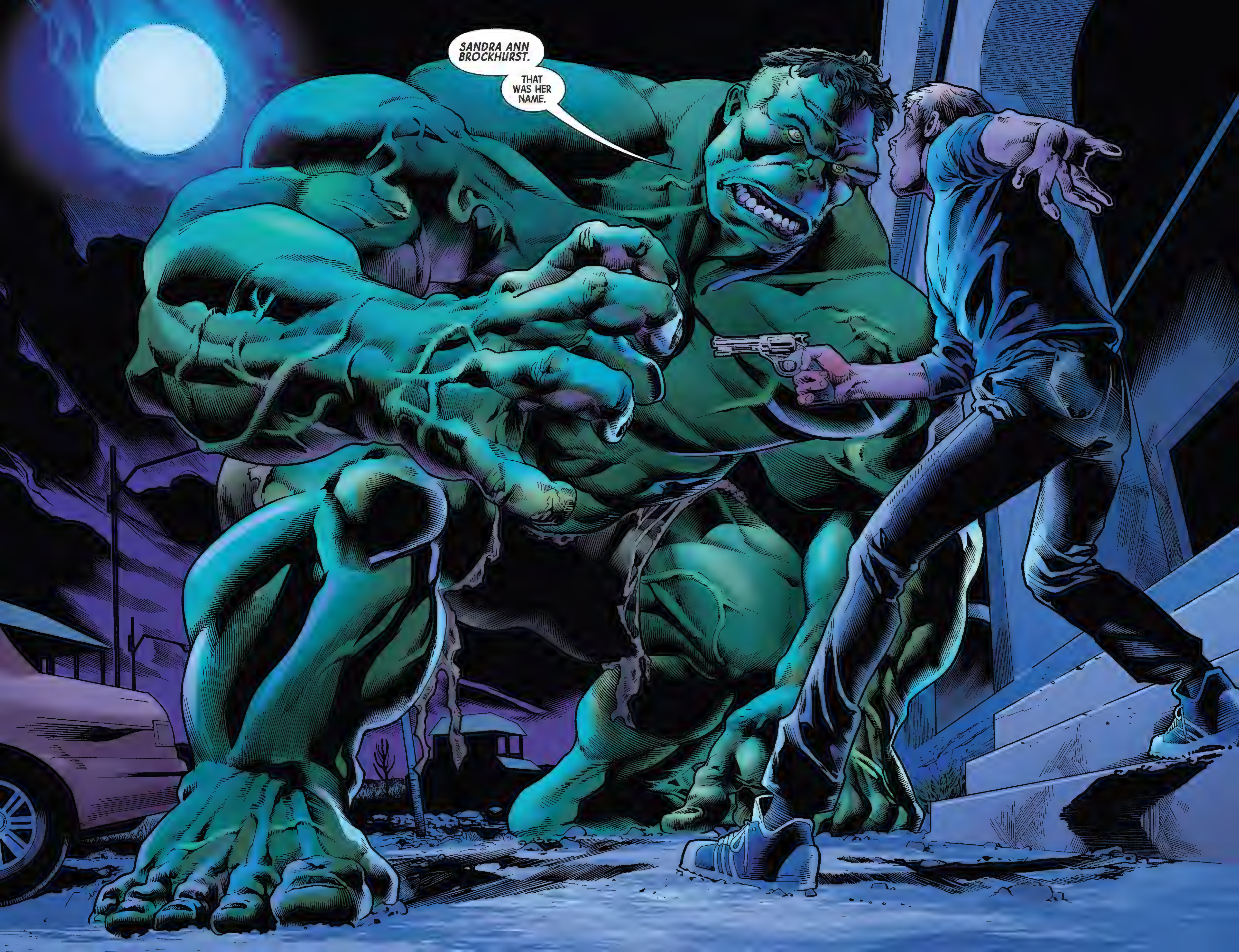

HAW!
I--I--
RELAX. I'M JUST HAVING A LITTLE FUN.
GET OUTTA HERE. GO GET THE REST OF MY MONEY.
NEXT TIME, DON'T BRING ME A SOB STORY WITH IT, HUH?
I MEAN IT!
YOU WANT OUT OF THIS HOLE YOU'RE IN, YOU NEED TO TOUGHEN THE HELL UP!
DON'T BE WEAK, TOMMY!
'CAUSE SOMEBODY STRONGER'N YOU IS ALWAYS GONNA COME ALONG AND--
THOOOM

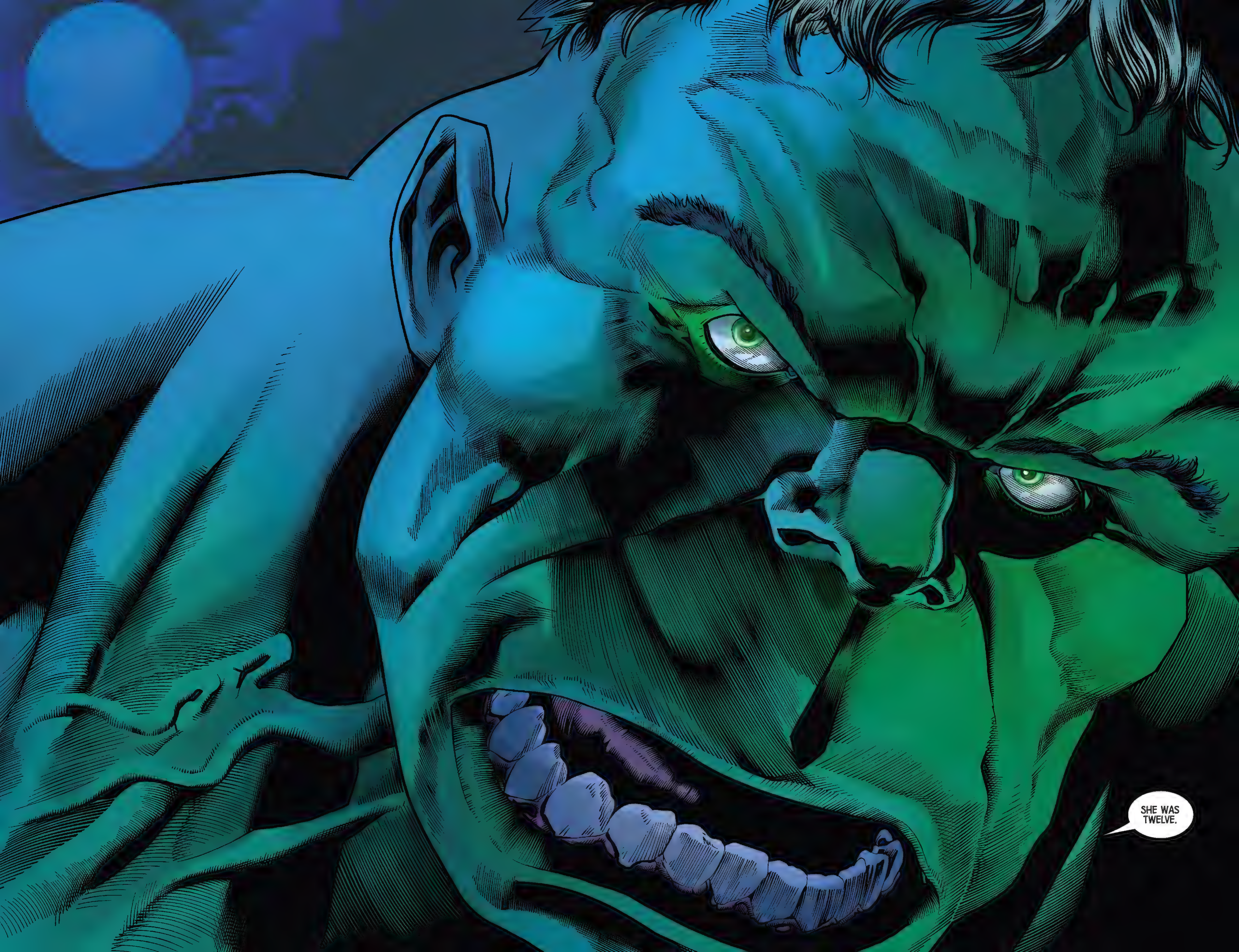

DAMN--
WAS THAT A BOMB, OR--
GO!
CHECK THE GENERATOR! MOVE IT!
Hell
WHAT... WHAT IN HELL COULD...
IN THE SHADOWS! SOMETHING'S MOVING!
SOMETHING'S--
EEEAAAGGH!
MIKEY?
MIKEY!
IT GOT HIM!
IT WAS JUST-- JUST THERE-- SO BIG--
IT'S THE DEVIL--
SHUT UP--
IT'S THE DEVIL, MAN!
IT'S THE DAMN KING OF HELL!

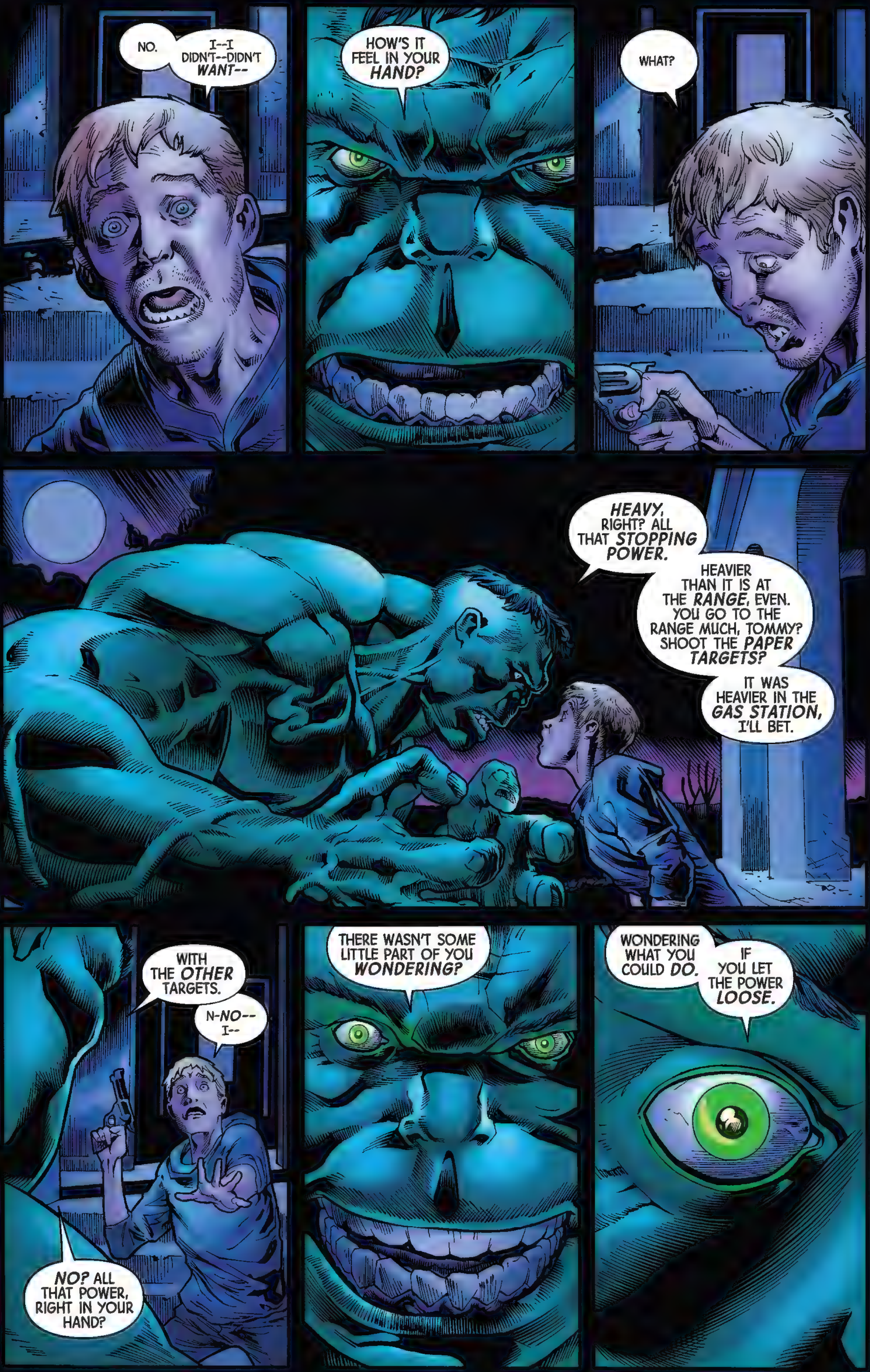

I SAID *SHUT UP!*
METH-HEAD &%$@^&#!
KRAK
FORM ON ME. *ALL* OF YOU.
WHOEVER IT IS, THEY CAN'T STAY OUT IN THE DARK *FOREVER.*
ANYTHING COMES THROUGH THAT DOOR, YOU *UNLOAD* ON--
WHUUUDGH
NO! *NO!*
AAAAHHH!
BDAM
BDAM
B-CHOOM

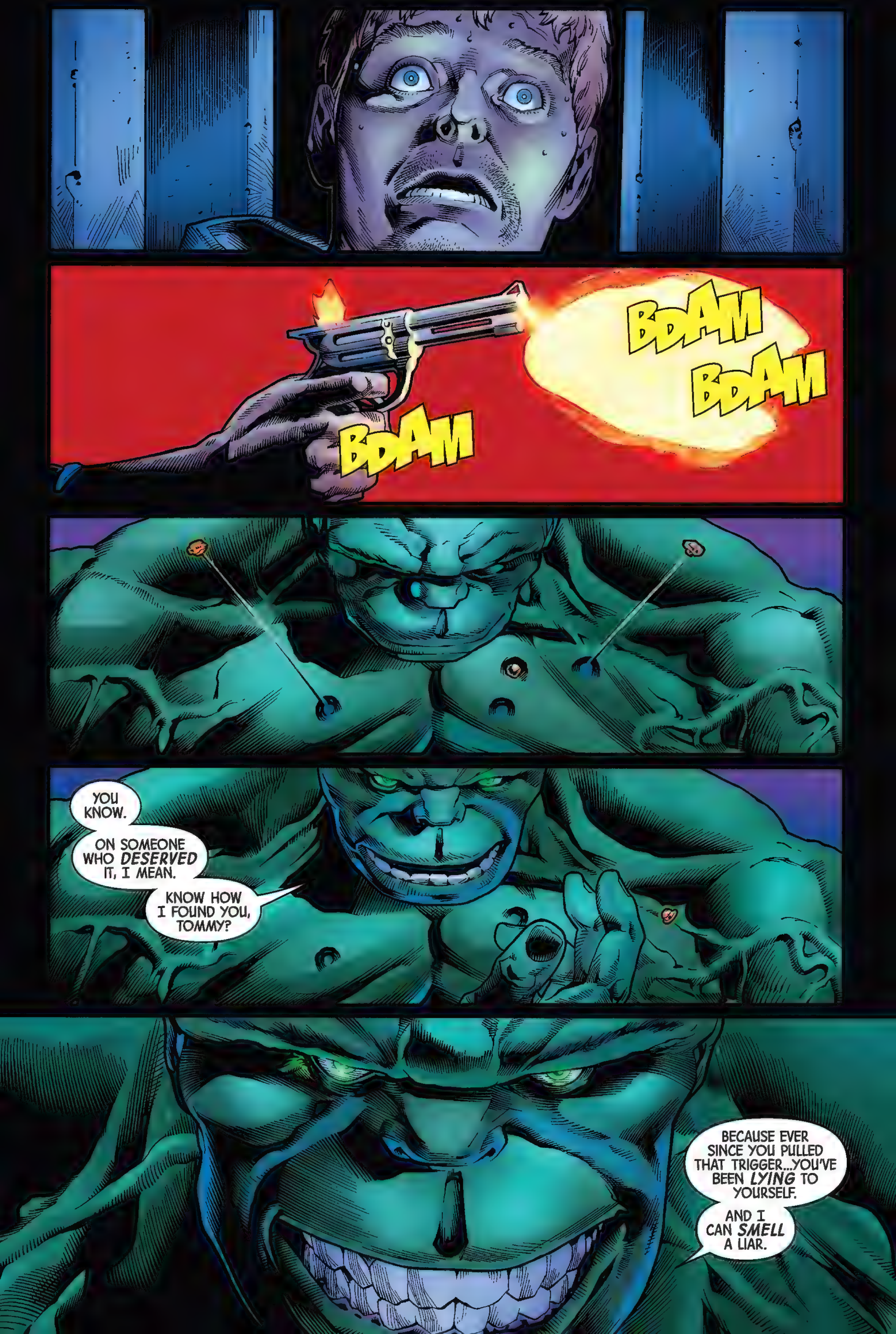

OH GOD--OH GOD--
BDAM BDAM
BDAM BDAM
SHOOT IT! AIM FOR THE EYES--
BDAM BDAM
IT DOESN'T DO ANYTHING!
IT DOESN'T DO ANY--
EEEAAAAHHHH!
B-CHOOM
GOD-- NO--
I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE!
B-CHOOM
I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, YOU SON OF A BITCH! YOU'RE HIM!
YOU'RE THE--

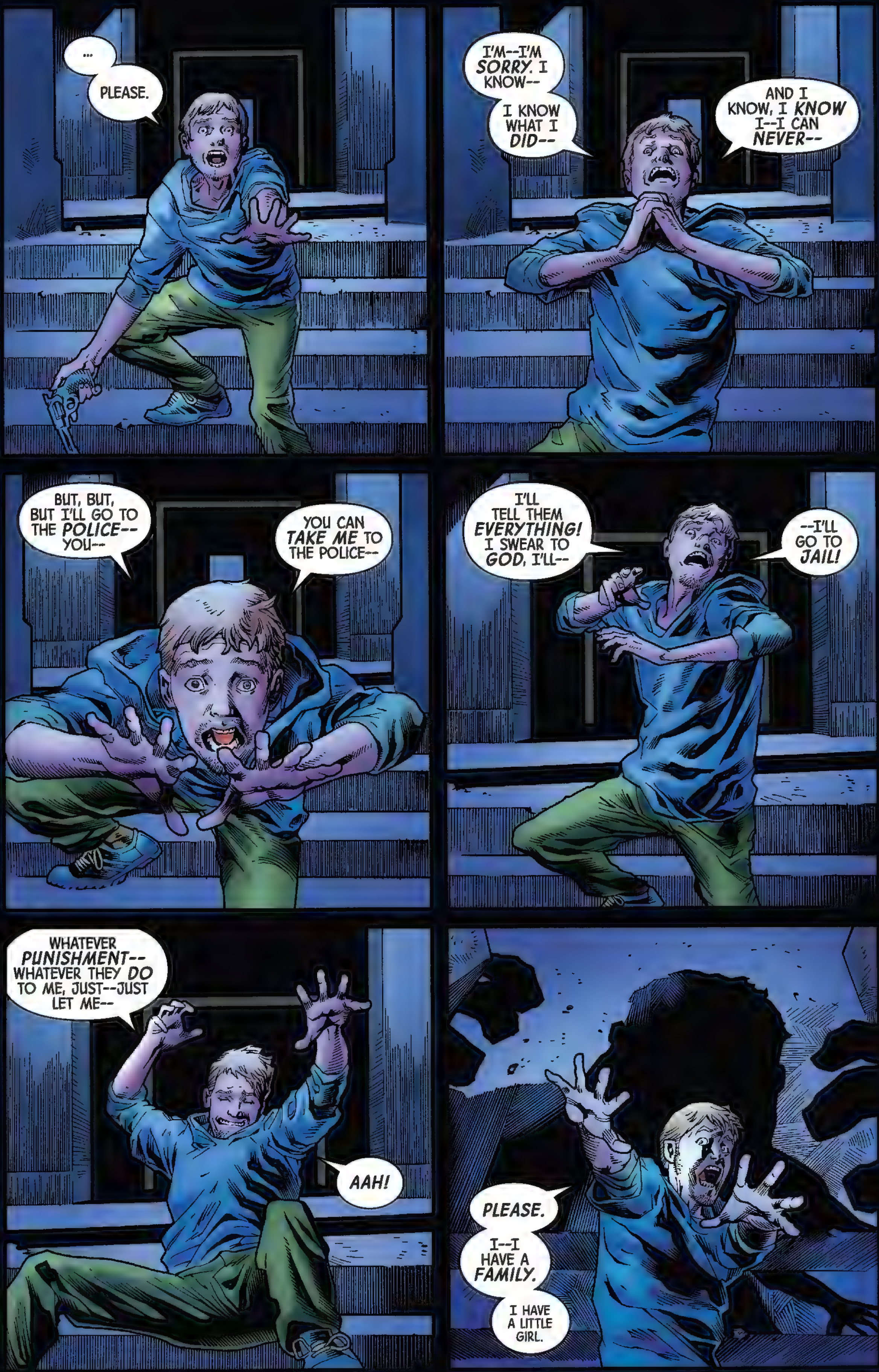

...
HELLO?
IS...IS ANYONE... STILL...
HELLO?
ANYONE?

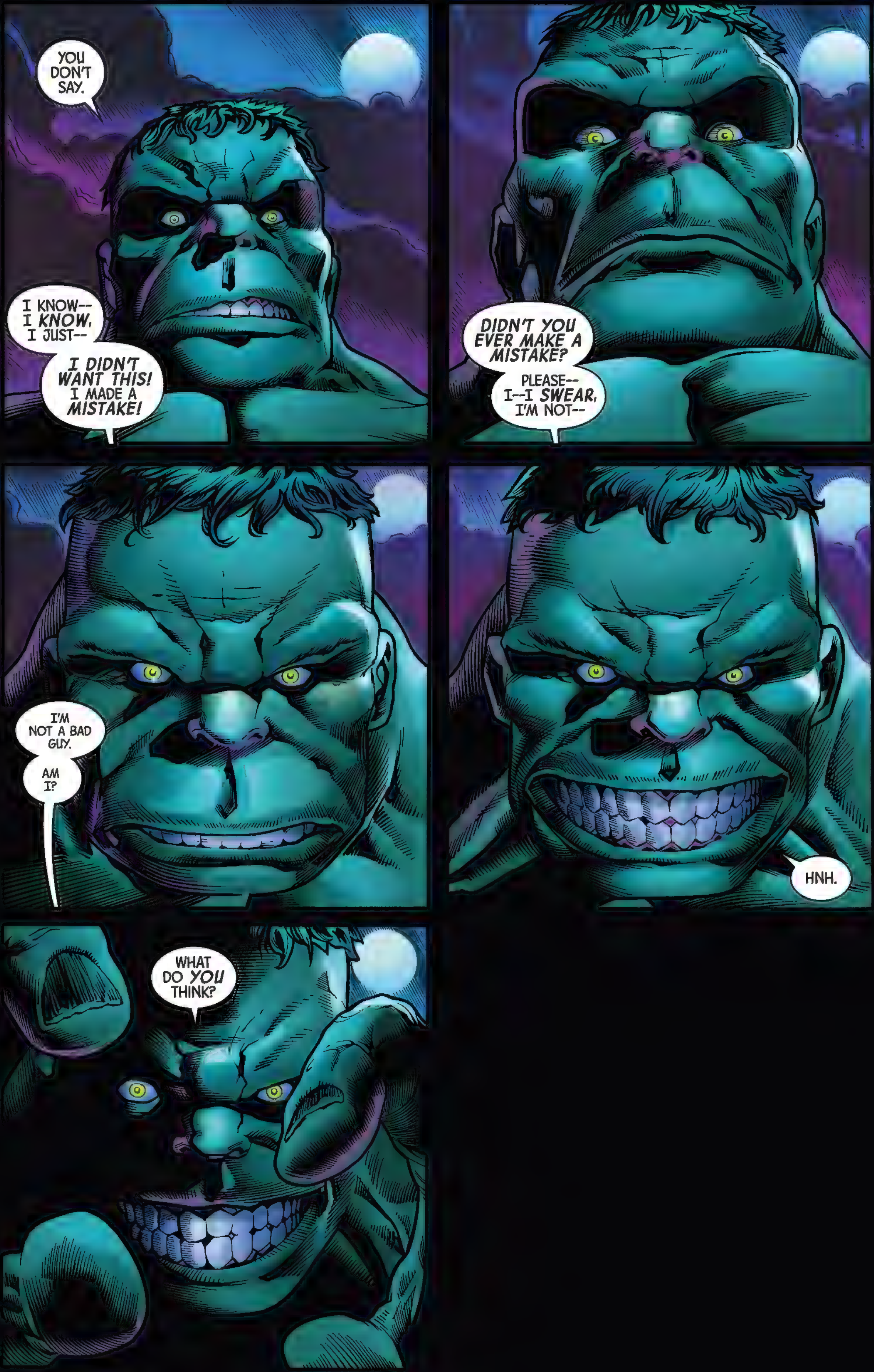

SANDRA ANN BROCKHURST.
THAT WAS HER NAME.

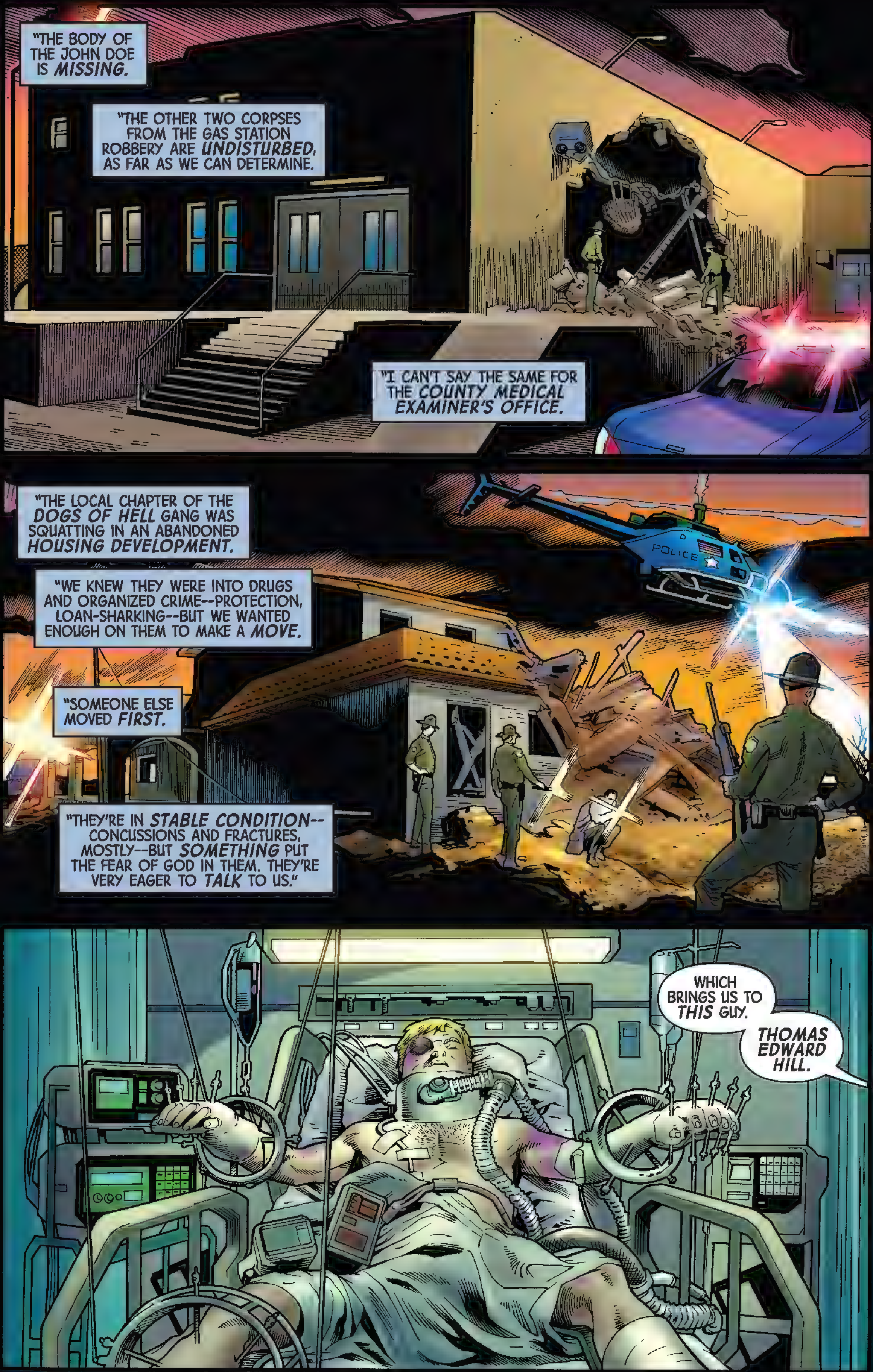

SHE WAS TWELVE.

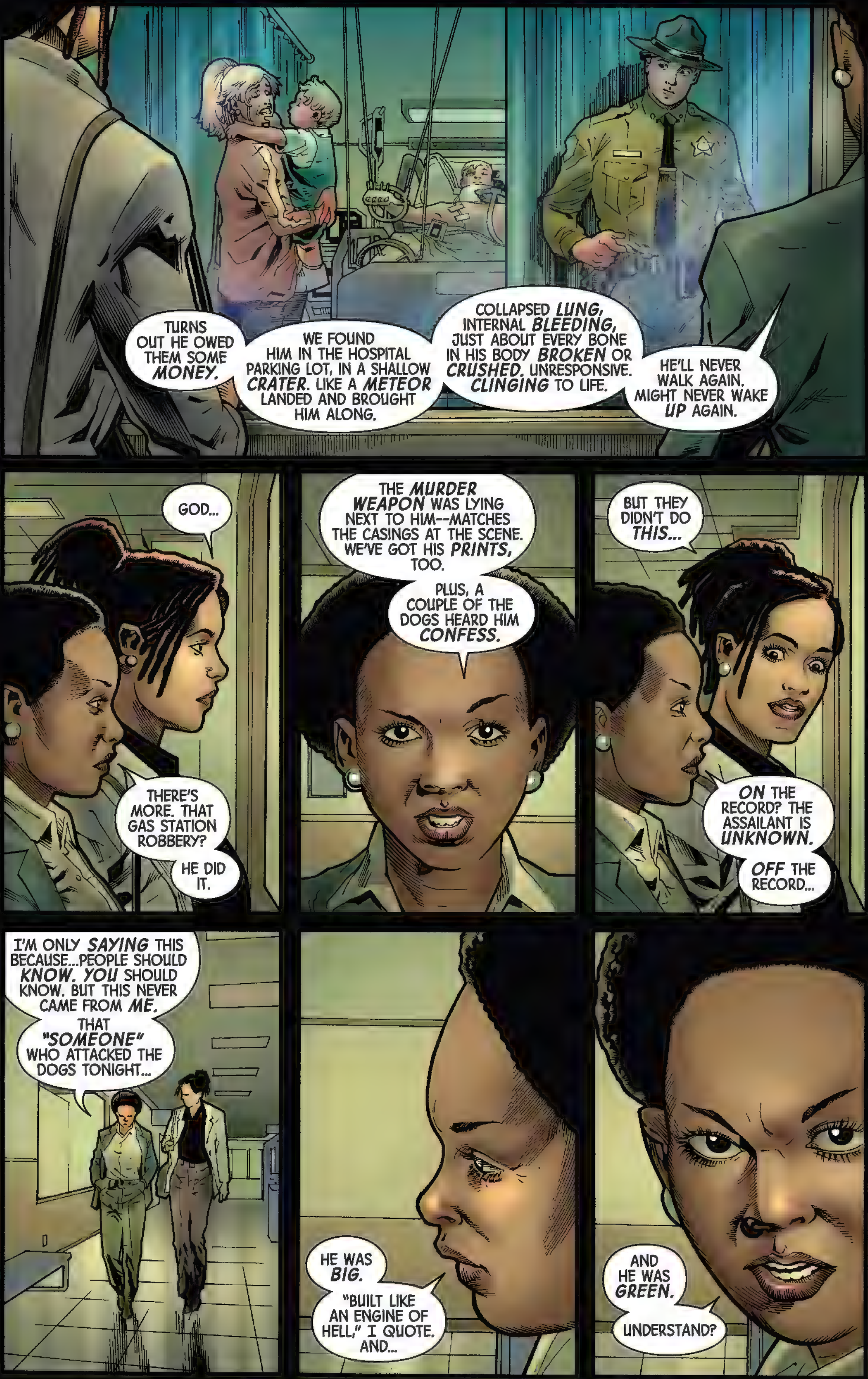

NO.
I--I DIDN'T--DIDN'T *WANT--*
HOW'S IT FEEL IN YOUR *HAND?*
WHAT?
HEAVY, RIGHT? ALL THAT *STOPPING POWER.*
HEAVIER THAN IT IS AT THE *RANGE,* EVEN. YOU GO TO THE RANGE MUCH, TOMMY? SHOOT THE *PAPER TARGETS?*
IT WAS HEAVIER IN THE *GAS STATION,* I'LL BET.
WITH THE *OTHER* TARGETS.
N-*NO--* I--
NO? ALL THAT POWER, RIGHT IN YOUR HAND?
THERE WASN'T SOME LITTLE PART OF YOU *WONDERING?*
WONDERING WHAT YOU COULD *DO,*
IF YOU LET THE POWER *LOOSE.*

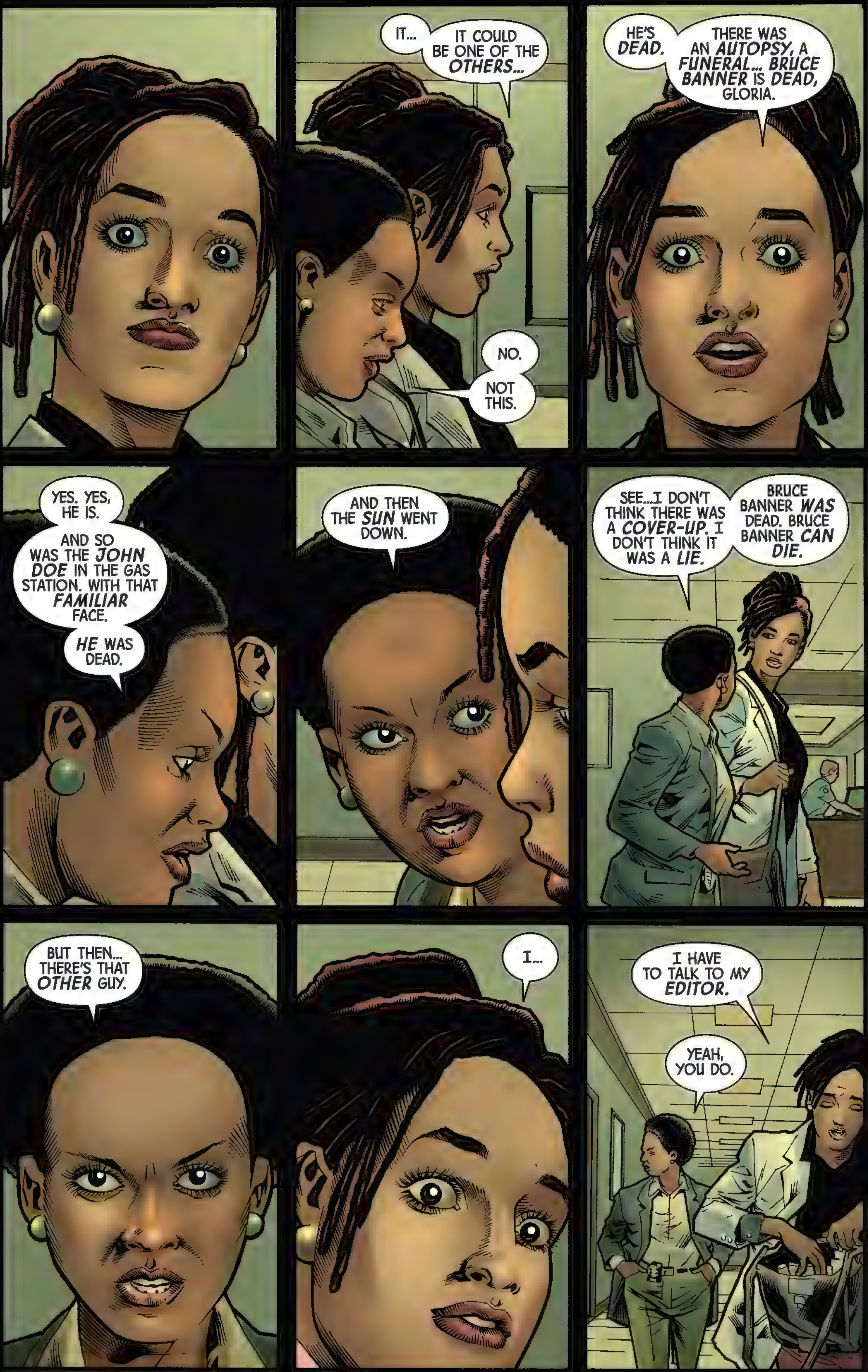

BDAM
BDAM
BDAM
YOU KNOW.
ON SOMEONE WHO *DESERVED* IT, I MEAN.
KNOW HOW I FOUND YOU, TOMMY?
BECAUSE EVER SINCE YOU PULLED THAT TRIGGER...YOU'VE BEEN *LYING* TO YOURSELF.
AND I CAN *SMELL* A LIAR.

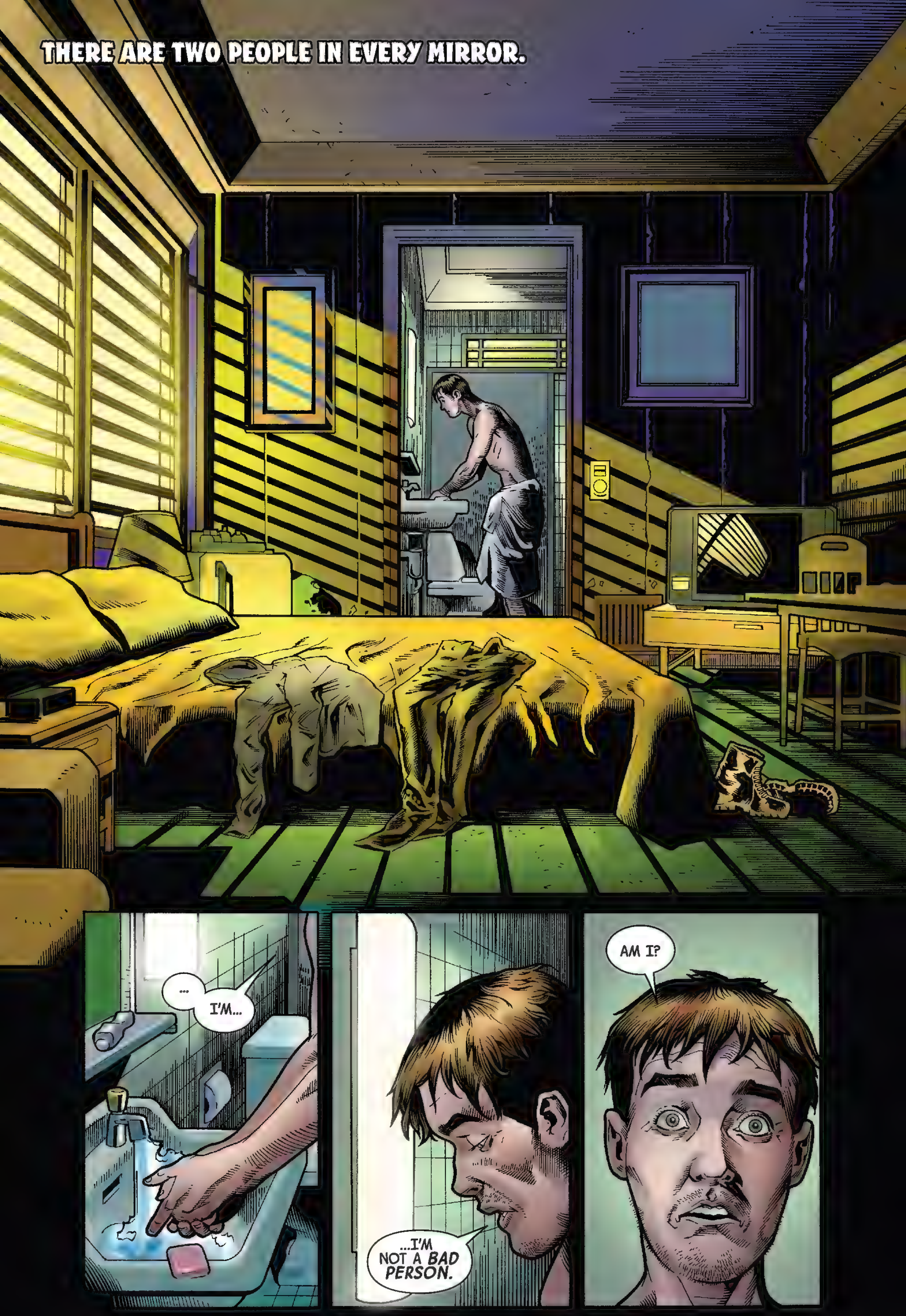

...
PLEASE.
I'M--I'M *SORRY.* I KNOW--
I KNOW WHAT I *DID--*
AND I KNOW, I *KNOW* I--I CAN *NEVER--*
BUT, BUT, BUT I'LL GO TO THE *POLICE--* YOU--
YOU CAN *TAKE ME* TO THE POLICE--
I'LL TELL THEM *EVERYTHING!* I SWEAR TO *GOD,* I'LL--
--I'LL GO TO *JAIL!*
WHATEVER *PUNISHMENT--* WHATEVER THEY *DO* TO ME, JUST--JUST LET ME--
AAH!
PLEASE.
I--I HAVE A *FAMILY.*
I HAVE A LITTLE GIRL.

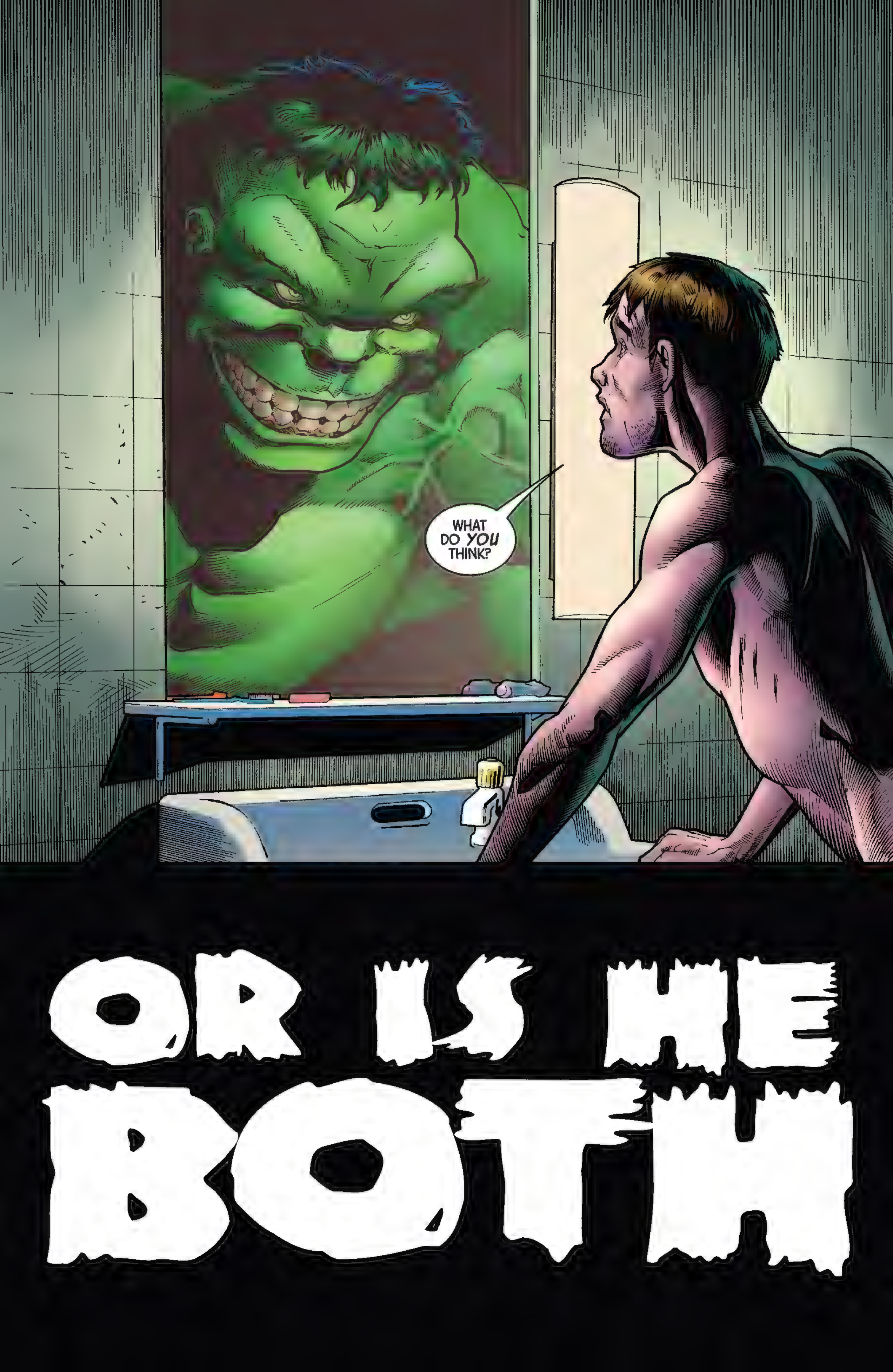

YOU DON'T SAY.
I KNOW-- I *KNOW*, I JUST--
I DIDN'T WANT THIS! I MADE A *MISTAKE!*
DIDN'T YOU EVER MAKE A MISTAKE?
PLEASE-- I--I *SWEAR*, I'M NOT--
I'M NOT A BAD GUY.
AM I?
HNH.
WHAT DO *YOU* THINK?


"THE BODY OF THE JOHN DOE IS *MISSING.*
"THE OTHER TWO CORPSES FROM THE GAS STATION ROBBERY ARE *UNDISTURBED,* AS FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE.
"I CAN'T SAY THE SAME FOR THE *COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE.*
"THE LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE *DOGS OF HELL* GANG WAS SQUATTING IN AN ABANDONED *HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.*
"WE KNEW THEY WERE INTO DRUGS AND ORGANIZED CRIME--PROTECTION, LOAN-SHARKING--BUT WE WANTED ENOUGH ON THEM TO MAKE A *MOVE.*
POLICE
"SOMEONE ELSE MOVED *FIRST.*
"THEY'RE IN *STABLE CONDITION*--CONCUSSIONS AND FRACTURES, MOSTLY--BUT *SOMETHING* PUT THE FEAR OF GOD IN THEM. THEY'RE VERY EAGER TO *TALK* TO US."
WHICH BRINGS US TO *THIS* GUY.
THOMAS EDWARD HILL.


TURNS OUT HE OWED THEM SOME *MONEY.*
WE FOUND HIM IN THE HOSPITAL PARKING LOT, IN A SHALLOW *CRATER.* LIKE A *METEOR* LANDED AND BROUGHT HIM ALONG.
COLLAPSED *LUNG,* INTERNAL *BLEEDING,* JUST ABOUT EVERY BONE IN HIS BODY *BROKEN* OR *CRUSHED.* UNRESPONSIVE. *CLINGING* TO LIFE.
HE'LL NEVER WALK AGAIN. MIGHT NEVER WAKE *UP* AGAIN.
GOD...
THERE'S MORE. THAT GAS STATION ROBBERY?
HE DID IT.
THE *MURDER WEAPON* WAS LYING NEXT TO HIM--MATCHES THE CASINGS AT THE SCENE. WE'VE GOT HIS *PRINTS,* TOO.
PLUS, A COUPLE OF THE DOGS HEARD HIM *CONFESS.*
BUT THEY DIDN'T DO *THIS...*
ON THE RECORD? THE ASSAILANT IS *UNKNOWN.*
OFF THE RECORD...
I'M ONLY *SAYING* THIS BECAUSE...PEOPLE SHOULD *KNOW. YOU* SHOULD KNOW. BUT THIS NEVER CAME FROM *ME.*
THAT *"SOMEONE"* WHO ATTACKED THE DOGS TONIGHT...
HE WAS *BIG.*
"BUILT LIKE AN ENGINE OF HELL," I QUOTE. AND...
AND HE WAS *GREEN.*
UNDERSTAND?


IT...
IT COULD BE ONE OF THE *OTHERS...*
NO.
NOT THIS.
HE'S *DEAD.*
THERE WAS AN *AUTOPSY,* A *FUNERAL... BRUCE BANNER* IS *DEAD,* GLORIA.
YES. YES, HE IS.
AND SO WAS THE *JOHN DOE* IN THE GAS STATION. WITH THAT *FAMILIAR* FACE.
HE WAS DEAD.
AND THEN THE *SUN* WENT DOWN.
SEE...I DON'T THINK THERE WAS A *COVER-UP.* I DON'T THINK IT WAS A *LIE.*
BRUCE BANNER *WAS* DEAD. BRUCE BANNER *CAN DIE.*
BUT THEN... THERE'S THAT *OTHER* GUY.
I...
I HAVE TO TALK TO MY *EDITOR.*
YEAH, YOU DO.

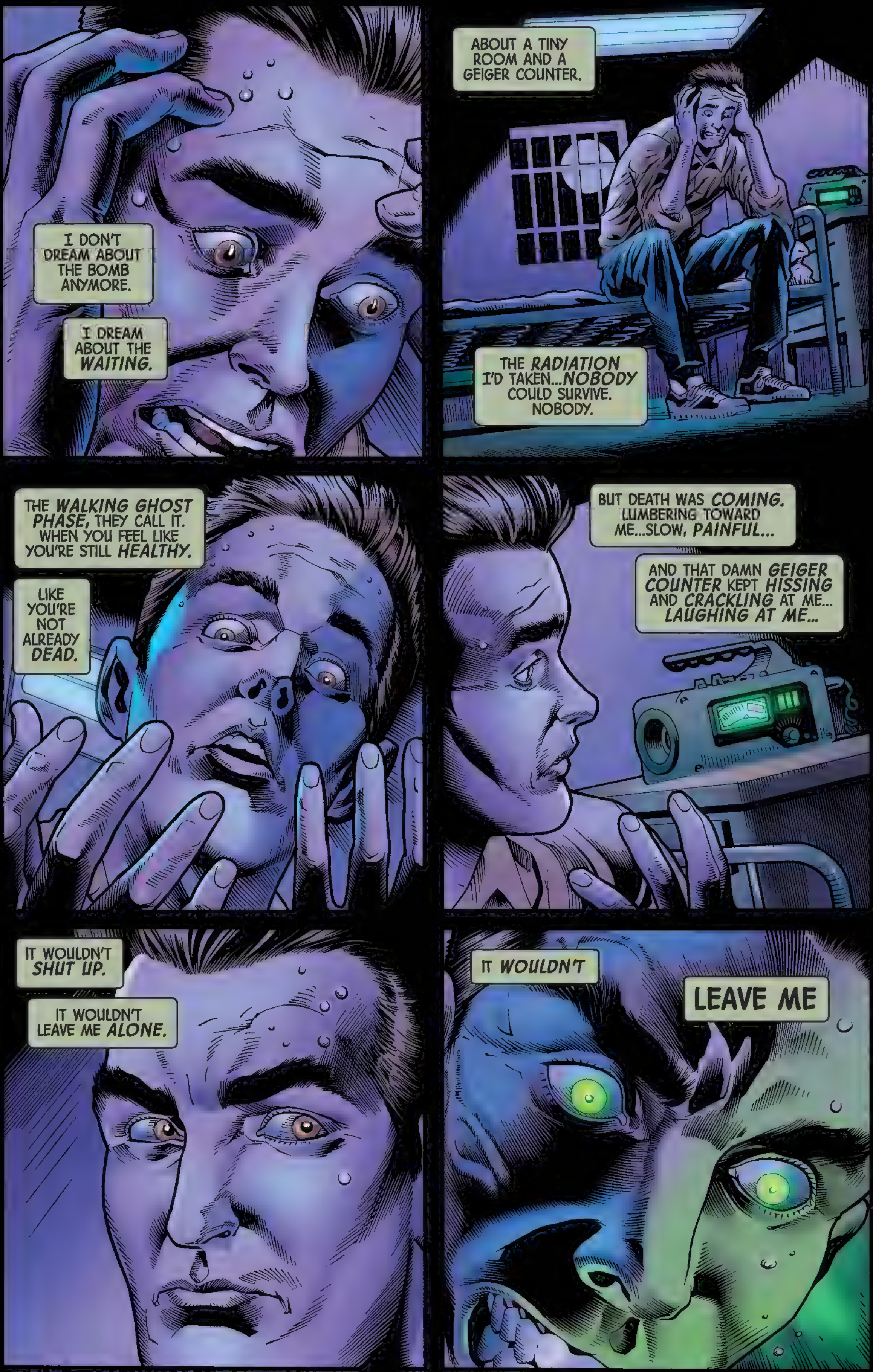

THERE ARE TWO PEOPLE IN EVERY MIRROR.
... I'M...
...I'M NOT A *BAD* PERSON.
AM I?

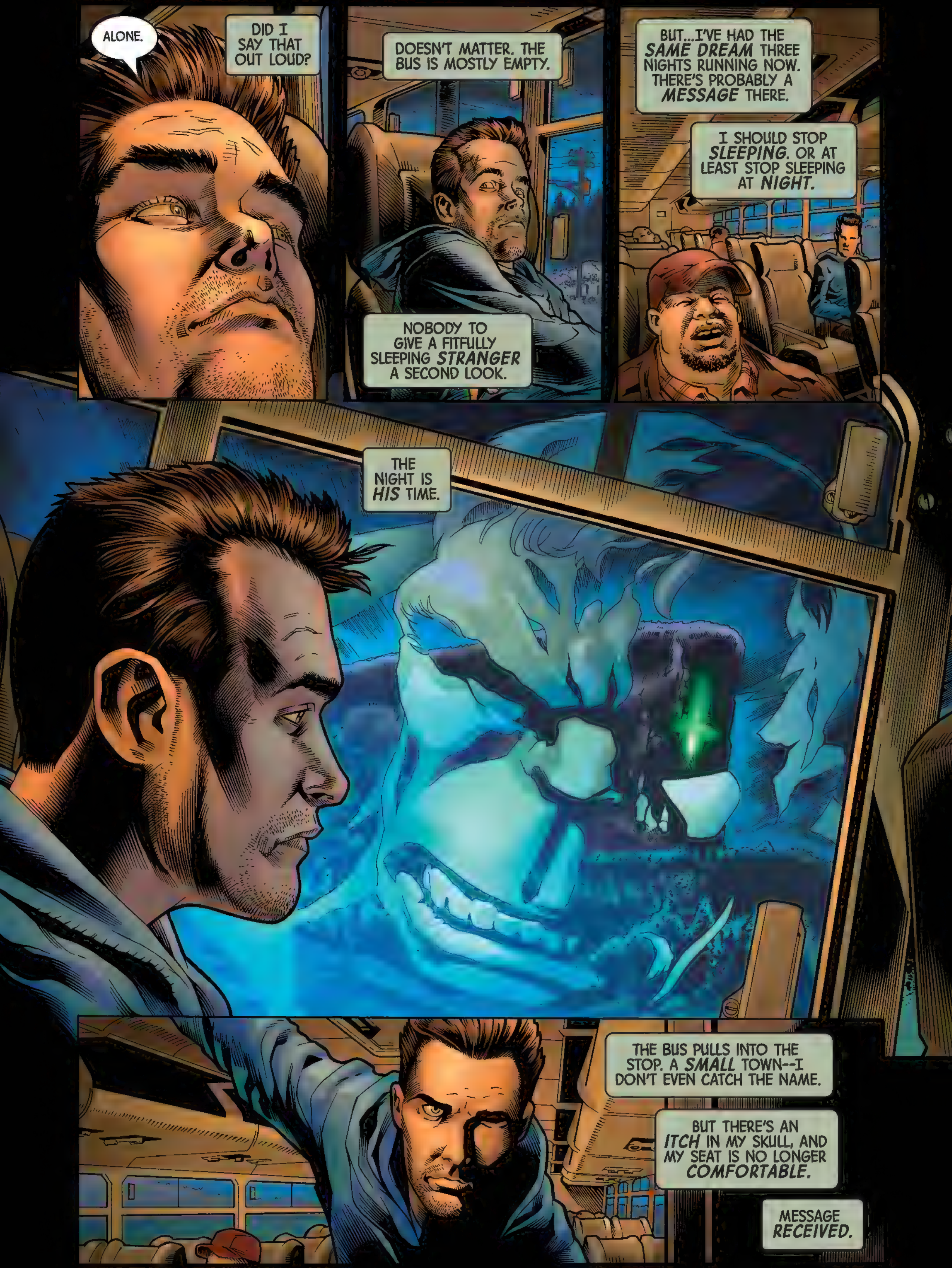

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK?
OR IS HE
BOTH

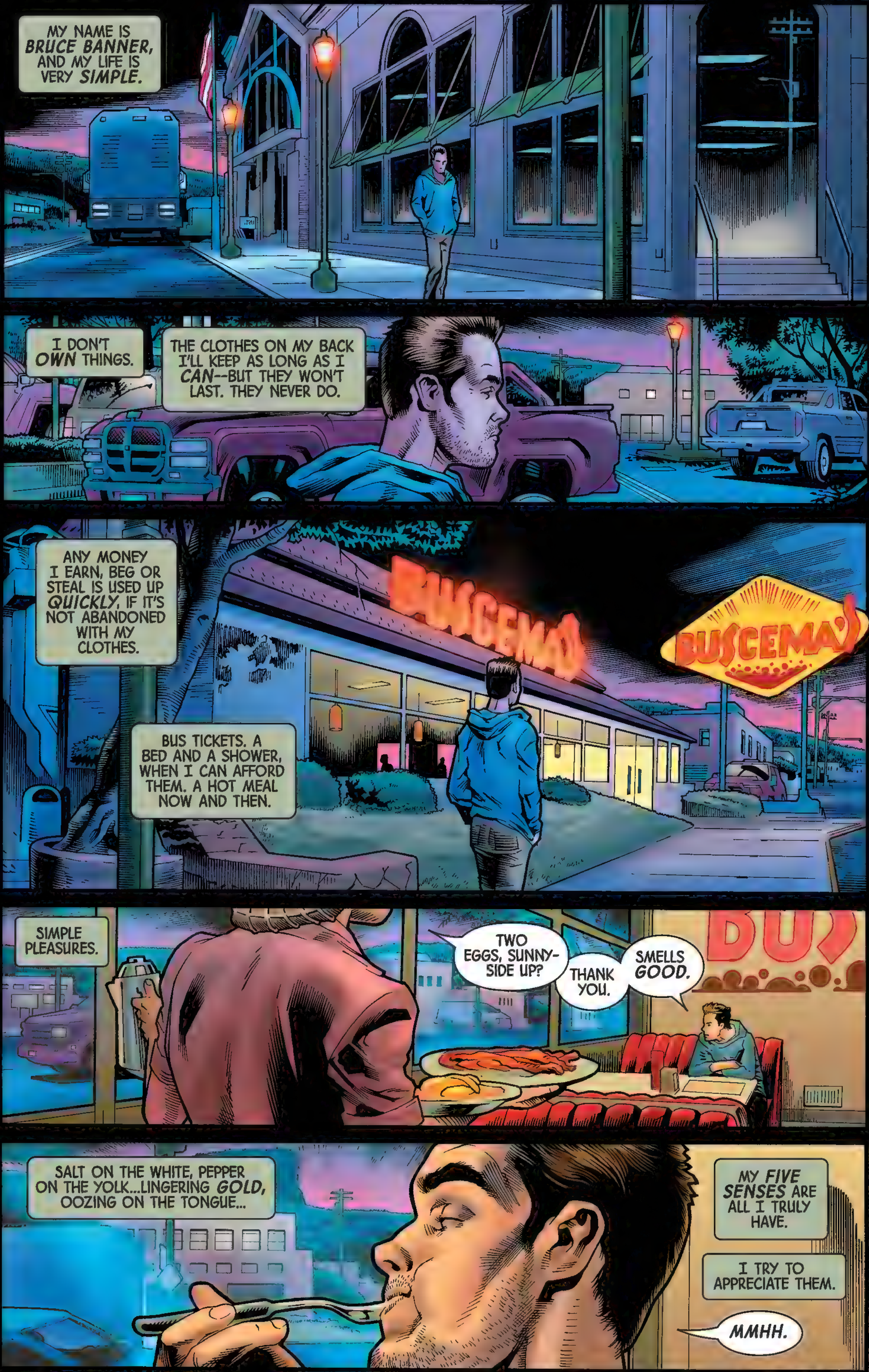
2

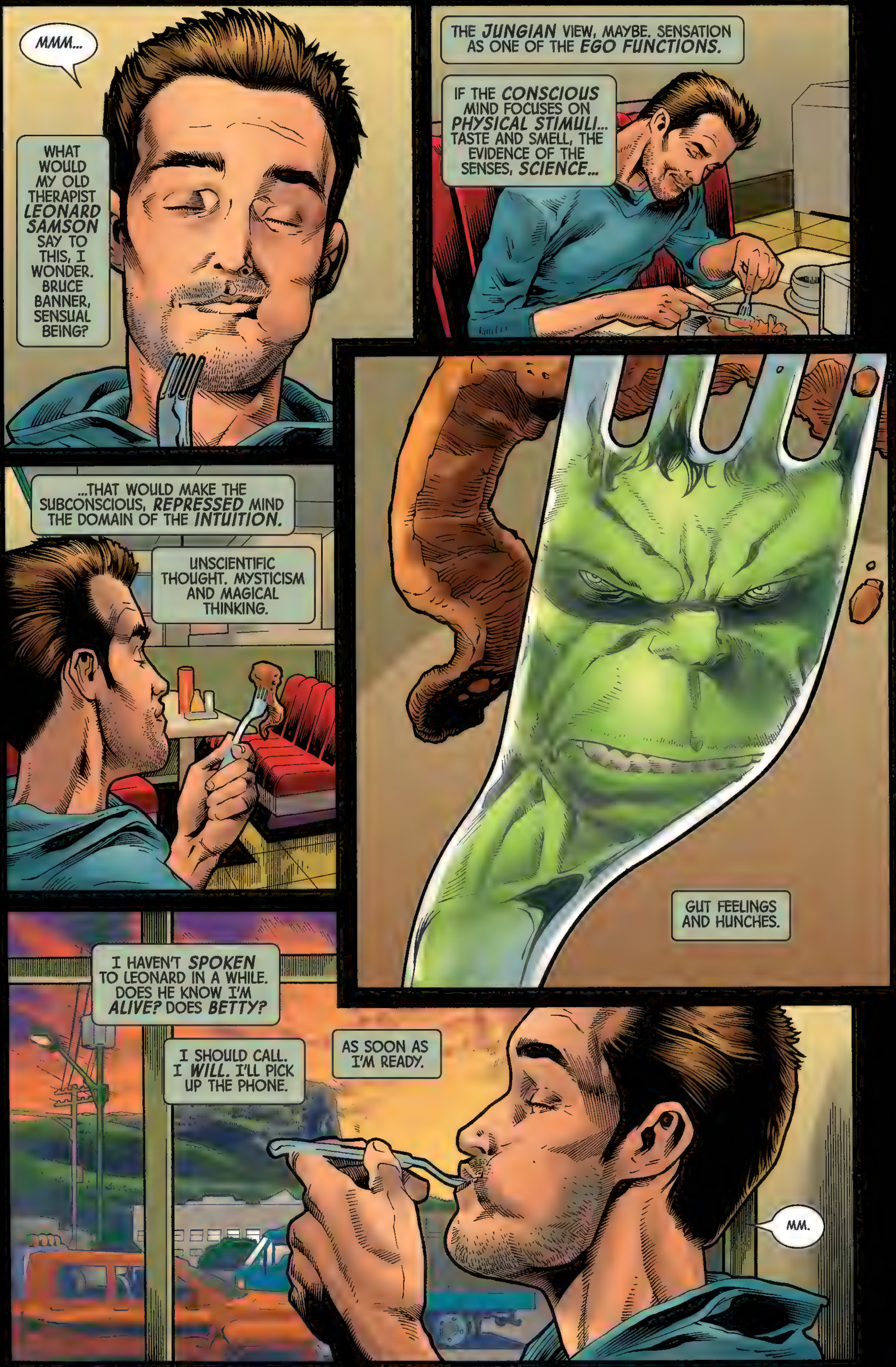
"ALL THAT A MAN HATH WILL HE GIVE FOR HIS LIFE."

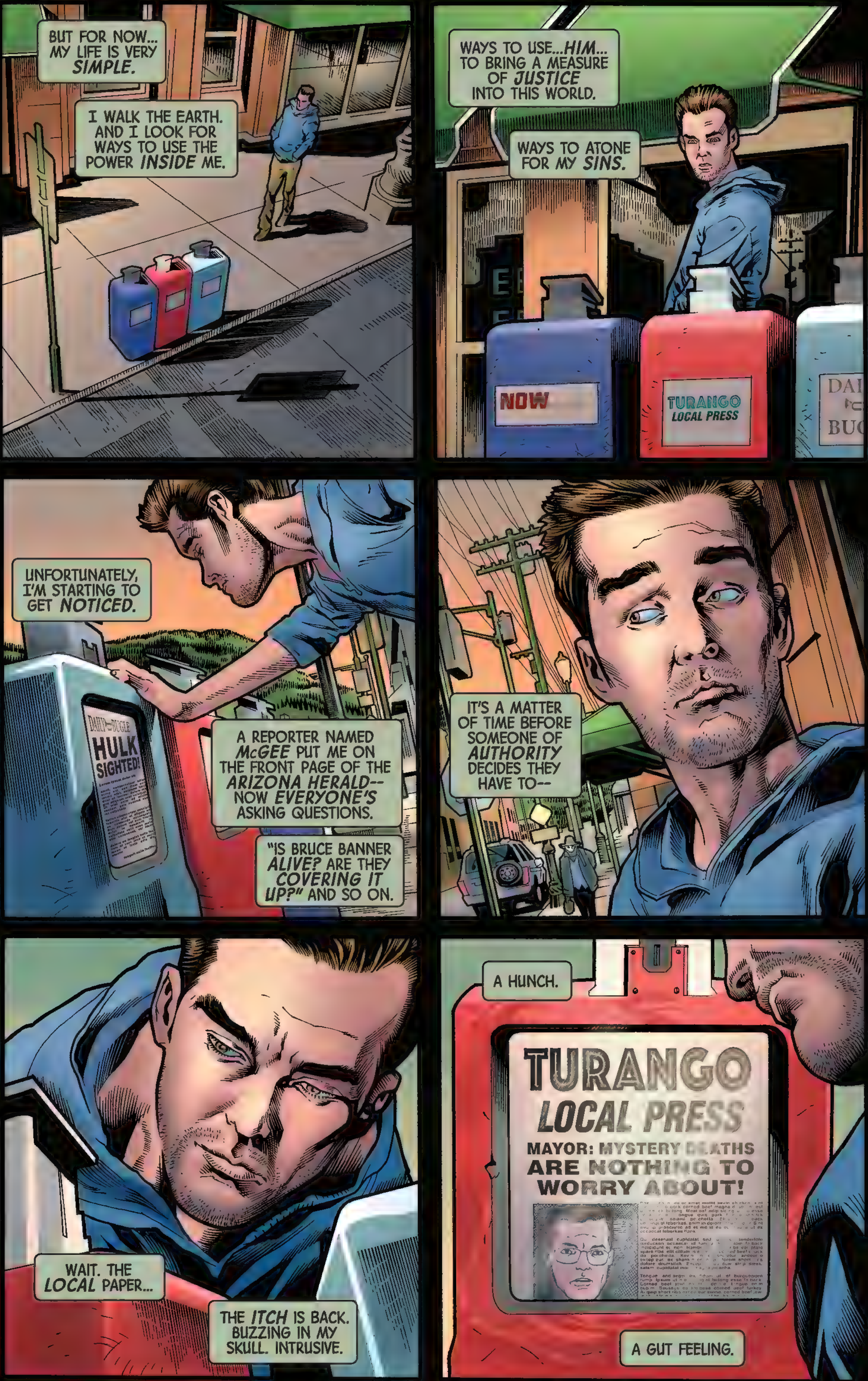
– JOB 2:4

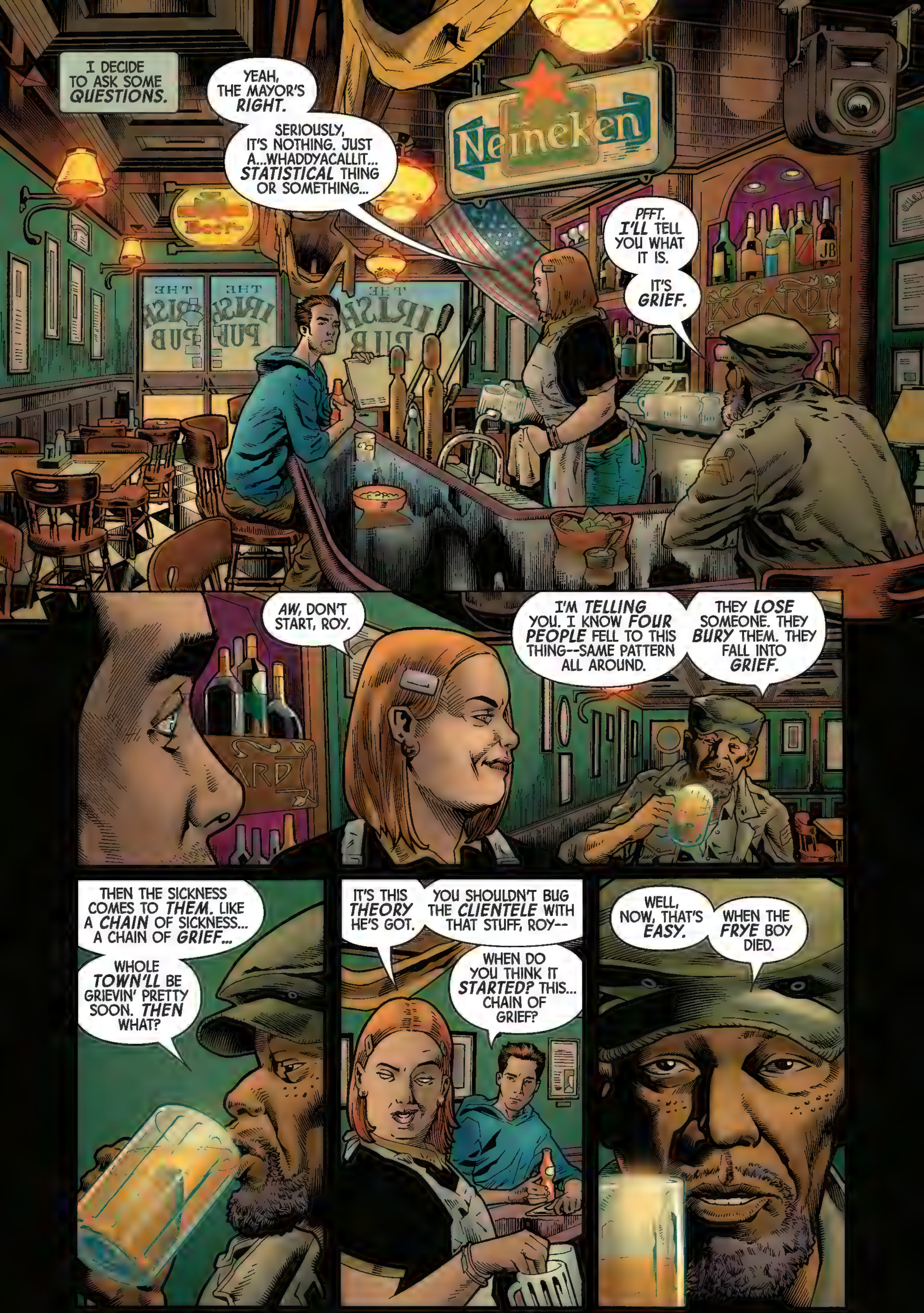

I DON'T DREAM ABOUT THE BOMB ANYMORE.
I DREAM ABOUT THE *WAITING.*
ABOUT A TINY ROOM AND A GEIGER COUNTER.
THE *RADIATION* I'D TAKEN...*NOBODY* COULD SURVIVE. NOBODY.
THE *WALKING GHOST PHASE,* THEY CALL IT. WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE STILL *HEALTHY.*
LIKE YOU'RE NOT ALREADY *DEAD.*
BUT DEATH WAS *COMING.* LUMBERING TOWARD ME...SLOW, *PAINFUL...*
AND THAT DAMN *GEIGER COUNTER* KEPT *HISSING* AND *CRACKLING* AT ME... *LAUGHING AT ME...*
IT WOULDN'T *SHUT UP.*
IT WOULDN'T LEAVE ME *ALONE.*
IT *WOULDN'T*
LEAVE ME

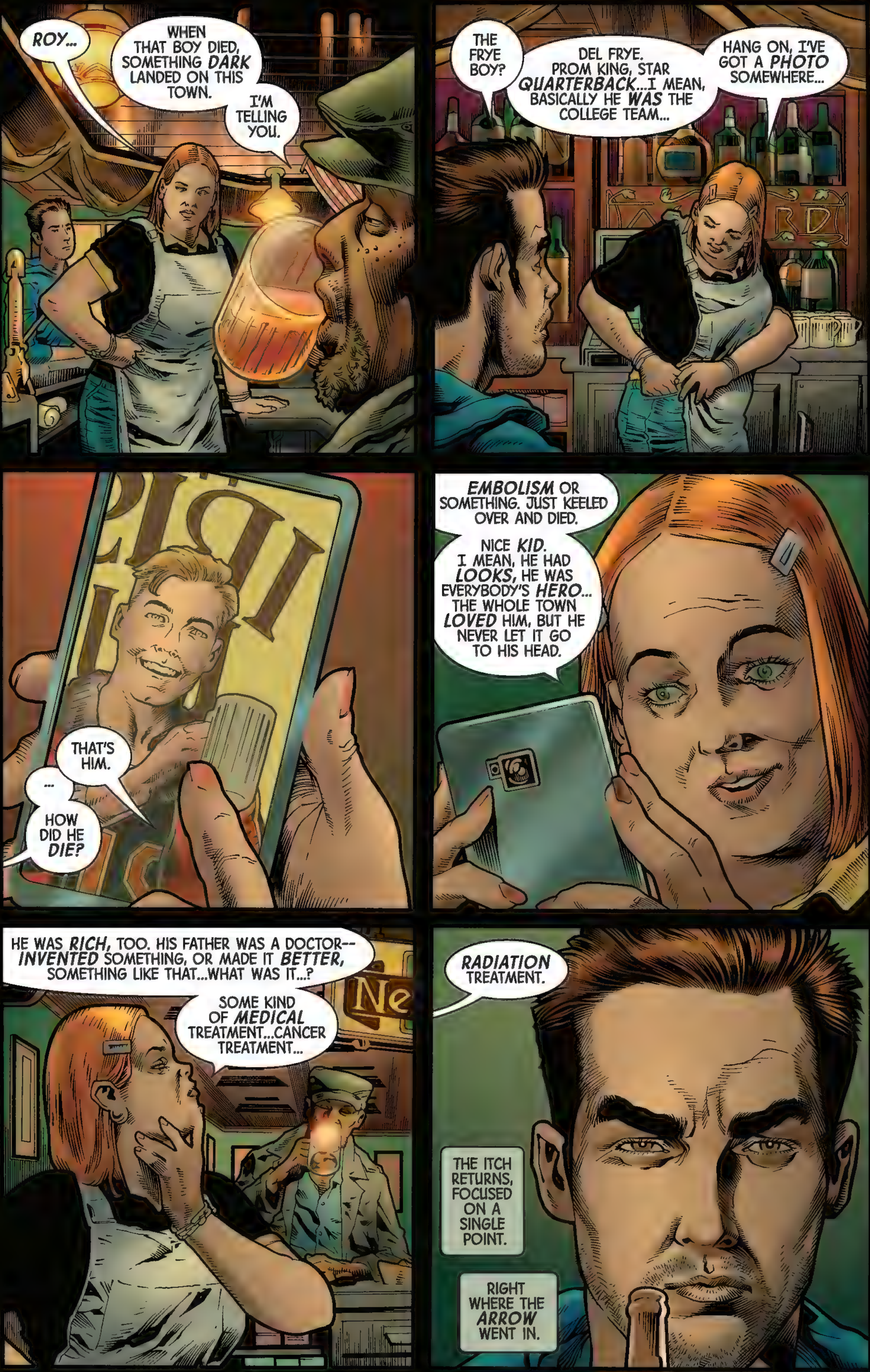

ALONE.
DID I SAY THAT OUT LOUD?
DOESN'T MATTER. THE BUS IS MOSTLY EMPTY.
NOBODY TO GIVE A FITFULLY SLEEPING *STRANGER* A SECOND LOOK.
BUT...I'VE HAD THE *SAME DREAM* THREE NIGHTS RUNNING NOW. THERE'S PROBABLY A *MESSAGE* THERE.
I SHOULD STOP *SLEEPING*. OR AT LEAST STOP SLEEPING AT *NIGHT*.
THE NIGHT IS *HIS* TIME.
THE BUS PULLS INTO THE STOP. A *SMALL* TOWN--I DON'T EVEN CATCH THE NAME.
BUT THERE'S AN *ITCH* IN MY SKULL, AND MY SEAT IS NO LONGER *COMFORTABLE*.
MESSAGE *RECEIVED*.

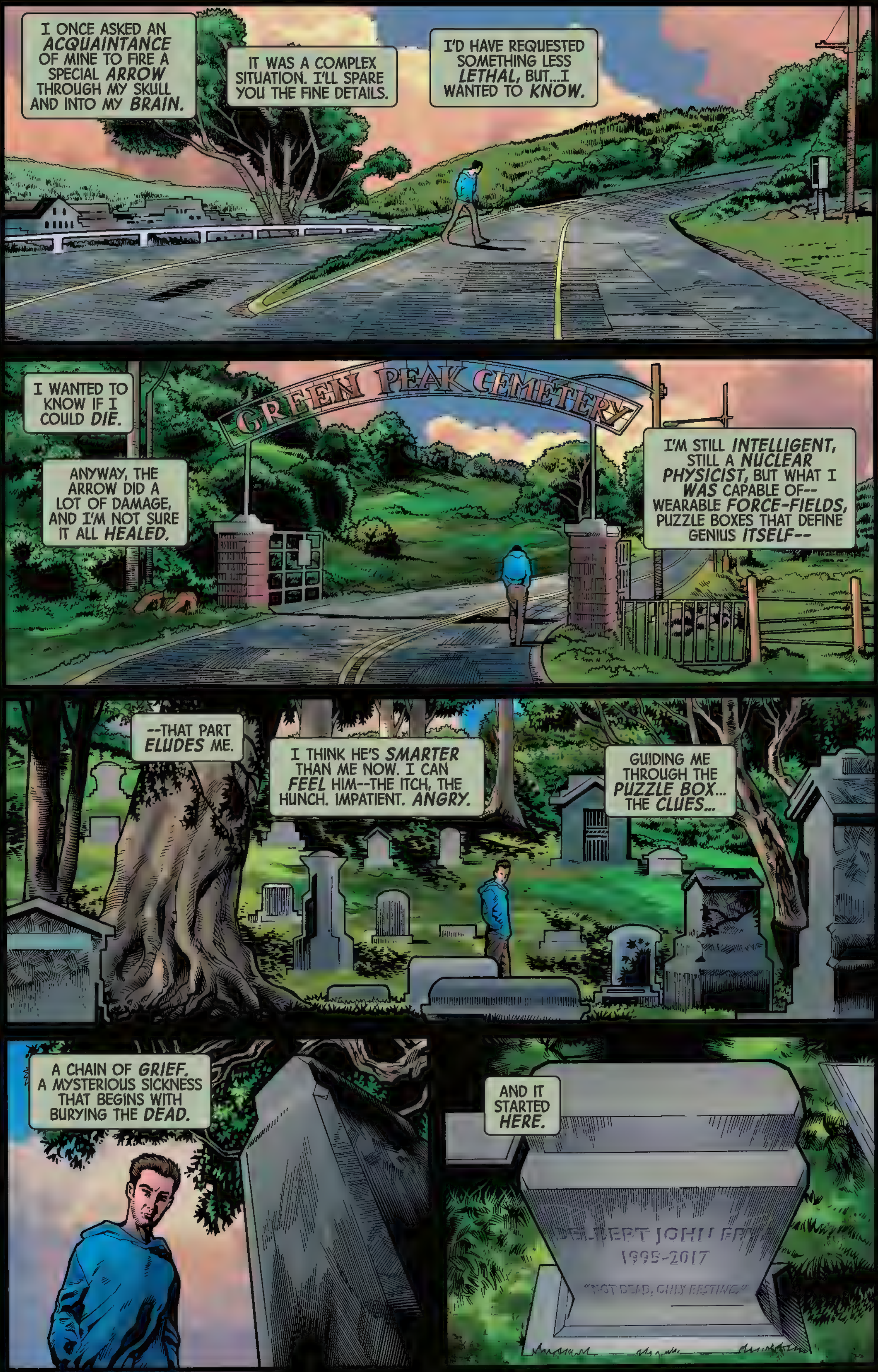

MY NAME IS *BRUCE BANNER*, AND MY LIFE IS VERY *SIMPLE*.
I DON'T *OWN* THINGS.
THE CLOTHES ON MY BACK I'LL KEEP AS LONG AS I *CAN*--BUT THEY WON'T LAST. THEY NEVER DO.
ANY MONEY I EARN, BEG OR STEAL IS USED UP *QUICKLY*, IF IT'S NOT ABANDONED WITH MY CLOTHES.
BUSCEMA'S
BUSCEMA'S
BUS TICKETS. A BED AND A SHOWER, WHEN I CAN AFFORD THEM. A HOT MEAL NOW AND THEN.
SIMPLE PLEASURES.
TWO EGGS, SUNNY-SIDE UP?
THANK YOU.
SMELLS *GOOD*.
BUS
SALT ON THE WHITE, PEPPER ON THE YOLK...LINGERING *GOLD*, OOZING ON THE TONGUE...
MY *FIVE SENSES* ARE ALL I TRULY HAVE.
I TRY TO APPRECIATE THEM.
MMHH.

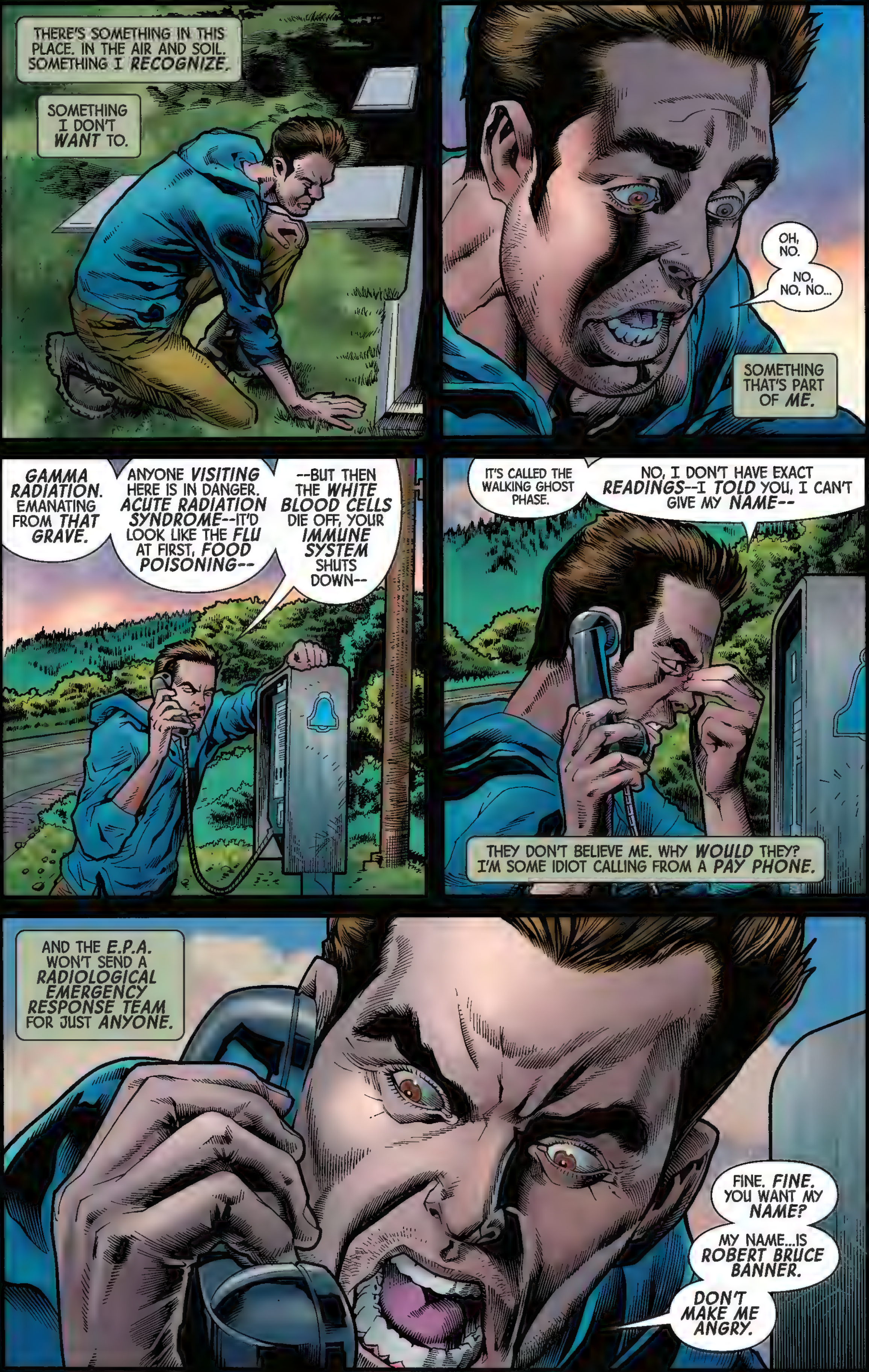

MMM...
WHAT WOULD MY OLD THERAPIST LEONARD SAMSON SAY TO THIS, I WONDER. BRUCE BANNER, SENSUAL BEING?
THE JUNGIAN VIEW, MAYBE. SENSATION AS ONE OF THE EGO FUNCTIONS.
IF THE CONSCIOUS MIND FOCUSES ON PHYSICAL STIMULI... TASTE AND SMELL, THE EVIDENCE OF THE SENSES, SCIENCE...
...THAT WOULD MAKE THE SUBCONSCIOUS, REPRESSED MIND THE DOMAIN OF THE INTUITION.
UNSCIENTIFIC THOUGHT. MYSTICISM AND MAGICAL THINKING.
GUT FEELINGS AND HUNCHES.
I HAVEN'T SPOKEN TO LEONARD IN A WHILE. DOES HE KNOW I'M ALIVE? DOES BETTY?
I SHOULD CALL. I WILL. I'LL PICK UP THE PHONE.
AS SOON AS I'M READY.
MM.

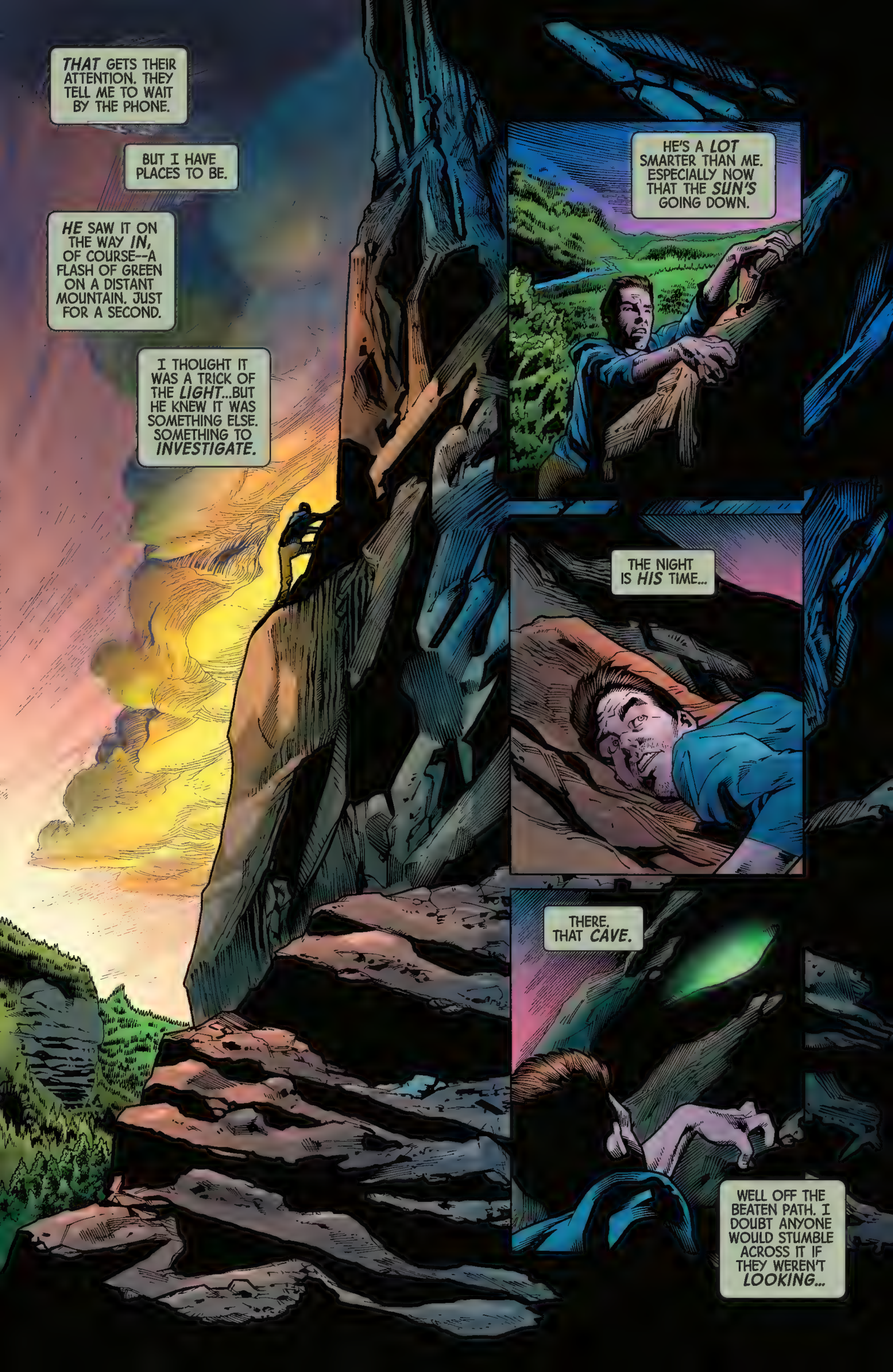

BUT FOR NOW... MY LIFE IS VERY *SIMPLE.*
I WALK THE EARTH. AND I LOOK FOR WAYS TO USE THE POWER *INSIDE* ME.
WAYS TO USE...*HIM*... TO BRING A MEASURE OF *JUSTICE* INTO THIS WORLD.
WAYS TO ATONE FOR MY *SINS.*
NOW
TURANGO LOCAL PRESS
DAI BUG
UNFORTUNATELY, I'M STARTING TO GET *NOTICED.*
DAILY BUGLE
HULK SIGHTED!
A REPORTER NAMED *McGEE* PUT ME ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE *ARIZONA HERALD--* NOW *EVERYONE'S* ASKING QUESTIONS.
"IS BRUCE BANNER *ALIVE?* ARE THEY *COVERING IT UP?"* AND SO ON.
IT'S A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOMEONE OF *AUTHORITY* DECIDES THEY HAVE TO--
WAIT. THE *LOCAL* PAPER...
THE *ITCH* IS BACK. BUZZING IN MY SKULL. INTRUSIVE.
A HUNCH.
TURANGO LOCAL PRESS
MAYOR: MYSTERY DEATHS ARE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT!
A GUT FEELING.

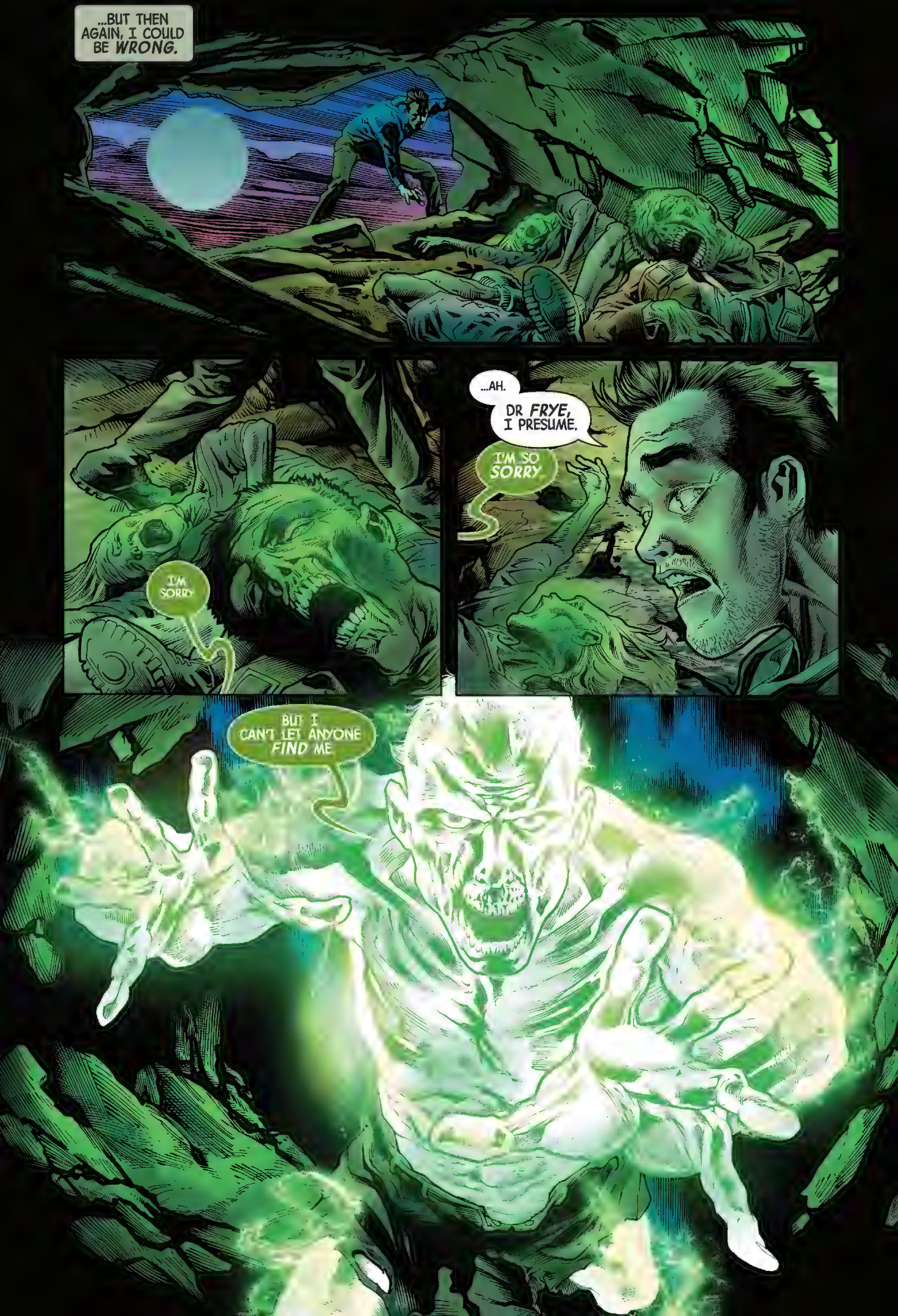

I DECIDE TO ASK SOME *QUESTIONS.*
YEAH, THE MAYOR'S *RIGHT.*
SERIOUSLY, IT'S NOTHING. JUST A...WHADDYACALLIT... *STATISTICAL* THING OR SOMETHING...
Heineken
THE IRISH PUB
PFFT. *I'LL* TELL YOU WHAT IT IS.
IT'S *GRIEF.*
AW, DON'T START, ROY.
I'M *TELLING* YOU. I KNOW *FOUR PEOPLE* FELL TO THIS THING--SAME PATTERN ALL AROUND.
THEY *LOSE* SOMEONE. THEY *BURY* THEM. THEY FALL INTO *GRIEF.*
THEN THE SICKNESS COMES TO *THEM.* LIKE A *CHAIN* OF SICKNESS... A CHAIN OF *GRIEF...*
WHOLE *TOWN'LL* BE GRIEVIN' PRETTY SOON. *THEN* WHAT?
IT'S THIS *THEORY* HE'S GOT.
YOU SHOULDN'T BUG THE *CLIENTELE* WITH THAT STUFF, ROY--
WHEN DO YOU THINK IT *STARTED?* THIS... CHAIN OF GRIEF?
WELL, NOW, THAT'S *EASY.*
WHEN THE *FRYE* BOY DIED.

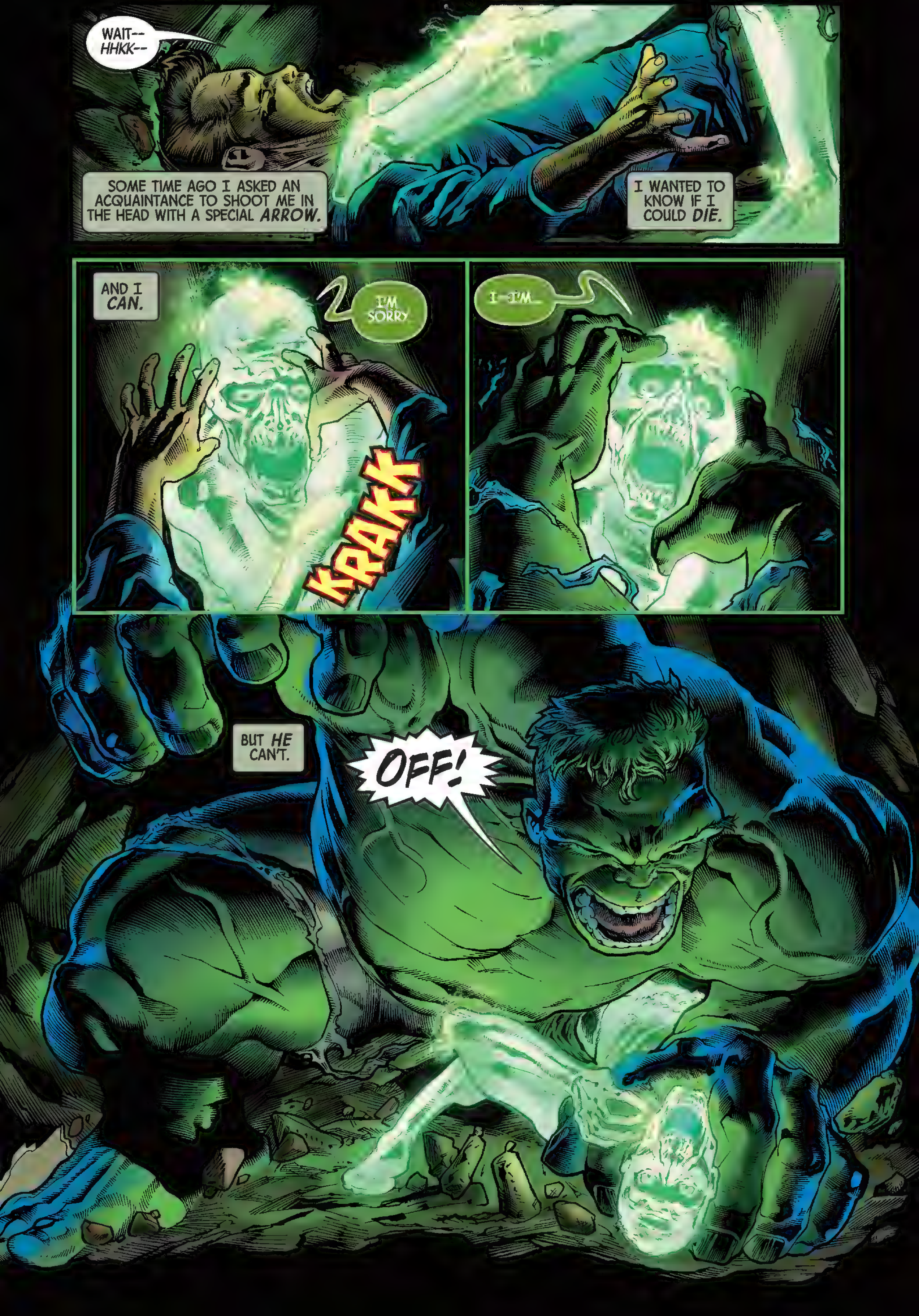

ROY...
WHEN THAT BOY DIED, SOMETHING DARK LANDED ON THIS TOWN.
I'M TELLING YOU.
THE FRYE BOY?
DEL FRYE. PROM KING, STAR QUARTERBACK...I MEAN, BASICALLY HE WAS THE COLLEGE TEAM...
HANG ON, I'VE GOT A PHOTO SOMEWHERE...
THAT'S HIM.
...
HOW DID HE DIE?
EMBOLISM OR SOMETHING. JUST KEELED OVER AND DIED.
NICE KID. I MEAN, HE HAD LOOKS, HE WAS EVERYBODY'S HERO... THE WHOLE TOWN LOVED HIM, BUT HE NEVER LET IT GO TO HIS HEAD.
HE WAS RICH, TOO. HIS FATHER WAS A DOCTOR-- INVENTED SOMETHING, OR MADE IT BETTER, SOMETHING LIKE THAT...WHAT WAS IT...?
SOME KIND OF MEDICAL TREATMENT...CANCER TREATMENT...
Ne
RADIATION TREATMENT.
THE ITCH RETURNS, FOCUSED ON A SINGLE POINT.
RIGHT WHERE THE ARROW WENT IN.

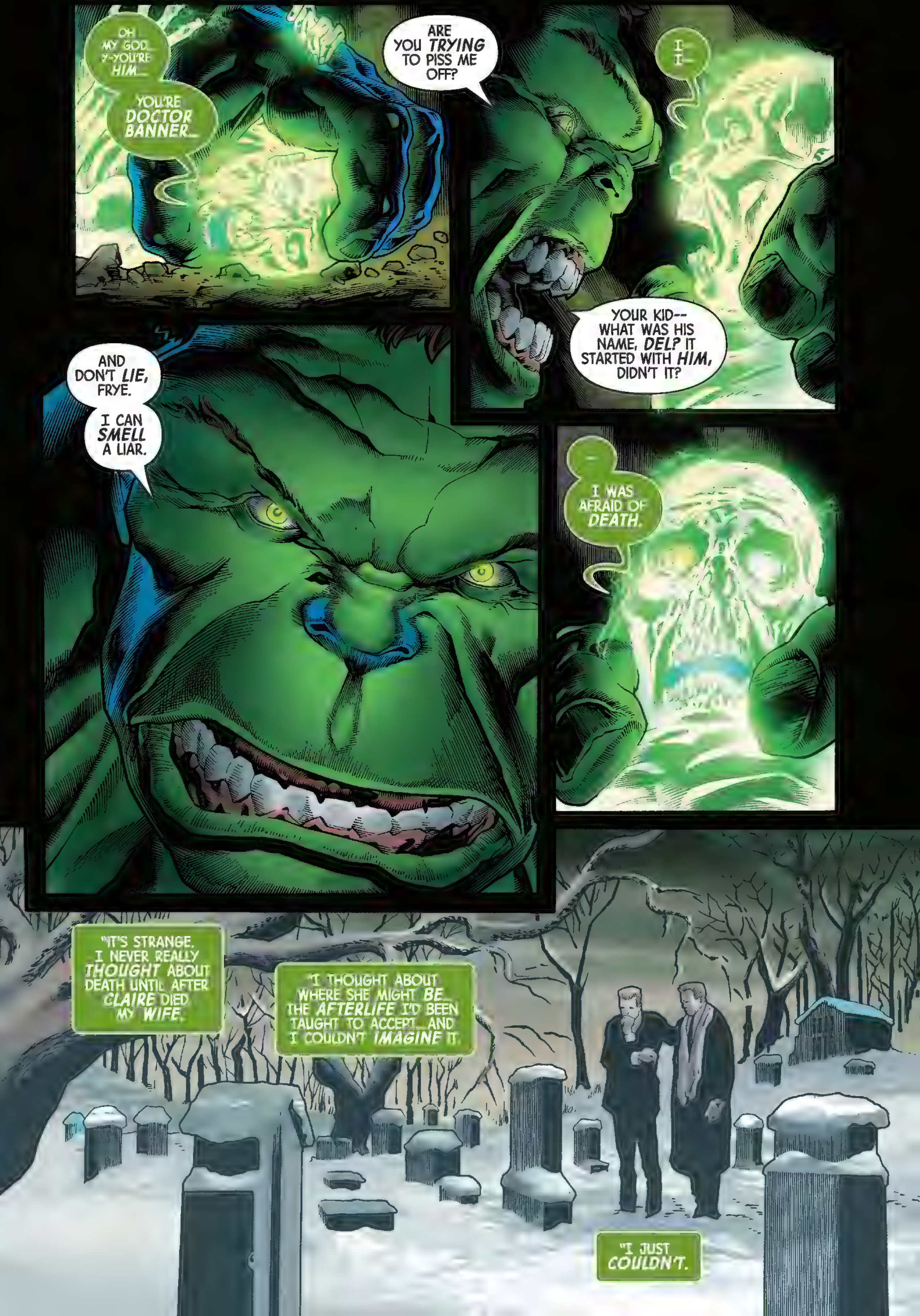

I ONCE ASKED AN *ACQUAINTANCE* OF MINE TO FIRE A SPECIAL *ARROW* THROUGH *MY* SKULL AND INTO MY *BRAIN.*
IT WAS A COMPLEX SITUATION. I'LL SPARE YOU THE FINE DETAILS.
I'D HAVE REQUESTED SOMETHING LESS *LETHAL*, BUT...I WANTED TO *KNOW.*
GREEN PEAK CEMETERY
I WANTED TO KNOW IF I COULD *DIE.*
ANYWAY, THE ARROW DID A LOT OF DAMAGE, AND I'M NOT SURE IT ALL *HEALED.*
I'M STILL *INTELLIGENT*, STILL A *NUCLEAR PHYSICIST*, BUT WHAT I *WAS* CAPABLE OF--WEARABLE *FORCE-FIELDS*, PUZZLE BOXES THAT DEFINE GENIUS *ITSELF*--
--THAT PART *ELUDES* ME.
I THINK HE'S *SMARTER* THAN ME NOW. I CAN *FEEL* HIM--THE ITCH, THE HUNCH. IMPATIENT. *ANGRY.*
GUIDING ME THROUGH THE *PUZZLE BOX*... THE *CLUES*...
A CHAIN OF *GRIEF.* A MYSTERIOUS SICKNESS THAT BEGINS WITH BURYING THE *DEAD.*
AND IT STARTED *HERE.*
DELBERT JOHN FR
1995-2017
"NOT DEAD, ONLY RESTING."


THERE'S SOMETHING IN THIS PLACE. IN THE AIR AND SOIL. SOMETHING I *RECOGNIZE.*
SOMETHING I DON'T *WANT* TO.
OH, NO.
NO, NO, NO...
SOMETHING THAT'S PART OF *ME.*
GAMMA RADIATION. EMANATING FROM *THAT GRAVE.*
ANYONE *VISITING* HERE IS IN DANGER. *ACUTE RADIATION SYNDROME*--IT'D LOOK LIKE THE *FLU* AT FIRST, *FOOD POISONING*--
--BUT THEN THE *WHITE BLOOD CELLS* DIE OFF, YOUR *IMMUNE SYSTEM* SHUTS DOWN--
IT'S CALLED THE WALKING GHOST PHASE.
NO, I DON'T HAVE EXACT *READINGS*--I *TOLD* YOU, I CAN'T GIVE MY *NAME*--
THEY DON'T BELIEVE ME. WHY *WOULD* THEY? I'M SOME IDIOT CALLING FROM A *PAY PHONE.*
AND THE *E.P.A.* WON'T SEND A *RADIOLOGICAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM* FOR JUST *ANYONE.*
FINE. *FINE.* YOU WANT MY *NAME?*
MY NAME...IS *ROBERT BRUCE BANNER.*
DON'T MAKE ME ANGRY.


THAT GETS THEIR ATTENTION. THEY TELL ME TO WAIT BY THE PHONE.
BUT I HAVE PLACES TO BE.
HE SAW IT ON THE WAY *IN*, OF COURSE--A FLASH OF GREEN ON A DISTANT MOUNTAIN. JUST FOR A SECOND.
I THOUGHT IT WAS A TRICK OF THE *LIGHT*...BUT HE KNEW IT WAS SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING TO *INVESTIGATE.*
HE'S A *LOT* SMARTER THAN ME. ESPECIALLY NOW THAT THE *SUN'S* GOING DOWN.
THE NIGHT IS *HIS* TIME...
THERE. THAT *CAVE.*
WELL OFF THE BEATEN PATH. I DOUBT ANYONE WOULD STUMBLE ACROSS IT IF THEY WEREN'T *LOOKING*...


...BUT THEN AGAIN, I COULD BE *WRONG.*
I'M SORRY
...AH.
DR *FRYE,* I PRESUME.
I'M SO *SORRY.*
BUT I CAN'T LET ANYONE *FIND* ME


WAIT--
HHKK--
SOME TIME AGO I ASKED AN ACQUAINTANCE TO SHOOT ME IN THE HEAD WITH A SPECIAL *ARROW.*
I WANTED TO KNOW IF I COULD *DIE.*
AND I *CAN.*
I'M SORRY.
KRAKK
I--I'M...
BUT *HE* CAN'T.
OFF!

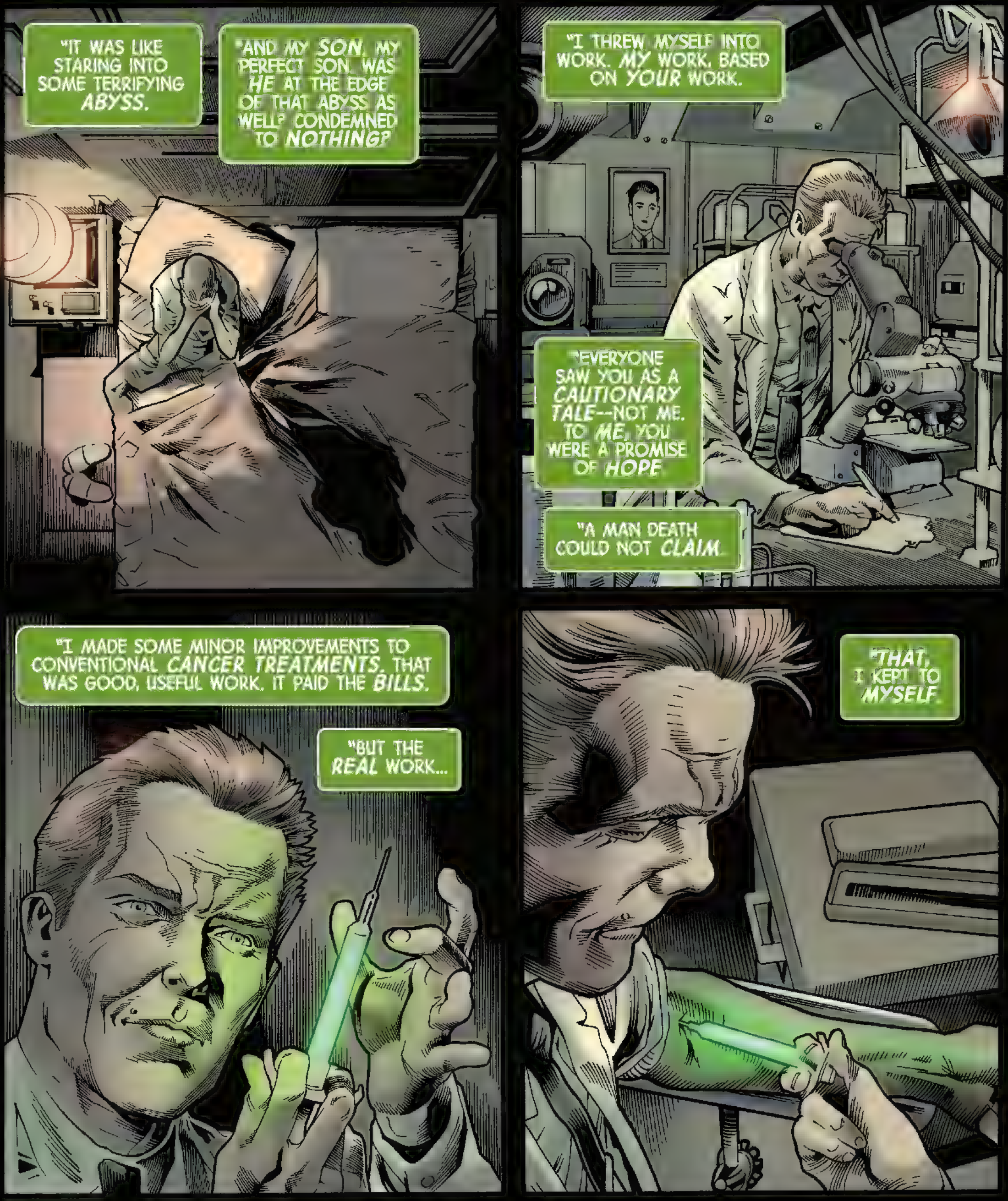

OH MY GOD... Y-YOU'RE *HIM*...
YOU'RE *DOCTOR BANNER*...
ARE YOU *TRYING* TO PISS ME OFF?
I-- I--
YOUR KID-- WHAT WAS HIS NAME, *DEL?* IT STARTED WITH *HIM*, DIDN'T IT?
AND DON'T *LIE*, FRYE.
I CAN *SMELL* A LIAR.
—
I WAS AFRAID OF *DEATH*.
"IT'S STRANGE. I NEVER REALLY *THOUGHT* ABOUT DEATH UNTIL AFTER *CLAIRE* DIED. MY *WIFE*.
"I THOUGHT ABOUT WHERE SHE MIGHT *BE*... THE *AFTERLIFE* I'D BEEN TAUGHT TO ACCEPT... AND I COULDN'T *IMAGINE* IT.
"I JUST *COULDN'T*.

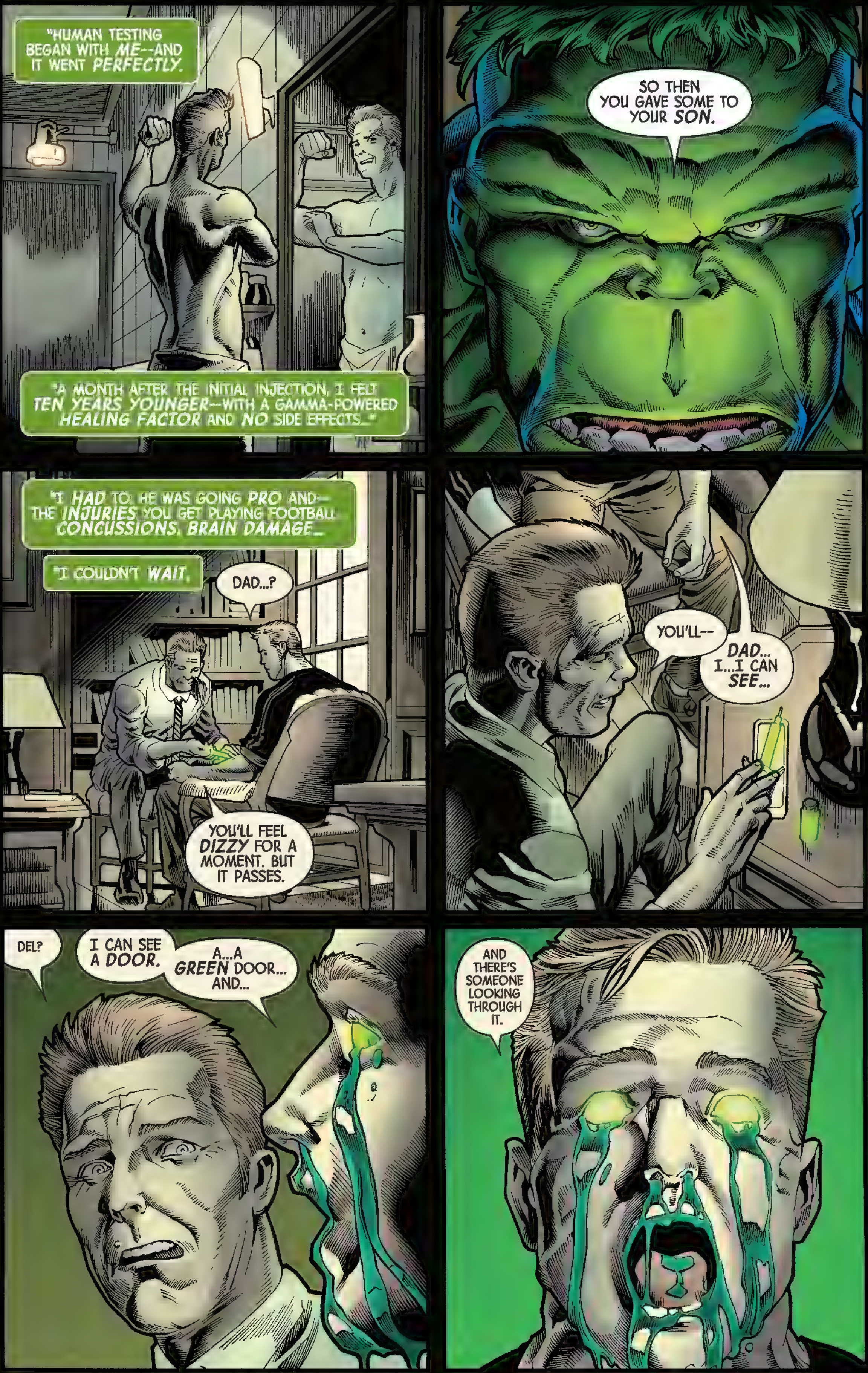
"AND I BEGAN TO THINK ABOUT WHAT DEATH REALLY *WAS*.

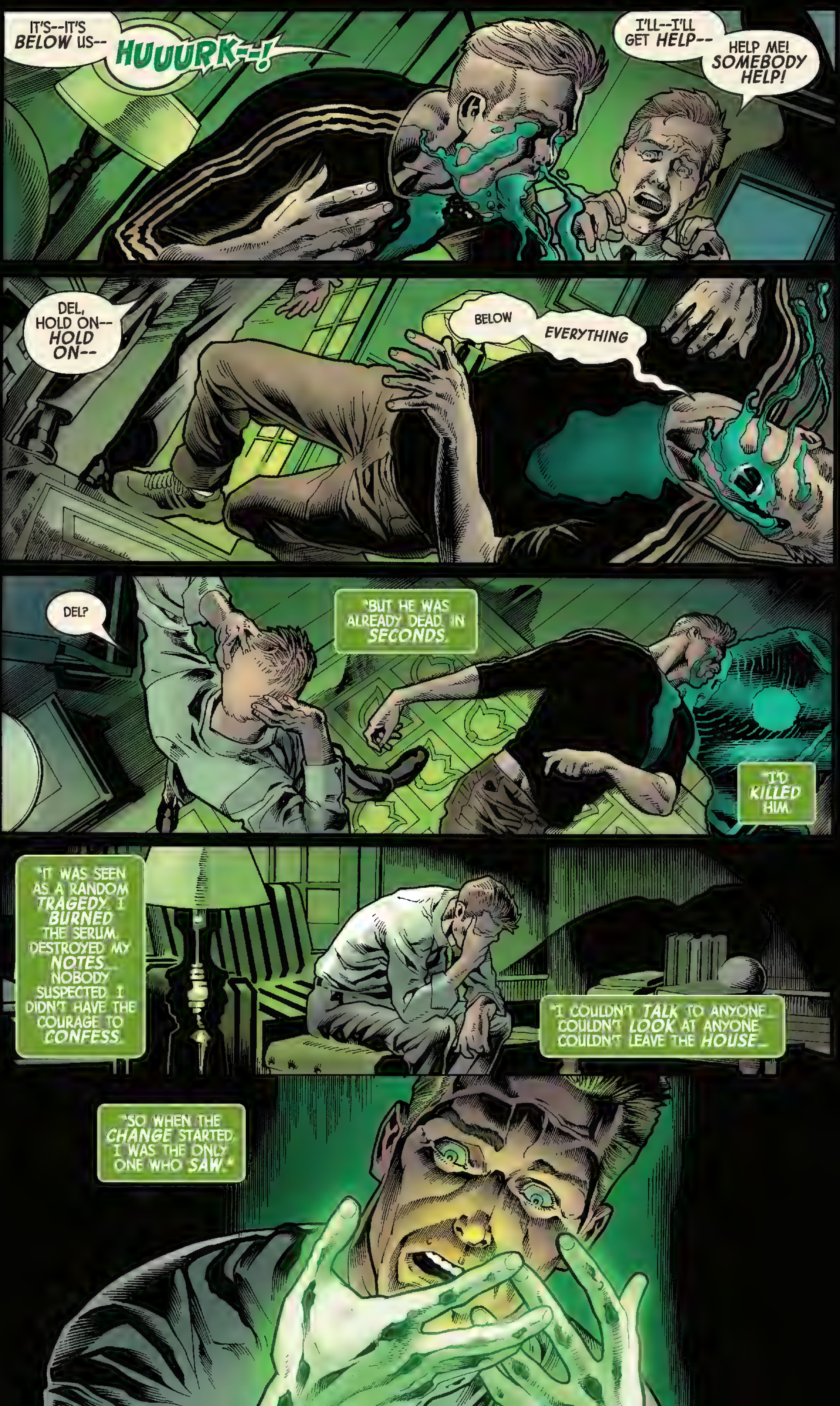
"AN UNIMAGINABLE *ABSENCE*. A TOTAL CESSATION OF BEING.

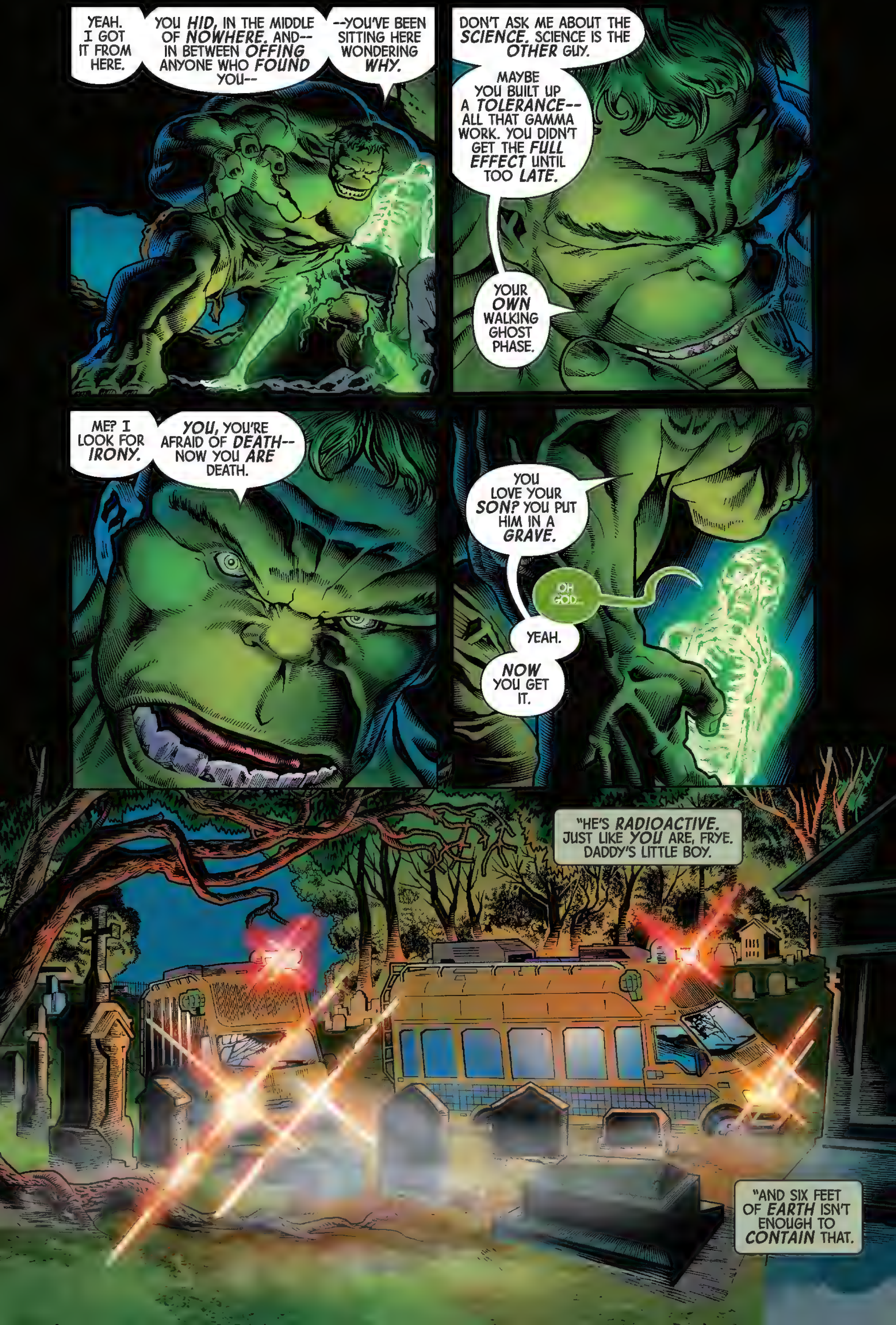
"ALL THE JOYS OF *TOUCH* AND *TASTE* AND *SMELL*, OF *THOUGHT*, EVEN THE *MEMORY* OF THOUGHT--*GONE*.

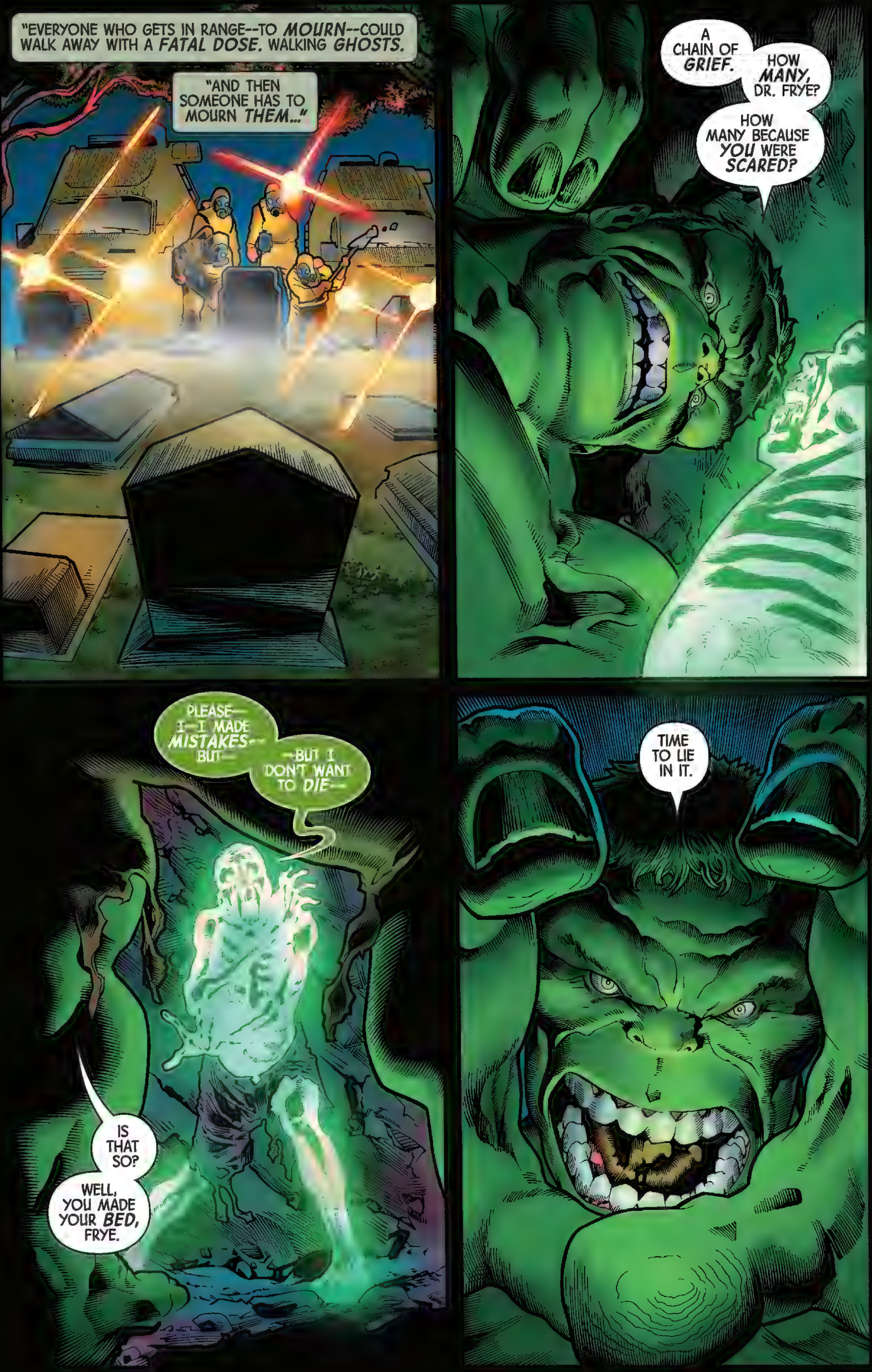
"UTTERLY.

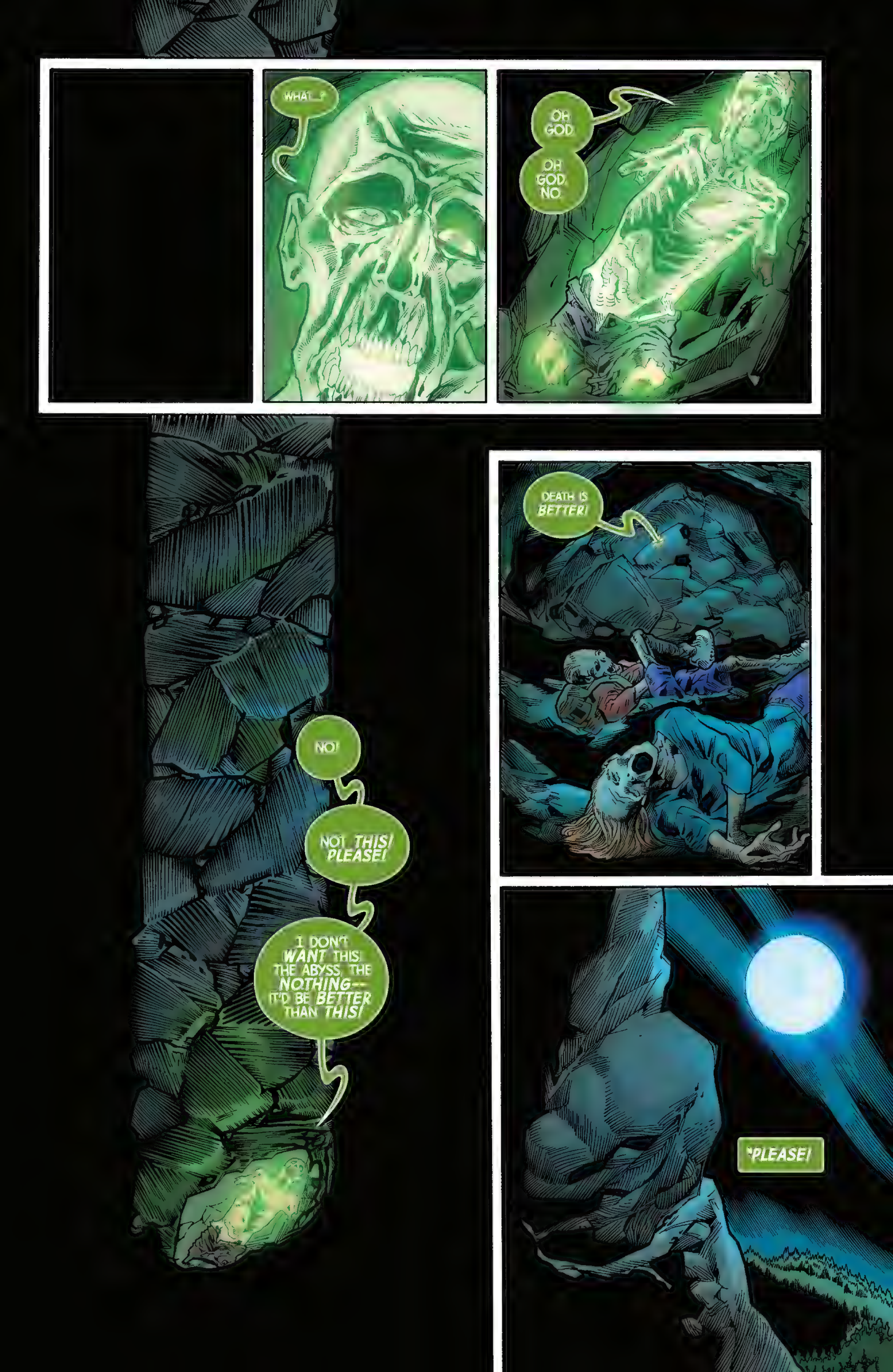

"IT WAS LIKE STARING INTO SOME TERRIFYING *ABYSS*.
"AND MY *SON*, MY PERFECT SON. WAS *HE* AT THE EDGE OF THAT ABYSS AS WELL? CONDEMNED TO *NOTHING*?
"I THREW MYSELF INTO WORK. *MY* WORK, BASED ON *YOUR* WORK.
"EVERYONE SAW YOU AS A *CAUTIONARY TALE*--NOT ME. TO *ME*, YOU WERE A PROMISE OF *HOPE*.
"A MAN DEATH COULD NOT *CLAIM*.
"I MADE SOME MINOR IMPROVEMENTS TO CONVENTIONAL *CANCER TREATMENTS*. THAT WAS GOOD, USEFUL WORK. IT PAID THE *BILLS*.
"BUT THE *REAL* WORK...
"*THAT*, I KEPT TO *MYSELF*.

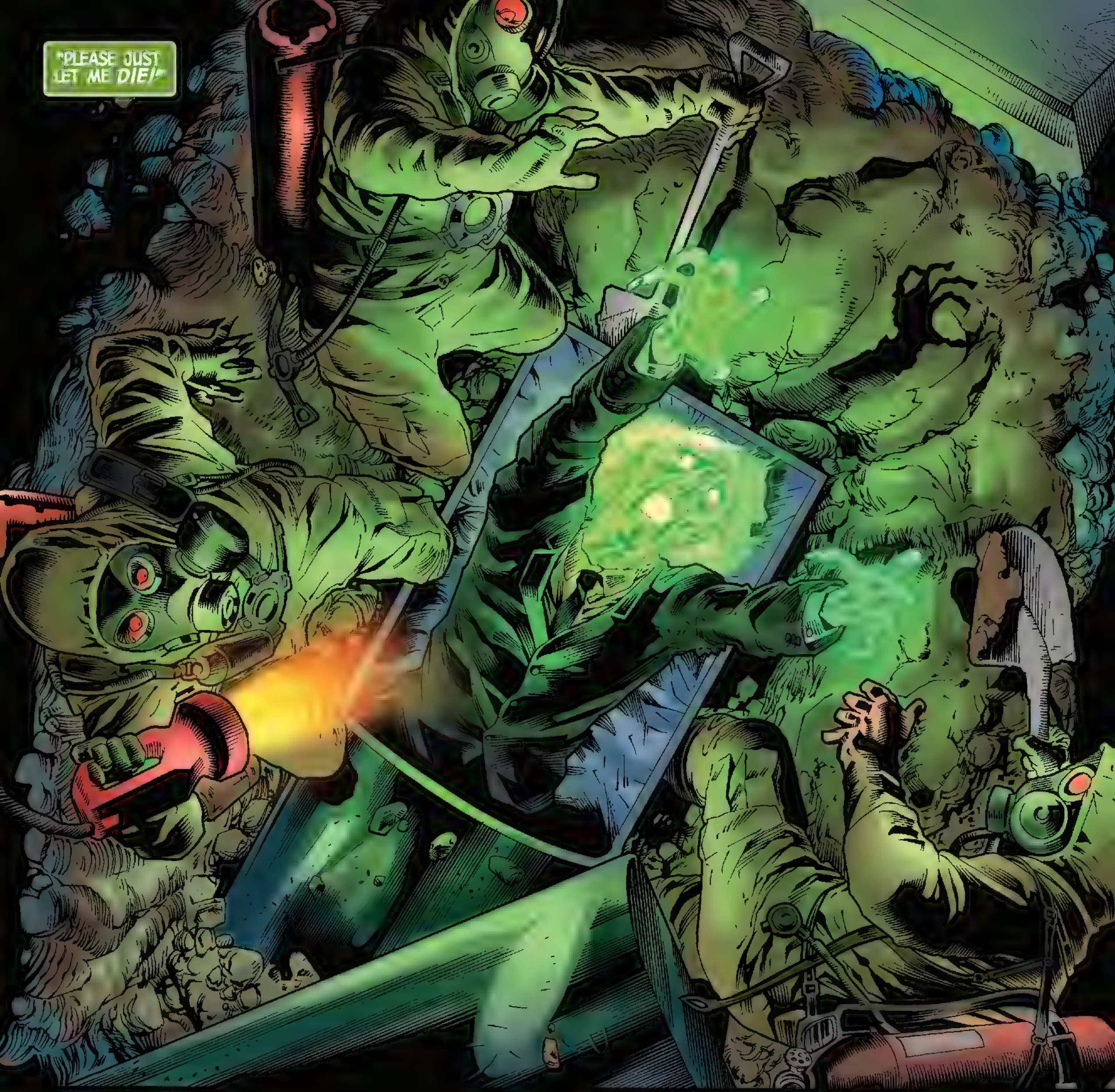

"HUMAN TESTING BEGAN WITH *ME*--AND IT WENT *PERFECTLY*.
"A MONTH AFTER THE INITIAL INJECTION, I FELT *TEN YEARS YOUNGER*--WITH A GAMMA-POWERED *HEALING FACTOR* AND *NO* SIDE EFFECTS..."
SO THEN YOU GAVE SOME TO YOUR *SON*.
"I *HAD* TO. HE WAS GOING *PRO* AND-- THE *INJURIES* YOU GET PLAYING FOOTBALL. *CONCUSSIONS. BRAIN DAMAGE*...
"I COULDN'T *WAIT*.
DAD...?
YOU'LL FEEL *DIZZY* FOR A MOMENT. BUT IT PASSES.
YOU'LL--
DAD... I...I CAN *SEE*...
DEL?
I CAN SEE A *DOOR*.
A...A *GREEN* DOOR... AND...
AND THERE'S SOMEONE LOOKING THROUGH IT.


IT'S--IT'S *BELOW* US--
HUUURK--!
I'LL--I'LL GET *HELP*--
HELP ME! *SOMEBODY HELP!*
DEL, HOLD ON-- *HOLD ON*--
BELOW
EVERYTHING
DEL?
"BUT HE WAS ALREADY DEAD IN *SECONDS*.
"I'D *KILLED* HIM.
"IT WAS SEEN AS A RANDOM *TRAGEDY*. I *BURNED* THE SERUM, DESTROYED MY *NOTES*... NOBODY SUSPECTED. I DIDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO *CONFESS*.
"I COULDN'T *TALK* TO ANYONE... COULDN'T *LOOK* AT ANYONE... COULDN'T LEAVE THE *HOUSE*...
"SO WHEN THE *CHANGE* STARTED, I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO *SAW*."


YEAH. I GOT IT FROM HERE.
YOU HID, IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. AND-- IN BETWEEN OFFING ANYONE WHO FOUND YOU--
--YOU'VE BEEN SITTING HERE WONDERING WHY.
DON'T ASK ME ABOUT THE SCIENCE. SCIENCE IS THE OTHER GUY.
MAYBE YOU BUILT UP A TOLERANCE-- ALL THAT GAMMA WORK. YOU DIDN'T GET THE FULL EFFECT UNTIL TOO LATE.
YOUR OWN WALKING GHOST PHASE.
ME? I LOOK FOR IRONY.
YOU, YOU'RE AFRAID OF DEATH-- NOW YOU ARE DEATH.
YOU LOVE YOUR SON? YOU PUT HIM IN A GRAVE.
OH GOD...
YEAH.
NOW YOU GET IT.
"HE'S RADIOACTIVE. JUST LIKE YOU ARE, FRYE. DADDY'S LITTLE BOY.
"AND SIX FEET OF EARTH ISN'T ENOUGH TO CONTAIN THAT.


"EVERYONE WHO GETS IN RANGE--TO *MOURN*--COULD WALK AWAY WITH A *FATAL DOSE.* WALKING *GHOSTS.*
"AND THEN SOMEONE HAS TO MOURN *THEM...*"
A CHAIN OF *GRIEF.*
HOW *MANY,* DR. FRYE?
HOW MANY BECAUSE *YOU* WERE *SCARED?*
PLEASE— I—I MADE *MISTAKES*— BUT—
—BUT I DON'T WANT TO *DIE*—
IS THAT SO?
WELL, YOU MADE YOUR *BED,* FRYE.
TIME TO LIE IN IT.


WHAT...?
OH GOD.
OH GOD. NO.
DEATH IS *BETTER!*
NO!
NOT *THIS! PLEASE!*
I DON'T *WANT* THIS! THE ABYSS, THE *NOTHING--* IT'D BE *BETTER* THAN *THIS!*
*PLEASE!

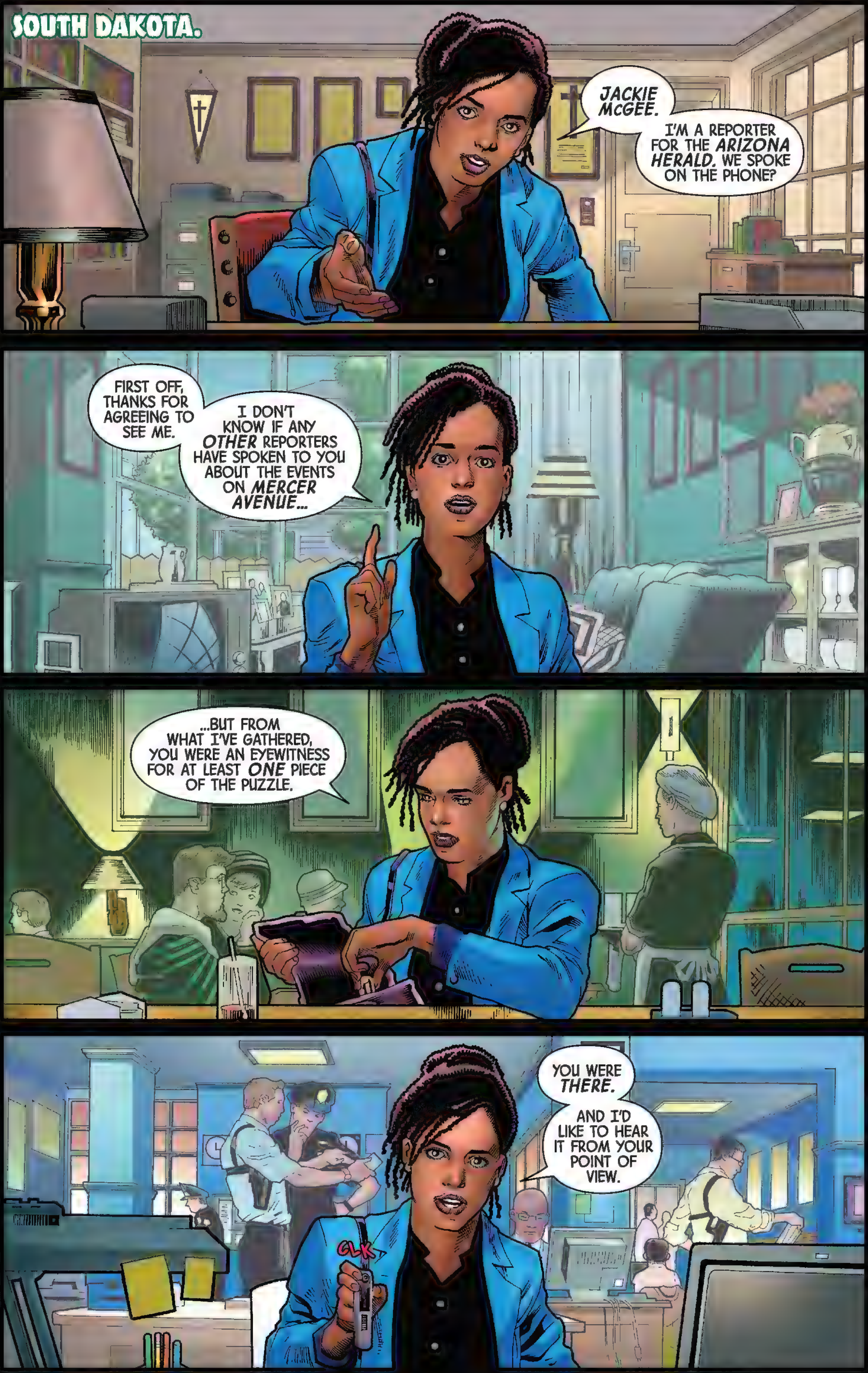

"PLEASE JUST LET ME DIE!"

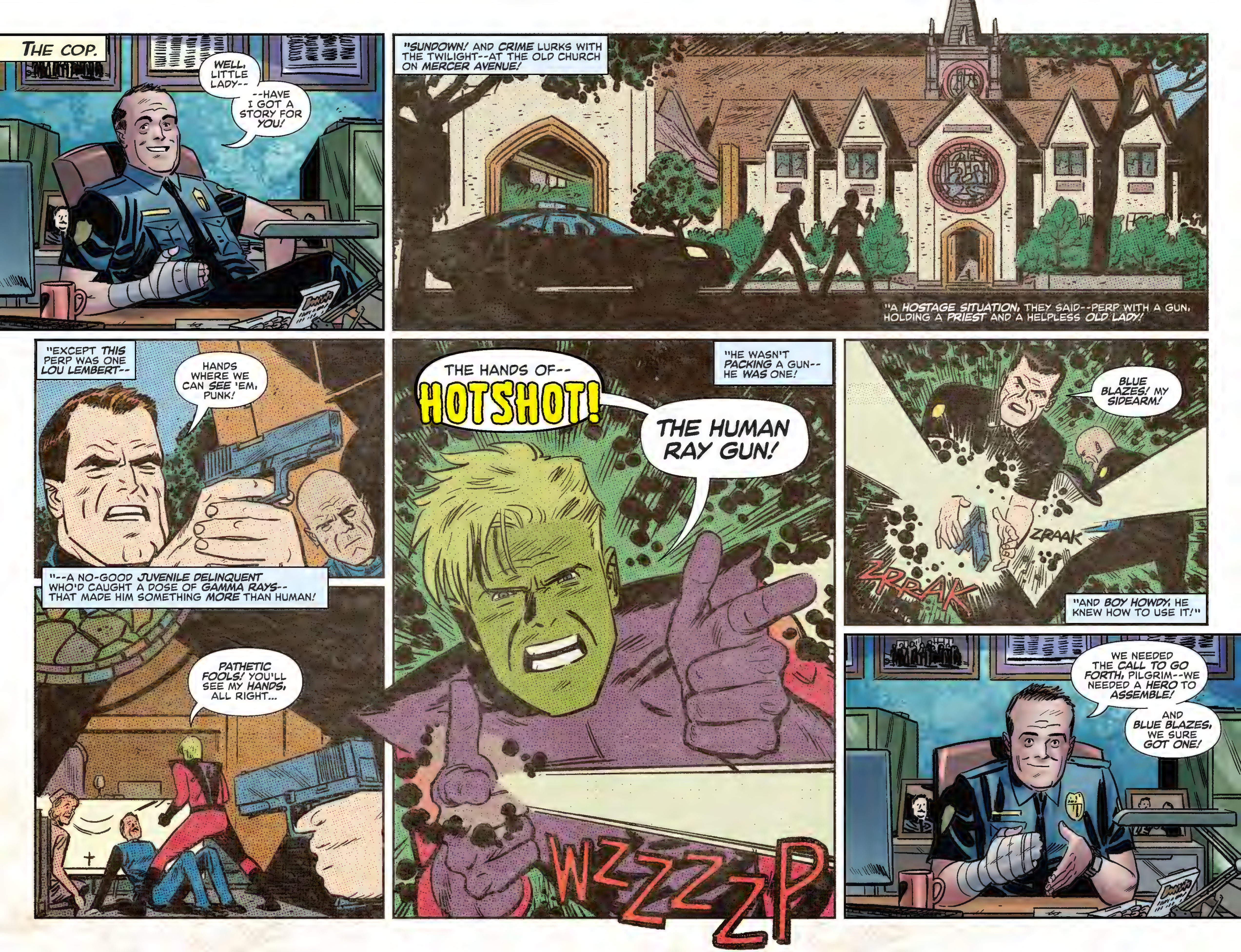
THE WALKING GHOST

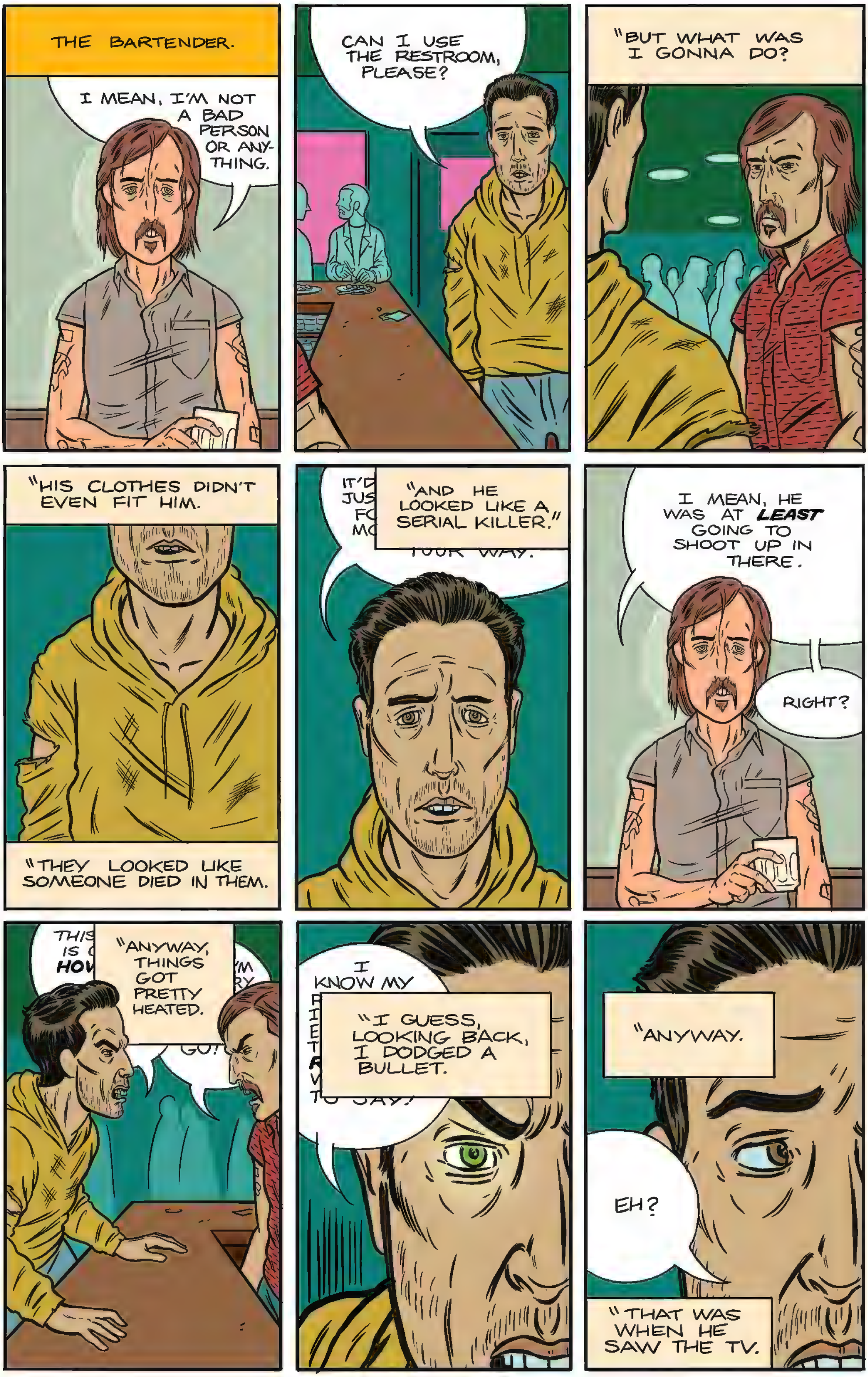
3

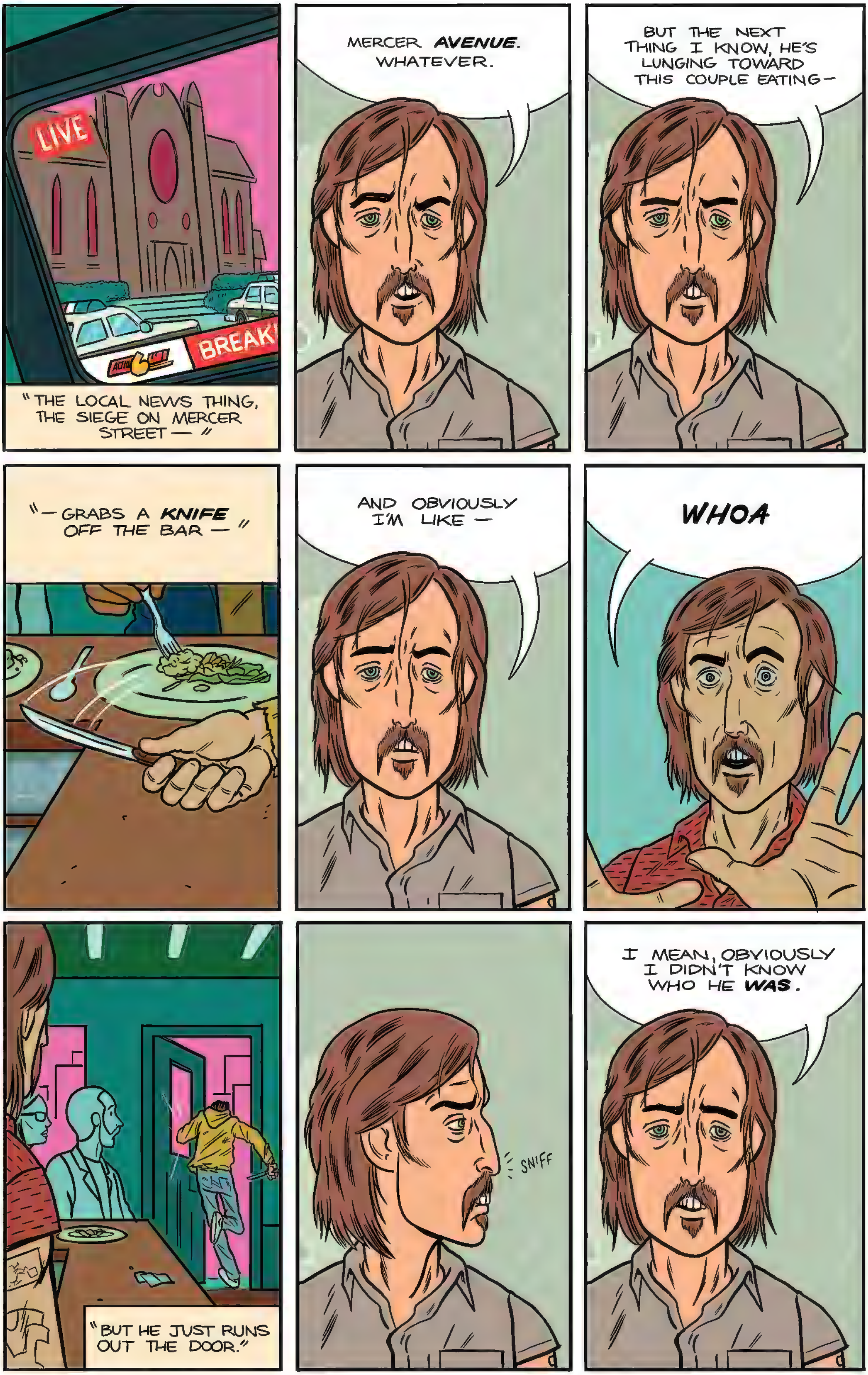
“AND IN THE LOWEST
DEEP A LOWER DEEP,
STILL THREAT'NING TO
DEVOUR ME, OPENS WIDE...”

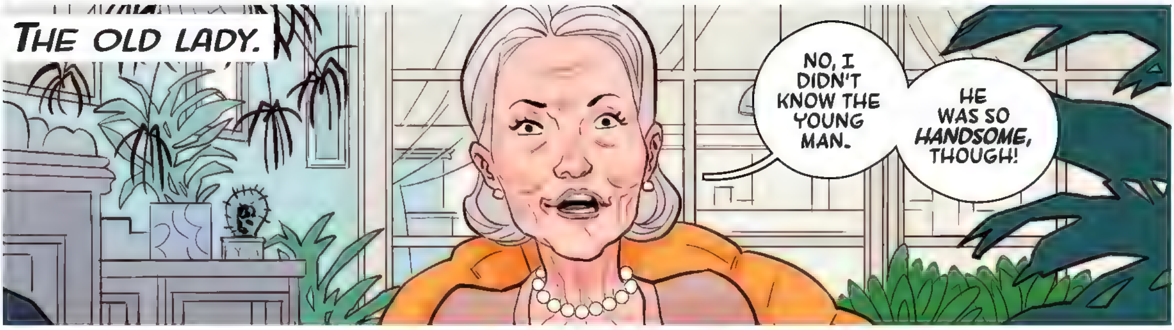
– JOHN MILTON
PARADISE LOST

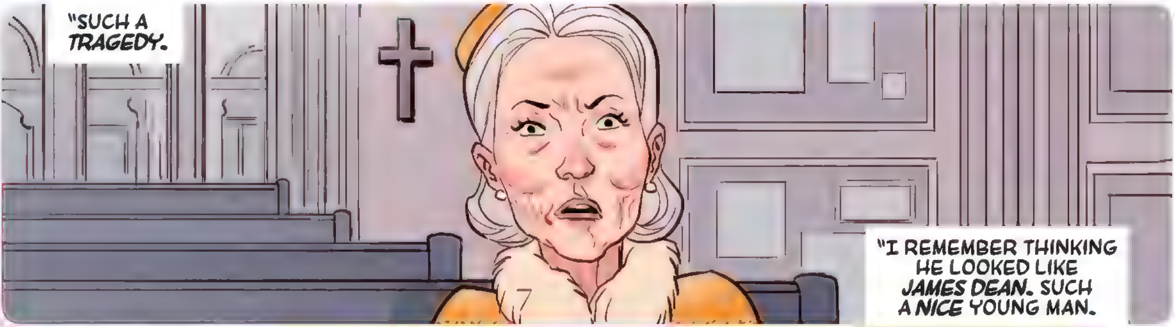

SOUTH DAKOTA.
JACKIE McGEE.
I'M A REPORTER FOR THE ARIZONA HERALD. WE SPOKE ON THE PHONE?
FIRST OFF, THANKS FOR AGREEING TO SEE ME.
I DON'T KNOW IF ANY OTHER REPORTERS HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU ABOUT THE EVENTS ON MERCER AVENUE...
...BUT FROM WHAT I'VE GATHERED, YOU WERE AN EYEWITNESS FOR AT LEAST ONE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE.
YOU WERE THERE.
AND I'D LIKE TO HEAR IT FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW.
CLK

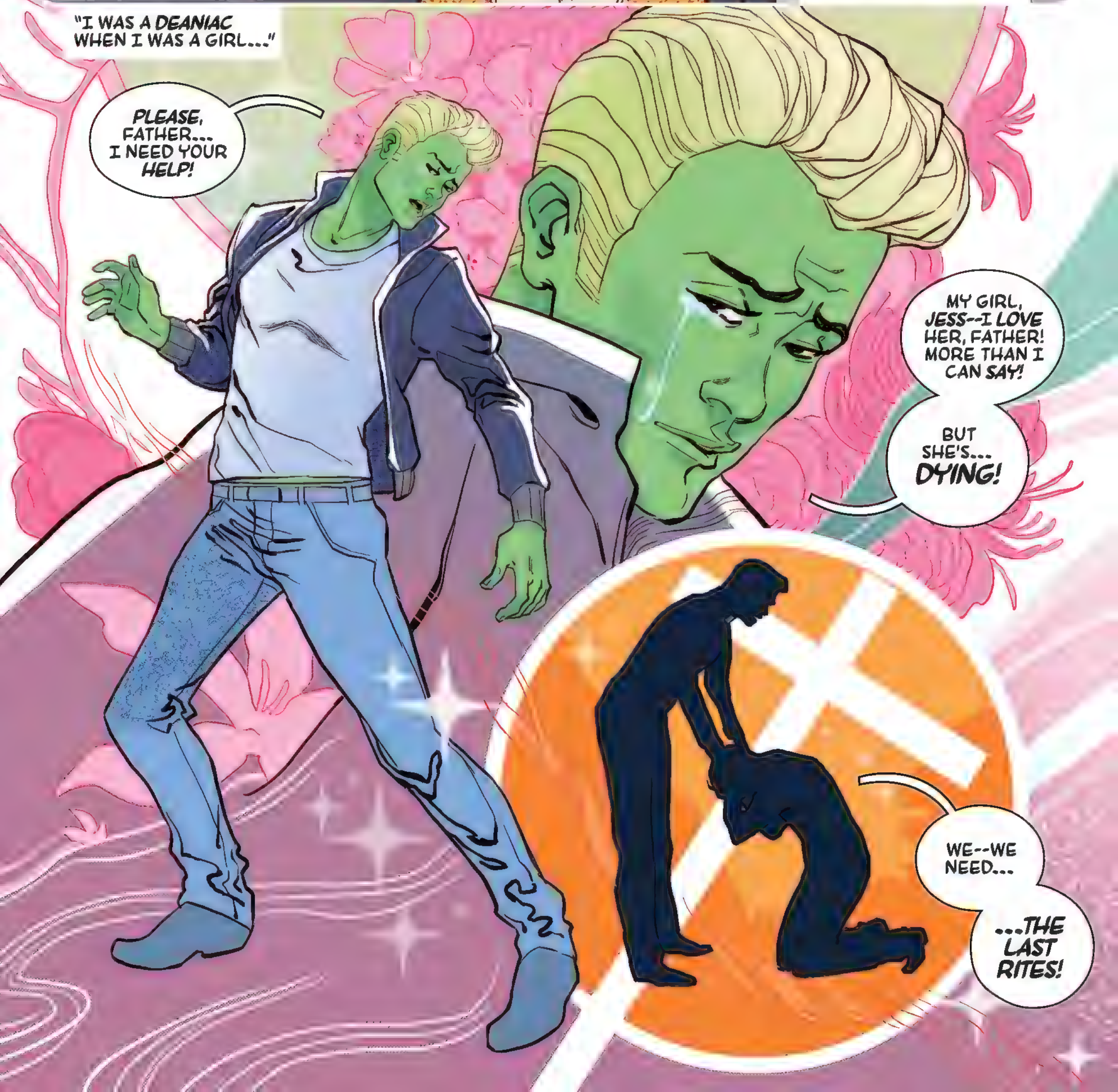

THE COP.
WELL, LITTLE LADY--
--HAVE I GOT A STORY FOR YOU!
"SUNDOWN! AND CRIME LURKS WITH THE TWILIGHT--AT THE OLD CHURCH ON MERCER AVENUE!
"A HOSTAGE SITUATION, THEY SAID--PERP WITH A GUN, HOLDING A PRIEST AND A HELPLESS OLD LADY!
"EXCEPT THIS PERP WAS ONE LOU LEMBERT--
HANDS WHERE WE CAN SEE 'EM, PUNK!
"--A NO-GOOD JUVENILE DELINQUENT WHO'D CAUGHT A DOSE OF GAMMA RAYS--THAT MADE HIM SOMETHING MORE THAN HUMAN!
PATHETIC FOOLS! YOU'LL SEE MY HANDS, ALL RIGHT...
THE HANDS OF-- HOTSHOT!
THE HUMAN RAY GUN!
"HE WASN'T PACKING A GUN--HE WAS ONE!
WZZZZZP
BLUE BLAZES! MY SIDEARM!
ZRRAK
ZRAAK
"AND BOY HOWDY, HE KNEW HOW TO USE IT!"
WE NEEDED THE CALL TO GO FORTH, PILGRIM--WE NEEDED A HERO TO ASSEMBLE!
AND BLUE BLAZES, WE SURE GOT ONE!

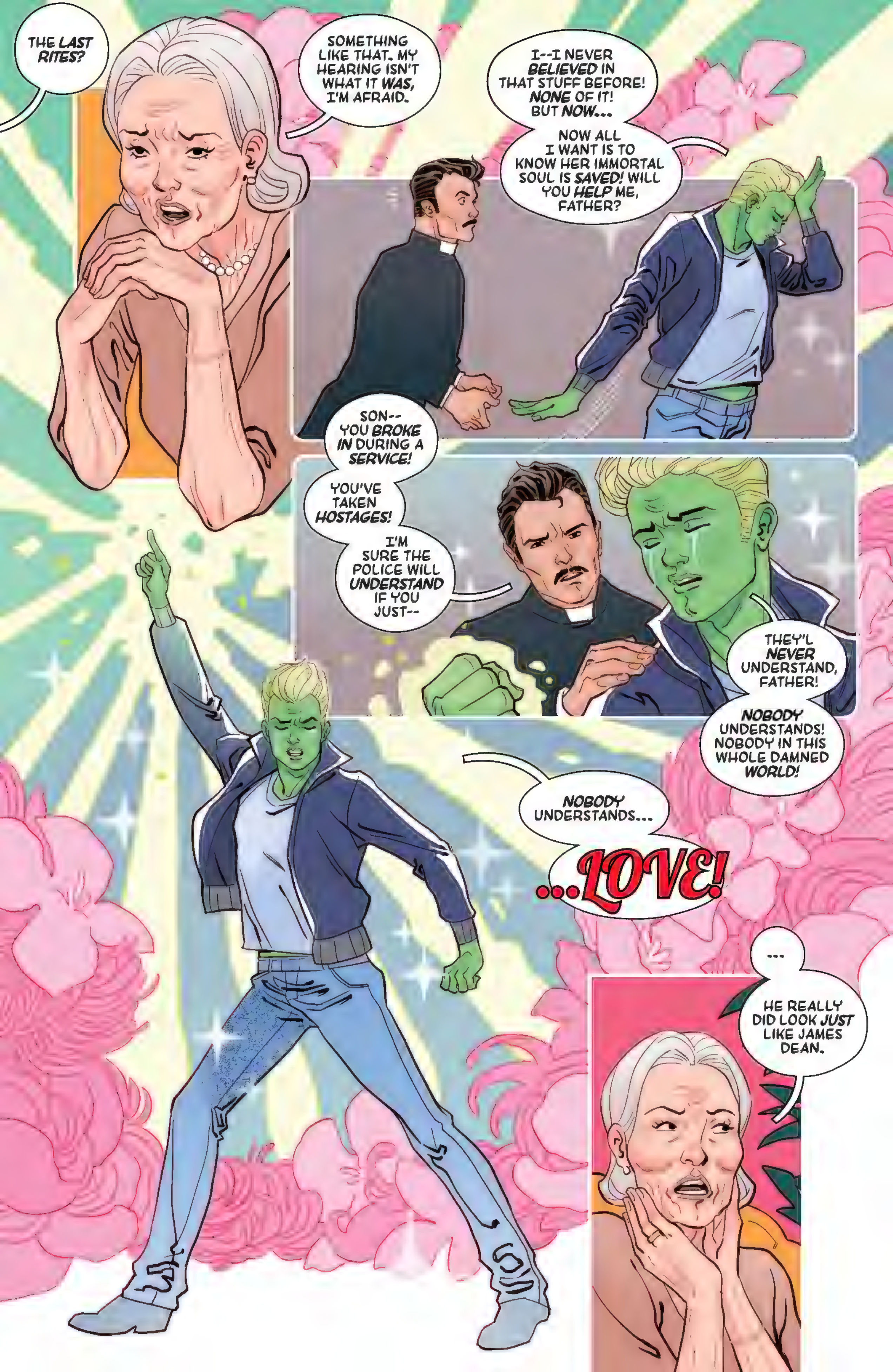

THE BARTENDER.
I MEAN, I'M NOT A BAD PERSON OR ANYTHING.
CAN I USE THE RESTROOM, PLEASE?
"BUT WHAT WAS I GONNA DO?
"HIS CLOTHES DIDN'T EVEN FIT HIM.
"THEY LOOKED LIKE SOMEONE DIED IN THEM.
IT'D JUS FO MO YOUR WAY.
"AND HE LOOKED LIKE A SERIAL KILLER."
I MEAN, HE WAS AT ***LEAST*** GOING TO SHOOT UP IN THERE.
RIGHT?
THIS IS HOW
GO!
"ANYWAY, THINGS GOT PRETTY HEATED.
I KNOW MY TO SAY?
"I GUESS, LOOKING BACK, I DODGED A BULLET.
"ANYWAY.
EH?
"THAT WAS WHEN HE SAW THE TV.

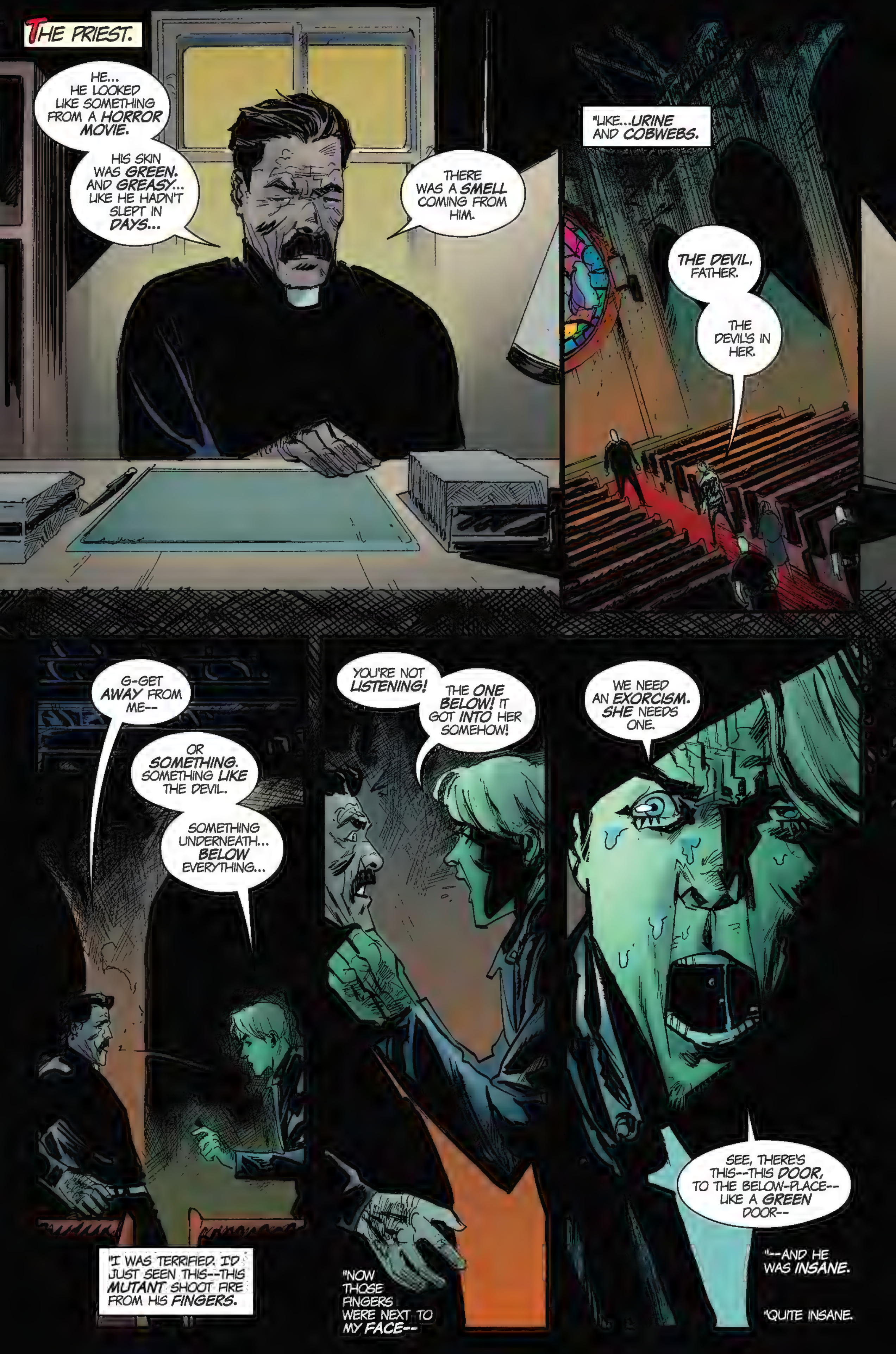

LIVE
BREAK
ACTION 6
"THE LOCAL NEWS THING, THE SIEGE ON MERCER STREET — "
MERCER **AVENUE**. WHATEVER.
BUT THE NEXT THING I KNOW, HE'S LUNGING TOWARD THIS COUPLE EATING —
"— GRABS A **KNIFE** OFF THE BAR — "
AND OBVIOUSLY I'M LIKE —
WHOA
"BUT HE JUST RUNS OUT THE DOOR."
SNIFF
I MEAN, OBVIOUSLY I DIDN'T KNOW WHO HE **WAS**.

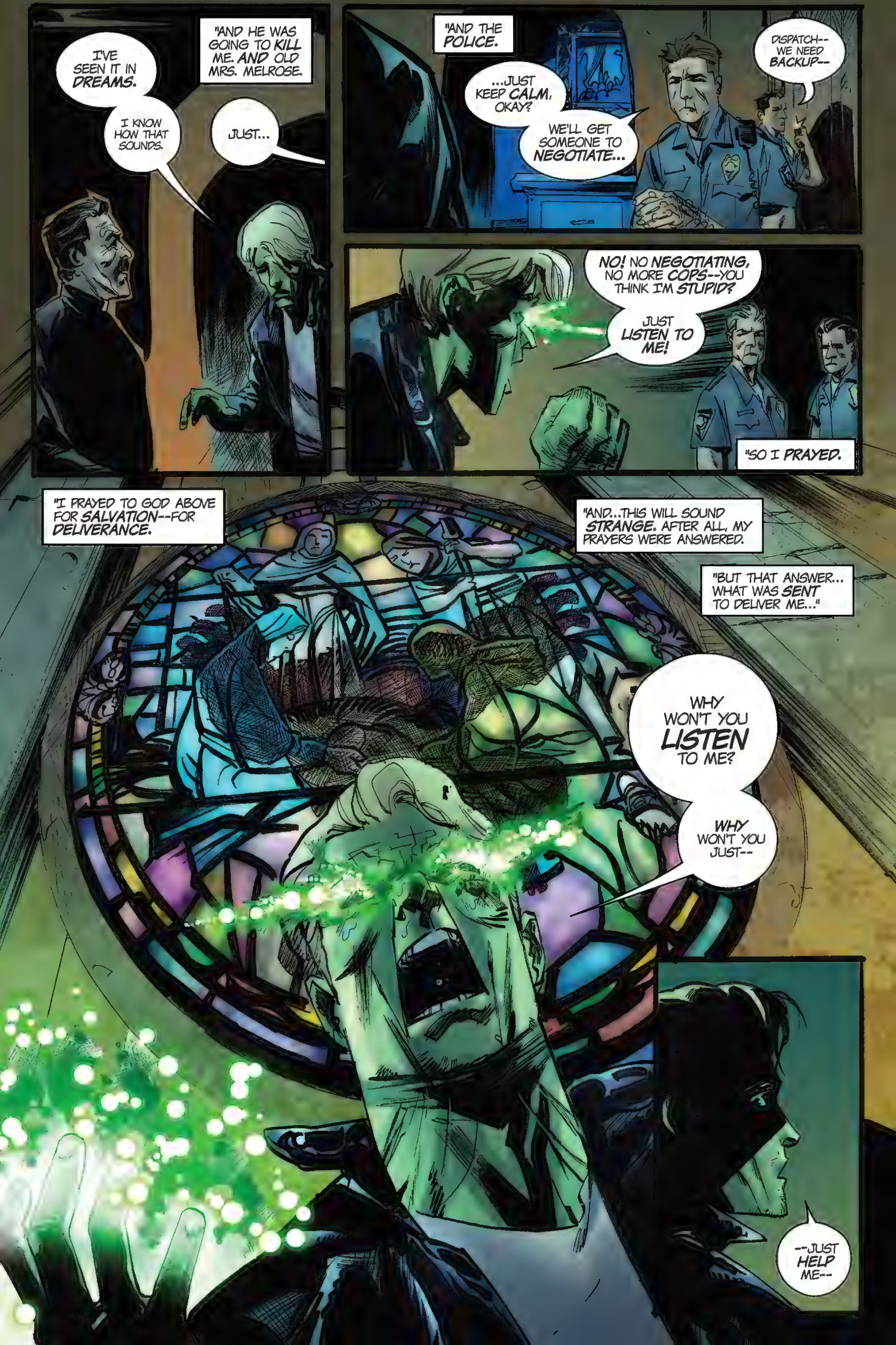

THE OLD LADY.
NO, I DIDN'T KNOW THE YOUNG MAN.
HE WAS SO *HANDSOME*, THOUGH!

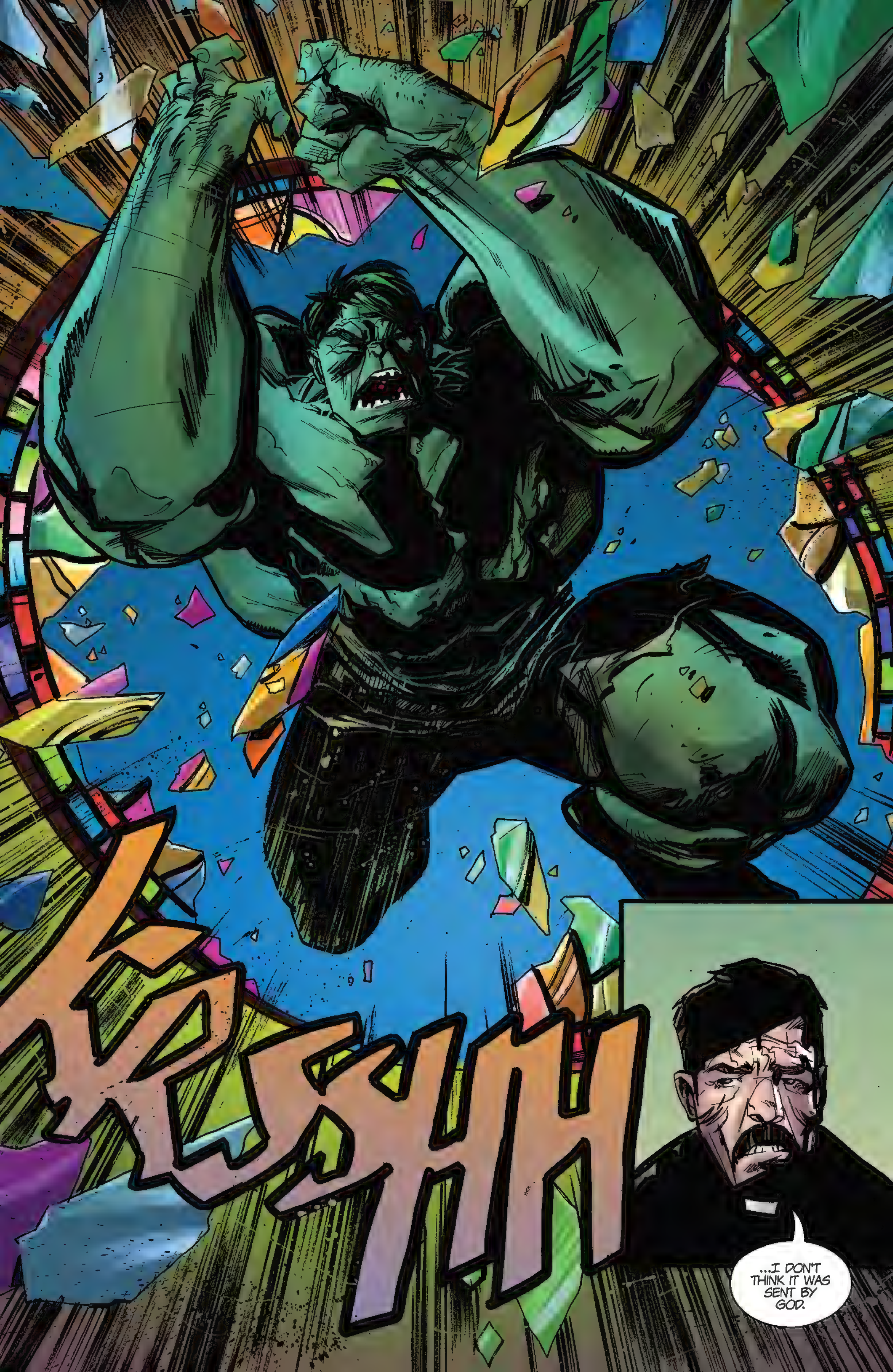

"SUCH A *TRAGEDY*.
"I REMEMBER THINKING HE LOOKED LIKE *JAMES DEAN*. SUCH A *NICE* YOUNG MAN.

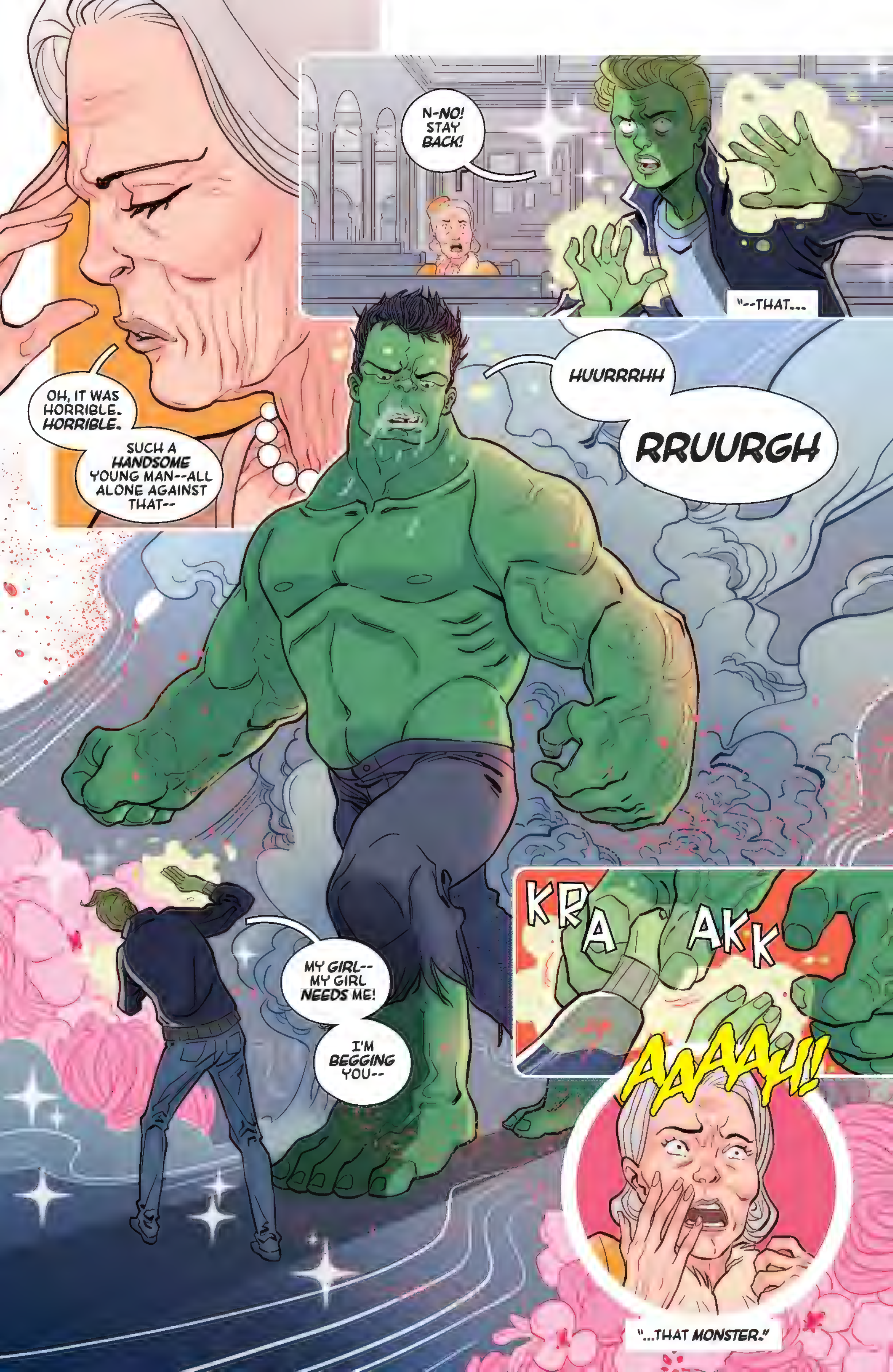

"I WAS A *DEANIAC* WHEN I WAS A GIRL..."
PLEASE, FATHER... I NEED YOUR *HELP!*
MY GIRL, *JESS*--I *LOVE* HER, FATHER! MORE THAN I CAN *SAY!*
BUT SHE'S... *DYING!*
WE--WE NEED...
...THE LAST RITES!

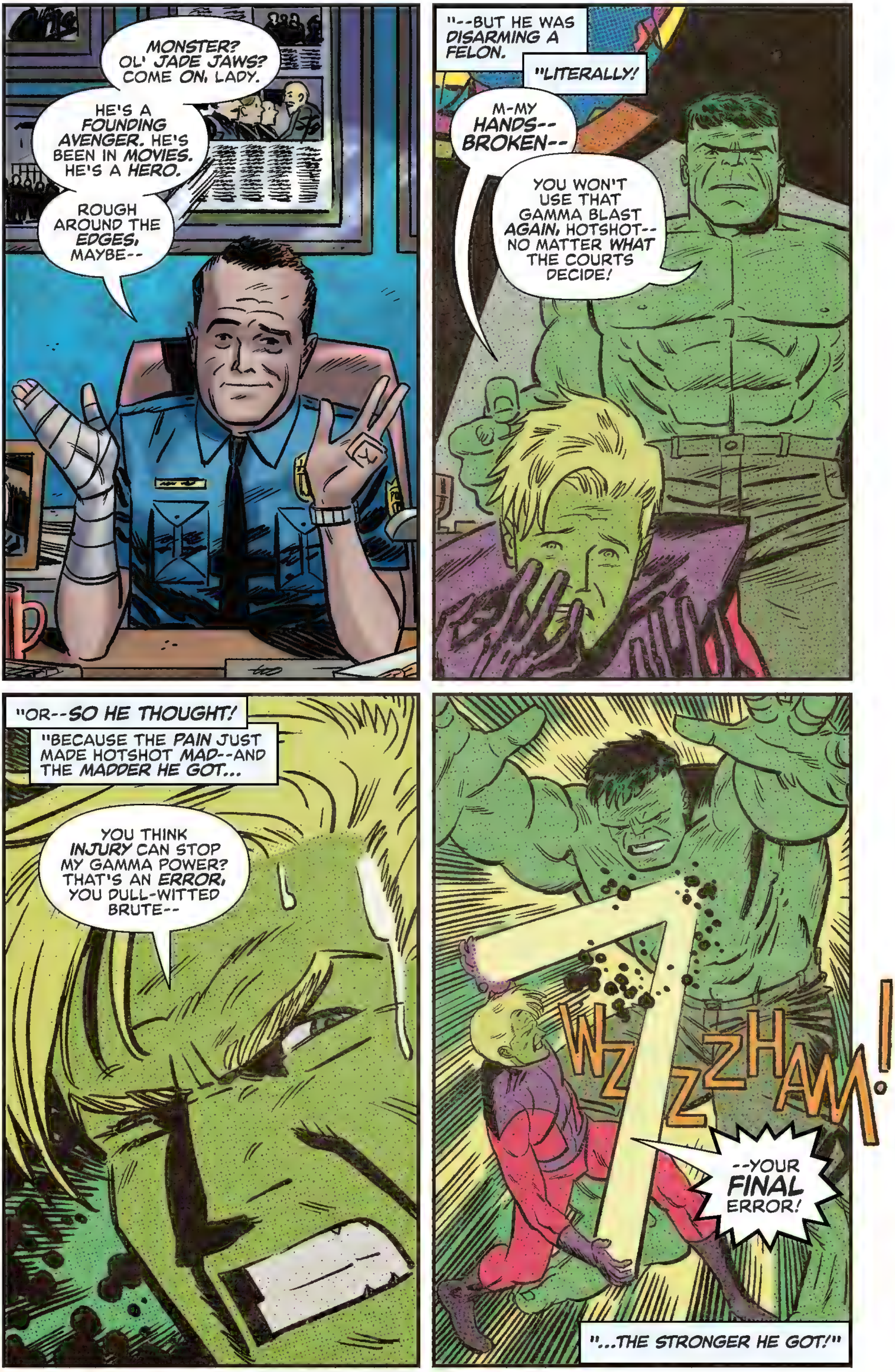

THE *LAST* RITES?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT. MY HEARING ISN'T WHAT IT *WAS*, I'M AFRAID.
I--I NEVER *BELIEVED* IN THAT STUFF BEFORE! *NONE* OF IT! BUT *NOW*...
NOW ALL I WANT IS TO KNOW HER IMMORTAL SOUL IS *SAVED!* WILL YOU *HELP* ME, FATHER?
SON-- YOU *BROKE IN* DURING A *SERVICE!*
YOU'VE TAKEN *HOSTAGES!*
I'M SURE THE POLICE WILL *UNDERSTAND* IF YOU JUST--
THEY'L *NEVER* UNDERSTAND, FATHER!
NOBODY UNDERSTANDS! NOBODY IN THIS WHOLE DAMNED *WORLD!*
NOBODY UNDERSTANDS...
...LOVE!
...
HE REALLY DID LOOK *JUST* LIKE JAMES DEAN.

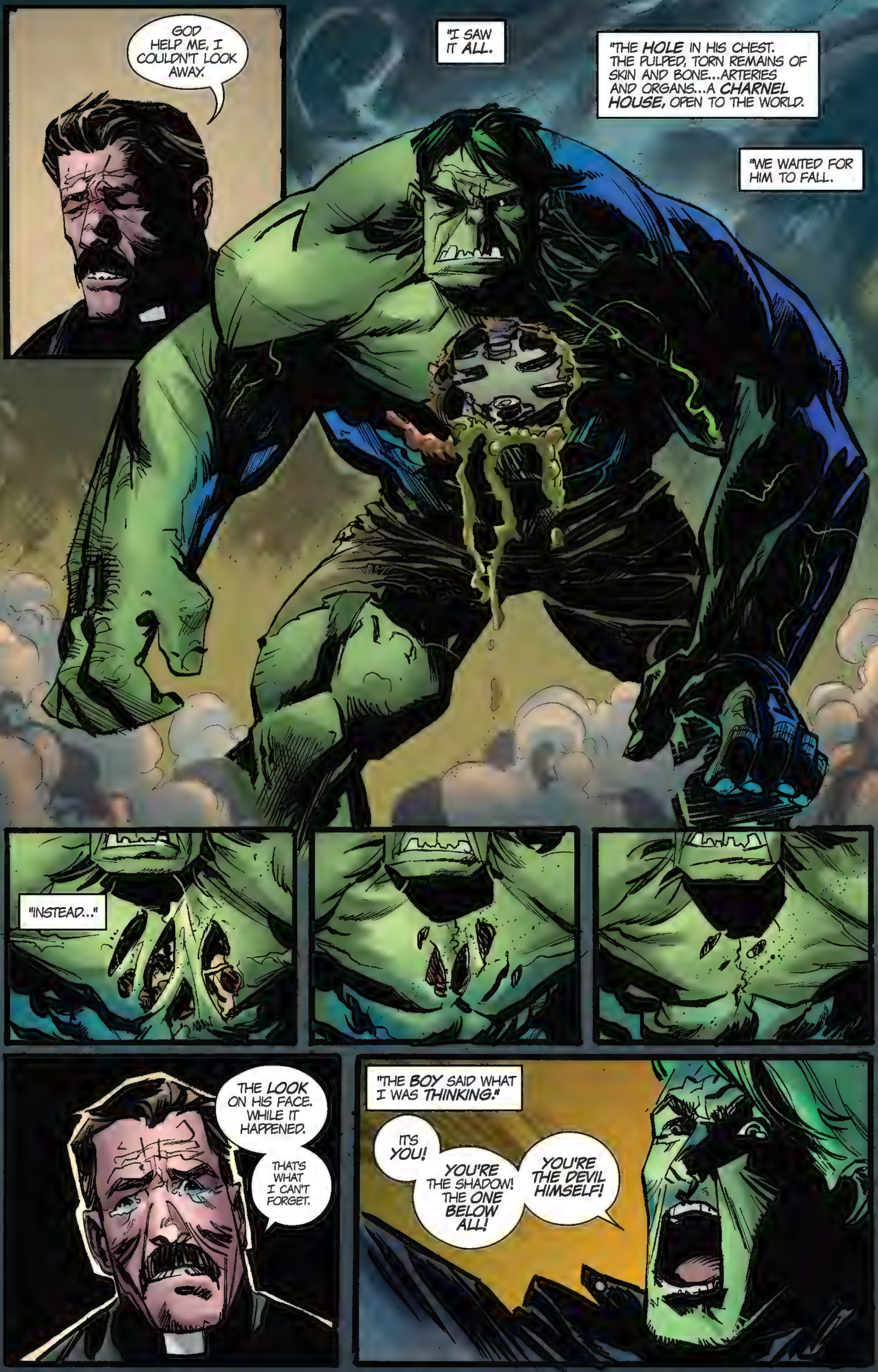

THE PRIEST.
HE... HE LOOKED LIKE SOMETHING FROM A HORROR MOVIE.
HIS SKIN WAS GREEN. AND GREASY... LIKE HE HADN'T SLEPT IN DAYS...
THERE WAS A SMELL COMING FROM HIM.
"LIKE...URINE AND COBWEBS.
THE DEVIL, FATHER.
THE DEVIL'S IN HER.
G-GET AWAY FROM ME--
OR SOMETHING. SOMETHING LIKE THE DEVIL.
SOMETHING UNDERNEATH... BELOW EVERYTHING...
"I WAS TERRIFIED. I'D JUST SEEN THIS--THIS MUTANT SHOOT FIRE FROM HIS FINGERS.
YOU'RE NOT LISTENING!
THE ONE BELOW! IT GOT INTO HER SOMEHOW!
"NOW THOSE FINGERS WERE NEXT TO MY FACE--
WE NEED AN EXORCISM. SHE NEEDS ONE.
SEE, THERE'S THIS--THIS DOOR, TO THE BELOW-PLACE-- LIKE A GREEN DOOR--
"--AND HE WAS INSANE.
"QUITE INSANE.

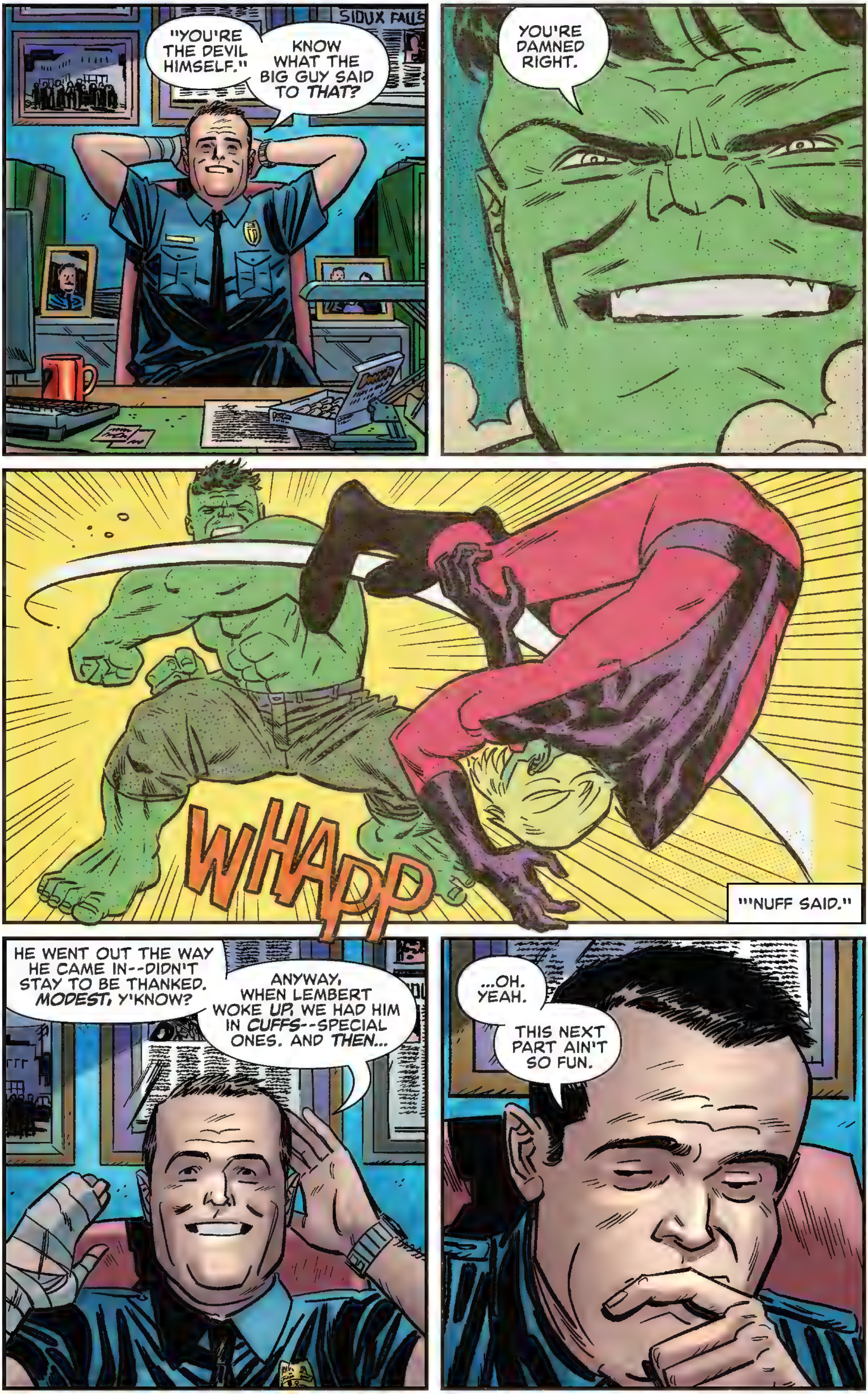

"AND HE WAS GOING TO KILL ME. AND OLD MRS. MELROSE.
I'VE SEEN IT IN DREAMS.
I KNOW HOW THAT SOUNDS.
JUST...
"AND THE POLICE.
...JUST KEEP CALM, OKAY?
WE'LL GET SOMEONE TO NEGOTIATE...
DISPATCH--WE NEED BACKUP--
NO! NO NEGOTIATING, NO MORE COPS--YOU THINK I'M STUPID?
JUST LISTEN TO ME!
"SO I PRAYED.
"I PRAYED TO GOD ABOVE FOR SALVATION--FOR DELIVERANCE.
"AND...THIS WILL SOUND STRANGE. AFTER ALL, MY PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED.
"BUT THAT ANSWER... WHAT WAS SENT TO DELIVER ME..."
WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN TO ME?
WHY WON'T YOU JUST--
--JUST HELP ME--

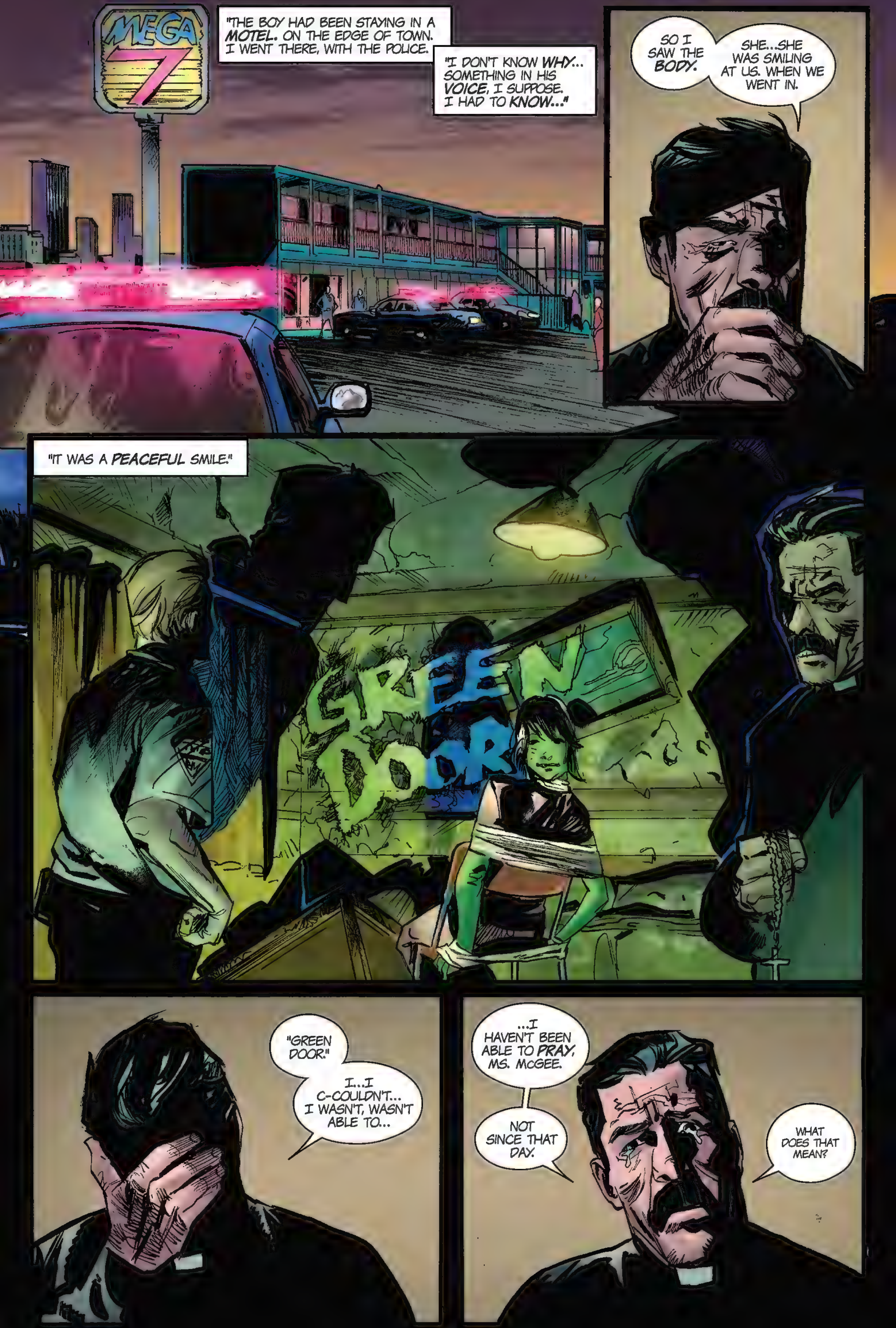

KRSHH
...I DON'T THINK IT WAS SENT BY GOD.

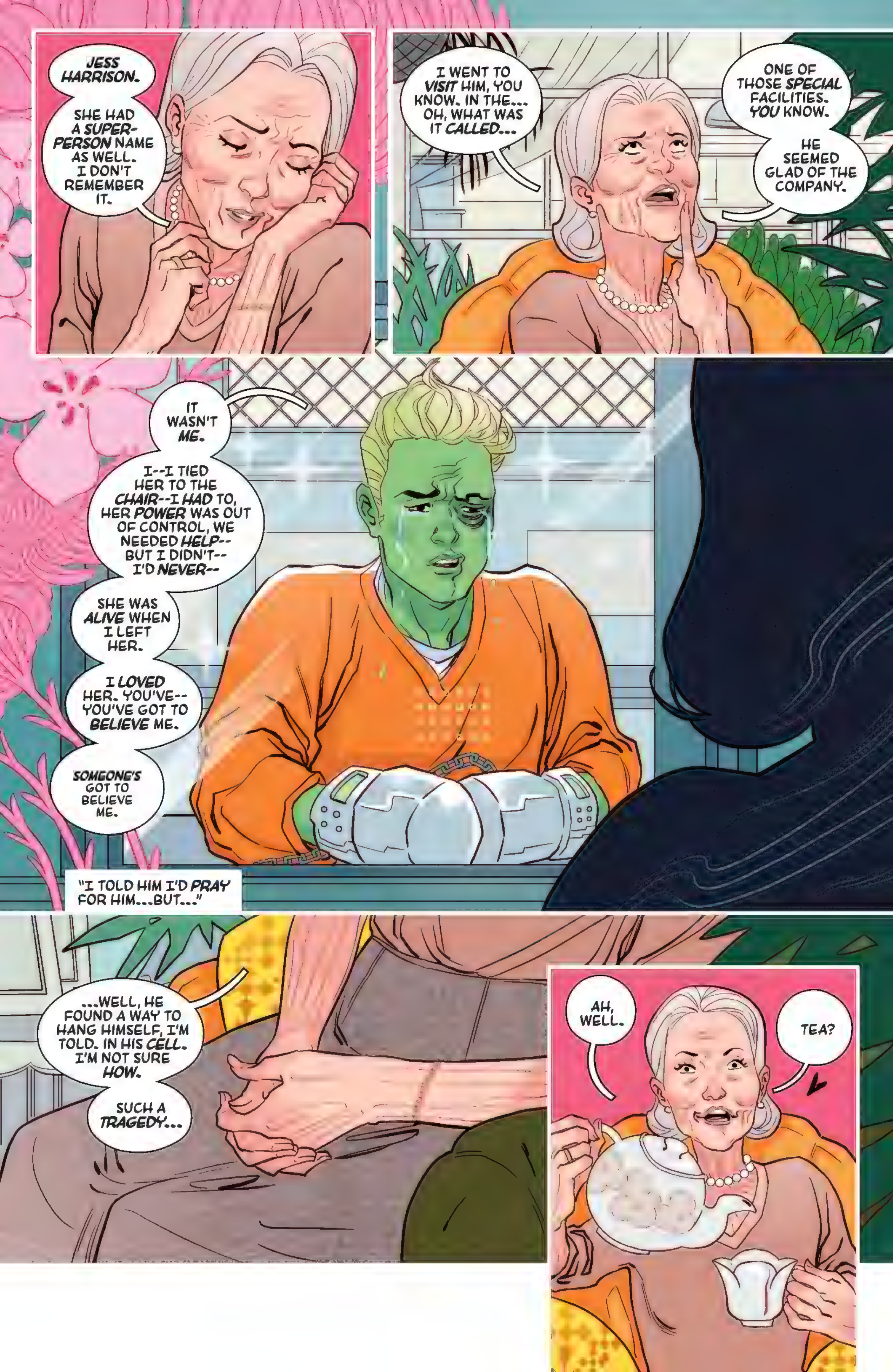

OH, IT WAS HORRIBLE. *HORRIBLE.*
SUCH A *HANDSOME* YOUNG MAN--ALL ALONE AGAINST THAT--
N-*NO!* STAY *BACK!*
"--THAT...
HUURRRHH
RRUURGH
MY *GIRL*-- MY GIRL *NEEDS* ME!
I'M *BEGGING* YOU--
KRAAKK
AAAAH!
"...THAT *MONSTER.*"

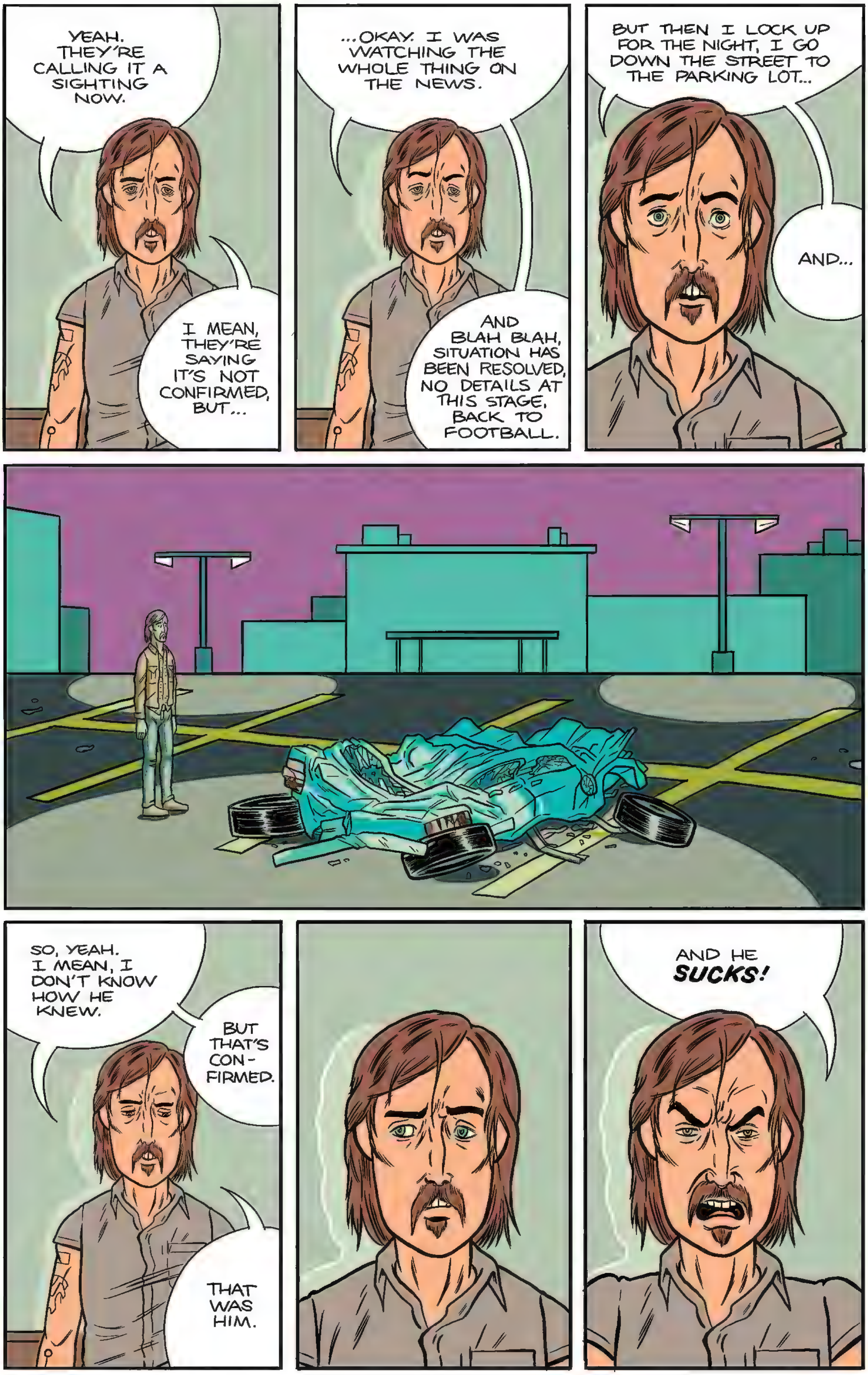

MONSTER? OL' JADE JAWS? COME ON, LADY.
HE'S A FOUNDING AVENGER. HE'S BEEN IN MOVIES. HE'S A HERO.
ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES, MAYBE--
"--BUT HE WAS DISARMING A FELON.
"LITERALLY!
M-MY HANDS-- BROKEN--
YOU WON'T USE THAT GAMMA BLAST AGAIN, HOTSHOT--NO MATTER WHAT THE COURTS DECIDE!
"OR--SO HE THOUGHT!
"BECAUSE THE PAIN JUST MADE HOTSHOT MAD--AND THE MADDER HE GOT...
YOU THINK INJURY CAN STOP MY GAMMA POWER? THAT'S AN ERROR, YOU DULL-WITTED BRUTE--
WZZZHAM!
--YOUR FINAL ERROR!
"...THE STRONGER HE GOT!"

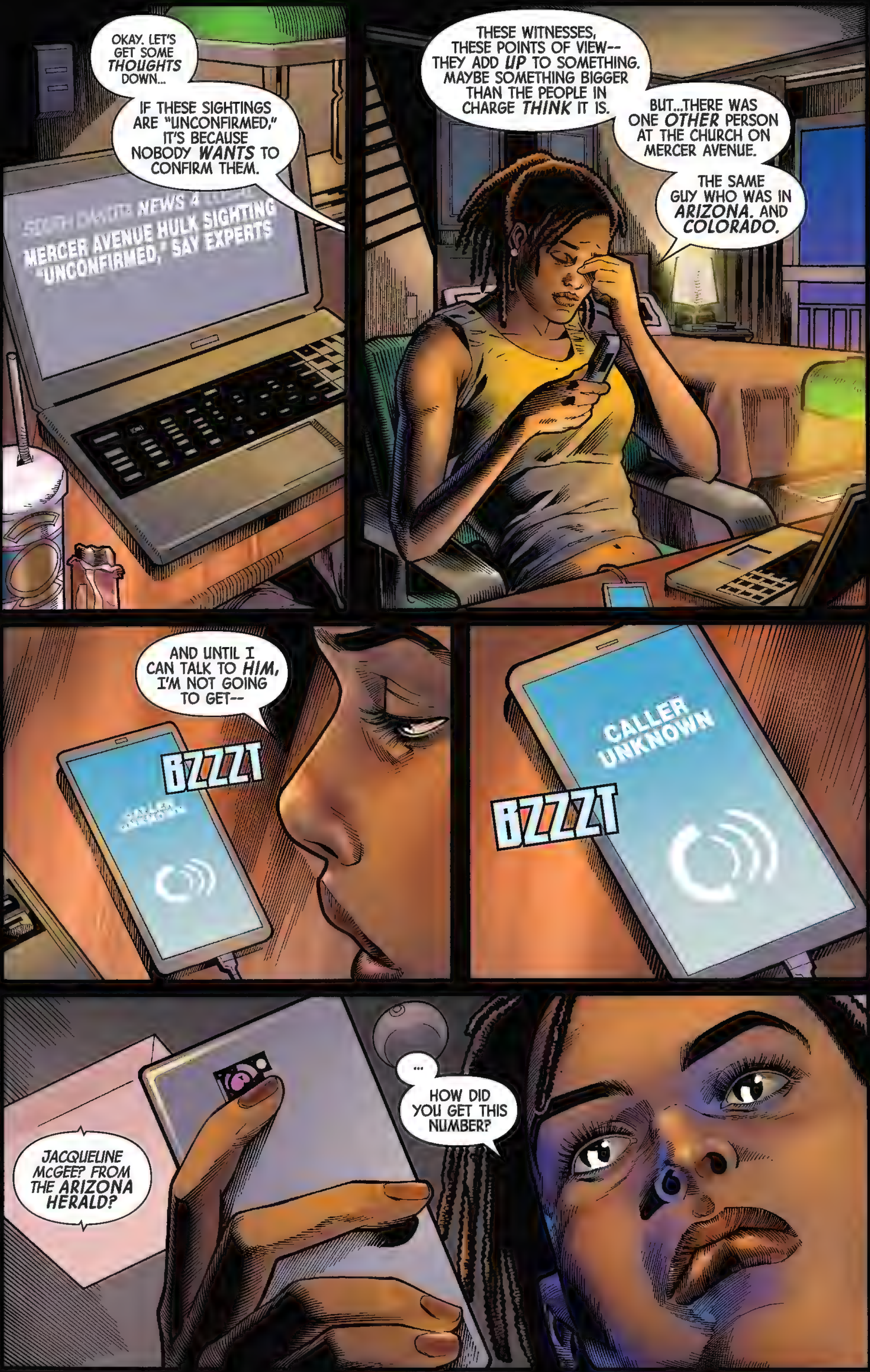

GOD HELP ME, I COULDN'T LOOK AWAY.
"I SAW IT **ALL**.
"THE **HOLE** IN HIS CHEST. THE PULPED, TORN REMAINS OF SKIN AND BONE...ARTERIES AND ORGANS...A **CHARNEL HOUSE**, OPEN TO THE WORLD.
"WE WAITED FOR HIM TO FALL.
"INSTEAD..."
THE **LOOK** ON HIS FACE. WHILE IT HAPPENED.
THAT'S WHAT I CAN'T FORGET.
"THE **BOY** SAID WHAT I WAS **THINKING**."
IT'S **YOU!**
YOU'RE THE SHADOW! THE **ONE BELOW ALL!**
YOU'RE THE DEVIL HIMSELF!

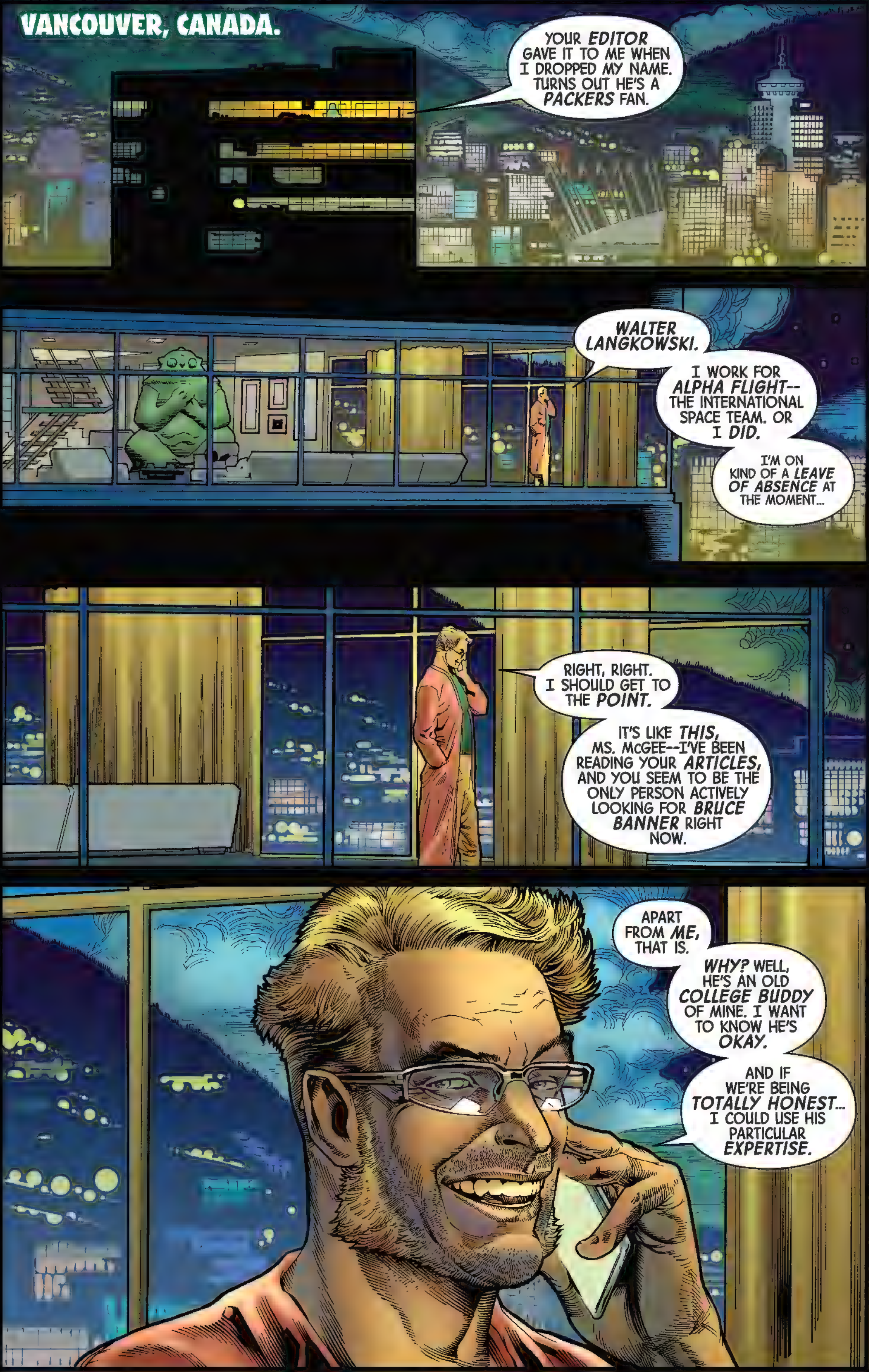

SIOUX FALLS
"YOU'RE THE DEVIL HIMSELF."
KNOW WHAT THE BIG GUY SAID TO *THAT?*
YOU'RE DAMNED RIGHT.
WHAPP
"'NUFF SAID."
HE WENT OUT THE WAY HE CAME IN--DIDN'T STAY TO BE THANKED. *MODEST,* Y'KNOW?
ANYWAY, WHEN LEMBERT WOKE *UP,* WE HAD HIM IN *CUFFS*--SPECIAL ONES. AND *THEN...*
...OH. YEAH.
THIS NEXT PART AIN'T SO FUN.

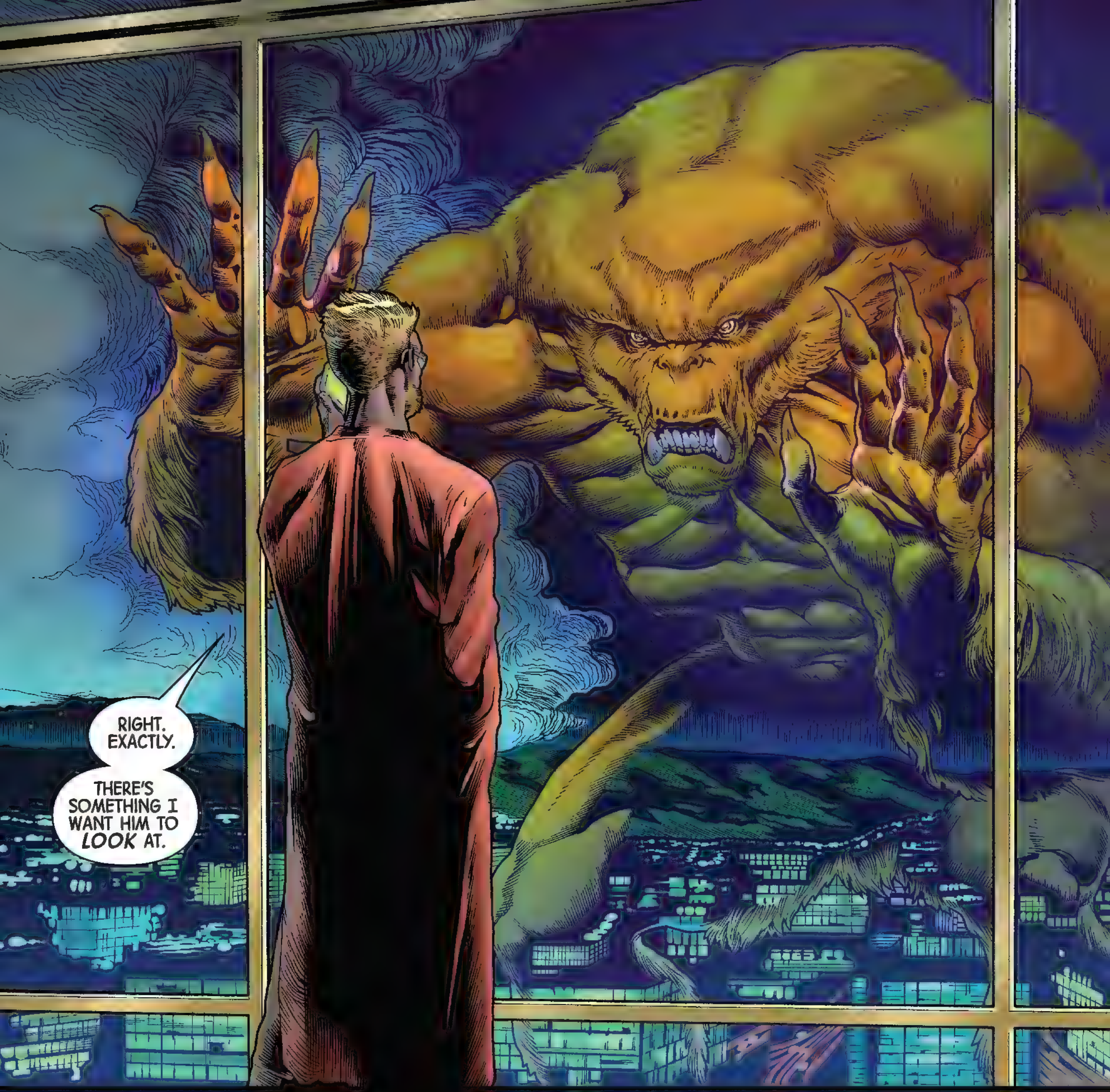

MEGA 7
"THE BOY HAD BEEN STAYING IN A *MOTEL.* ON THE EDGE OF TOWN. I WENT THERE, WITH THE POLICE.
"I DON'T KNOW *WHY...* SOMETHING IN HIS *VOICE,* I SUPPOSE. I HAD TO *KNOW...*"
SO I SAW THE *BODY.*
SHE...SHE WAS SMILING AT US. WHEN WE WENT IN.
"IT WAS A *PEACEFUL* SMILE."
GREEN DOOR
"GREEN DOOR."
I...I C-COULDN'T... I WASN'T, WASN'T ABLE TO...
...I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO *PRAY,* MS. McGEE.
NOT SINCE THAT DAY.
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?


JESS HARRISON.
SHE HAD A SUPER-PERSON NAME AS WELL. I DON'T REMEMBER IT.
I WENT TO VISIT HIM, YOU KNOW. IN THE... OH, WHAT WAS IT CALLED...
ONE OF THOSE SPECIAL FACILITIES. YOU KNOW.
HE SEEMED GLAD OF THE COMPANY.
IT WASN'T ME.
I--I TIED HER TO THE CHAIR--I HAD TO, HER POWER WAS OUT OF CONTROL, WE NEEDED HELP--BUT I DIDN'T--I'D NEVER--
SHE WAS ALIVE WHEN I LEFT HER.
I LOVED HER. YOU'VE--YOU'VE GOT TO BELIEVE ME.
SOMEONE'S GOT TO BELIEVE ME.
"I TOLD HIM I'D PRAY FOR HIM...BUT..."
...WELL, HE FOUND A WAY TO HANG HIMSELF, I'M TOLD. IN HIS CELL. I'M NOT SURE HOW.
SUCH A TRAGEDY...
AH, WELL.
TEA?


YEAH. THEY'RE CALLING IT A SIGHTING NOW.
I MEAN, THEY'RE SAYING IT'S NOT CONFIRMED, BUT...
...OKAY. I WAS WATCHING THE WHOLE THING ON THE NEWS.
AND BLAH BLAH, SITUATION HAS BEEN RESOLVED, NO DETAILS AT THIS STAGE, BACK TO FOOTBALL.
BUT THEN I LOCK UP FOR THE NIGHT, I GO DOWN THE STREET TO THE PARKING LOT...
AND...
SO, YEAH. I MEAN, I DON'T KNOW HOW HE KNEW.
BUT THAT'S CONFIRMED.
THAT WAS HIM.
AND HE **SUCKS!**


OKAY. LET'S GET SOME *THOUGHTS* DOWN...
IF THESE SIGHTINGS ARE "UNCONFIRMED," IT'S BECAUSE NOBODY *WANTS* TO CONFIRM THEM.
SOUTH DAKOTA NEWS 4 LOCAL
MERCER AVENUE HULK SIGHTING "UNCONFIRMED," SAY EXPERTS
THESE WITNESSES, THESE POINTS OF VIEW-- THEY ADD *UP* TO SOMETHING. MAYBE SOMETHING BIGGER THAN THE PEOPLE IN CHARGE *THINK* IT IS.
BUT...THERE WAS ONE *OTHER* PERSON AT THE CHURCH ON MERCER AVENUE.
THE SAME GUY WHO WAS IN *ARIZONA.* AND *COLORADO.*
AND UNTIL I CAN TALK TO *HIM,* I'M NOT GOING TO GET--
BZZZT
CALLER UNKNOWN
BZZZT
JACQUELINE MCGEE? FROM THE ARIZONA HERALD?
...
HOW DID YOU GET THIS NUMBER?

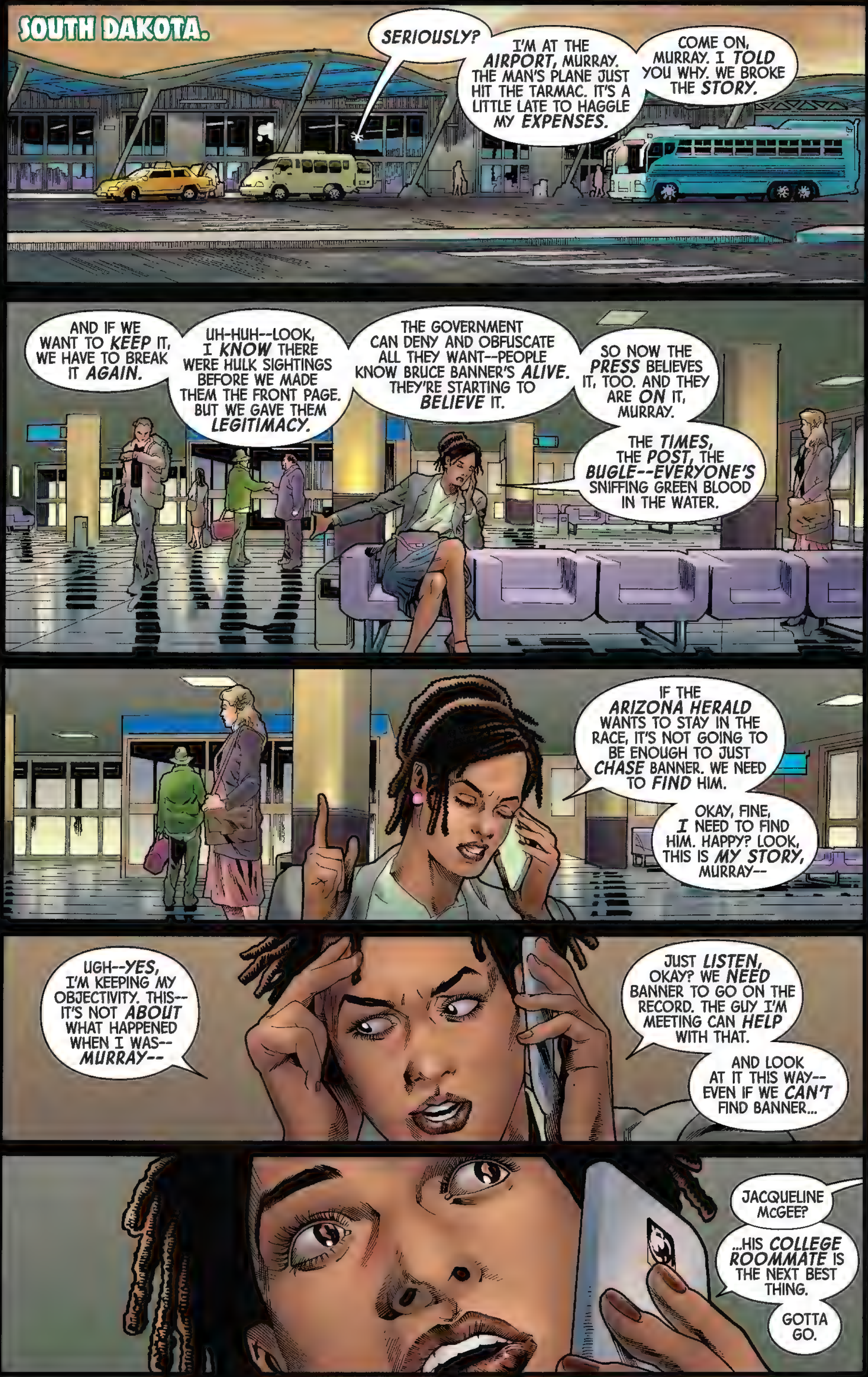

VANCOUVER, CANADA.
YOUR EDITOR GAVE IT TO ME WHEN I DROPPED MY NAME. TURNS OUT HE'S A PACKERS FAN.
WALTER LANGKOWSKI.
I WORK FOR ALPHA FLIGHT-- THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE TEAM. OR I DID.
I'M ON KIND OF A LEAVE OF ABSENCE AT THE MOMENT...
RIGHT, RIGHT. I SHOULD GET TO THE POINT.
IT'S LIKE THIS, MS. McGEE--I'VE BEEN READING YOUR ARTICLES, AND YOU SEEM TO BE THE ONLY PERSON ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR BRUCE BANNER RIGHT NOW.
APART FROM ME, THAT IS.
WHY? WELL, HE'S AN OLD COLLEGE BUDDY OF MINE. I WANT TO KNOW HE'S OKAY.
AND IF WE'RE BEING TOTALLY HONEST... I COULD USE HIS PARTICULAR EXPERTISE.

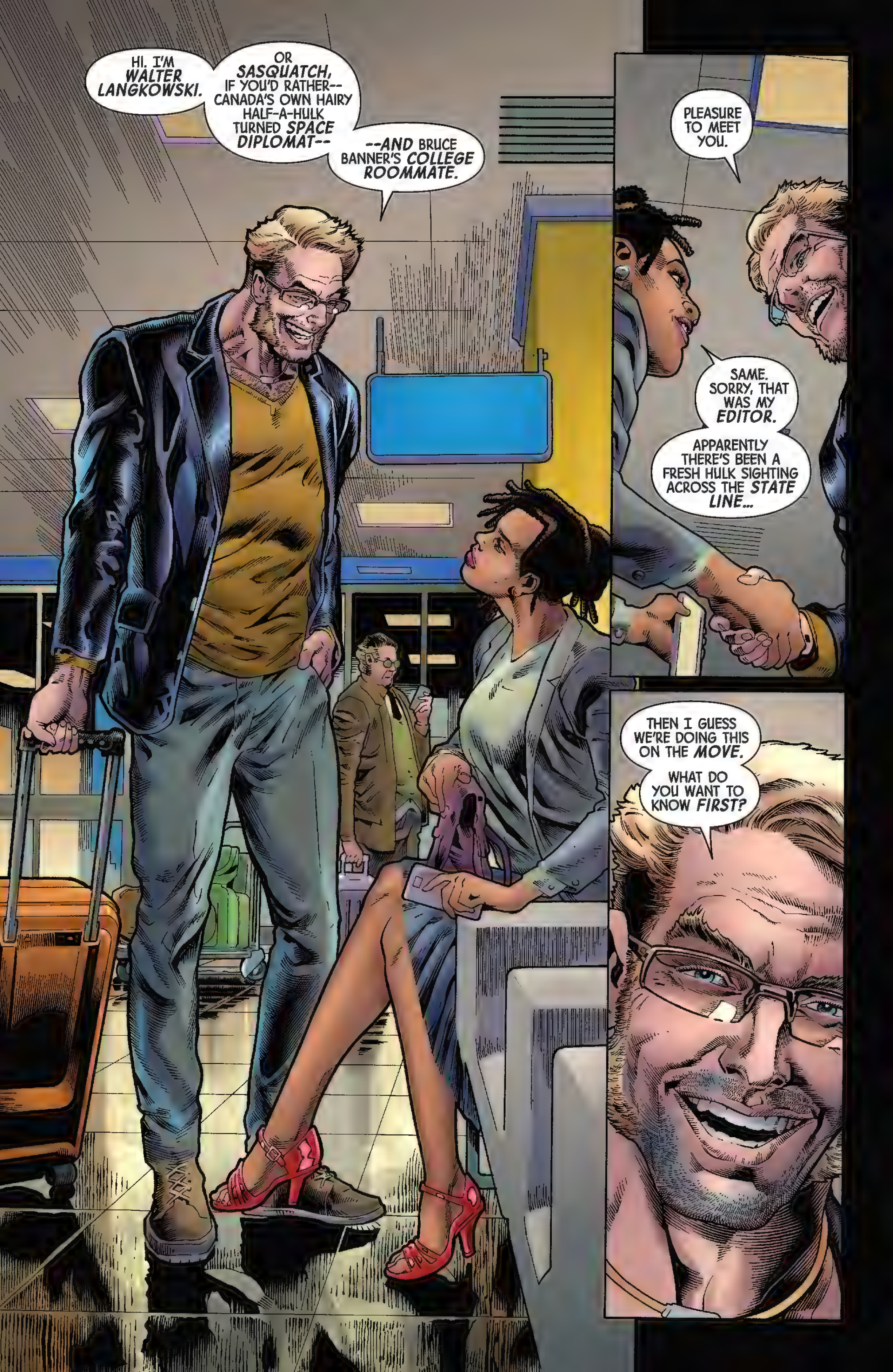

RIGHT. EXACTLY.
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT HIM TO *LOOK* AT.

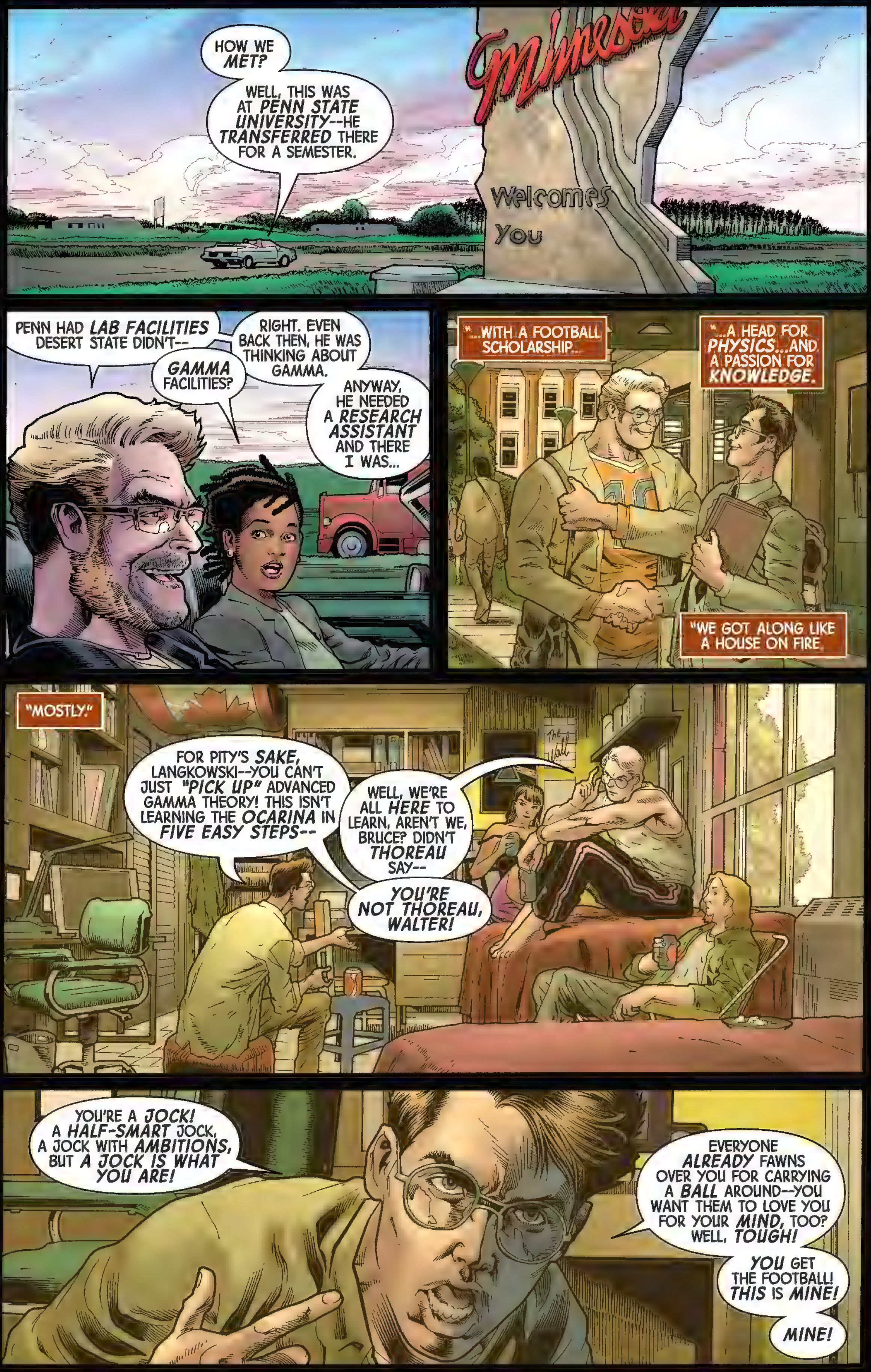
POINT OF VIEW

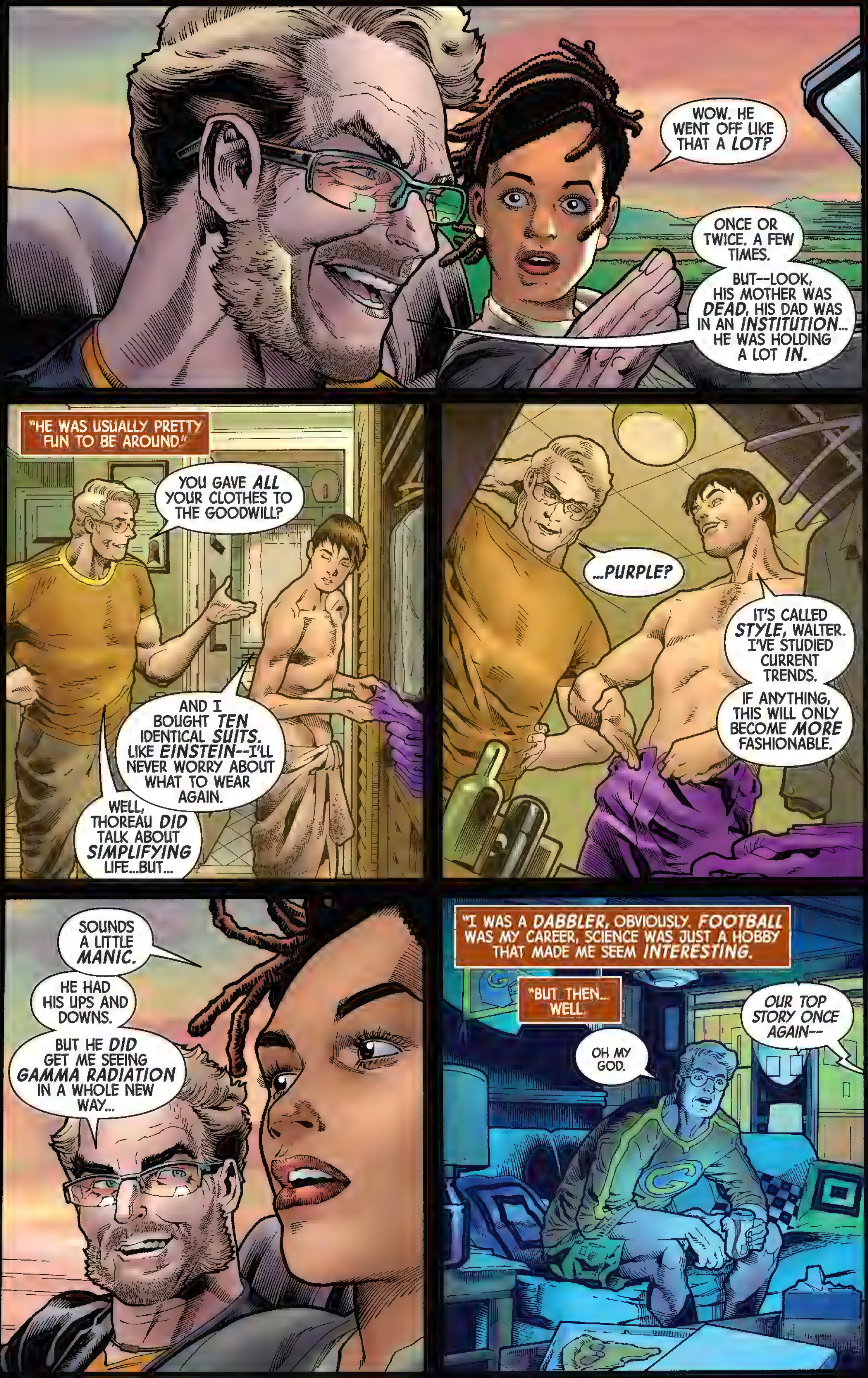
4

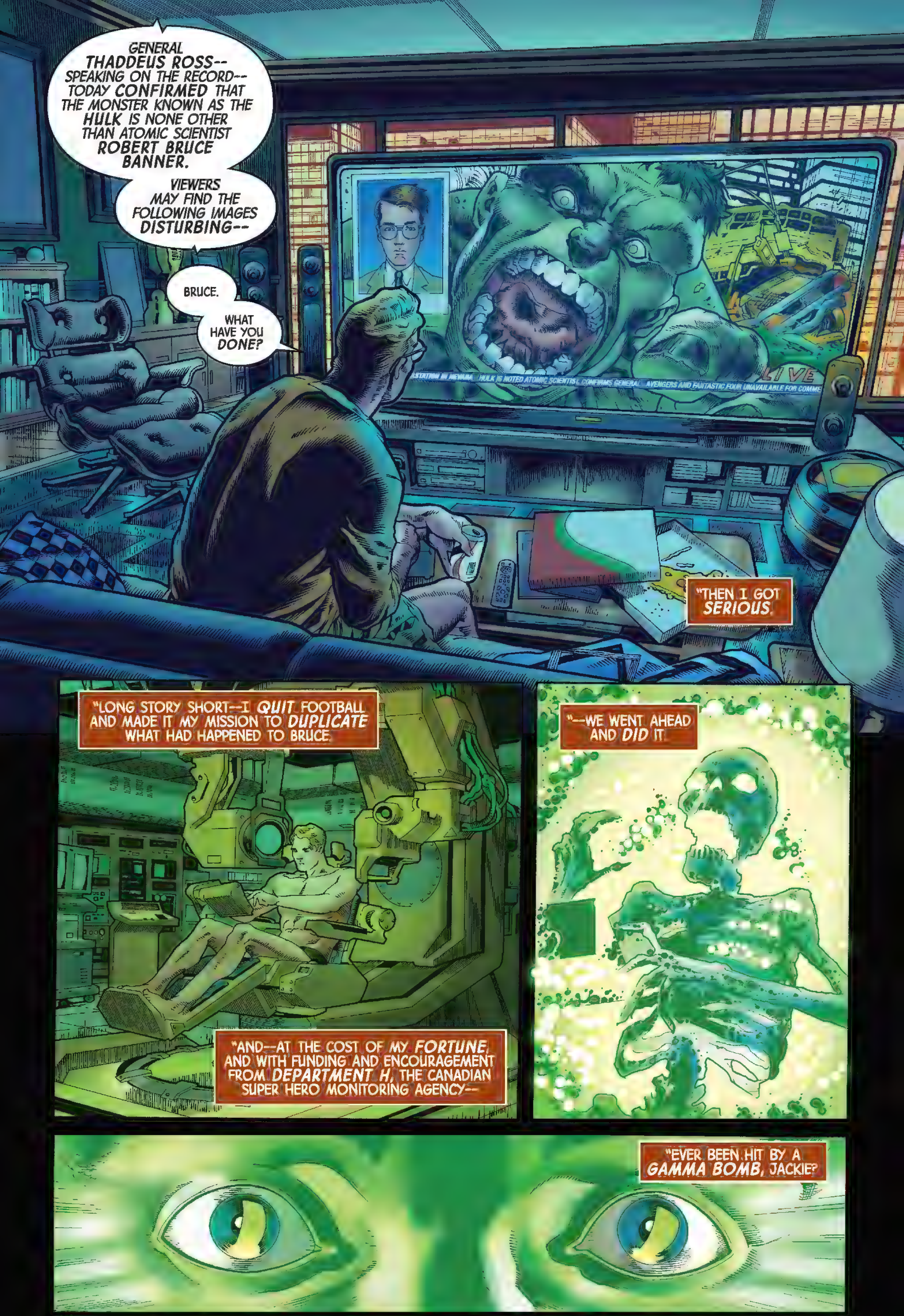
> "One always dies too soon--or too late."
>
> – JEAN-PAUL SARTRE
> *NO EXIT*

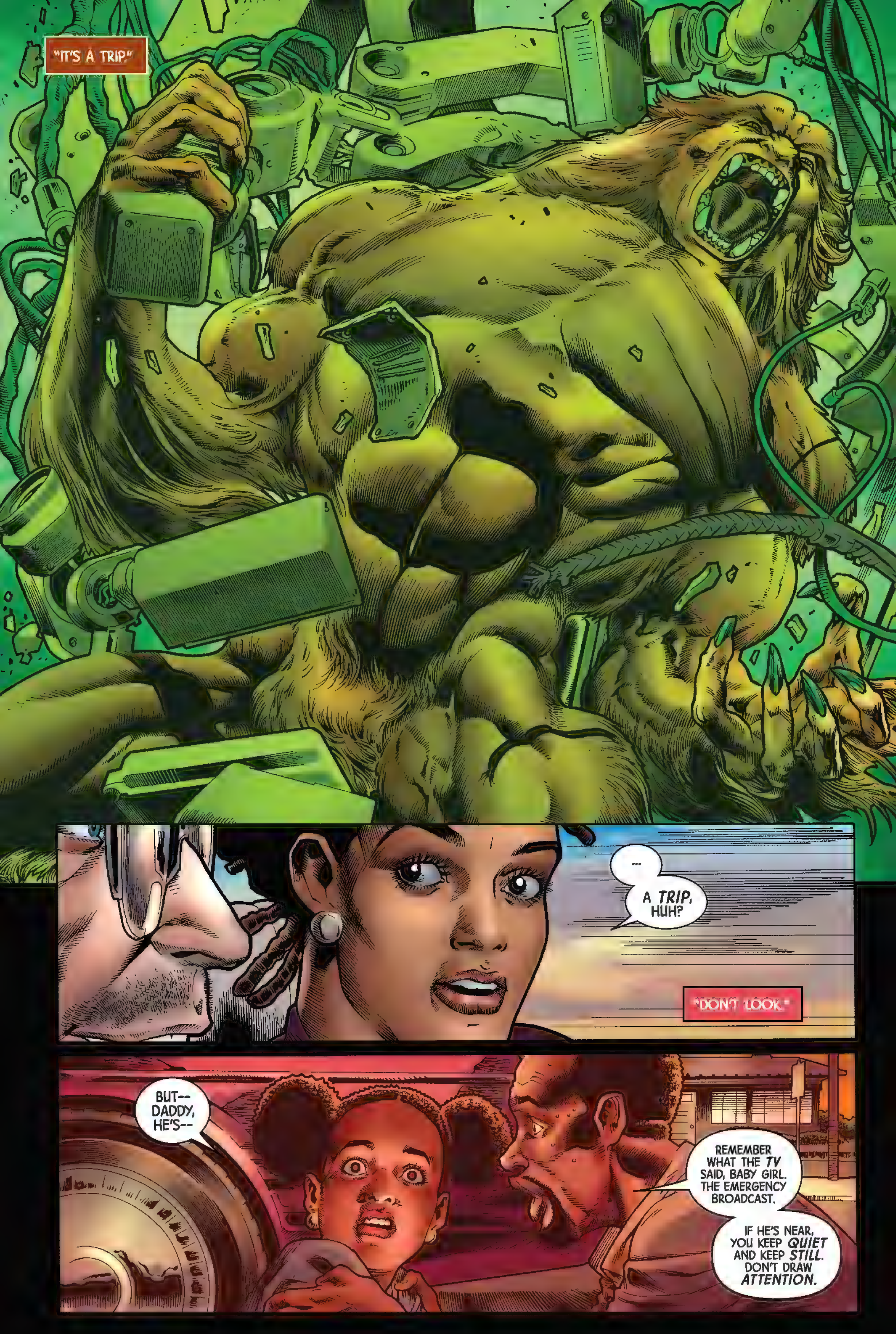

SOUTH DAKOTA.
SERIOUSLY?
I'M AT THE *AIRPORT*, MURRAY. THE MAN'S PLANE JUST HIT THE TARMAC. IT'S A LITTLE LATE TO HAGGLE MY *EXPENSES*.
COME ON, MURRAY. I *TOLD* YOU WHY. WE BROKE THE *STORY*.
AND IF WE WANT TO *KEEP* IT, WE HAVE TO BREAK IT *AGAIN*.
UH-HUH--LOOK, I *KNOW* THERE WERE HULK SIGHTINGS BEFORE WE MADE THEM THE FRONT PAGE. BUT WE GAVE THEM *LEGITIMACY*.
THE GOVERNMENT CAN DENY AND OBFUSCATE ALL THEY WANT--PEOPLE KNOW BRUCE BANNER'S *ALIVE*. THEY'RE STARTING TO *BELIEVE* IT.
SO NOW THE *PRESS* BELIEVES IT, TOO. AND THEY ARE *ON* IT, MURRAY.
THE *TIMES*, THE *POST*, THE *BUGLE--EVERYONE'S* SNIFFING GREEN BLOOD IN THE WATER.
IF THE *ARIZONA HERALD* WANTS TO STAY IN THE RACE, IT'S NOT GOING TO BE ENOUGH TO JUST *CHASE* BANNER. WE NEED TO *FIND* HIM.
OKAY, FINE, *I* NEED TO FIND HIM. HAPPY? LOOK, THIS IS *MY STORY*, MURRAY--
UGH--*YES*, I'M KEEPING MY OBJECTIVITY. THIS--IT'S NOT *ABOUT* WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I WAS--*MURRAY*--
JUST *LISTEN*, OKAY? WE *NEED* BANNER TO GO ON THE RECORD. THE GUY I'M MEETING CAN *HELP* WITH THAT.
AND LOOK AT IT THIS WAY--EVEN IF WE *CAN'T* FIND BANNER...
JACQUELINE MCGEE?
...HIS *COLLEGE ROOMMATE* IS THE NEXT BEST THING.
GOTTA GO.

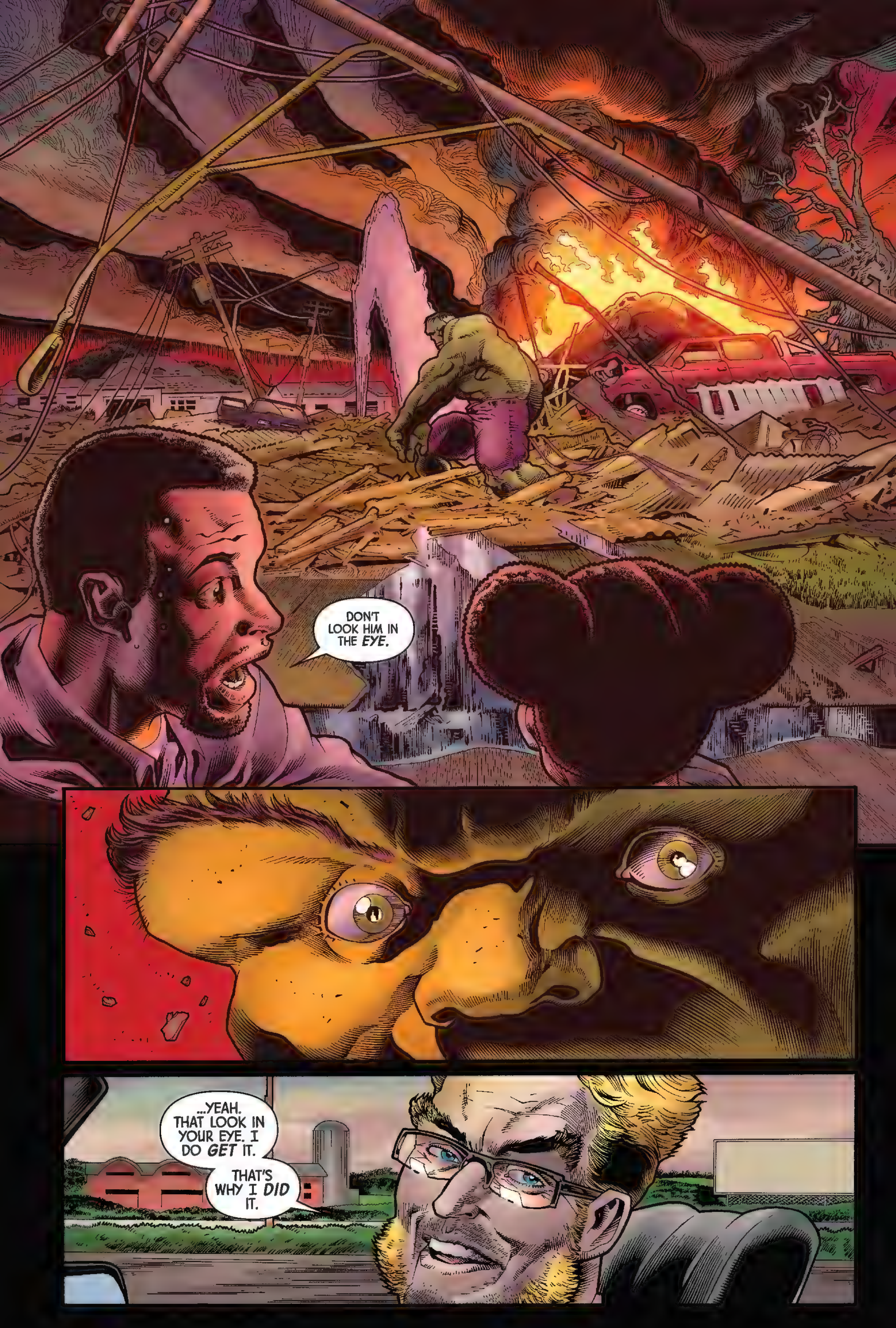

HI. I'M *WALTER LANGKOWSKI.*
OR *SASQUATCH,* IF YOU'D RATHER-- CANADA'S OWN HAIRY HALF-A-HULK TURNED *SPACE DIPLOMAT--*
--AND BRUCE BANNER'S *COLLEGE ROOMMATE.*
PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.
SAME. SORRY, THAT WAS MY *EDITOR.*
APPARENTLY THERE'S BEEN A FRESH HULK SIGHTING ACROSS THE *STATE LINE...*
THEN I GUESS WE'RE DOING THIS ON THE *MOVE.*
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW *FIRST?*

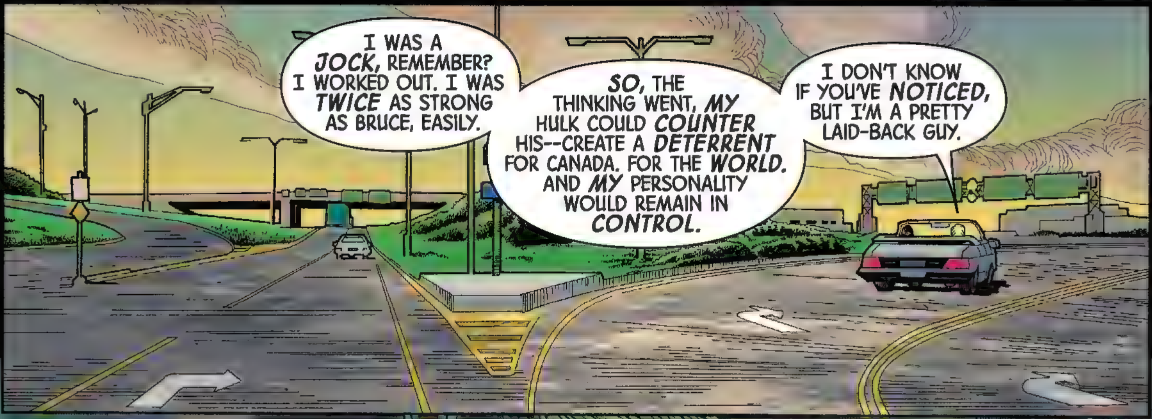

Minnesota
Welcomes You
HOW WE MET?
WELL, THIS WAS AT PENN STATE UNIVERSITY--HE TRANSFERRED THERE FOR A SEMESTER.
PENN HAD LAB FACILITIES DESERT STATE DIDN'T--
GAMMA FACILITIES?
RIGHT. EVEN BACK THEN, HE WAS THINKING ABOUT GAMMA.
ANYWAY, HE NEEDED A RESEARCH ASSISTANT AND THERE I WAS...
"...WITH A FOOTBALL SCHOLARSHIP...
"...A HEAD FOR PHYSICS...AND A PASSION FOR KNOWLEDGE.
"WE GOT ALONG LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE.
"MOSTLY."
FOR PITY'S SAKE, LANGKOWSKI--YOU CAN'T JUST "PICK UP" ADVANCED GAMMA THEORY! THIS ISN'T LEARNING THE OCARINA IN FIVE EASY STEPS--
WELL, WE'RE ALL HERE TO LEARN, AREN'T WE, BRUCE? DIDN'T THOREAU SAY--
YOU'RE NOT THOREAU, WALTER!
YOU'RE A JOCK! A HALF-SMART JOCK, A JOCK WITH AMBITIONS, BUT A JOCK IS WHAT YOU ARE!
EVERYONE ALREADY FAWNS OVER YOU FOR CARRYING A BALL AROUND--YOU WANT THEM TO LOVE YOU FOR YOUR MIND, TOO? WELL, TOUGH!
YOU GET THE FOOTBALL! THIS IS MINE!
MINE!

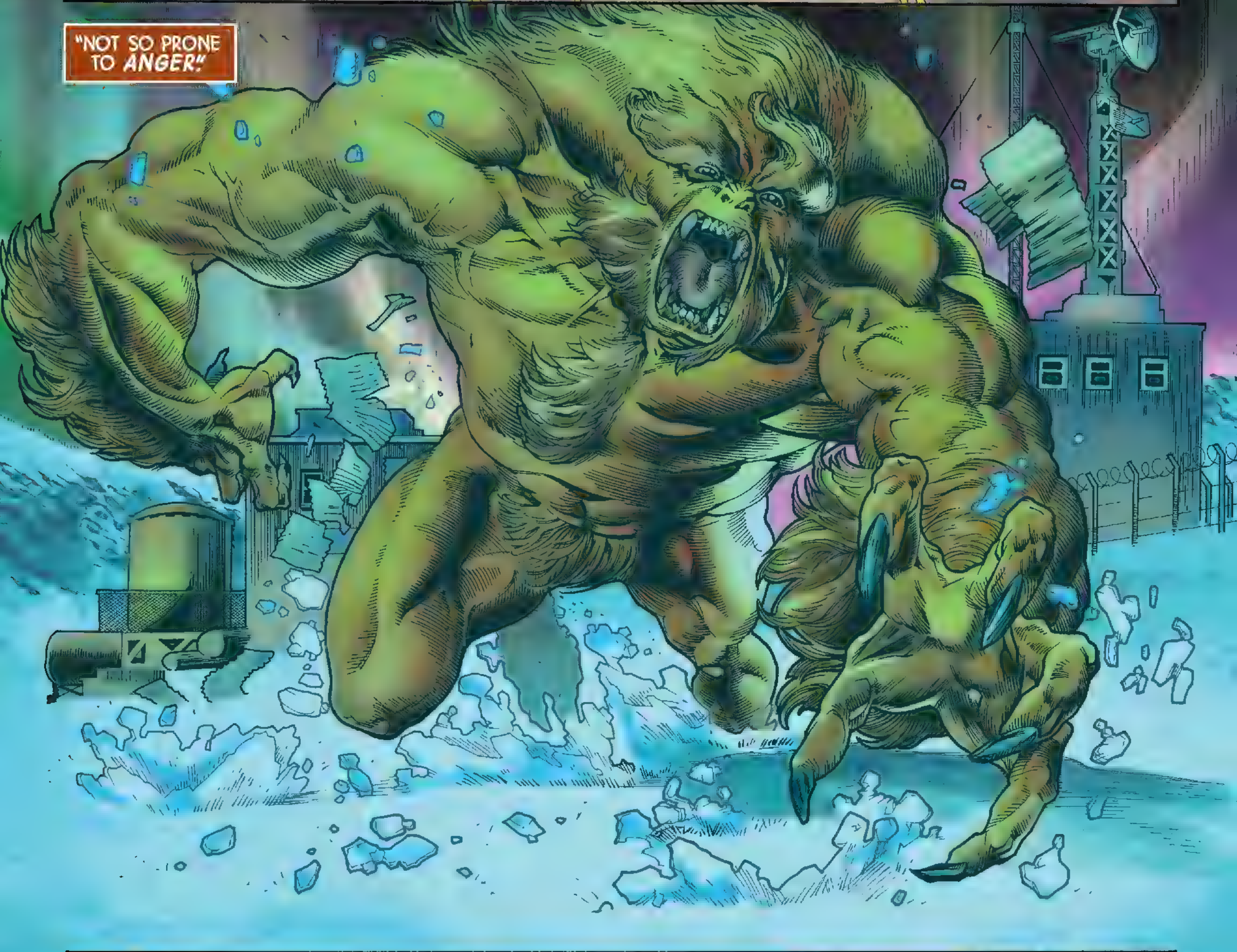

WOW. HE WENT OFF LIKE THAT A *LOT?*
ONCE OR TWICE. A FEW TIMES.
BUT--LOOK, HIS MOTHER WAS *DEAD,* HIS DAD WAS IN AN *INSTITUTION...* HE WAS HOLDING A LOT *IN.*
"HE WAS USUALLY PRETTY FUN TO BE AROUND."
YOU GAVE *ALL* YOUR CLOTHES TO THE GOODWILL?
AND I BOUGHT *TEN* IDENTICAL *SUITS.* LIKE *EINSTEIN*--I'LL NEVER WORRY ABOUT WHAT TO WEAR AGAIN.
WELL, THOREAU *DID* TALK ABOUT *SIMPLIFYING* LIFE...BUT...
...PURPLE?
IT'S CALLED *STYLE,* WALTER. I'VE STUDIED CURRENT TRENDS.
IF ANYTHING, THIS WILL ONLY BECOME *MORE* FASHIONABLE.
SOUNDS A LITTLE *MANIC.*
HE HAD HIS UPS AND DOWNS.
BUT HE *DID* GET ME SEEING *GAMMA RADIATION* IN A WHOLE NEW WAY...
"I WAS A *DABBLER,* OBVIOUSLY. *FOOTBALL* WAS MY CAREER, SCIENCE WAS JUST A HOBBY THAT MADE ME SEEM *INTERESTING.*
"BUT THEN... WELL.
OH MY GOD.
OUR TOP STORY ONCE AGAIN--

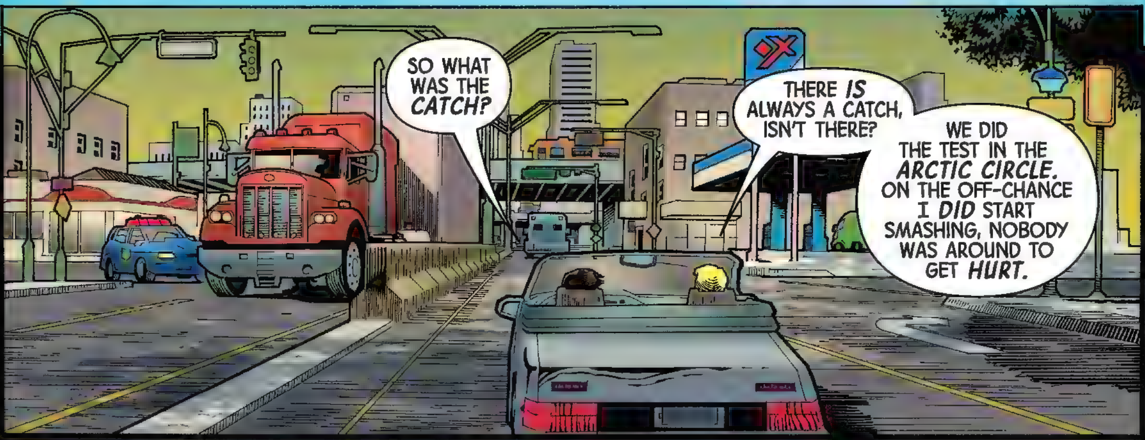

GENERAL THADDEUS ROSS--SPEAKING ON THE RECORD--TODAY CONFIRMED THAT THE MONSTER KNOWN AS THE HULK IS NONE OTHER THAN ATOMIC SCIENTIST ROBERT BRUCE BANNER.
VIEWERS MAY FIND THE FOLLOWING IMAGES DISTURBING--
BRUCE.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
STATION IN NEVADA HULK IS NOTED ATOMIC SCIENTIST CONFIRMS GENERAL AVENGERS AND FANTASTIC FOUR UNAVAILABLE FOR COMME
LIVE
"THEN I GOT SERIOUS.
"LONG STORY SHORT--I QUIT FOOTBALL AND MADE IT MY MISSION TO DUPLICATE WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO BRUCE.
"AND--AT THE COST OF MY FORTUNE, AND WITH FUNDING AND ENCOURAGEMENT FROM DEPARTMENT H, THE CANADIAN SUPER HERO MONITORING AGENCY--
"--WE WENT AHEAD AND DID IT.
"EVER BEEN HIT BY A GAMMA BOMB, JACKIE?

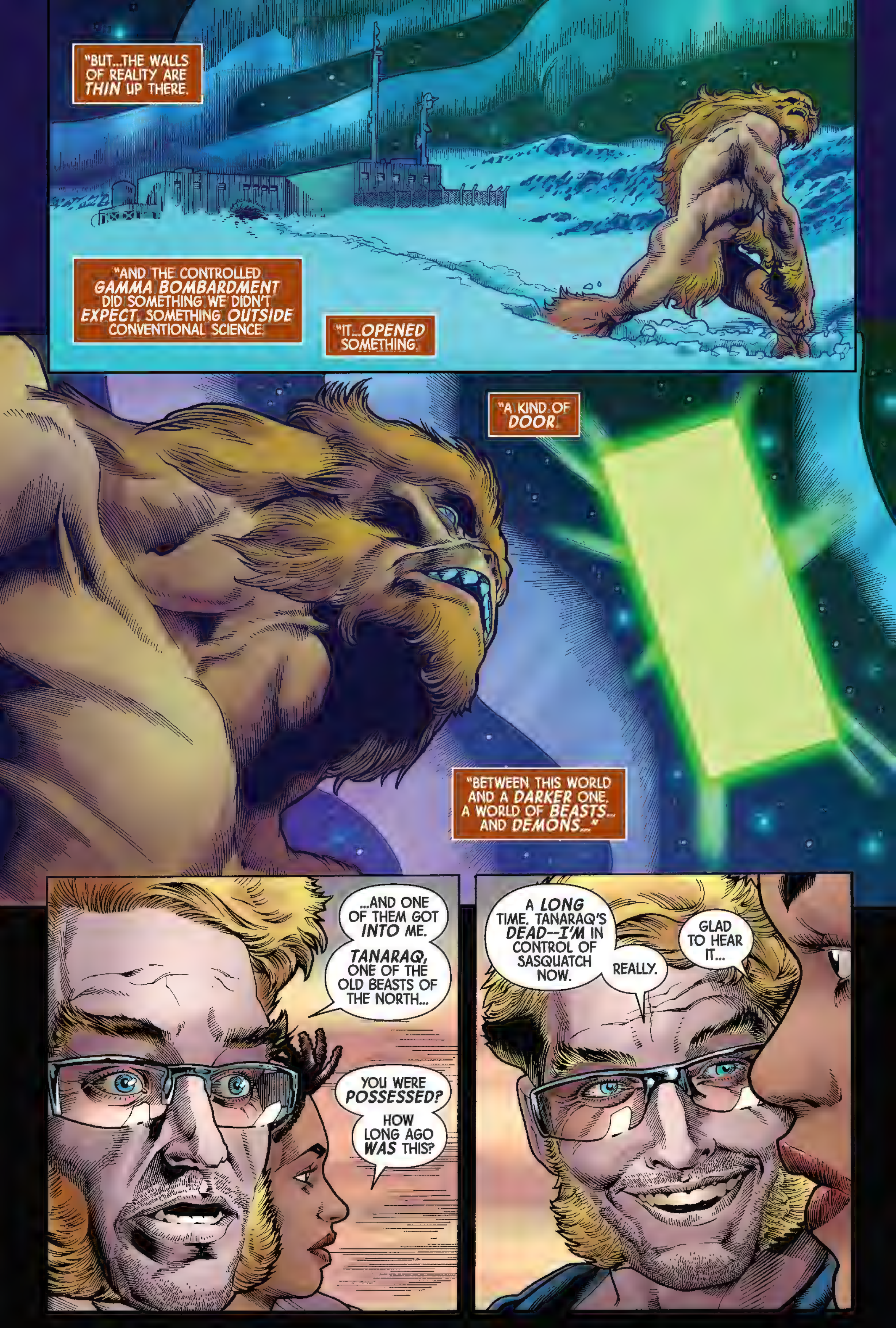

"IT'S A TRIP."
... A *TRIP*, HUH?
"DON'T LOOK."
BUT-- DADDY, HE'S--
REMEMBER WHAT THE *TV* SAID, BABY GIRL. THE EMERGENCY BROADCAST.
IF HE'S NEAR, YOU KEEP *QUIET* AND KEEP *STILL*. DON'T DRAW *ATTENTION*.

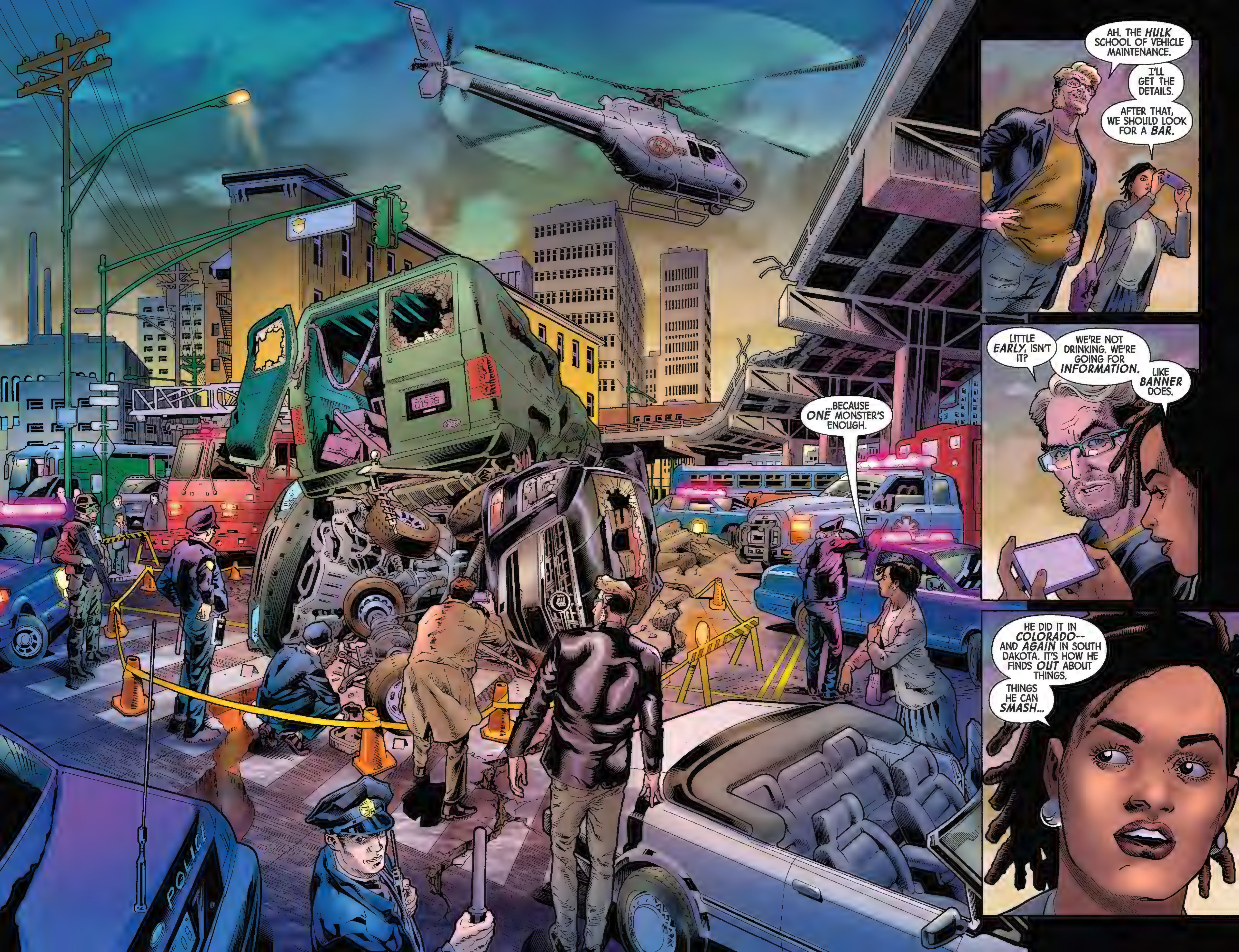

DON'T LOOK HIM IN THE *EYE*.
...YEAH. THAT LOOK IN YOUR EYE. I DO *GET* IT.
THAT'S WHY I *DID* IT.

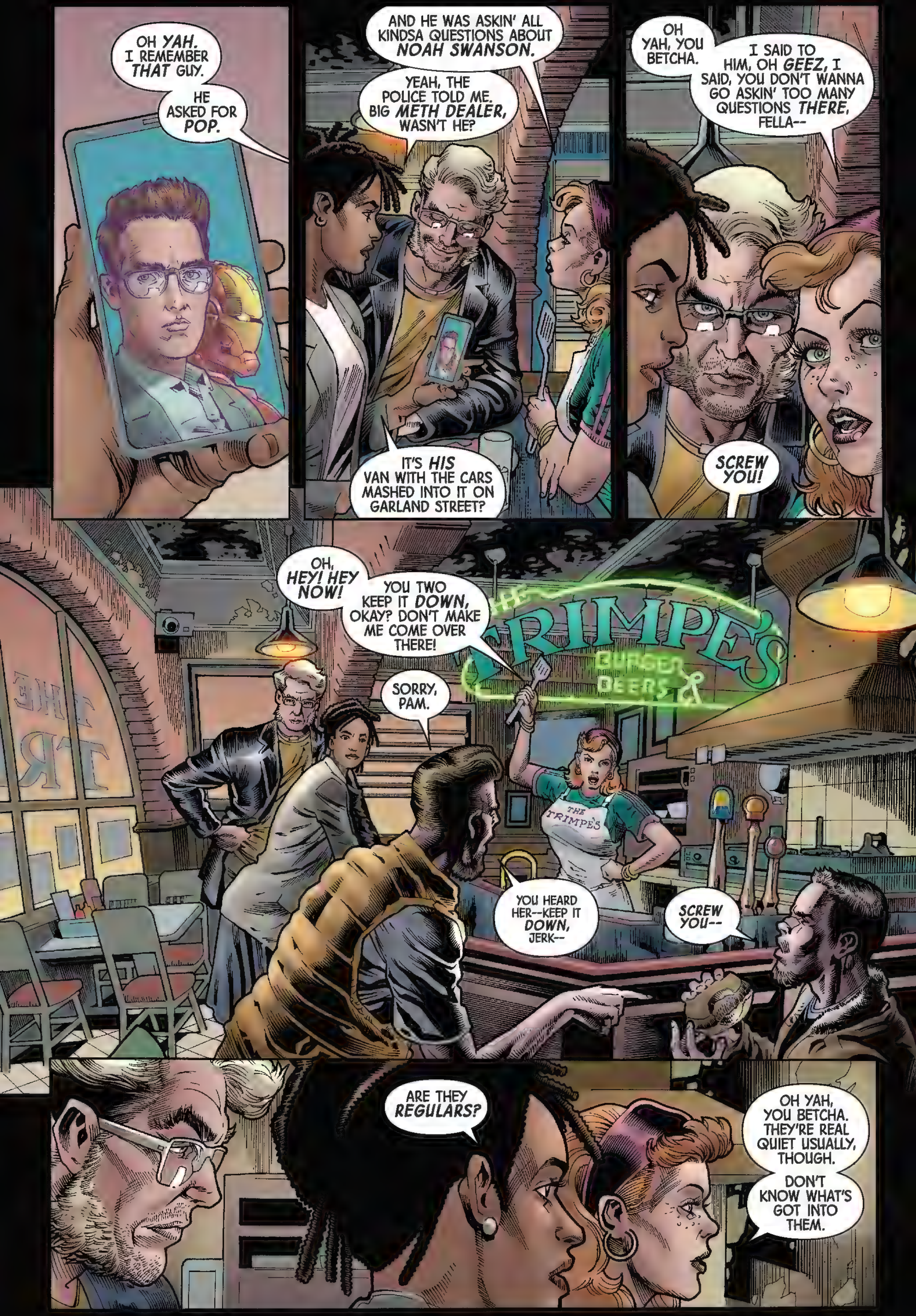

I WAS A *JOCK*, REMEMBER? I WORKED OUT. I WAS *TWICE* AS STRONG AS BRUCE, EASILY.
SO, THE THINKING WENT, *MY* HULK COULD *COUNTER* HIS--CREATE A *DETERRENT* FOR CANADA. FOR THE *WORLD*. AND *MY* PERSONALITY WOULD REMAIN IN *CONTROL*.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE *NOTICED*, BUT I'M A PRETTY LAID-BACK GUY.

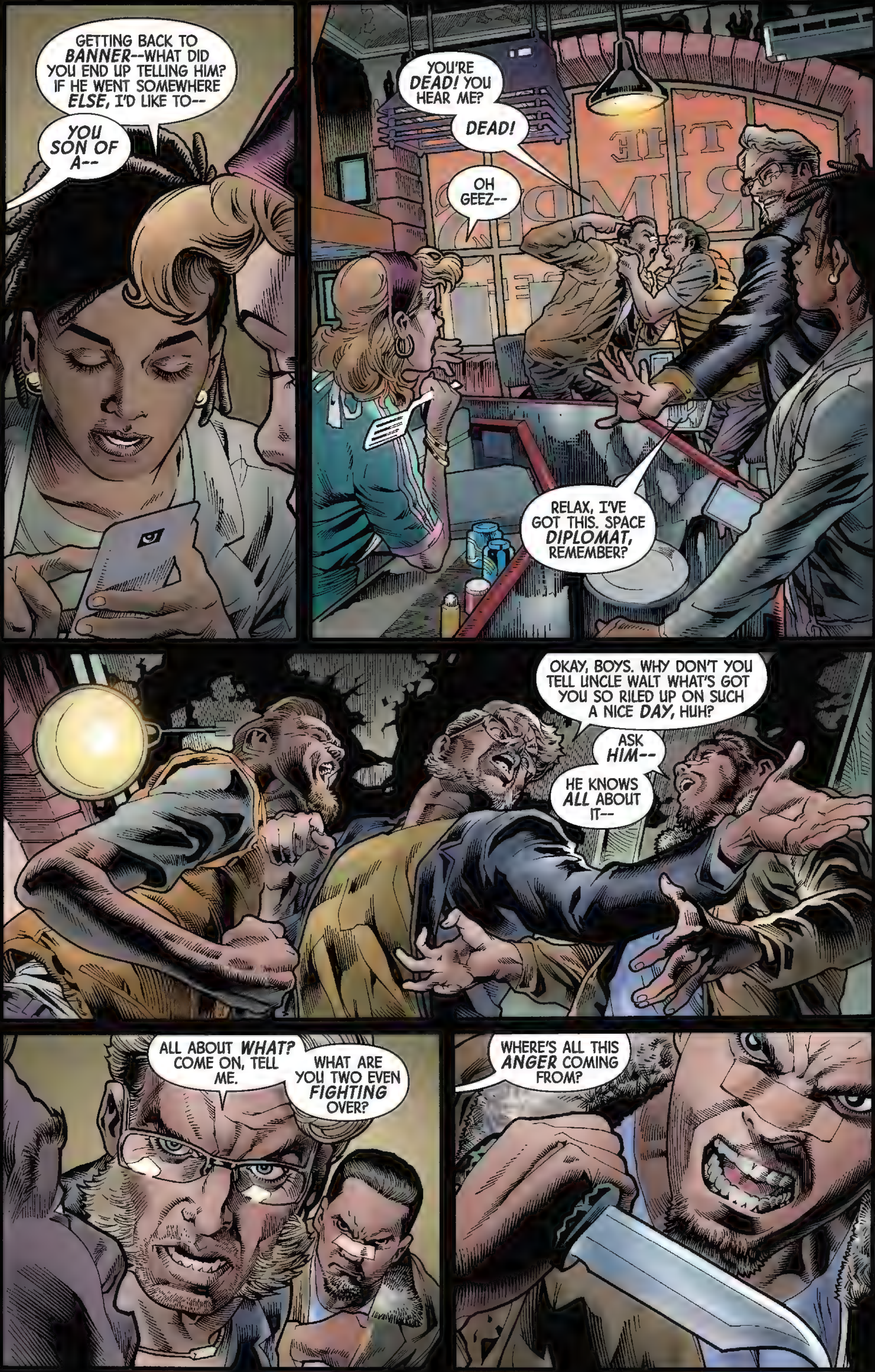

"NOT SO PRONE TO *ANGER*."

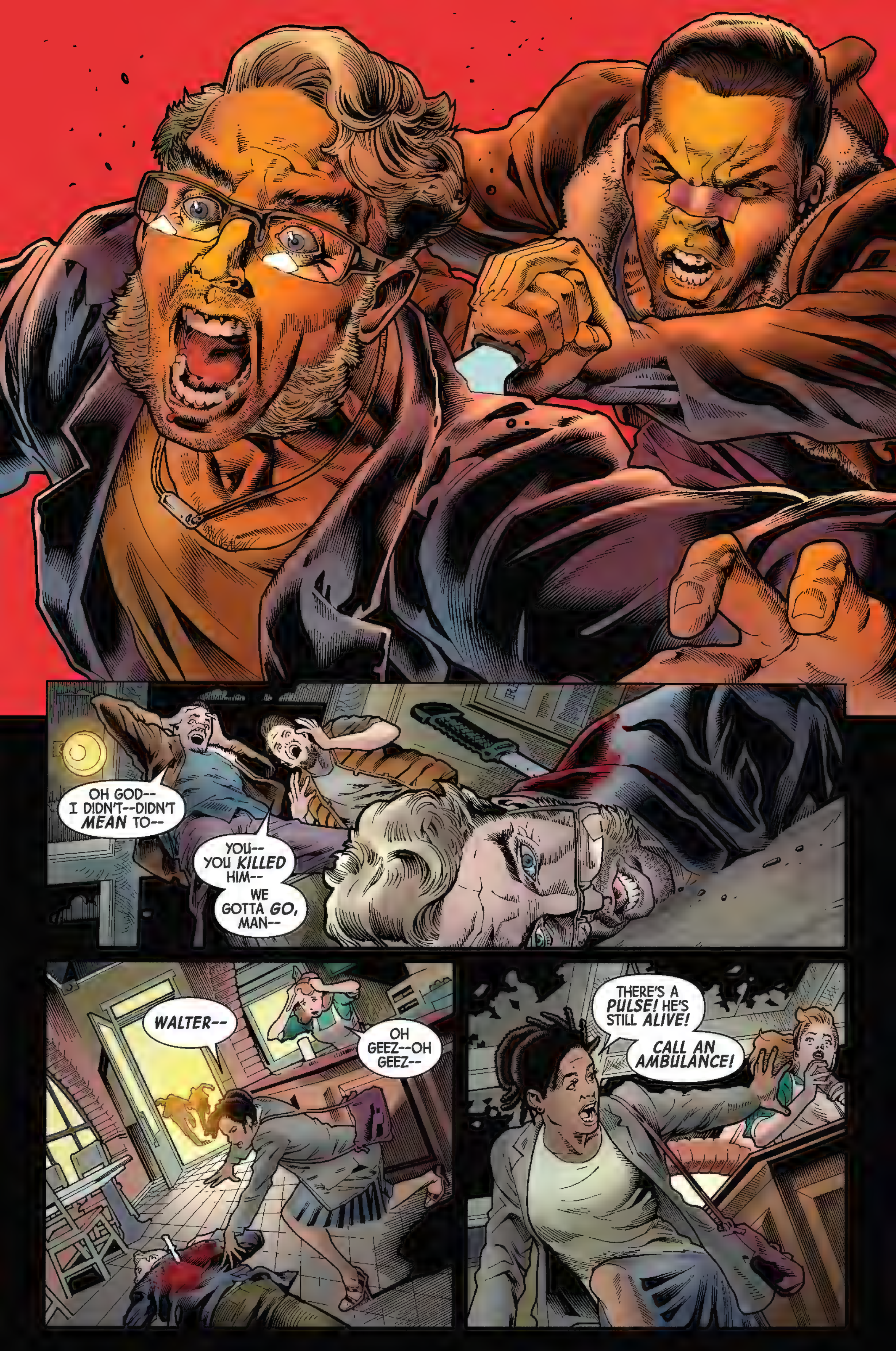

SO WHAT WAS THE *CATCH*?
THERE *IS* ALWAYS A CATCH, ISN'T THERE?
WE DID THE TEST IN THE *ARCTIC CIRCLE*. ON THE OFF-CHANCE I *DID* START SMASHING, NOBODY WAS AROUND TO GET *HURT*.

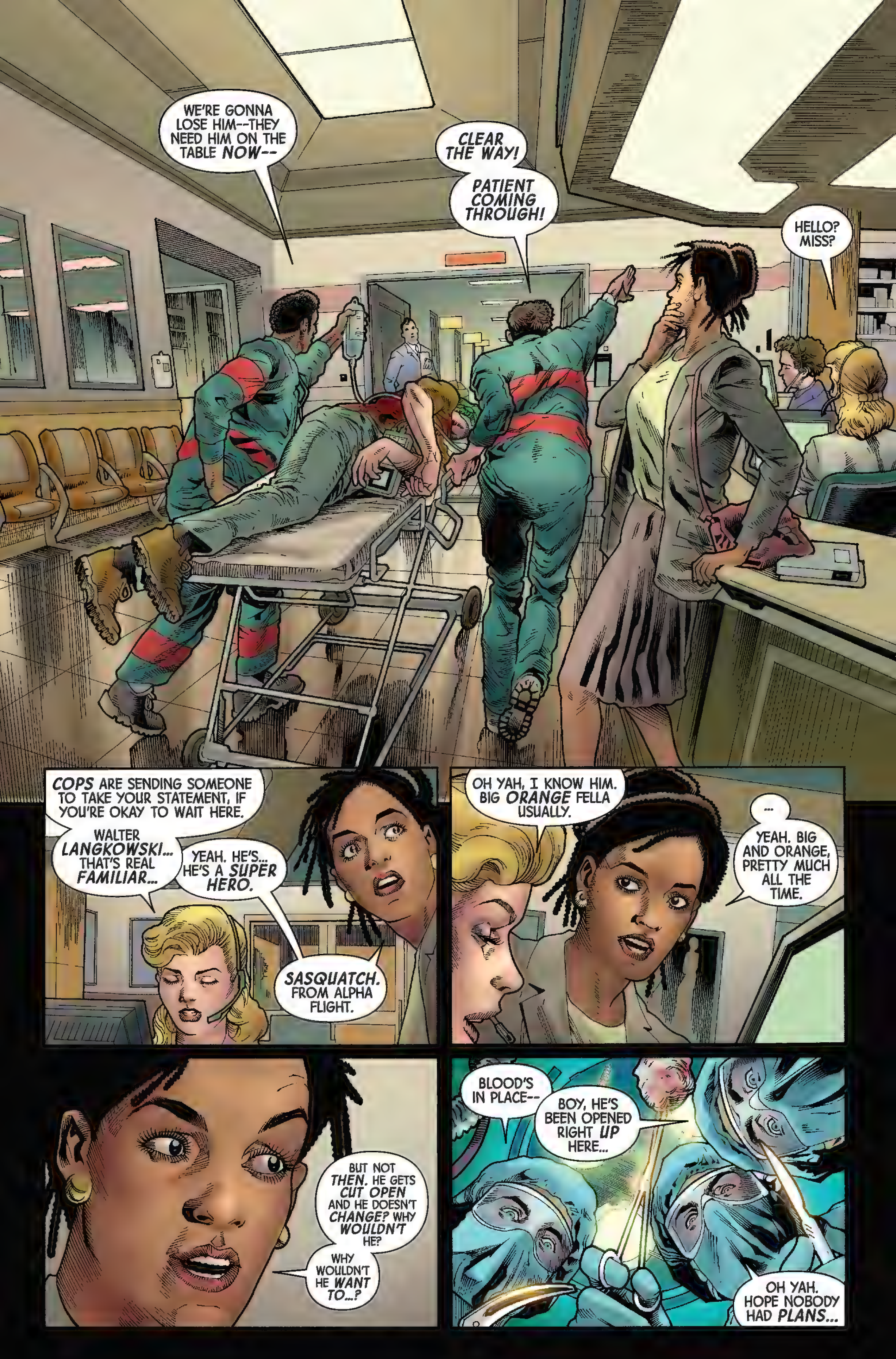

"BUT...THE WALLS OF REALITY ARE *THIN* UP THERE.
"AND THE CONTROLLED *GAMMA BOMBARDMENT* DID SOMETHING WE DIDN'T *EXPECT*. SOMETHING *OUTSIDE* CONVENTIONAL SCIENCE.
"IT...*OPENED* SOMETHING.
"A KIND OF *DOOR*.
"BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND A *DARKER* ONE. A WORLD OF *BEASTS*... AND *DEMONS*..."
...AND ONE OF THEM GOT *INTO* ME.
TANARAQ, ONE OF THE OLD BEASTS OF THE NORTH...
YOU WERE *POSSESSED*?
HOW LONG AGO *WAS* THIS?
A *LONG* TIME. TANARAQ'S *DEAD--I'M* IN CONTROL OF SASQUATCH NOW.
REALLY.
GLAD TO HEAR IT...

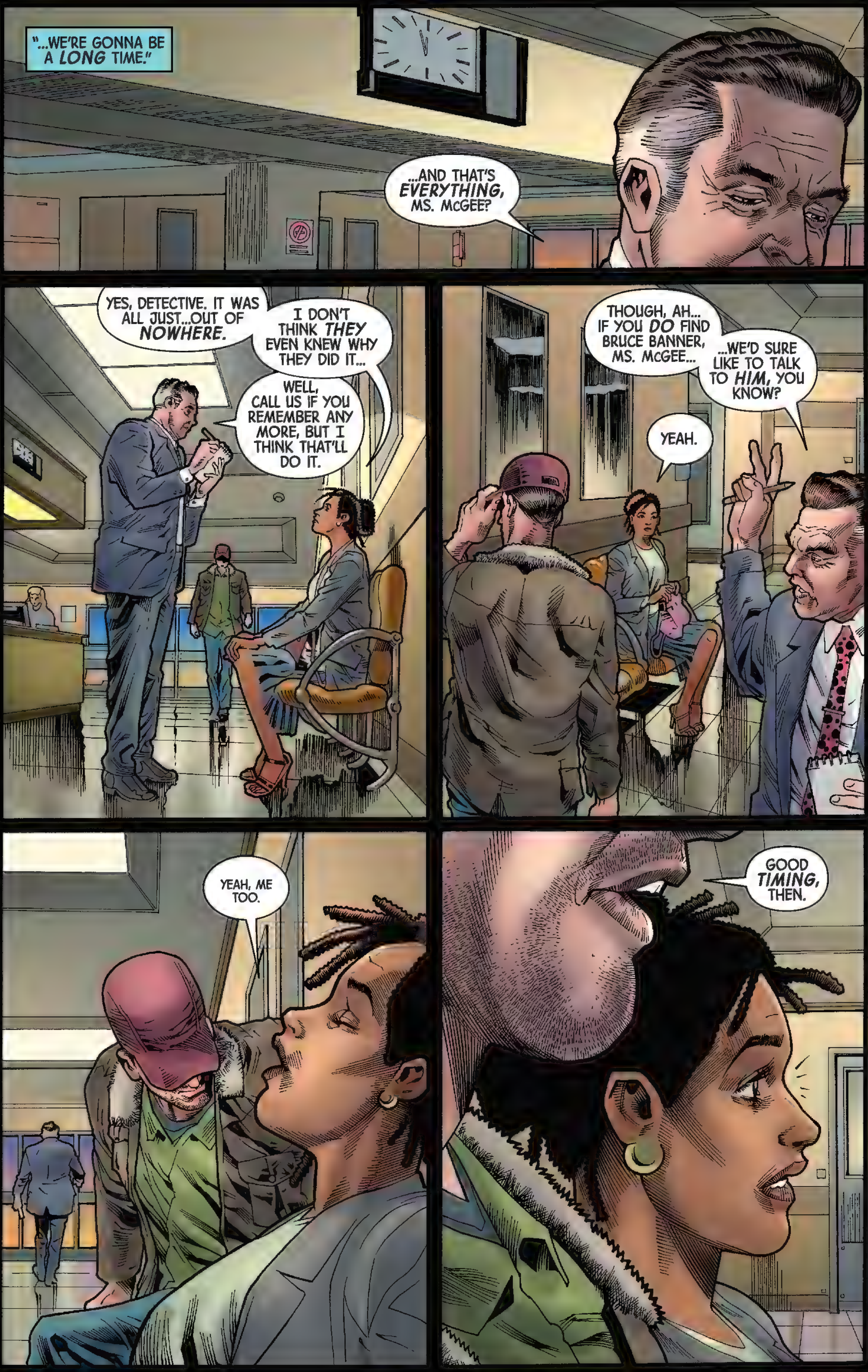

...BECAUSE *ONE* MONSTER'S ENOUGH.
POLICE
AH. THE *HULK* SCHOOL OF VEHICLE MAINTENANCE.
I'LL GET THE DETAILS.
AFTER THAT, WE SHOULD LOOK FOR A *BAR*.
LITTLE *EARLY*, ISN'T IT?
WE'RE NOT DRINKING. WE'RE GOING FOR *INFORMATION*.
LIKE *BANNER* DOES.
HE DID IT IN *COLORADO*-- AND *AGAIN* IN SOUTH DAKOTA. IT'S HOW HE FINDS *OUT* ABOUT THINGS.
THINGS HE CAN *SMASH*...

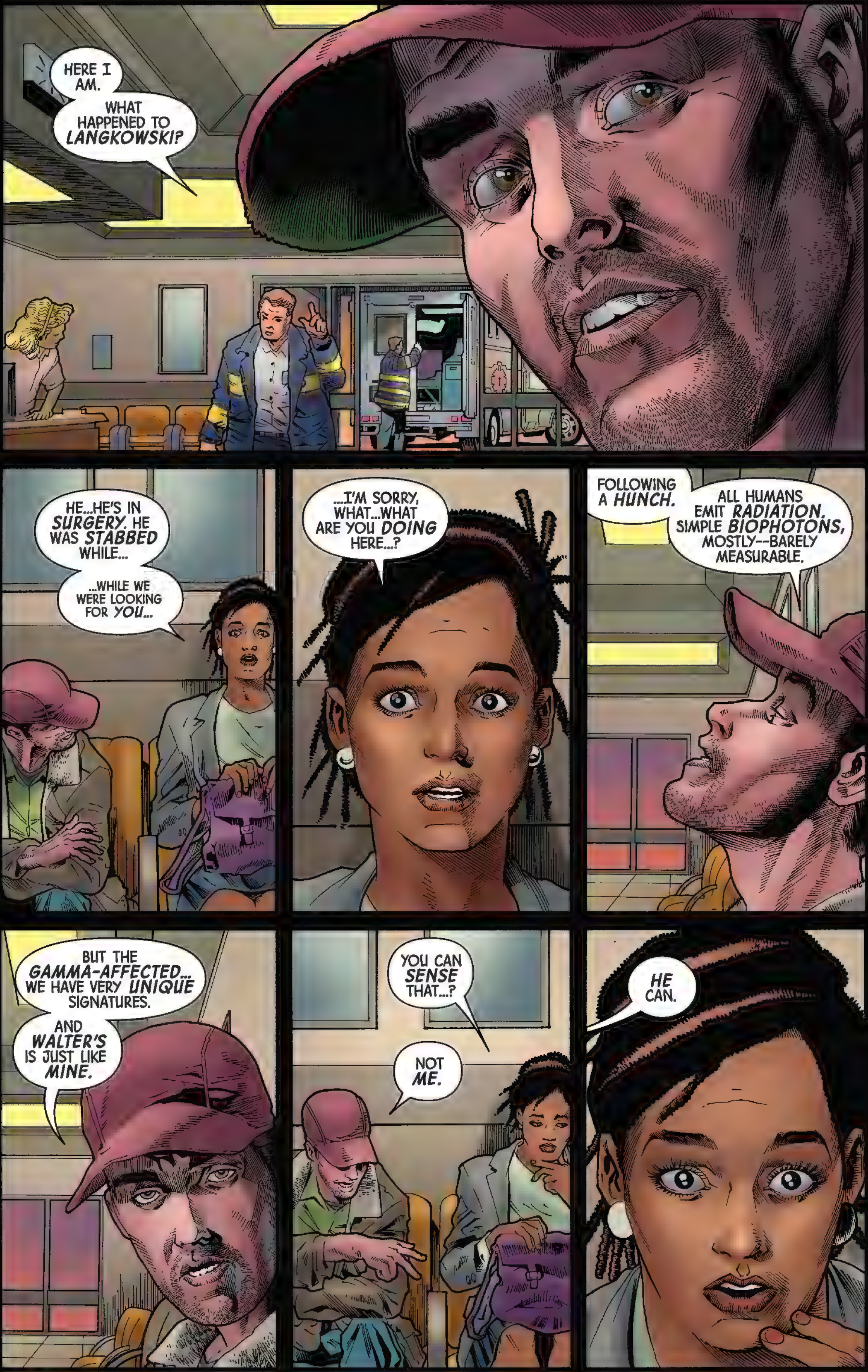

OH *YAH.* I REMEMBER *THAT* GUY.
HE ASKED FOR *POP.*
AND HE WAS ASKIN' ALL KINDSA QUESTIONS ABOUT *NOAH SWANSON.*
YEAH, THE POLICE TOLD ME. BIG *METH DEALER,* WASN'T HE?
IT'S *HIS* VAN WITH THE CARS MASHED INTO IT ON GARLAND STREET?
OH YAH, YOU BETCHA.
I SAID TO HIM, OH *GEEZ,* I SAID, YOU DON'T WANNA GO ASKIN' TOO MANY QUESTIONS *THERE,* FELLA--
SCREW YOU!
OH, *HEY! HEY NOW!*
YOU TWO KEEP IT *DOWN,* OKAY? DON'T MAKE ME COME OVER THERE!
THE TRIMPE'S
BURGER BEERS
SORRY, PAM.
THE TR
THE TRIMPE'S
YOU HEARD HER--KEEP IT *DOWN,* JERK--
SCREW YOU--
ARE THEY *REGULARS?*
OH YAH, YOU BETCHA. THEY'RE REAL QUIET USUALLY, THOUGH.
DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOT INTO THEM.

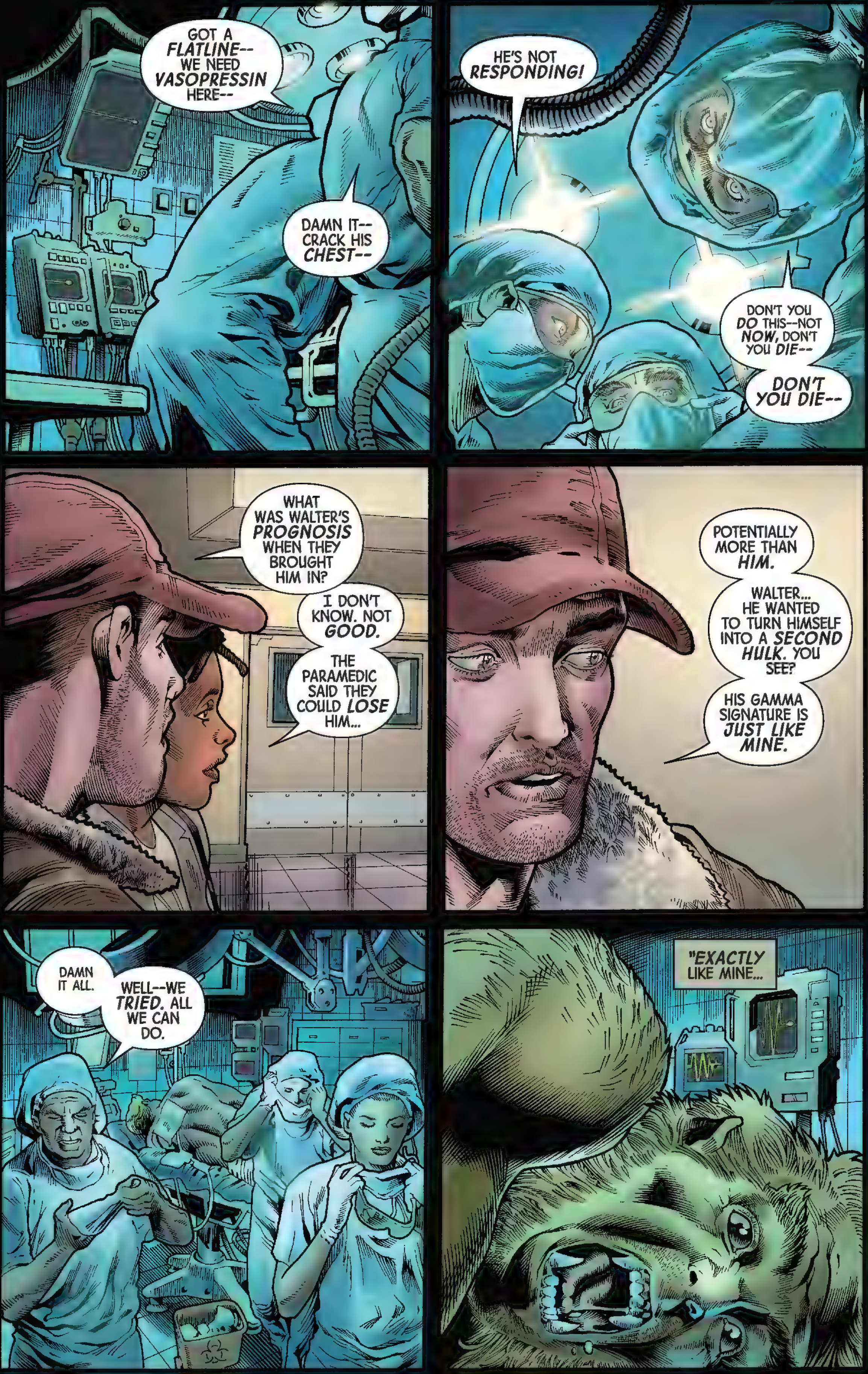

GETTING BACK TO *BANNER*--WHAT DID YOU END UP TELLING HIM? IF HE WENT SOMEWHERE *ELSE,* I'D LIKE TO--
YOU SON OF A--
YOU'RE *DEAD!* YOU HEAR ME?
DEAD!
OH GEEZ--
RELAX, I'VE GOT THIS. SPACE *DIPLOMAT,* REMEMBER?
OKAY, BOYS. WHY DON'T YOU TELL UNCLE WALT WHAT'S GOT YOU SO RILED UP ON SUCH A NICE *DAY,* HUH?
ASK *HIM--*
HE KNOWS *ALL* ABOUT IT--
ALL ABOUT *WHAT?* COME ON, TELL ME.
WHAT ARE YOU TWO EVEN *FIGHTING* OVER?
WHERE'S ALL THIS *ANGER* COMING FROM?

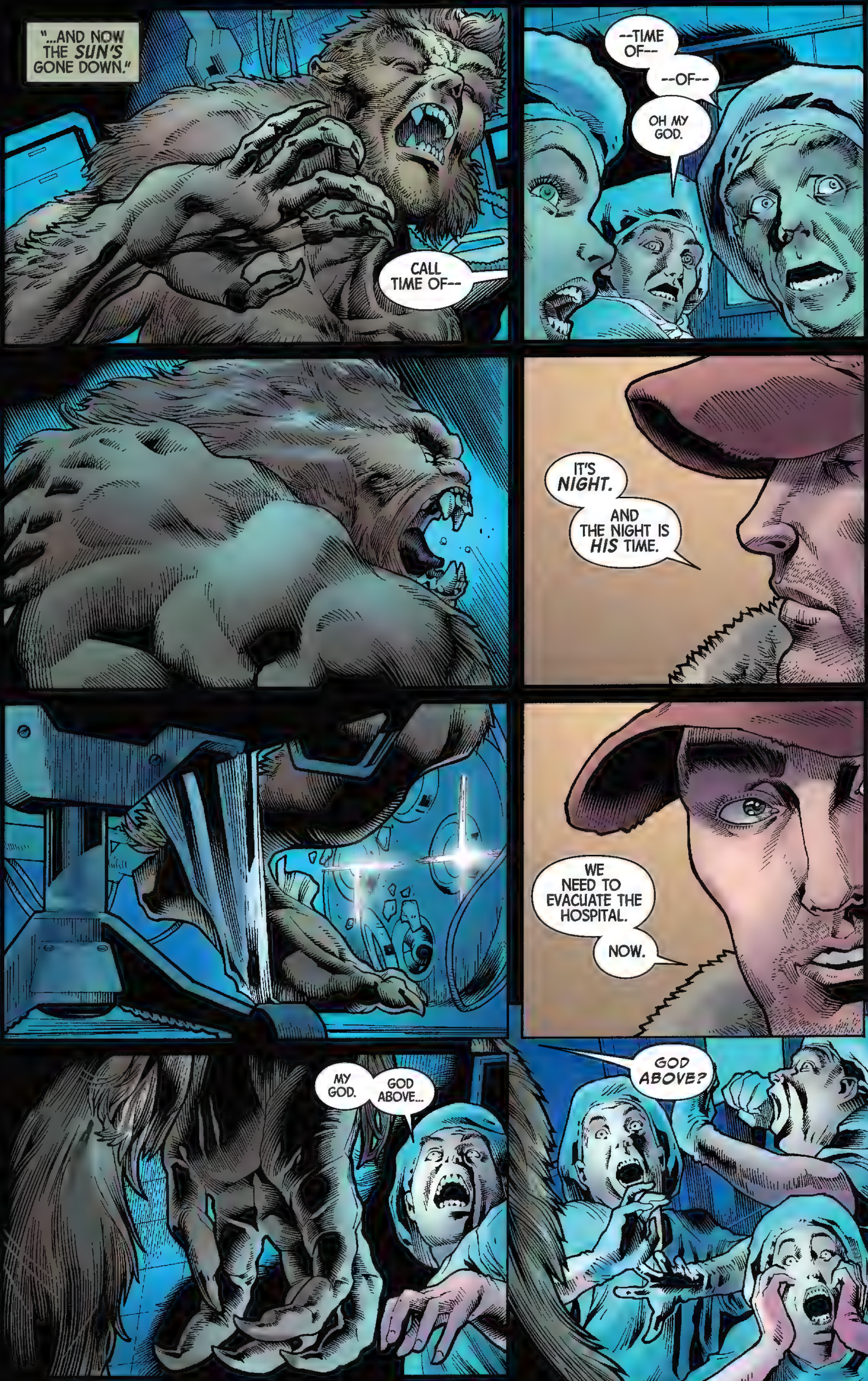

OH GOD-- I DIDN'T--DIDN'T *MEAN* TO--
YOU-- YOU *KILLED* HIM--
WE GOTTA *GO,* MAN--
WALTER--
OH GEEZ--OH GEEZ--
THERE'S A *PULSE!* HE'S STILL *ALIVE!*
CALL AN AMBULANCE!

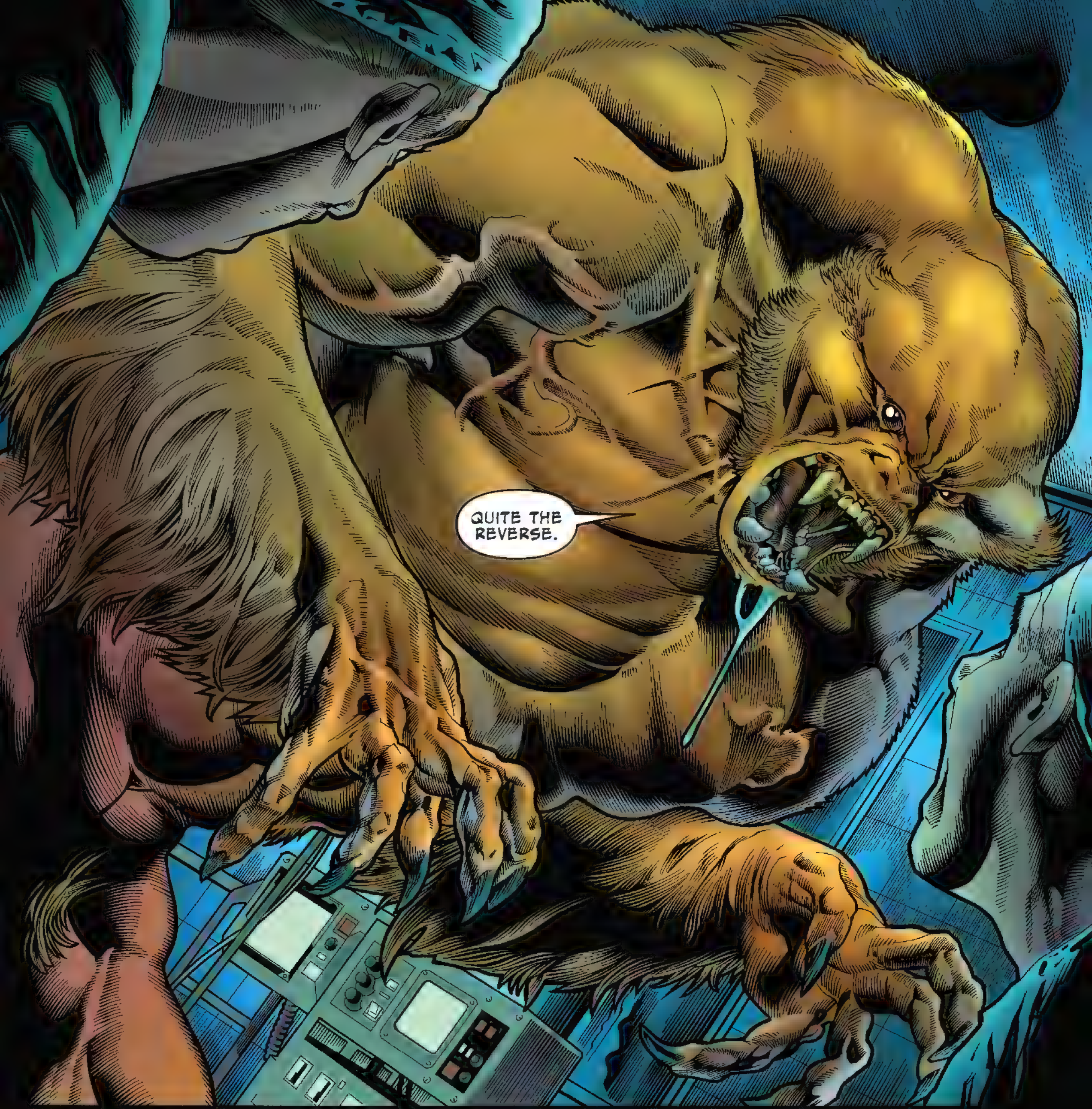

WE'RE GONNA LOSE HIM--THEY NEED HIM ON THE TABLE NOW--
CLEAR THE WAY!
PATIENT COMING THROUGH!
HELLO? MISS?
COPS ARE SENDING SOMEONE TO TAKE YOUR STATEMENT, IF YOU'RE OKAY TO WAIT HERE.
WALTER LANGKOWSKI... THAT'S REAL FAMILIAR...
YEAH. HE'S... HE'S A SUPER HERO.
SASQUATCH. FROM ALPHA FLIGHT.
OH YAH, I KNOW HIM. BIG ORANGE FELLA USUALLY.
...
YEAH. BIG AND ORANGE, PRETTY MUCH ALL THE TIME.
BUT NOT THEN. HE GETS CUT OPEN AND HE DOESN'T CHANGE? WHY WOULDN'T HE?
WHY WOULDN'T HE WANT TO...?
BLOOD'S IN PLACE--
BOY, HE'S BEEN OPENED RIGHT UP HERE...
OH YAH. HOPE NOBODY HAD PLANS...


"...WE'RE GONNA BE A *LONG* TIME."
...AND THAT'S *EVERYTHING,* MS. McGEE?
YES, DETECTIVE. IT WAS ALL JUST...OUT OF *NOWHERE.*
I DON'T THINK *THEY* EVEN KNEW WHY THEY DID IT...
WELL, CALL US IF YOU REMEMBER ANY MORE, BUT I THINK THAT'LL DO IT.
THOUGH, AH... IF YOU *DO* FIND BRUCE BANNER, MS. McGEE...
...WE'D SURE LIKE TO TALK TO *HIM,* YOU KNOW?
YEAH.
YEAH, ME TOO.
GOOD *TIMING,* THEN.


HERE I AM.
WHAT HAPPENED TO LANGKOWSKI?
HE...HE'S IN SURGERY. HE WAS STABBED WHILE...
...WHILE WE WERE LOOKING FOR YOU...
...I'M SORRY, WHAT...WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE...?
FOLLOWING A HUNCH.
ALL HUMANS EMIT RADIATION. SIMPLE BIOPHOTONS, MOSTLY--BARELY MEASURABLE.
BUT THE GAMMA-AFFECTED... WE HAVE VERY UNIQUE SIGNATURES.
AND WALTER'S IS JUST LIKE MINE.
YOU CAN SENSE THAT...?
NOT ME.
HE CAN.


GOT A *FLATLINE*-- WE NEED *VASOPRESSIN* HERE--
DAMN IT-- CRACK HIS *CHEST*--
HE'S NOT *RESPONDING!*
DON'T YOU *DO* THIS--NOT *NOW*, DON'T YOU *DIE*--
DON'T YOU DIE--
WHAT WAS WALTER'S *PROGNOSIS* WHEN THEY BROUGHT HIM IN?
I DON'T KNOW. NOT *GOOD.*
THE PARAMEDIC SAID THEY COULD *LOSE* HIM...
POTENTIALLY MORE THAN *HIM.*
WALTER... HE WANTED TO TURN HIMSELF INTO A *SECOND HULK*. YOU SEE?
HIS GAMMA SIGNATURE IS *JUST LIKE MINE.*
DAMN IT ALL.
WELL--WE *TRIED*. ALL WE CAN DO.
"*EXACTLY* LIKE MINE...


"...AND NOW THE *SUN'S* GONE DOWN."
CALL TIME OF--
--TIME OF--
--OF--
OH MY GOD.
IT'S *NIGHT.*
AND THE NIGHT IS *HIS* TIME.
WE NEED TO EVACUATE THE HOSPITAL.
NOW.
MY GOD.
GOD ABOVE...
GOD ABOVE?

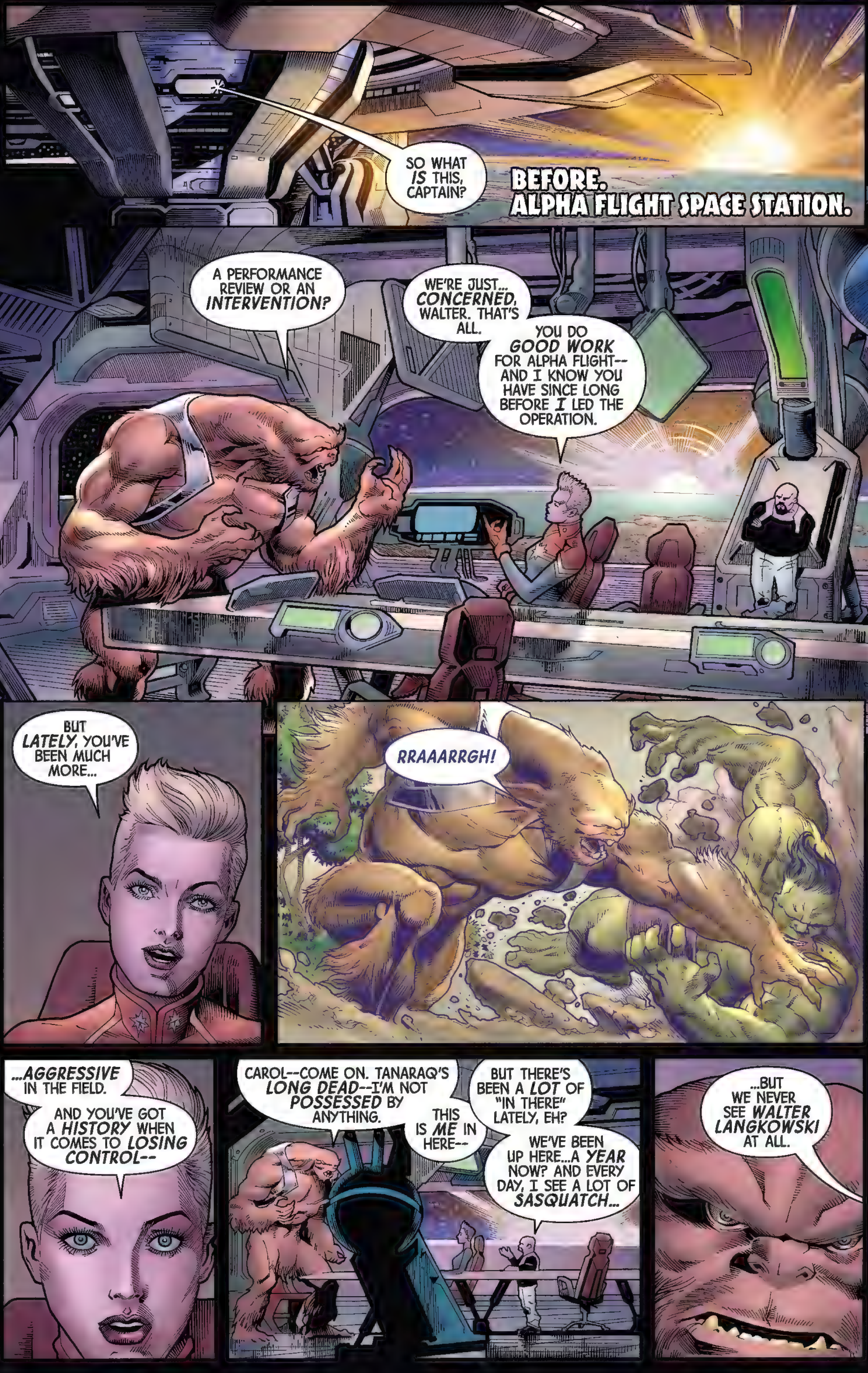

QUITE THE REVERSE.

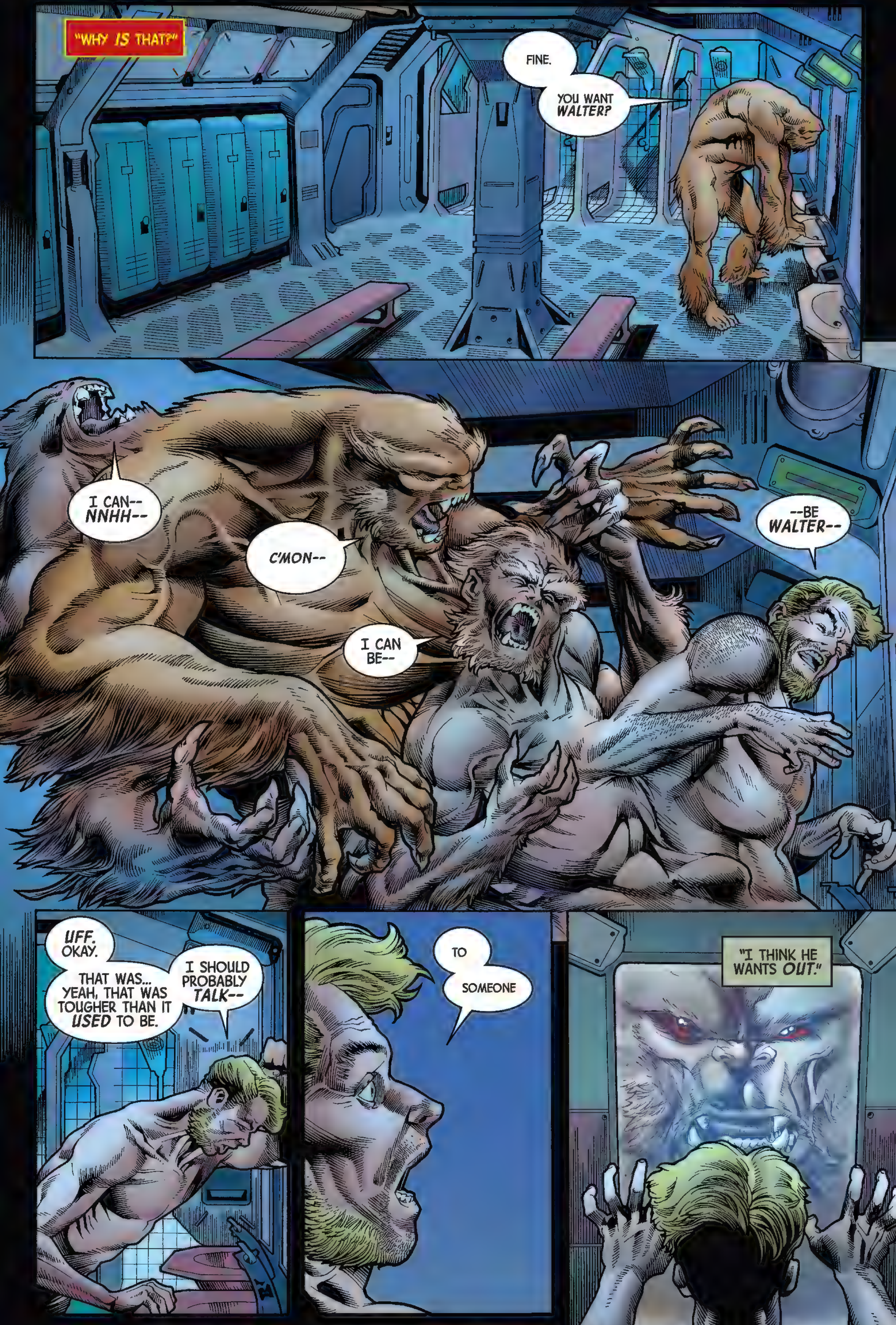
TIME OF DEATH

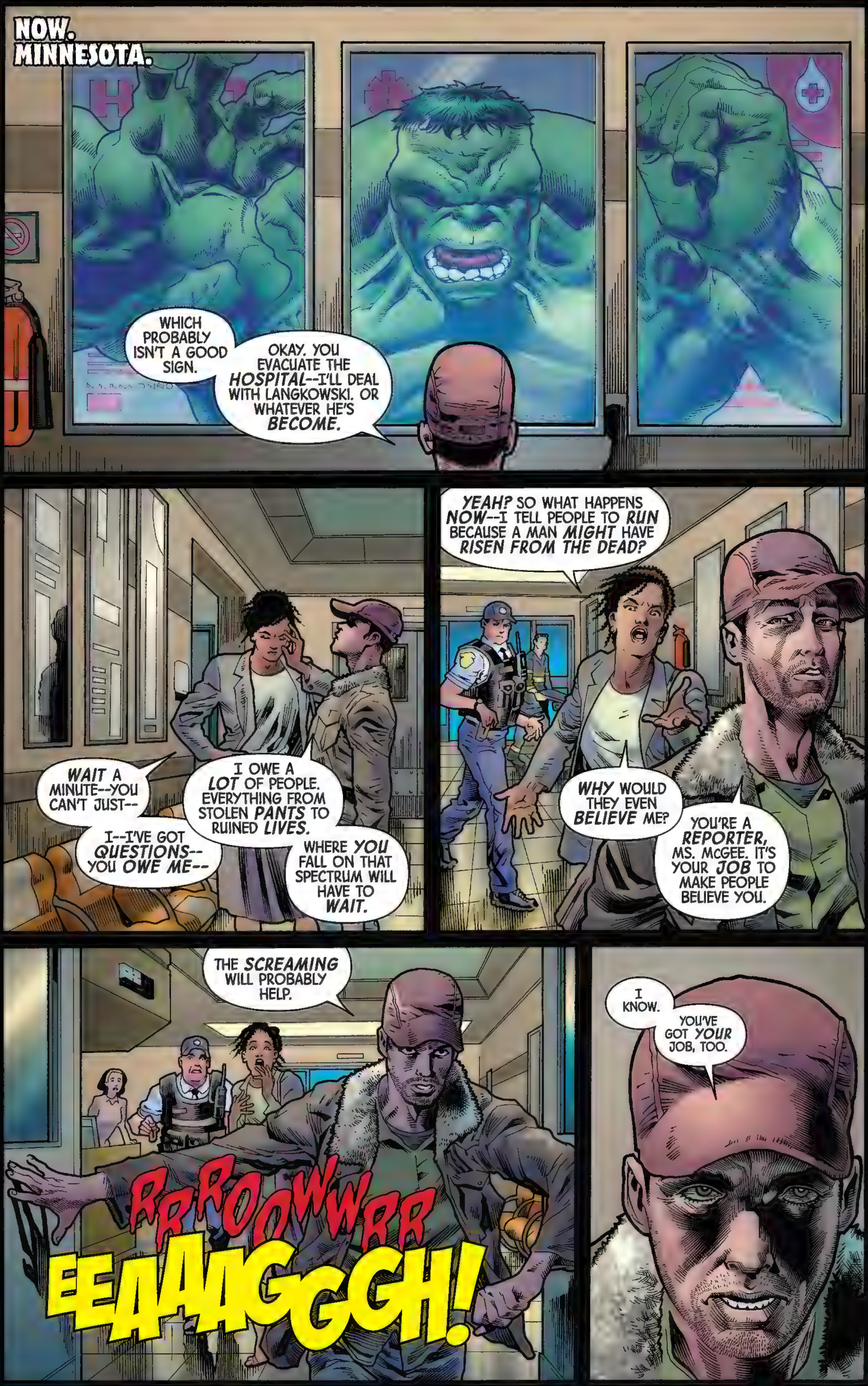
5

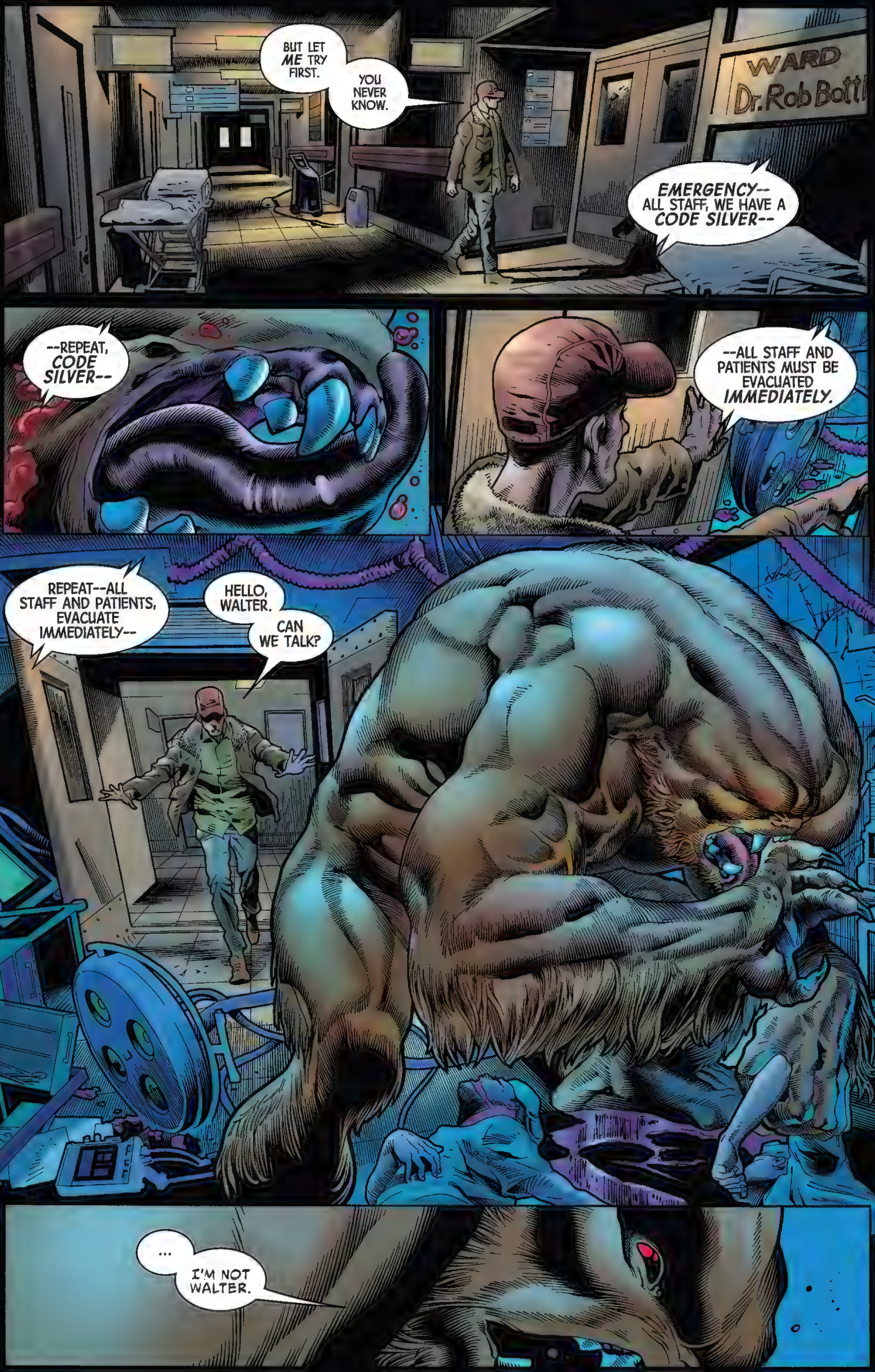
“MY DEVIL HAD BEEN LONG CAGED, HE CAME OUT ROARING.”

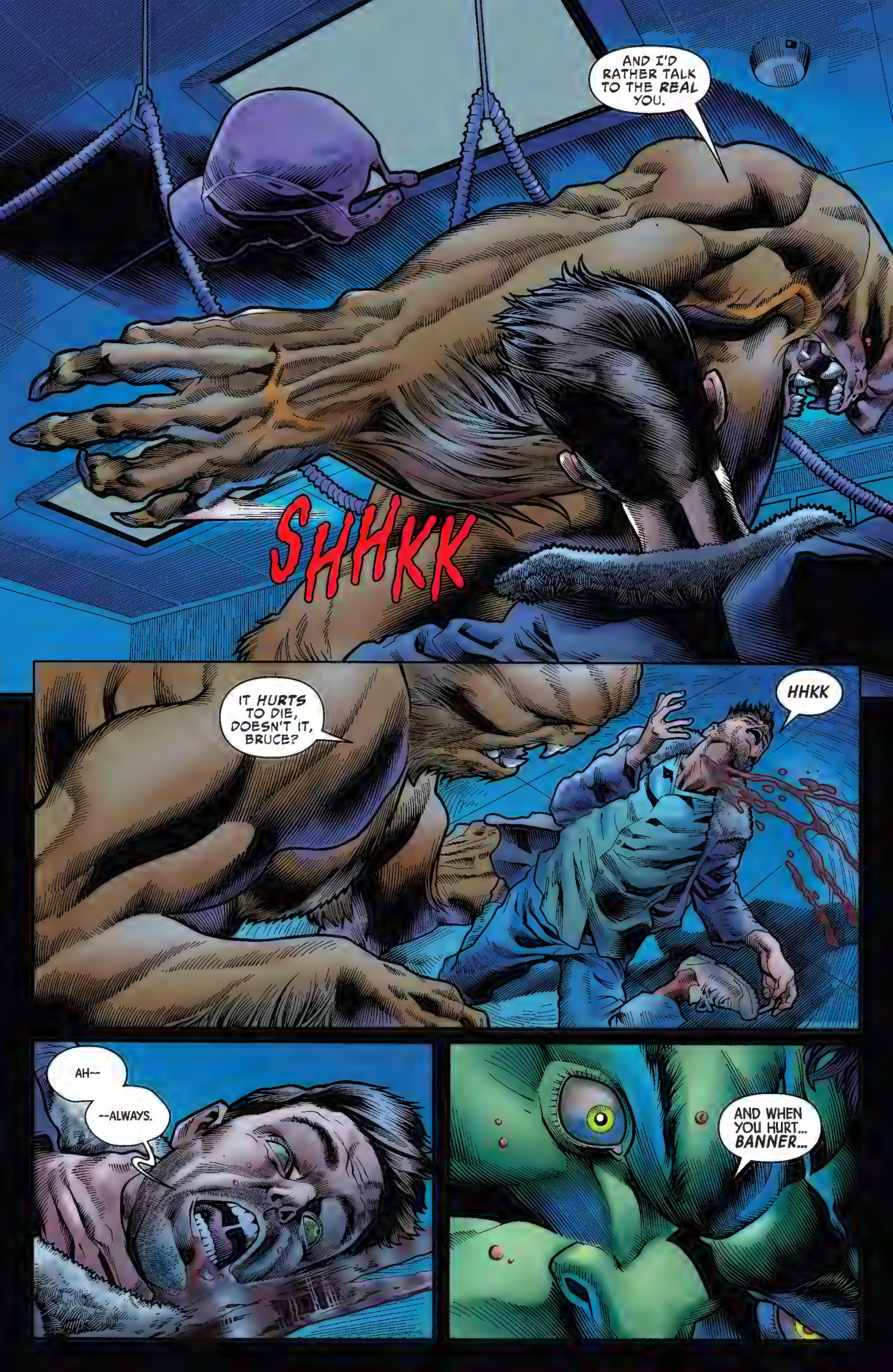
– ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

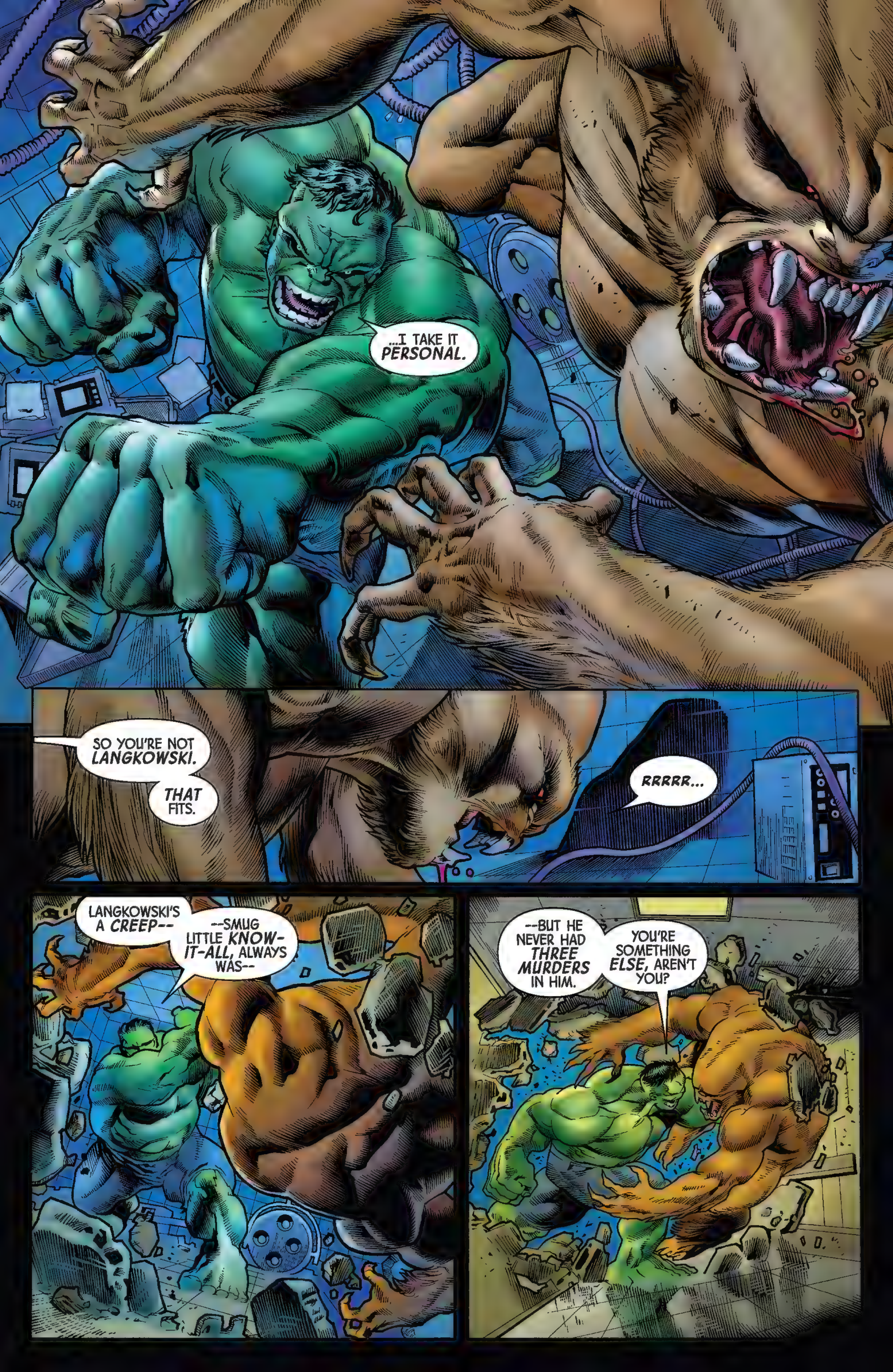

SO WHAT *IS* THIS, CAPTAIN?
BEFORE. ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
A PERFORMANCE REVIEW OR AN *INTERVENTION?*
WE'RE JUST... *CONCERNED,* WALTER. THAT'S ALL.
YOU DO *GOOD WORK* FOR ALPHA FLIGHT-- AND I KNOW YOU HAVE SINCE LONG BEFORE *I* LED THE OPERATION.
BUT *LATELY,* YOU'VE BEEN MUCH MORE...
RRAAARRGH!
...*AGGRESSIVE* IN THE FIELD.
AND YOU'VE GOT A *HISTORY* WHEN IT COMES TO *LOSING CONTROL--*
CAROL--COME ON. TANARAQ'S *LONG DEAD*--I'M NOT *POSSESSED* BY ANYTHING.
THIS IS *ME* IN HERE--
BUT THERE'S BEEN A *LOT* OF "IN THERE" LATELY, EH?
WE'VE BEEN UP HERE...A *YEAR* NOW? AND EVERY DAY, I SEE A LOT OF *SASQUATCH...*
...BUT WE NEVER SEE *WALTER LANGKOWSKI* AT ALL.

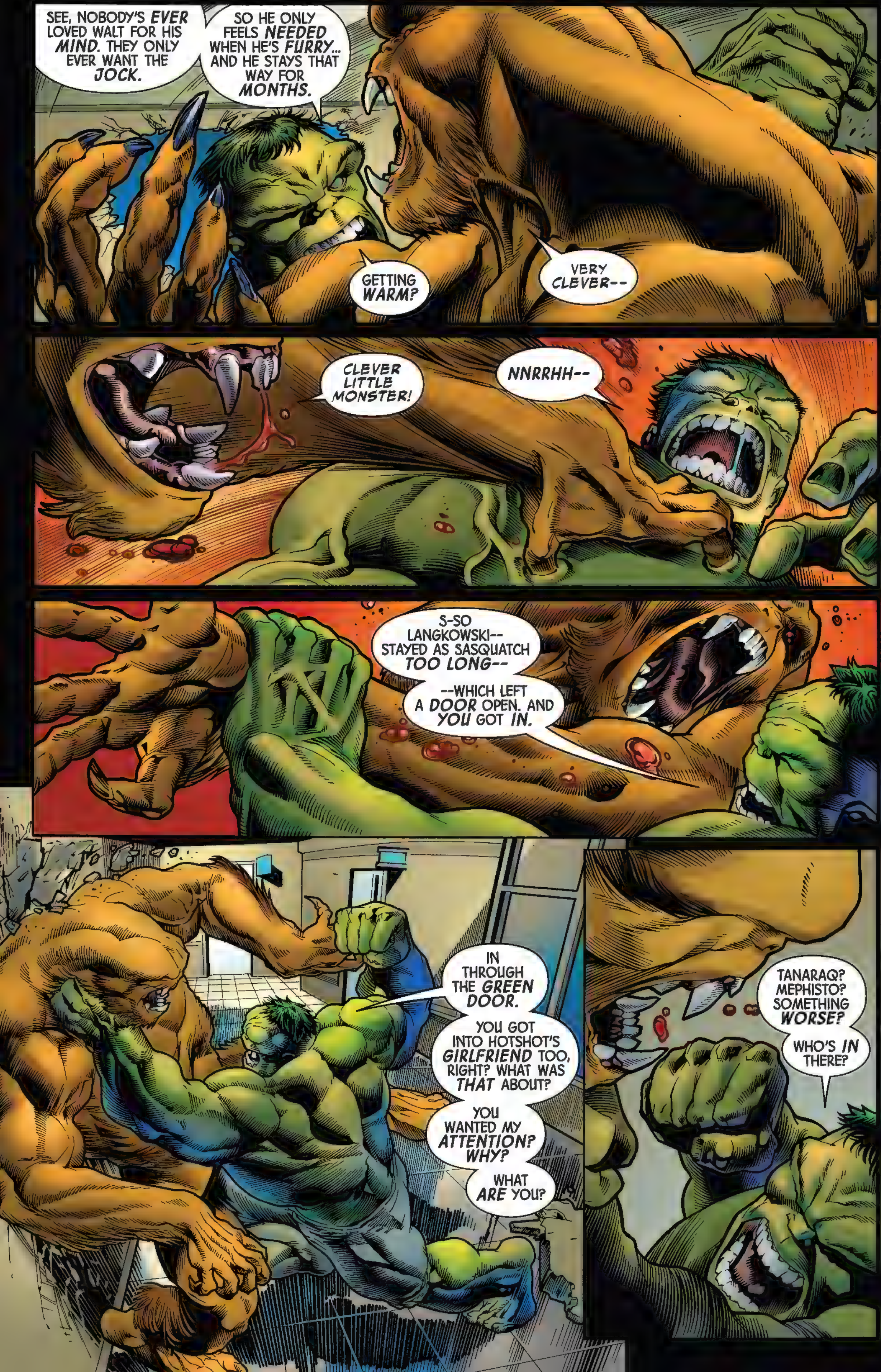

"WHY *IS* THAT?"
FINE.
YOU WANT *WALTER?*
I CAN-- *NNHH--*
C'MON--
I CAN BE--
--BE *WALTER--*
UFF. OKAY.
THAT WAS... YEAH, THAT WAS TOUGHER THAN IT *USED* TO BE.
I SHOULD PROBABLY *TALK--*
TO
SOMEONE
"I THINK HE WANTS *OUT.*"

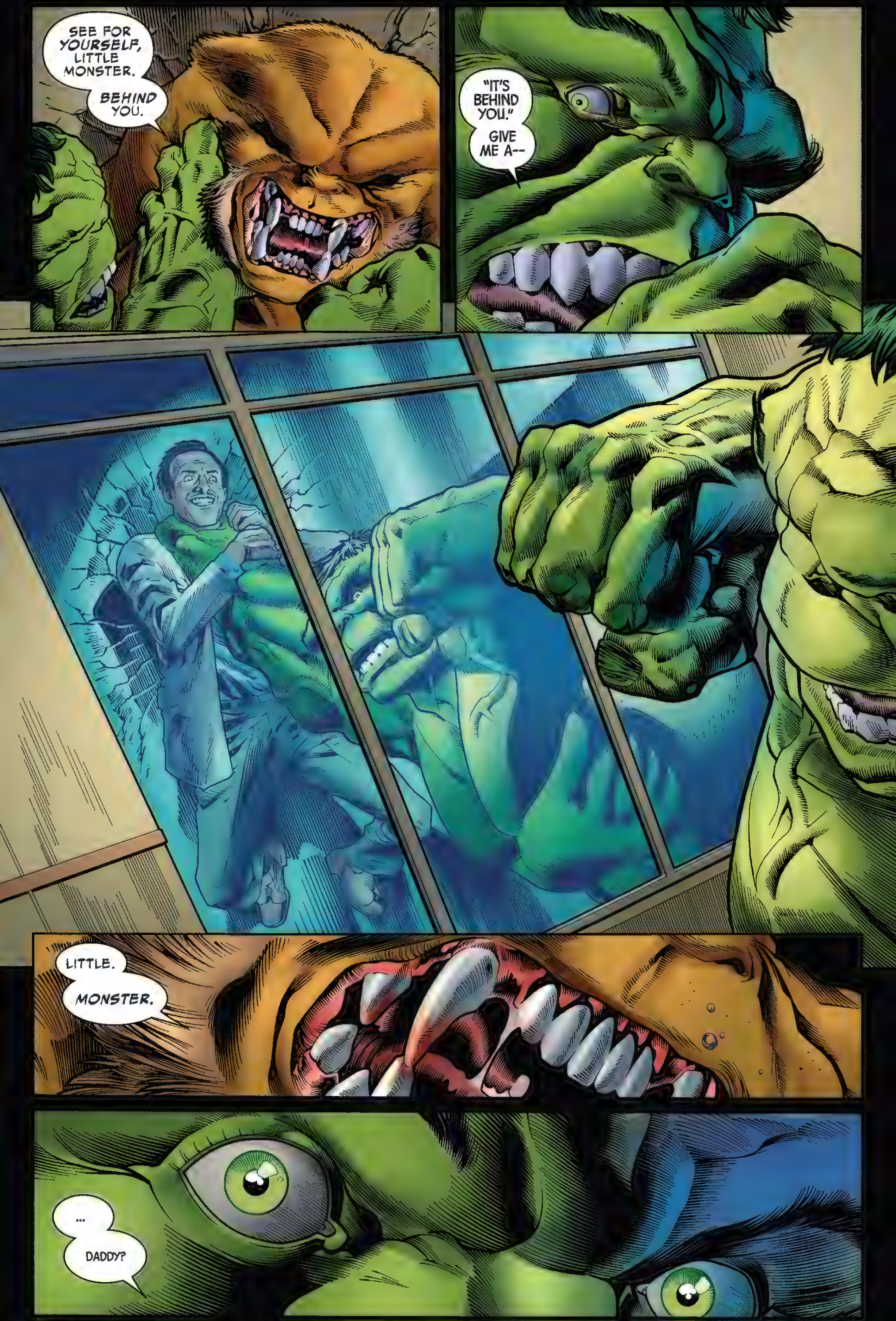

NOW. MINNESOTA.
WHICH PROBABLY ISN'T A GOOD SIGN.
OKAY, YOU EVACUATE THE HOSPITAL--I'LL DEAL WITH LANGKOWSKI. OR WHATEVER HE'S BECOME.
WAIT A MINUTE--YOU CAN'T JUST--
I--I'VE GOT QUESTIONS--YOU OWE ME--
I OWE A LOT OF PEOPLE. EVERYTHING FROM STOLEN PANTS TO RUINED LIVES.
WHERE YOU FALL ON THAT SPECTRUM WILL HAVE TO WAIT.
YEAH? SO WHAT HAPPENS NOW--I TELL PEOPLE TO RUN BECAUSE A MAN MIGHT HAVE RISEN FROM THE DEAD?
WHY WOULD THEY EVEN BELIEVE ME?
YOU'RE A REPORTER, MS. McGEE. IT'S YOUR JOB TO MAKE PEOPLE BELIEVE YOU.
THE SCREAMING WILL PROBABLY HELP.
RRROOWWRR
EEAAAGGGH!
I KNOW.
YOU'VE GOT YOUR JOB, TOO.

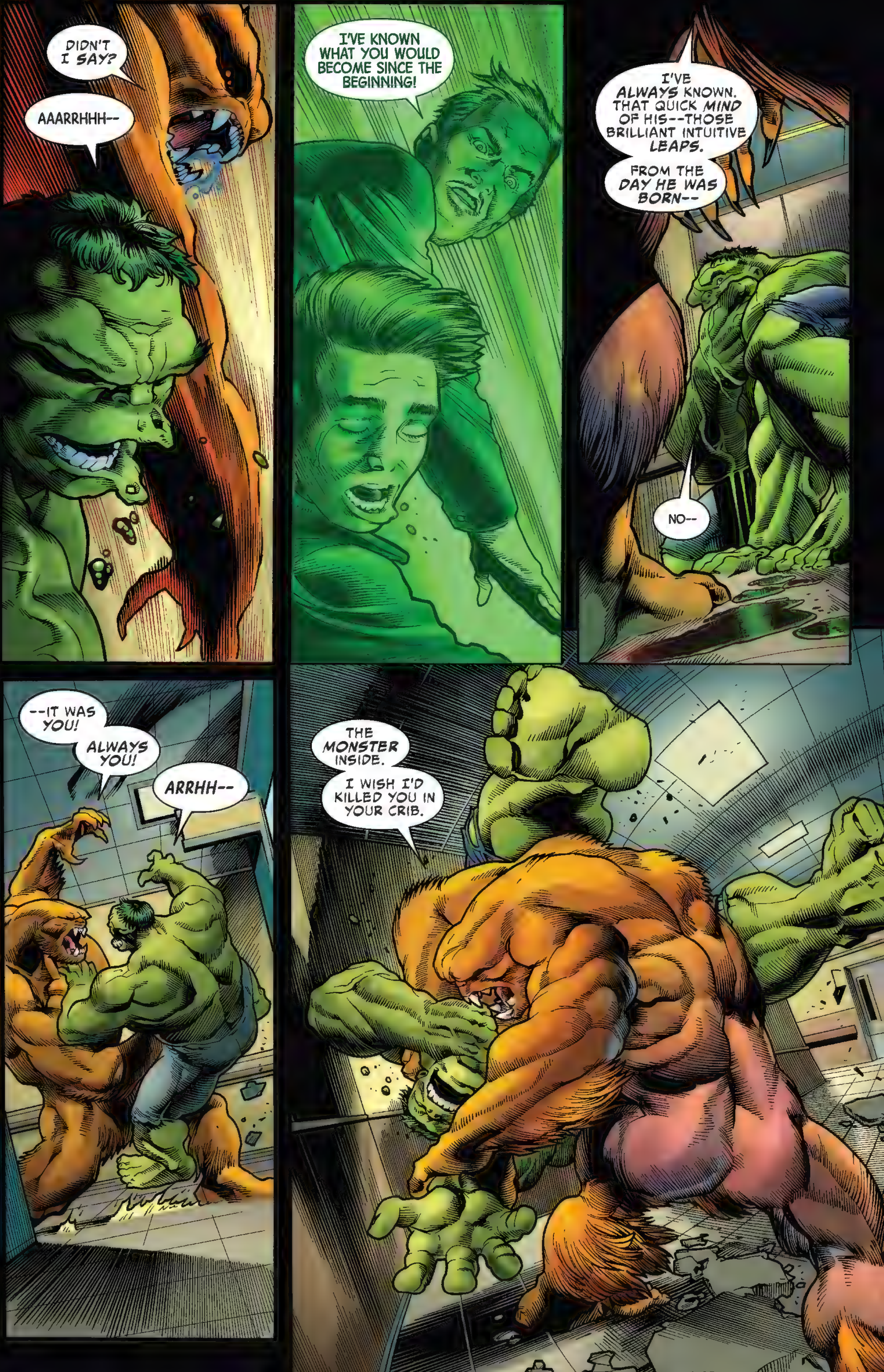

BUT LET *ME* TRY FIRST.
YOU NEVER KNOW.
WARD
Dr. Rob Bott
EMERGENCY-- ALL STAFF, WE HAVE A *CODE SILVER--*
--REPEAT, *CODE SILVER--*
--ALL STAFF AND PATIENTS MUST BE EVACUATED *IMMEDIATELY.*
REPEAT--ALL STAFF AND PATIENTS, EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY--
HELLO, WALTER.
CAN WE TALK?
...
I'M NOT WALTER.

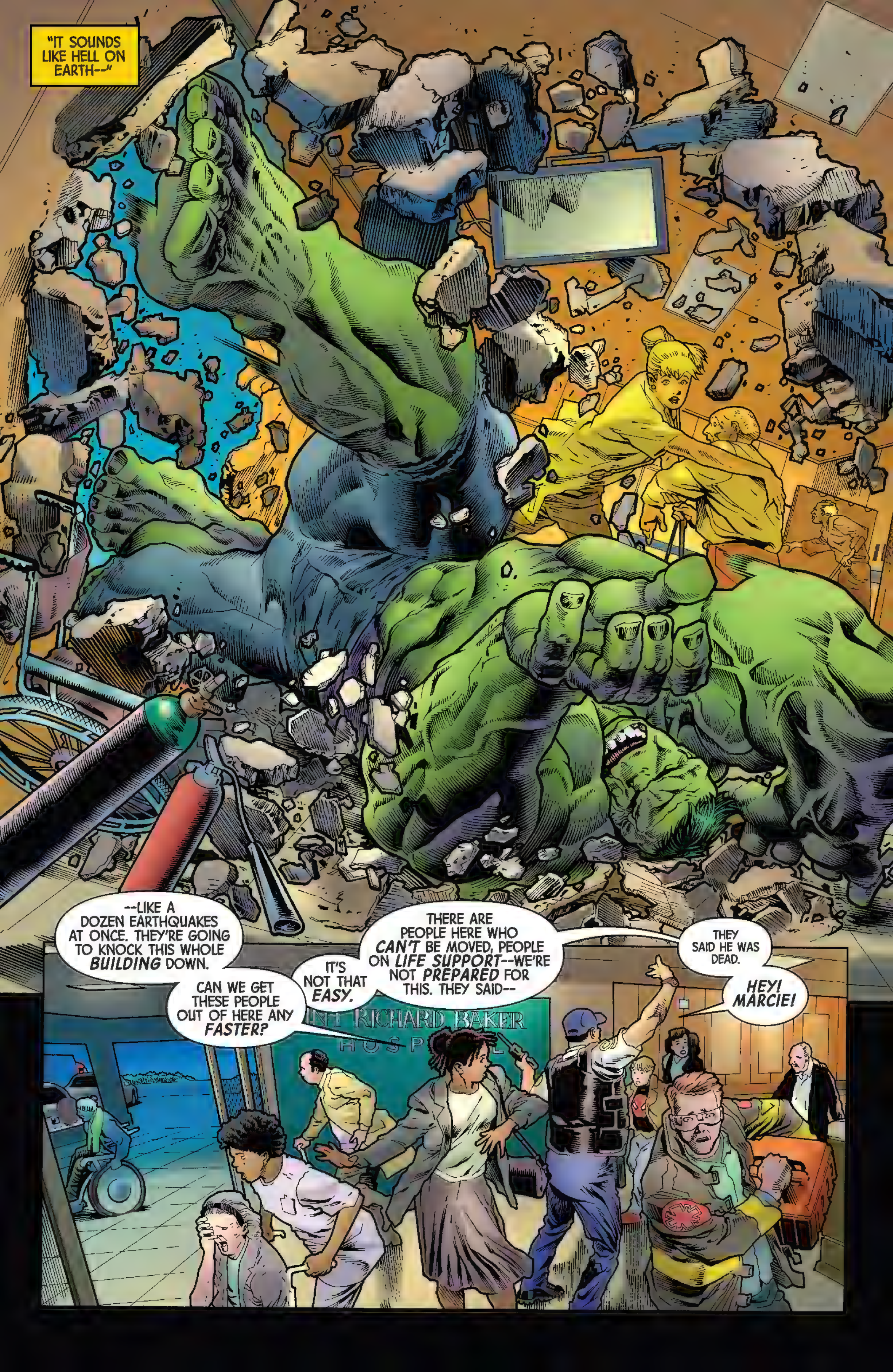

AND I'D RATHER TALK TO THE *REAL* YOU.
SHHKK
IT *HURTS* TO DIE, DOESN'T IT, BRUCE?
HHKK
AH--
--ALWAYS.
AND WHEN YOU HURT... *BANNER...*

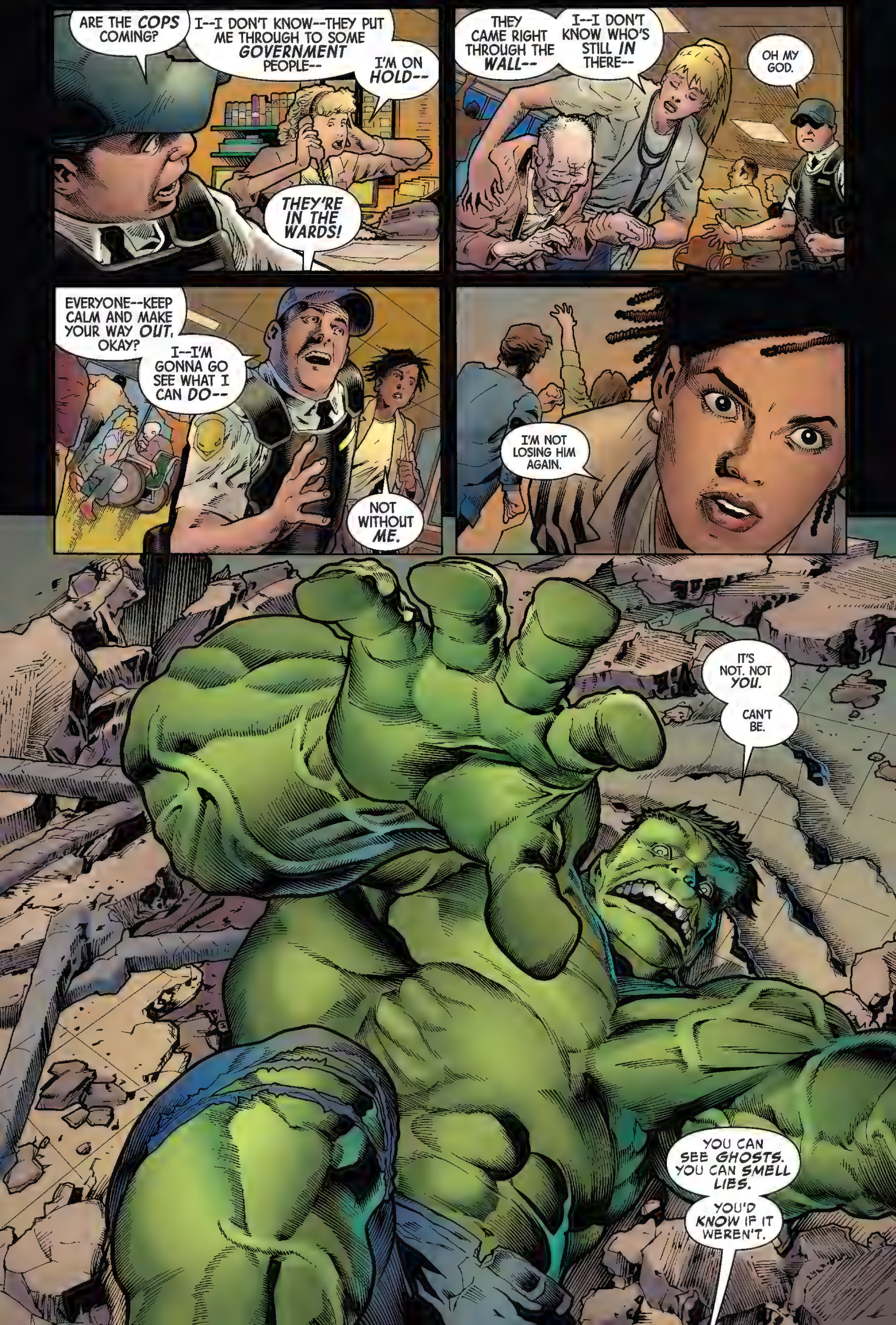

...I TAKE IT PERSONAL.
SO YOU'RE NOT LANGKOWSKI.
THAT FITS.
RRRRR...
LANGKOWSKI'S A CREEP--
--SMUG LITTLE KNOW-IT-ALL, ALWAYS WAS--
--BUT HE NEVER HAD THREE MURDERS IN HIM.
YOU'RE SOMETHING ELSE, AREN'T YOU?

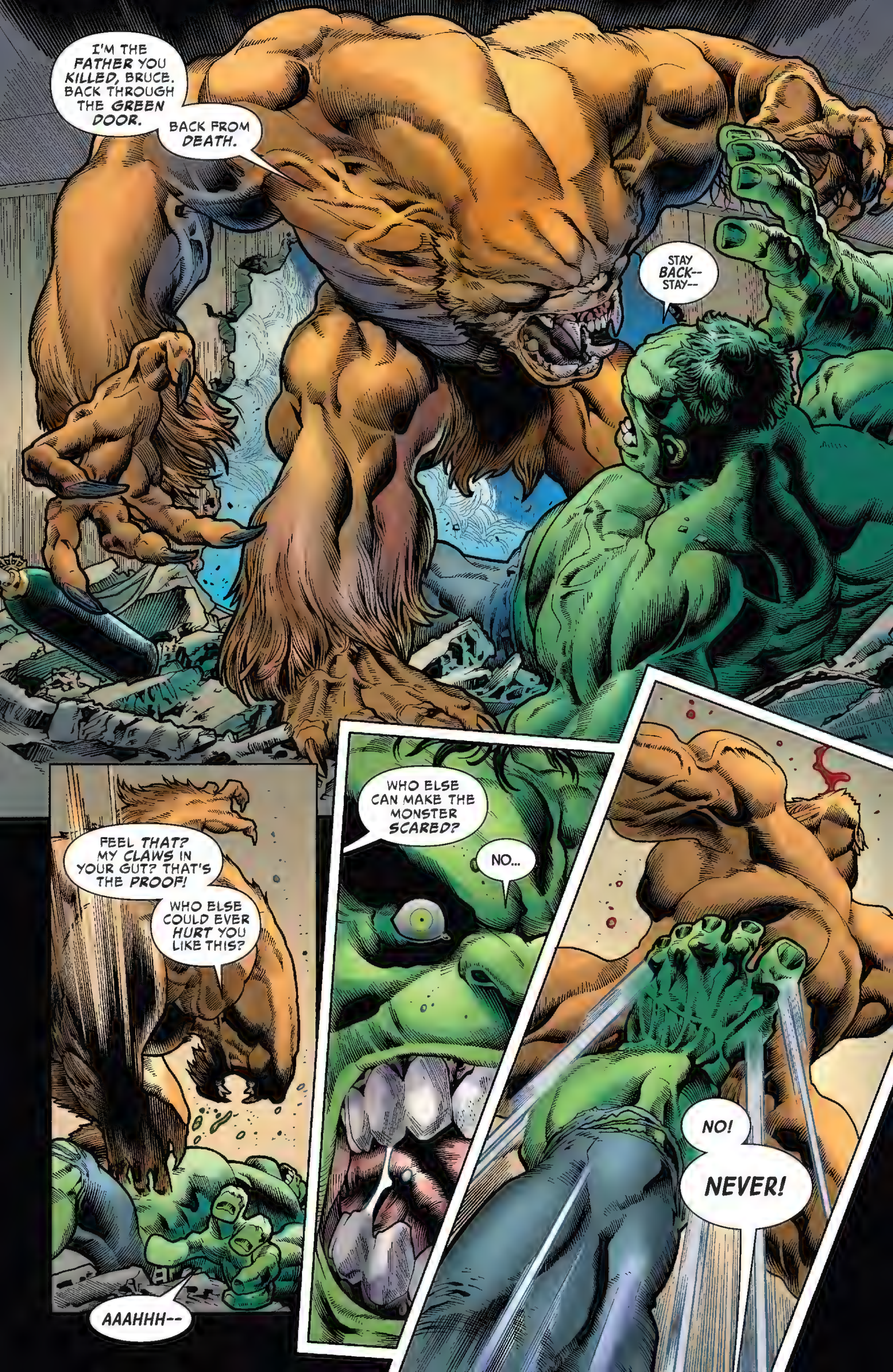

SEE, NOBODY'S EVER LOVED WALT FOR HIS MIND. THEY ONLY EVER WANT THE JOCK.
SO HE ONLY FEELS NEEDED WHEN HE'S FURRY... AND HE STAYS THAT WAY FOR MONTHS.
GETTING WARM?
VERY CLEVER--
CLEVER LITTLE MONSTER!
NNRRHH--
S-SO LANGKOWSKI-- STAYED AS SASQUATCH TOO LONG--
--WHICH LEFT A DOOR OPEN. AND YOU GOT IN.
IN THROUGH THE GREEN DOOR.
YOU GOT INTO HOTSHOT'S GIRLFRIEND TOO, RIGHT? WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
YOU WANTED MY ATTENTION? WHY?
WHAT ARE YOU?
TANARAQ? MEPHISTO? SOMETHING WORSE?
WHO'S IN THERE?

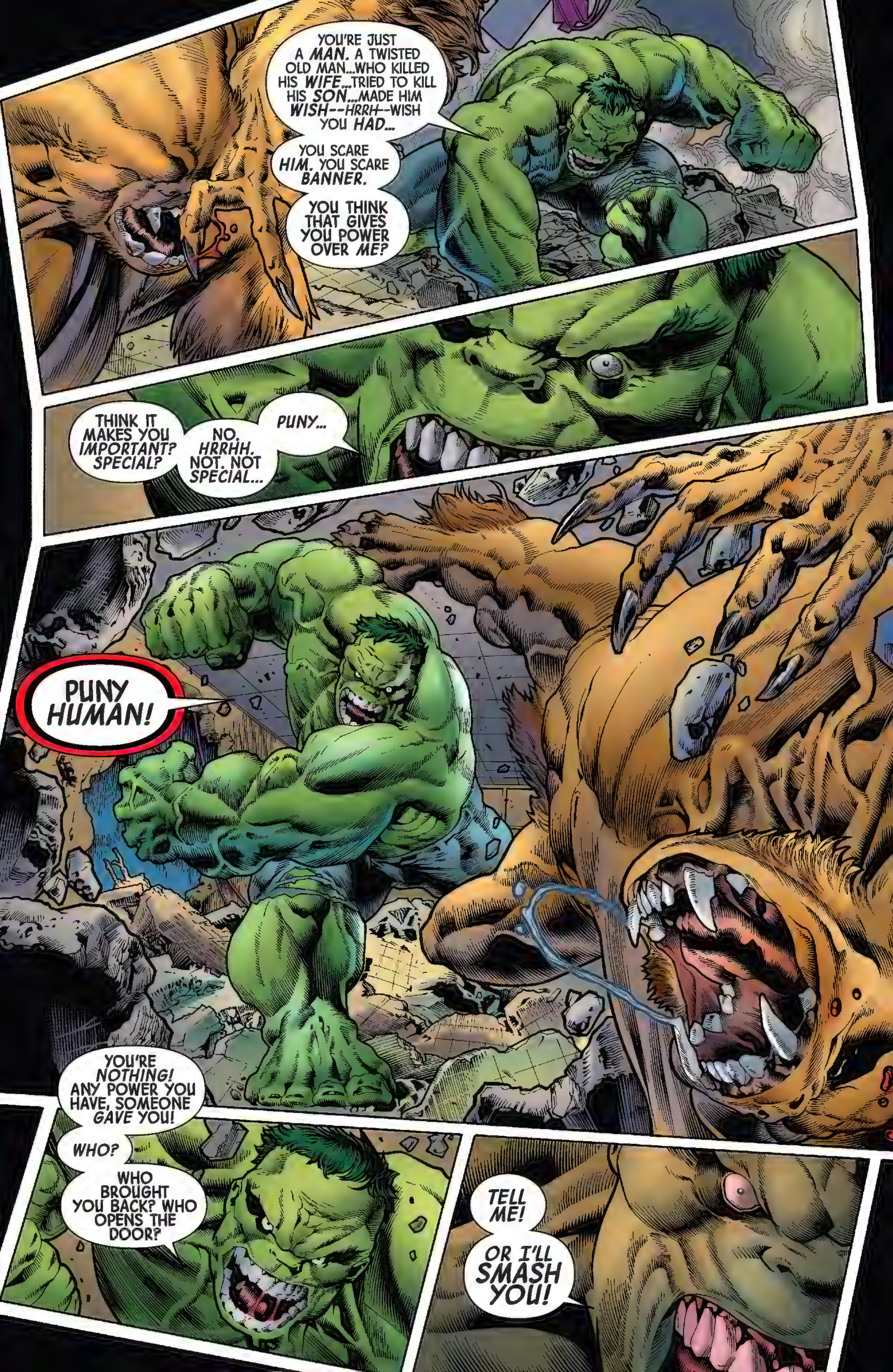

SEE FOR YOURSELF, LITTLE MONSTER.
BEHIND YOU.
"IT'S BEHIND YOU."
GIVE ME A--
LITTLE.
MONSTER.
...
DADDY?

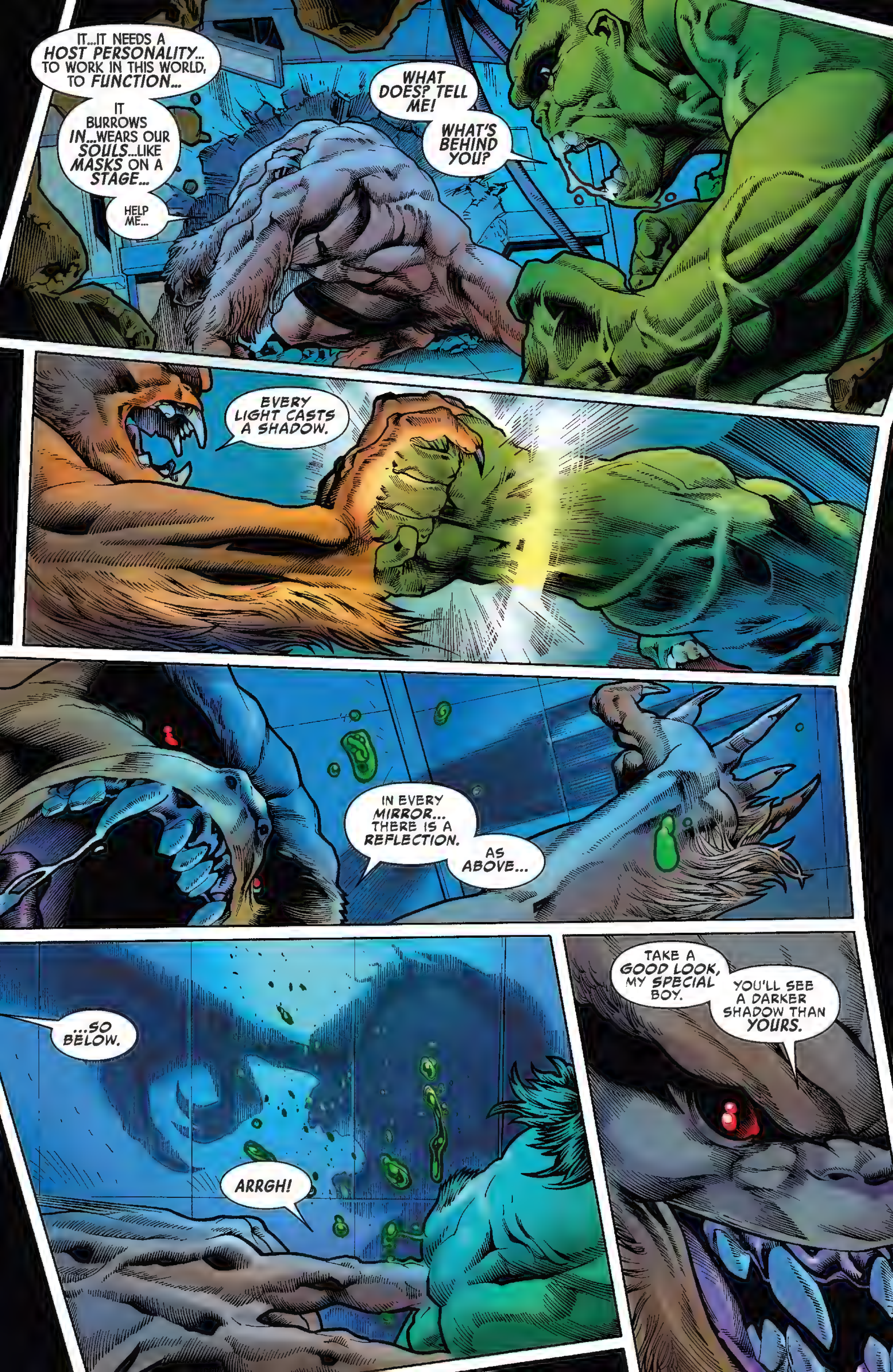

DIDN'T I *SAY?*
AAARRHHH--
I'VE KNOWN WHAT YOU WOULD BECOME SINCE THE BEGINNING!
I'VE *ALWAYS* KNOWN. THAT QUICK *MIND* OF HIS--THOSE BRILLIANT INTUITIVE *LEAPS.*
FROM THE *DAY HE WAS BORN--*
NO--
--IT WAS *YOU!*
ALWAYS YOU!
ARRHH--
THE *MONSTER* INSIDE.
I WISH I'D KILLED YOU IN YOUR CRIB.

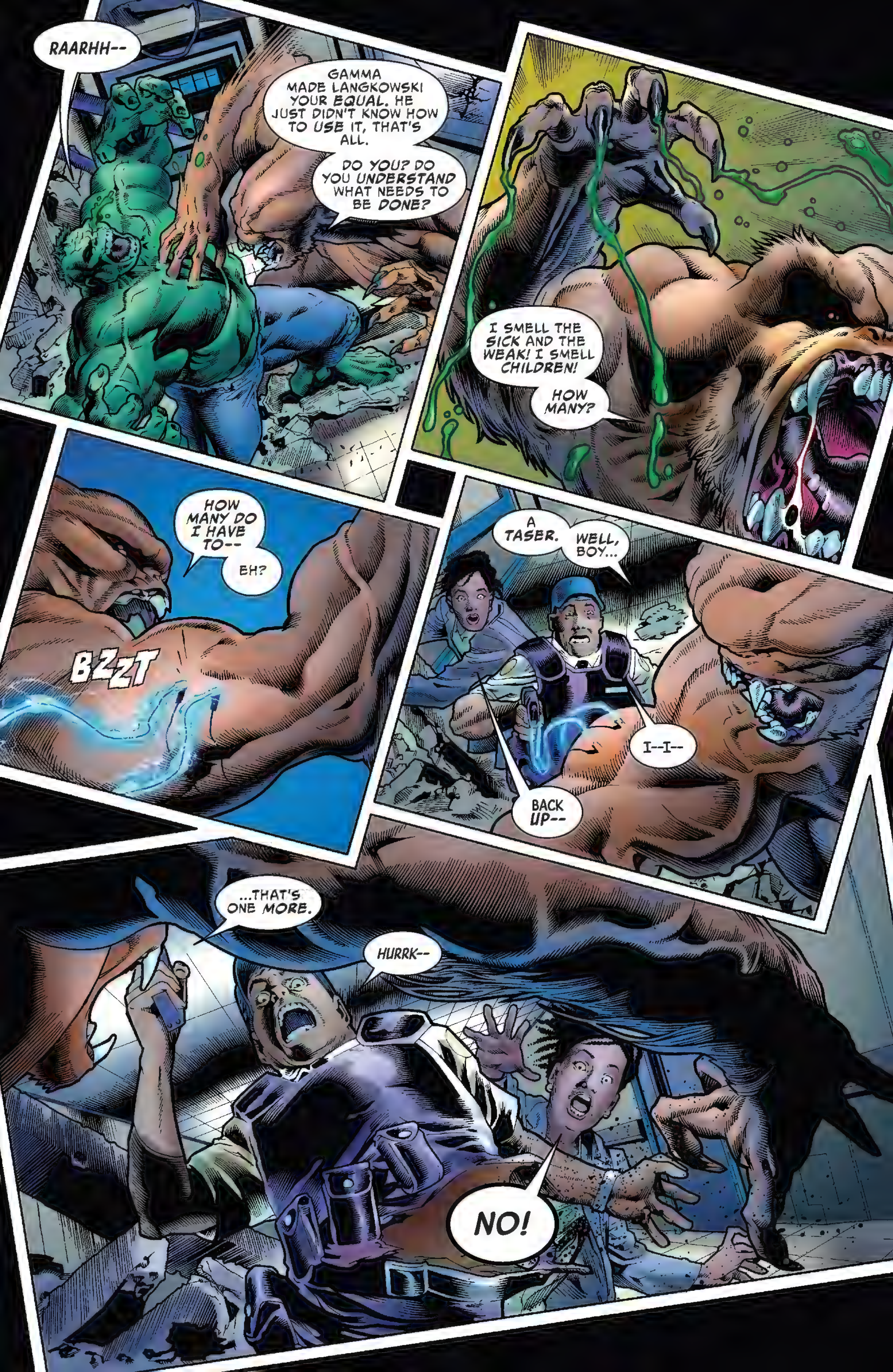

"IT SOUNDS LIKE HELL ON EARTH--"
--LIKE A DOZEN EARTHQUAKES AT ONCE. THEY'RE GOING TO KNOCK THIS WHOLE *BUILDING* DOWN.
CAN WE GET THESE PEOPLE OUT OF HERE ANY *FASTER?*
IT'S NOT THAT *EASY.*
THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE WHO *CAN'T* BE MOVED, PEOPLE ON *LIFE SUPPORT*--WE'RE NOT *PREPARED* FOR THIS. THEY SAID--
THEY SAID HE WAS DEAD.
HEY! MARCIE!
INT RICHARD BAKER
HOSP

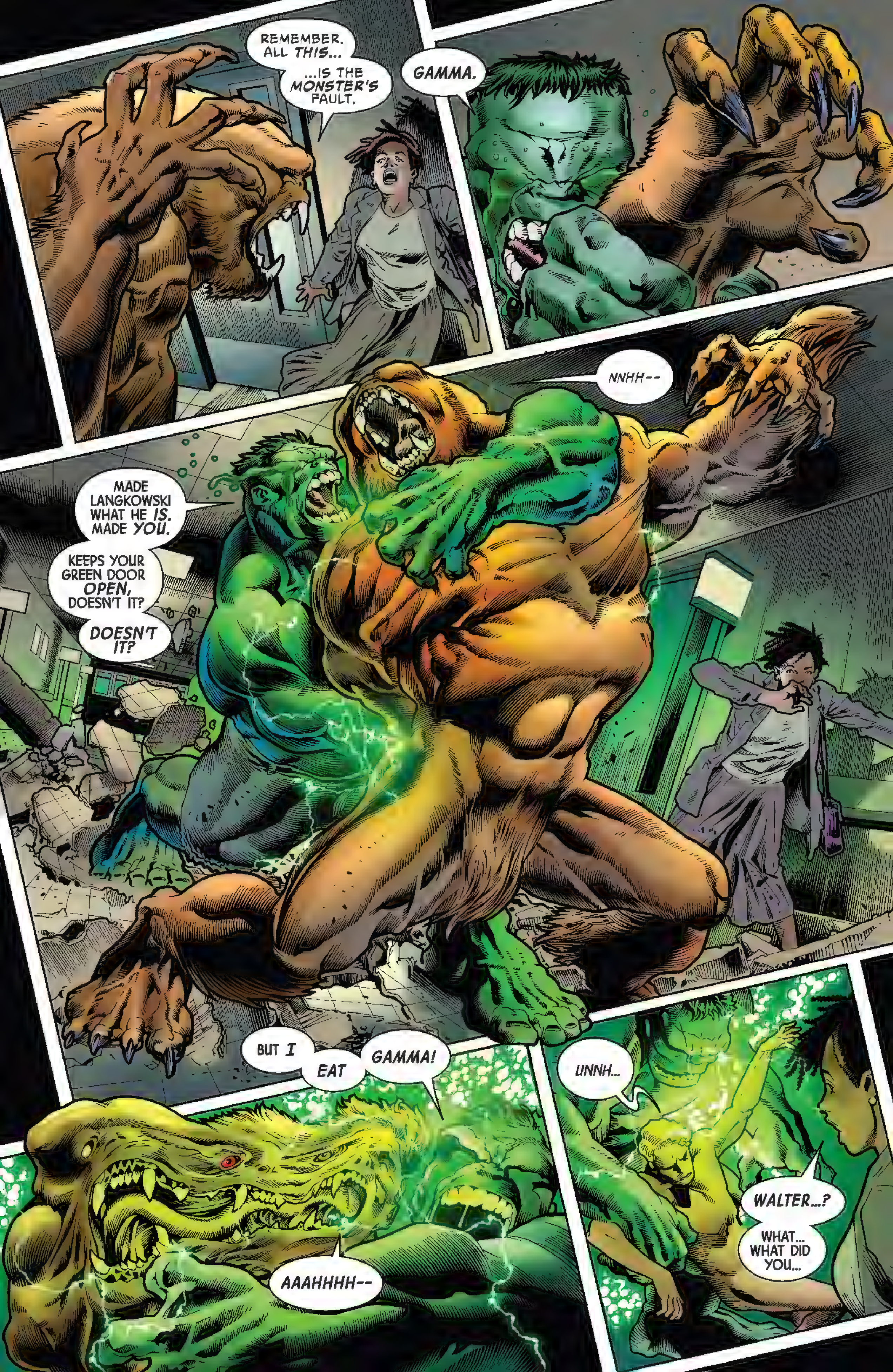

ARE THE COPS COMING?
I--I DON'T KNOW--THEY PUT ME THROUGH TO SOME GOVERNMENT PEOPLE--
I'M ON HOLD--
THEY'RE IN THE WARDS!
THEY CAME RIGHT THROUGH THE WALL--
I--I DON'T KNOW WHO'S STILL IN THERE--
OH MY GOD.
EVERYONE--KEEP CALM AND MAKE YOUR WAY OUT, OKAY?
I--I'M GONNA GO SEE WHAT I CAN DO--
NOT WITHOUT ME.
I'M NOT LOSING HIM AGAIN.
IT'S NOT. NOT YOU.
CAN'T BE.
YOU CAN SEE GHOSTS. YOU CAN SMELL LIES.
YOU'D KNOW IF IT WEREN'T.

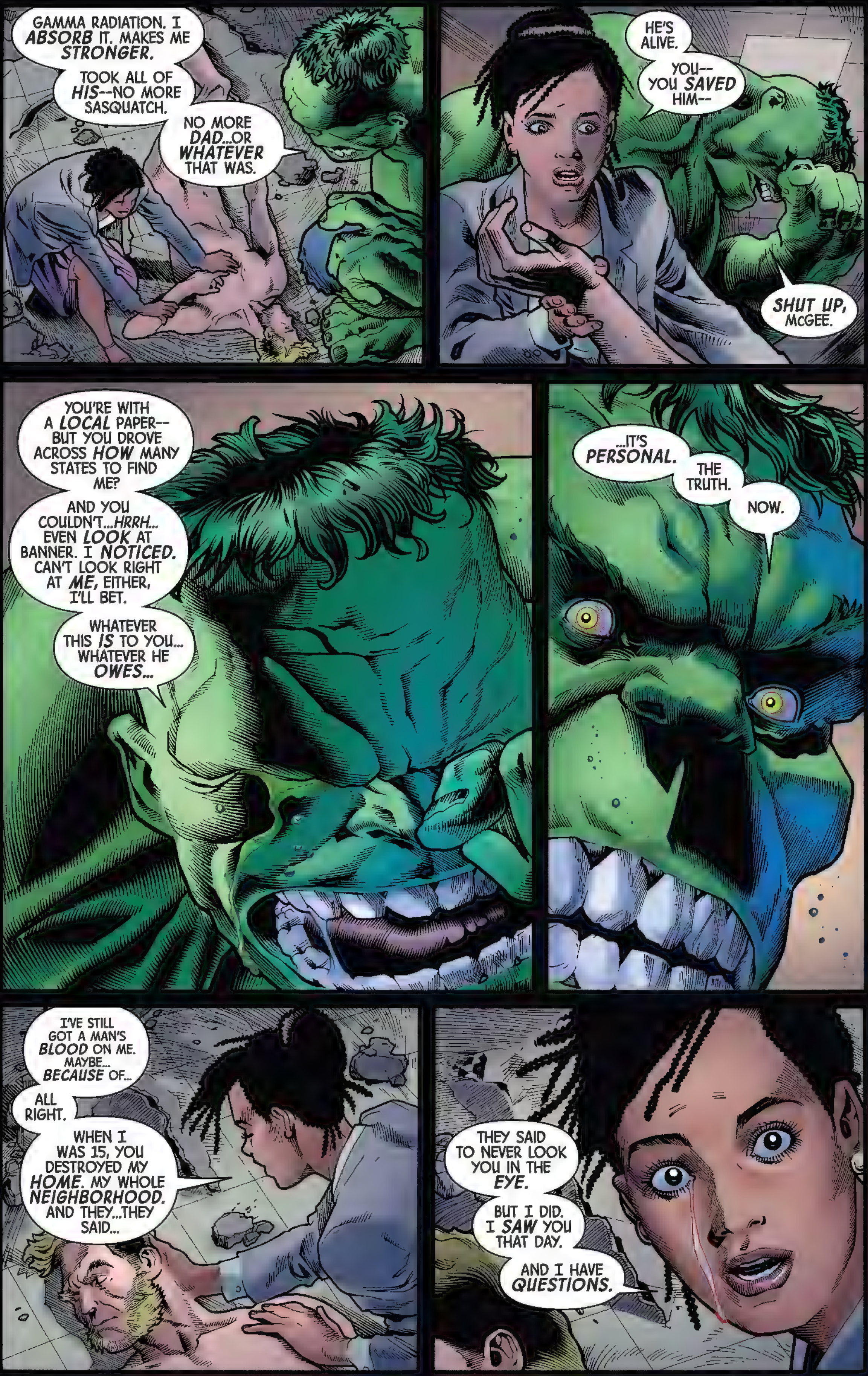

I'M THE *FATHER* YOU *KILLED*, BRUCE. BACK THROUGH THE *GREEN DOOR*.
BACK FROM *DEATH*.
STAY *BACK*-- STAY--
FEEL *THAT?* MY *CLAWS* IN YOUR GUT? THAT'S THE *PROOF!*
WHO ELSE COULD EVER *HURT* YOU LIKE THIS?
AAAHHH--
WHO ELSE CAN MAKE THE MONSTER *SCARED?*
NO...
NO!
NEVER!

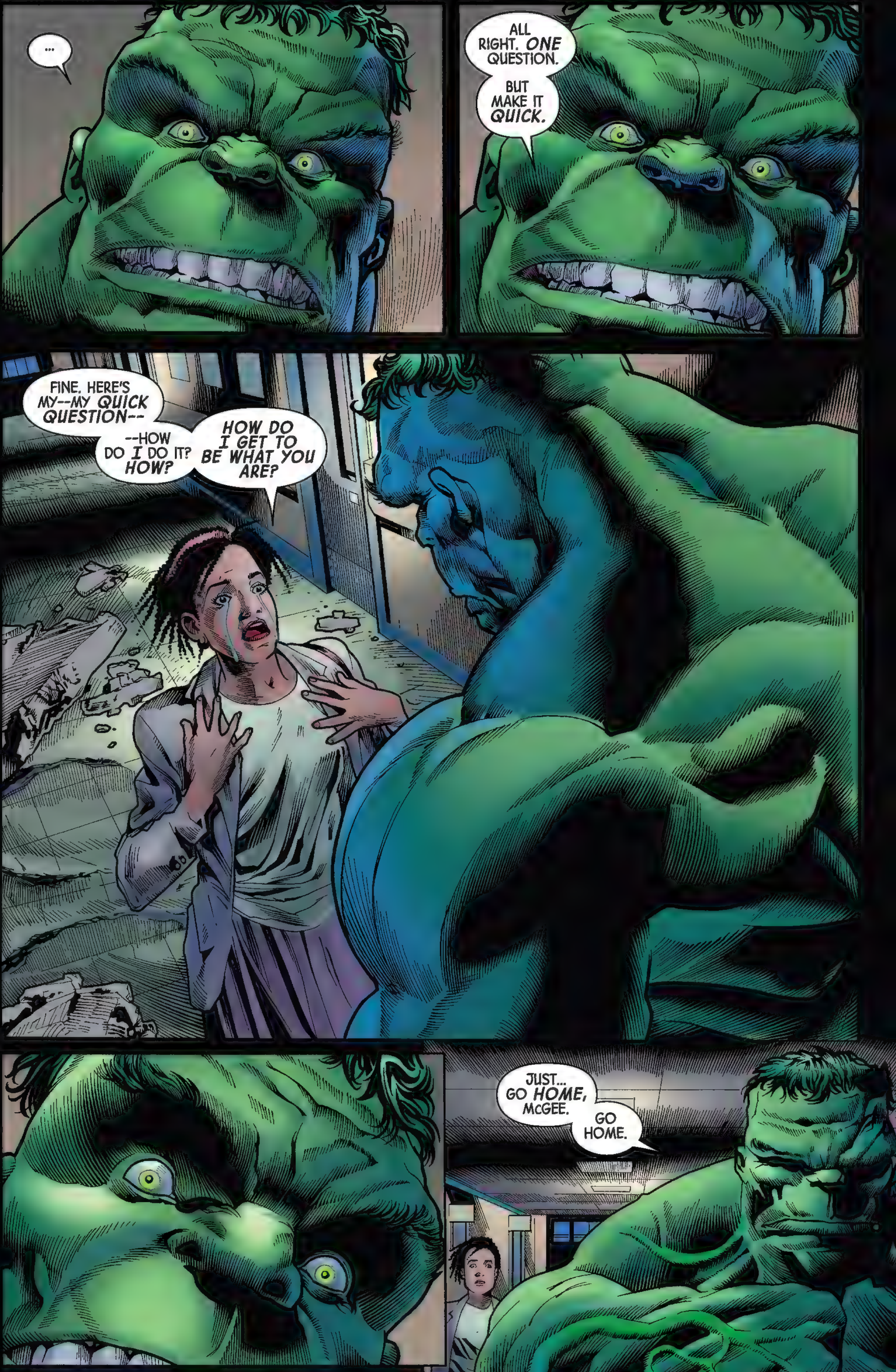

YOU'RE JUST A MAN. A TWISTED OLD MAN...WHO KILLED HIS WIFE...TRIED TO KILL HIS SON...MADE HIM WISH--HRRH--WISH YOU HAD...
YOU SCARE HIM. YOU SCARE BANNER.
YOU THINK THAT GIVES YOU POWER OVER ME?
THINK IT MAKES YOU IMPORTANT? SPECIAL?
NO. HRRHH. NOT. NOT SPECIAL...
PUNY...
PUNY HUMAN!
YOU'RE NOTHING! ANY POWER YOU HAVE, SOMEONE GAVE YOU!
WHO?
WHO BROUGHT YOU BACK? WHO OPENS THE DOOR?
TELL ME!
OR I'LL SMASH YOU!

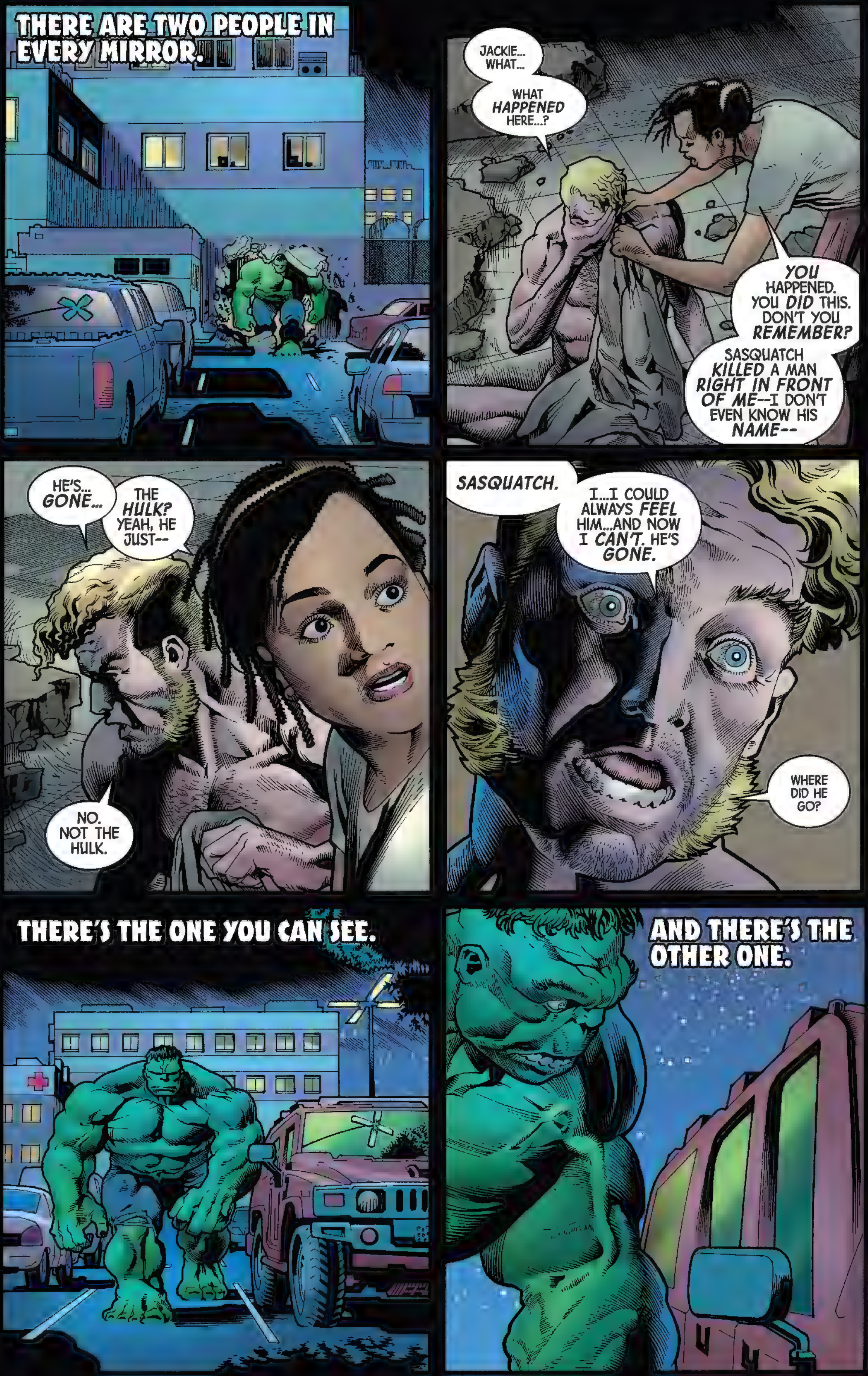

IT...IT NEEDS A HOST PERSONALITY... TO WORK IN THIS WORLD, TO FUNCTION...
IT BURROWS IN...WEARS OUR SOULS...LIKE MASKS ON A STAGE...
HELP ME...
WHAT DOES? TELL ME!
WHAT'S BEHIND YOU?
EVERY LIGHT CASTS A SHADOW.
IN EVERY MIRROR... THERE IS A REFLECTION.
AS ABOVE...
...SO BELOW.
ARRGH!
TAKE A GOOD LOOK, MY SPECIAL BOY.
YOU'LL SEE A DARKER SHADOW THAN YOURS.

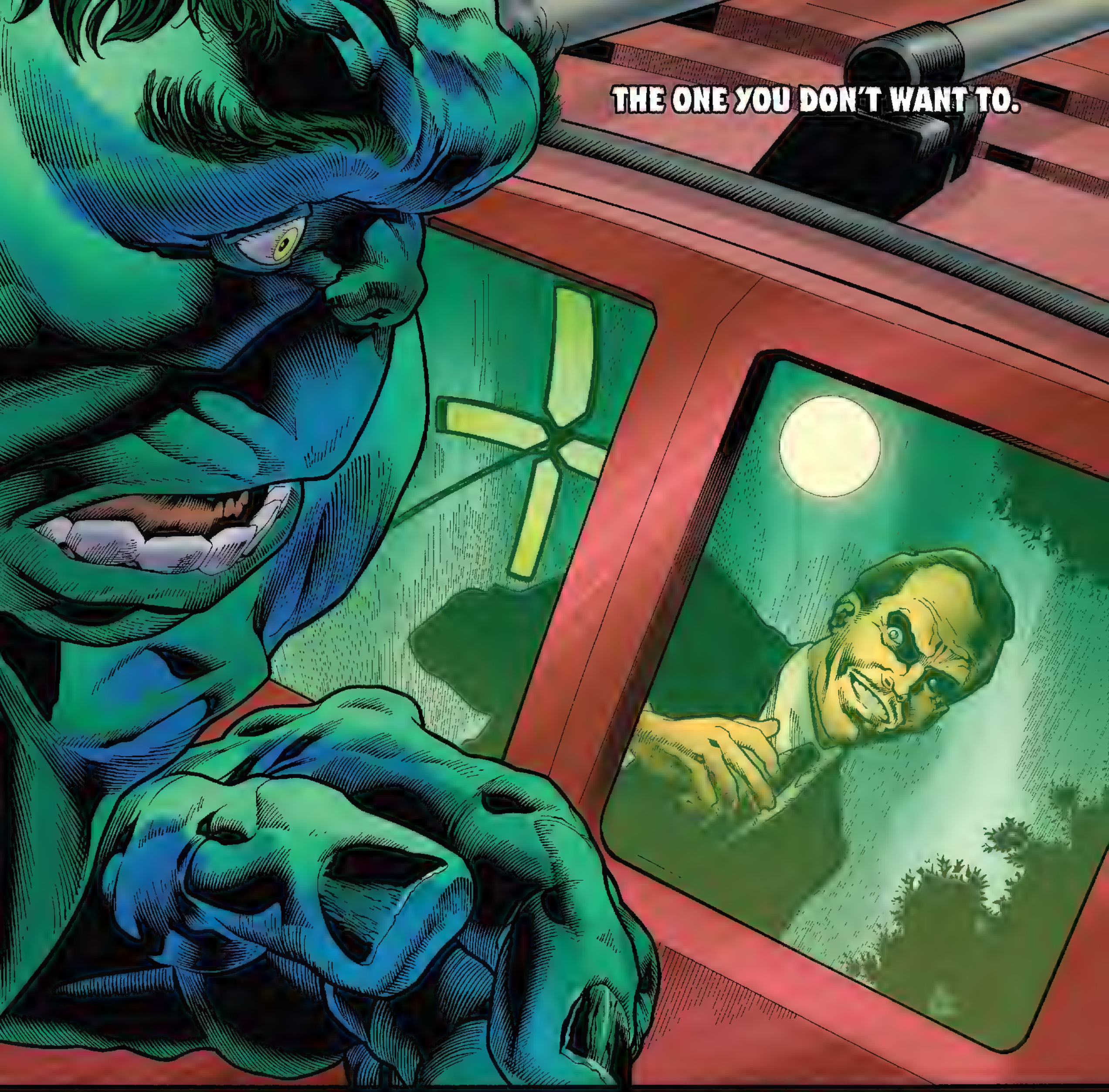

RAARHH--
GAMMA MADE LANGKOWSKI YOUR EQUAL. HE JUST DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO USE IT, THAT'S ALL.
DO YOU? DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?
I SMELL THE SICK AND THE WEAK! I SMELL CHILDREN!
HOW MANY?
HOW MANY DO I HAVE TO--
EH?
BZZT
A TASER.
WELL, BOY...
I--I--
BACK UP--
...THAT'S ONE MORE.
HURRK--
NO!


REMEMBER. ALL THIS...
...IS THE MONSTER'S FAULT.
GAMMA.
NNHH--
MADE LANGKOWSKI WHAT HE IS. MADE YOU.
KEEPS YOUR GREEN DOOR OPEN, DOESN'T IT?
DOESN'T IT?
BUT I
EAT
GAMMA!
AAAHHHH--
UNNH...
WALTER...?
WHAT... WHAT DID YOU...


GAMMA RADIATION. I *ABSORB* IT. MAKES ME *STRONGER.*
TOOK ALL OF *HIS*--NO MORE SASQUATCH.
NO MORE *DAD*...OR *WHATEVER* THAT WAS.
HE'S ALIVE.
YOU-- YOU *SAVED* HIM--
SHUT UP, McGEE.
YOU'RE WITH A *LOCAL* PAPER-- BUT YOU DROVE ACROSS *HOW* MANY STATES TO FIND ME?
AND YOU COULDN'T...*HRRH*... EVEN *LOOK* AT BANNER. I *NOTICED.* CAN'T LOOK RIGHT AT *ME,* EITHER, I'LL BET.
WHATEVER THIS *IS* TO YOU... WHATEVER HE *OWES*...
...IT'S *PERSONAL.*
THE TRUTH.
NOW.
I'VE STILL GOT A MAN'S *BLOOD* ON ME. MAYBE... *BECAUSE* OF...
ALL RIGHT.
WHEN I WAS 15, YOU DESTROYED MY *HOME.* MY WHOLE *NEIGHBORHOOD.* AND THEY...THEY SAID...
THEY SAID TO NEVER LOOK YOU IN THE *EYE.*
BUT I DID. I *SAW* YOU THAT DAY.
AND I HAVE *QUESTIONS.*


...
ALL RIGHT. ONE QUESTION.
BUT MAKE IT QUICK.
FINE. HERE'S MY--MY QUICK QUESTION--
--HOW DO I DO IT? HOW?
HOW DO I GET TO BE WHAT YOU ARE?
JUST... GO HOME, McGEE.
GO HOME.

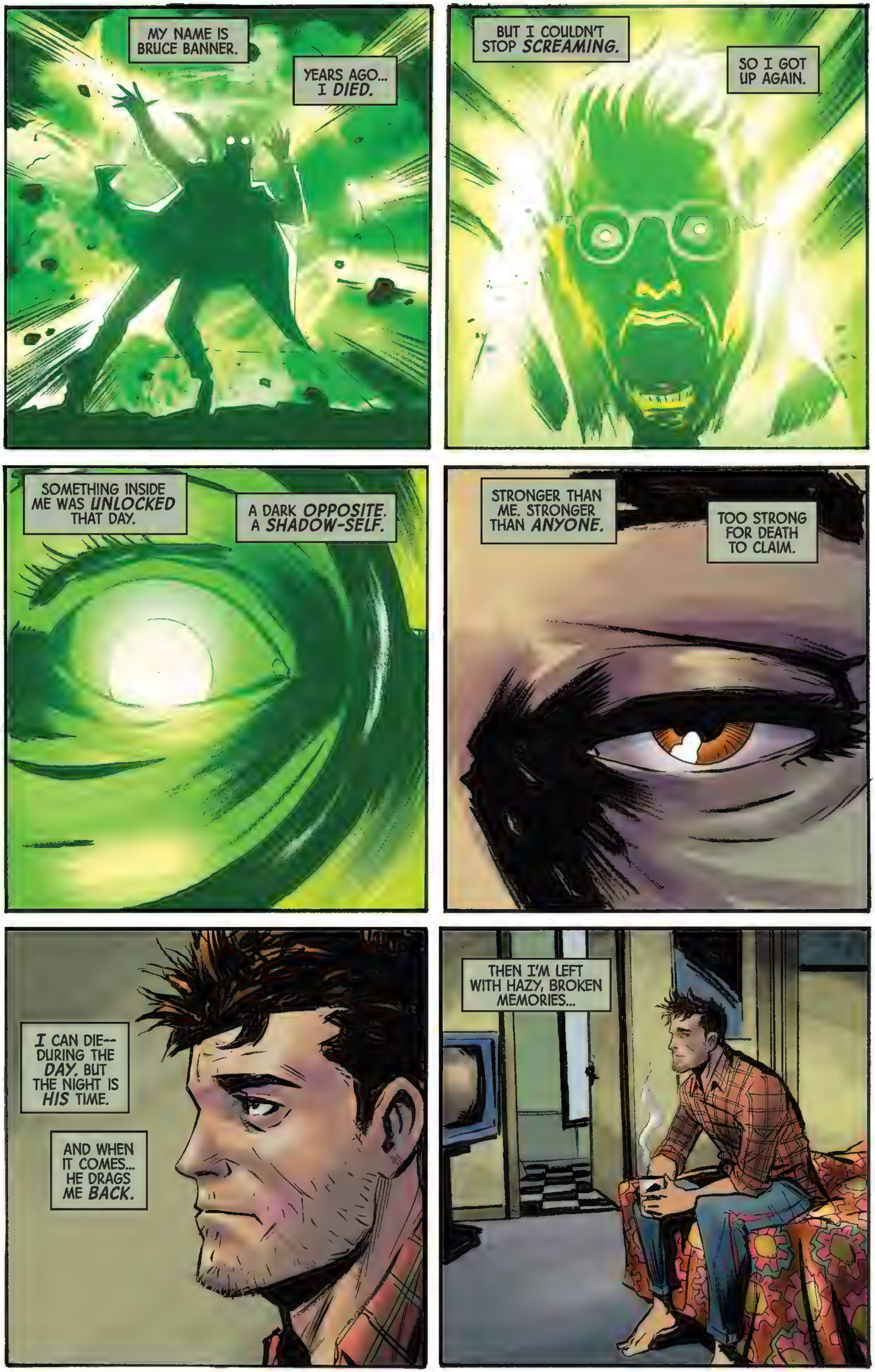

THERE ARE TWO PEOPLE IN EVERY MIRROR.
JACKIE... WHAT...
WHAT *HAPPENED* HERE...?
YOU HAPPENED. YOU *DID* THIS. DON'T YOU *REMEMBER?*
SASQUATCH *KILLED* A MAN *RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME*--I DON'T EVEN KNOW HIS *NAME--*
HE'S... *GONE...*
THE *HULK?* YEAH, HE JUST--
NO. NOT THE HULK.
SASQUATCH.
I...I COULD ALWAYS *FEEL* HIM...AND NOW I *CAN'T.* HE'S *GONE.*
WHERE DID HE GO?
THERE'S THE ONE YOU CAN SEE.
AND THERE'S THE OTHER ONE.

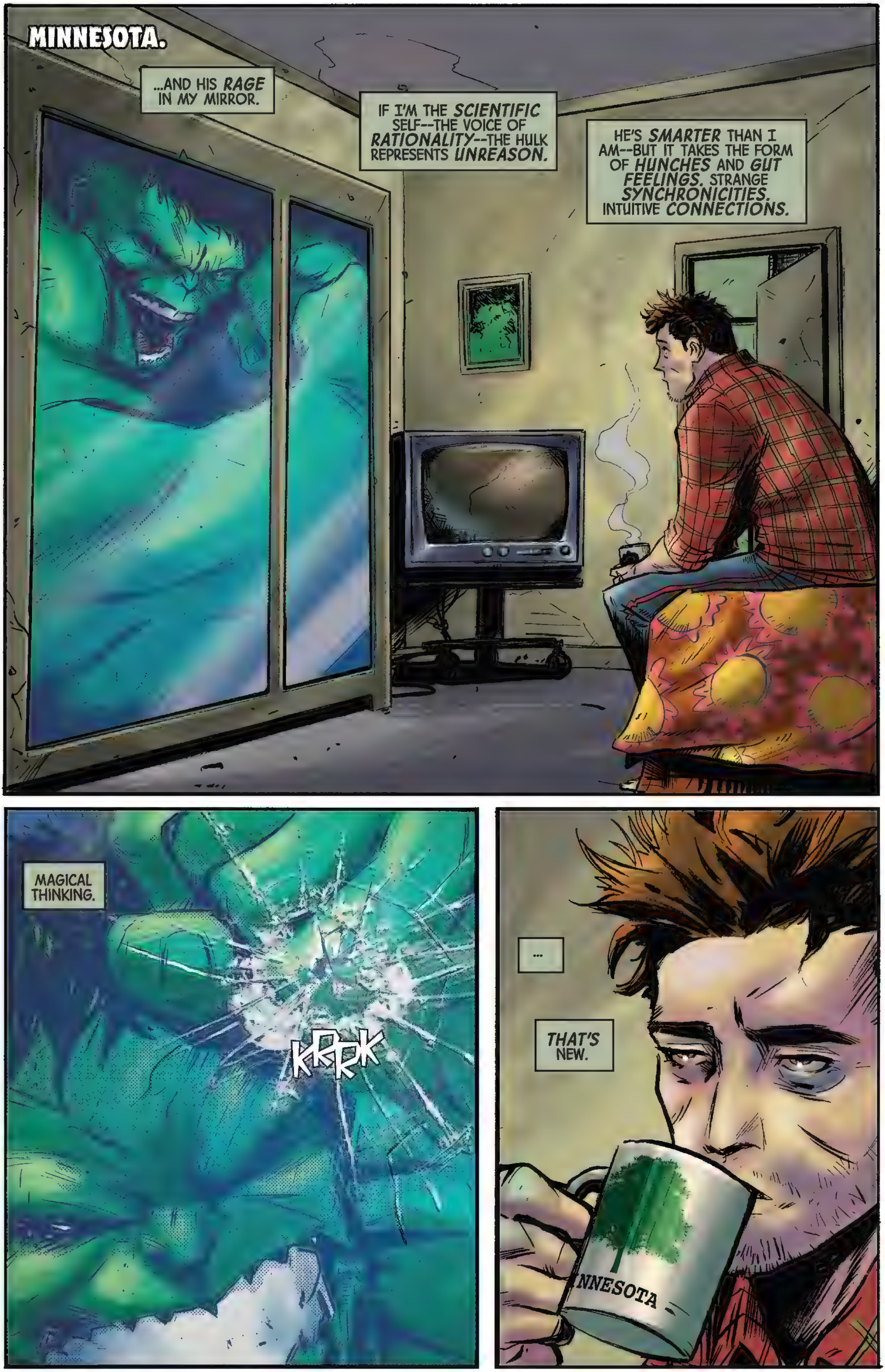

THE ONE YOU DON'T WANT TO.

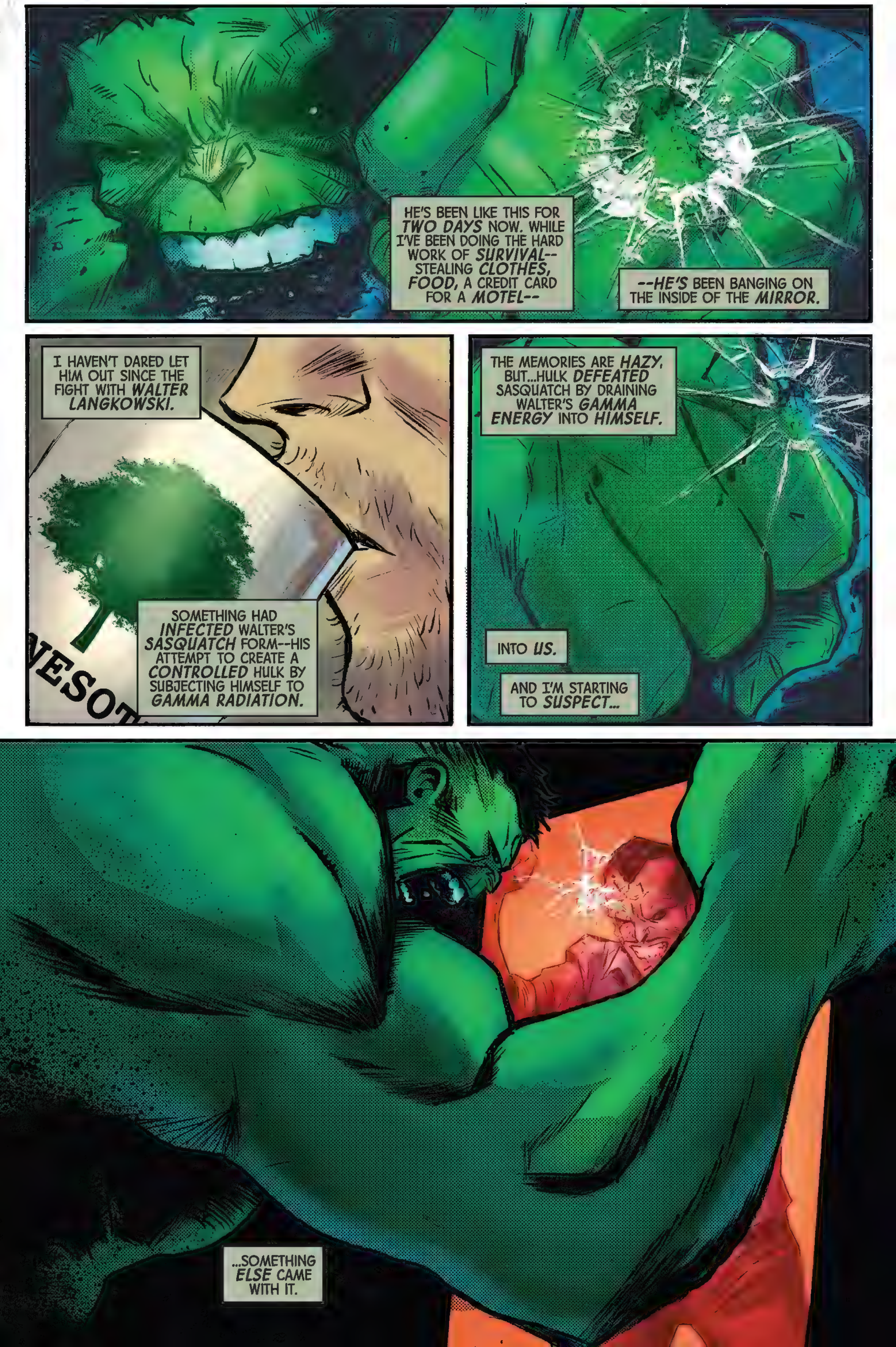
IN EVERY MIRROR

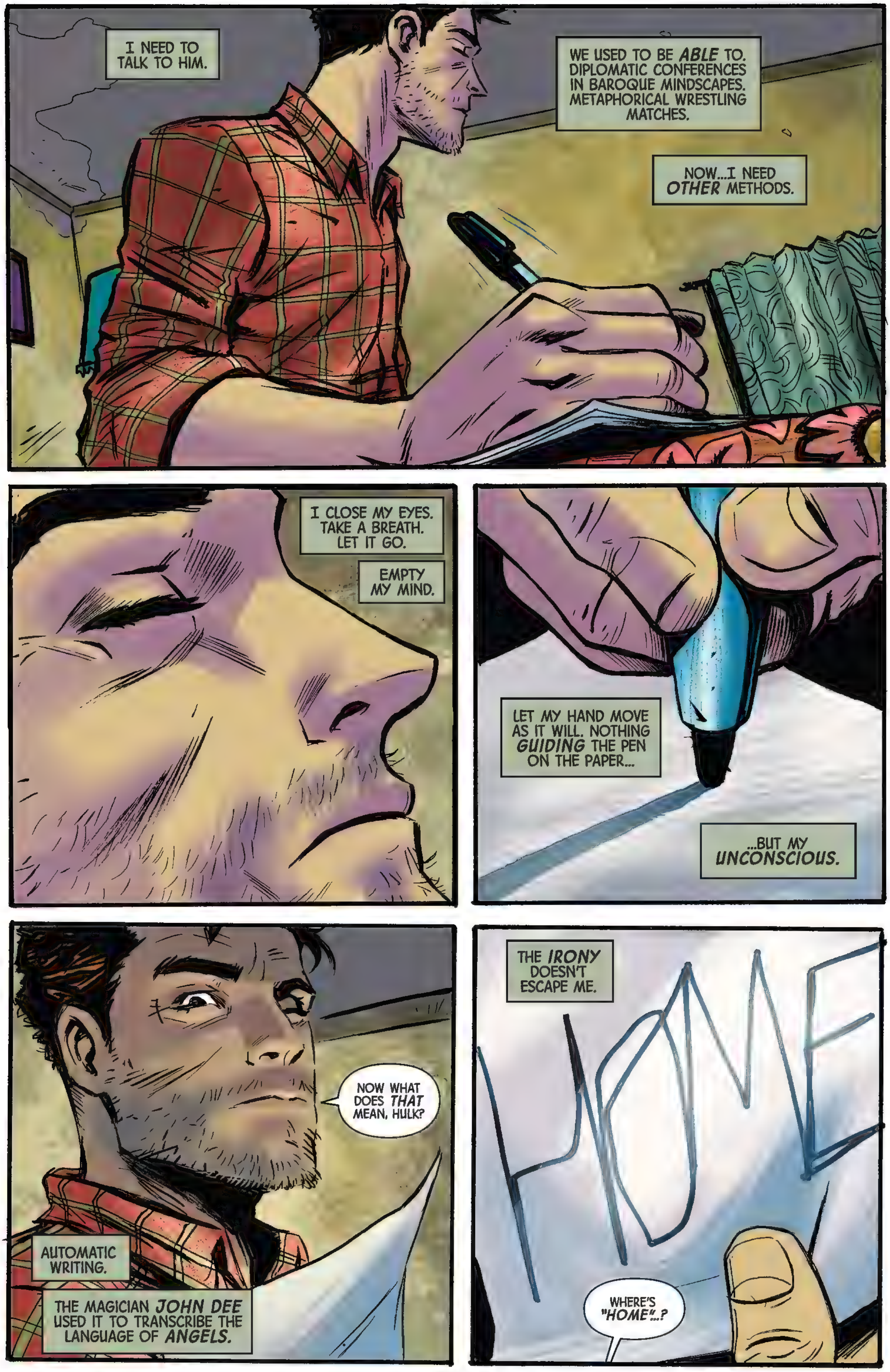
6

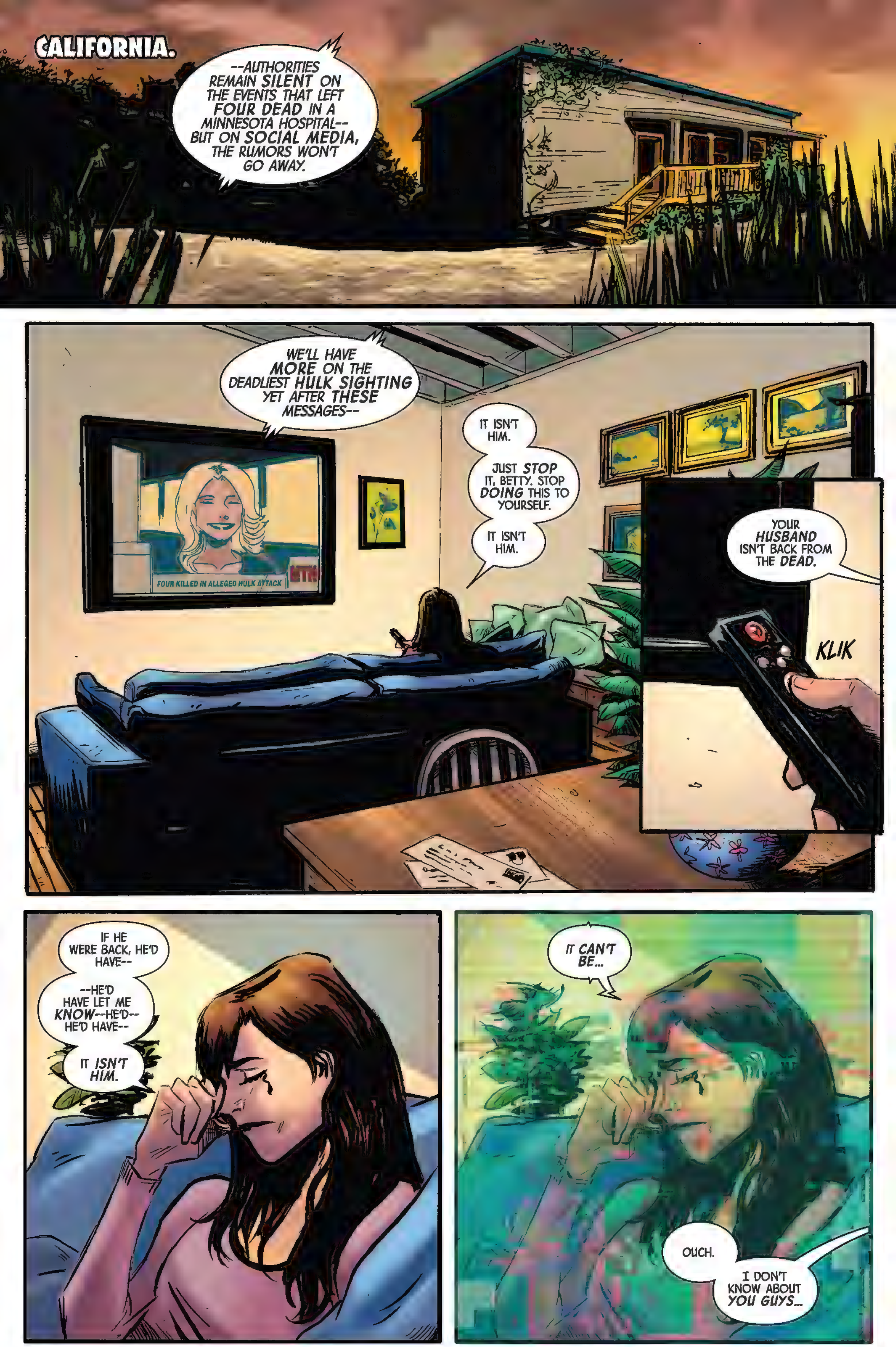
> "FOR I DO NOT EXIST:
> THERE EXIST BUT
> THE THOUSANDS
> OF MIRRORS THAT
> REFLECT ME."
>
> – VLADIMIR NABOKOV
> *THE EYE*

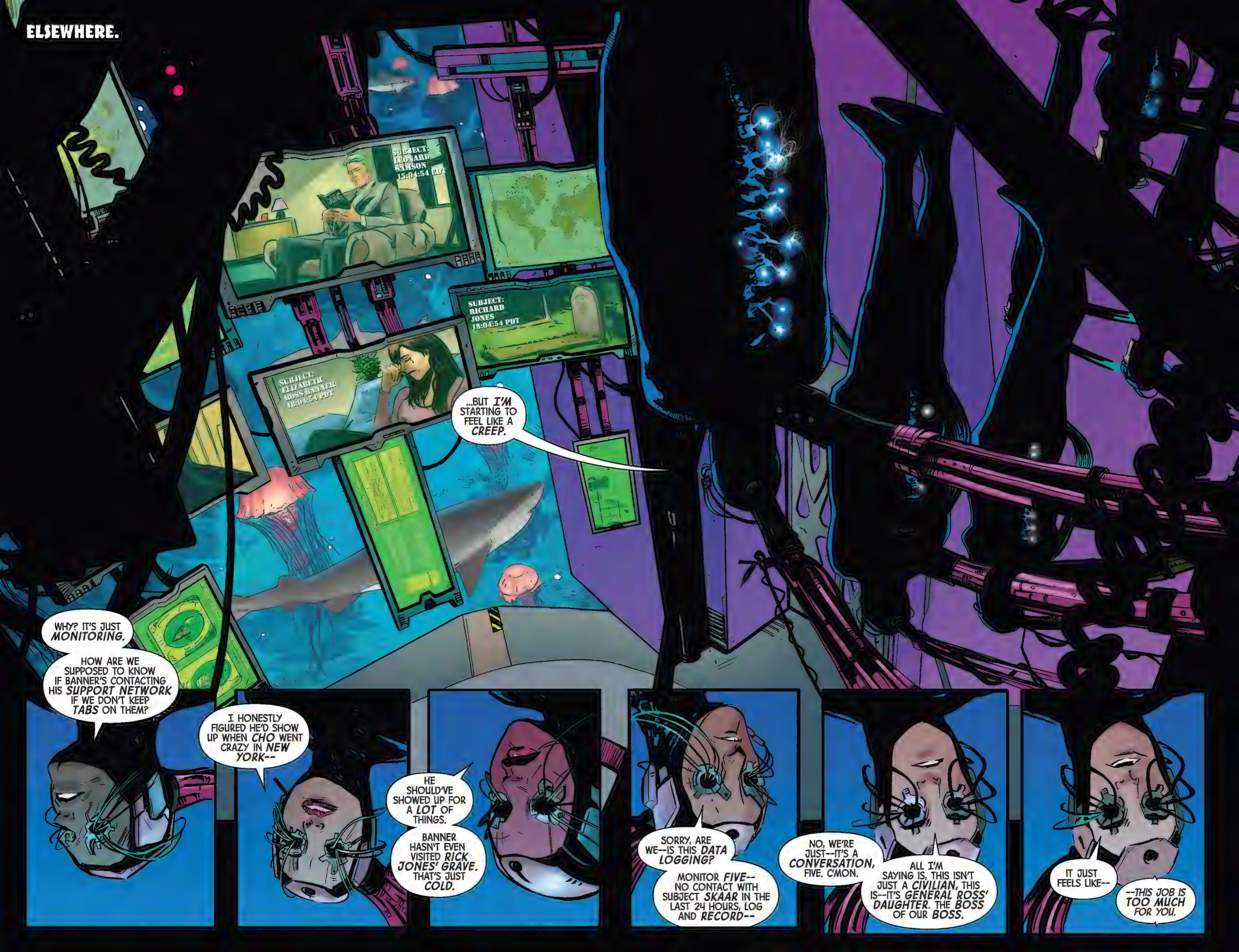

MY NAME IS BRUCE BANNER.
YEARS AGO... I *DIED.*
BUT I COULDN'T STOP *SCREAMING.*
SO I GOT UP AGAIN.
SOMETHING INSIDE ME WAS *UNLOCKED* THAT DAY.
A DARK *OPPOSITE.* A *SHADOW-SELF.*
STRONGER THAN ME. STRONGER THAN *ANYONE.*
TOO STRONG FOR DEATH TO CLAIM.
I CAN DIE--DURING THE *DAY,* BUT THE NIGHT IS *HIS* TIME.
AND WHEN IT COMES... HE DRAGS ME *BACK.*
THEN I'M LEFT WITH HAZY, BROKEN MEMORIES...

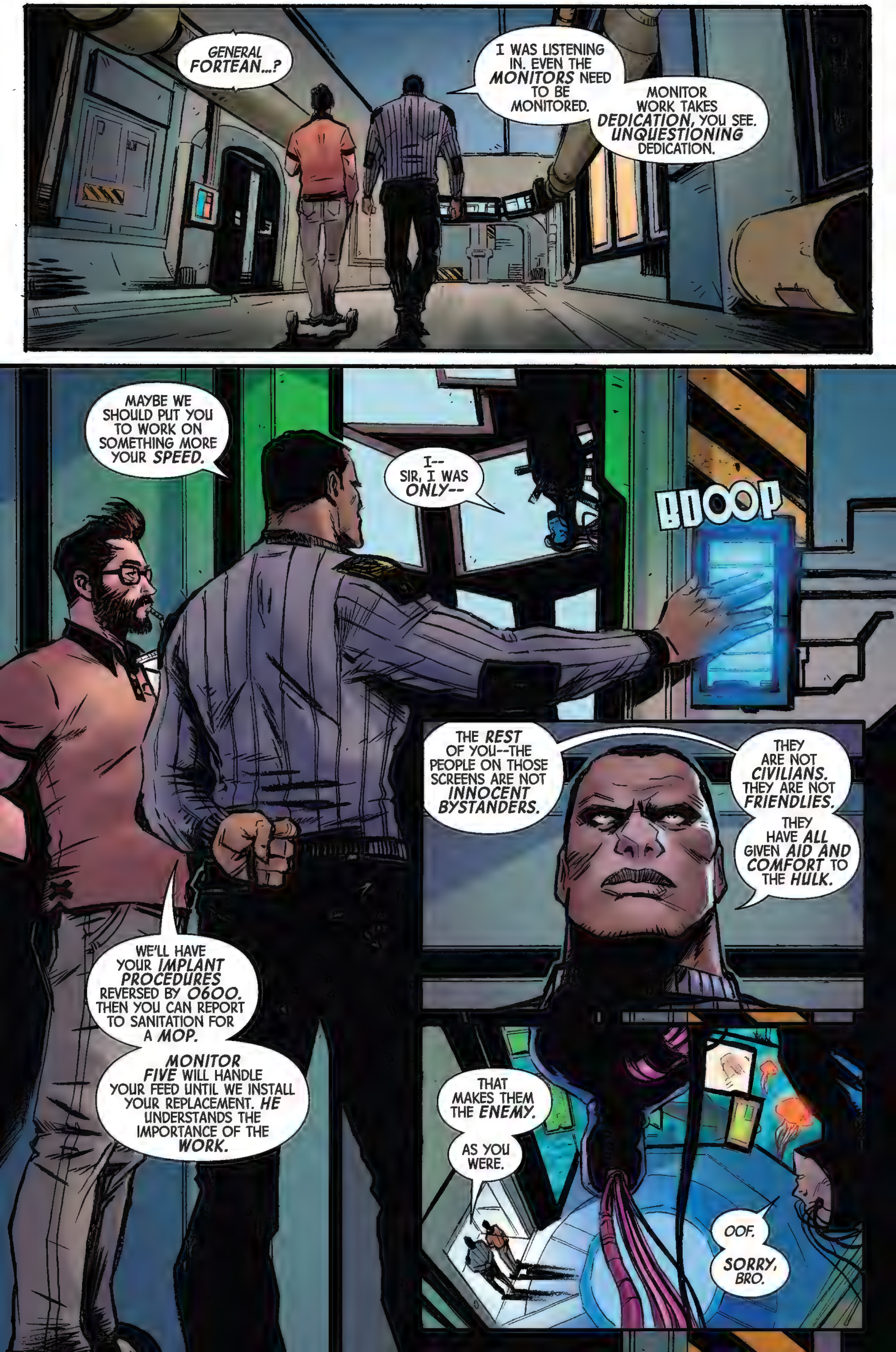

MINNESOTA.
...AND HIS RAGE IN MY MIRROR.
IF I'M THE SCIENTIFIC SELF--THE VOICE OF RATIONALITY--THE HULK REPRESENTS UNREASON.
HE'S SMARTER THAN I AM--BUT IT TAKES THE FORM OF HUNCHES AND GUT FEELINGS. STRANGE SYNCHRONICITIES. INTUITIVE CONNECTIONS.
MAGICAL THINKING.
KRRRK
...
THAT'S NEW.
NNESOTA

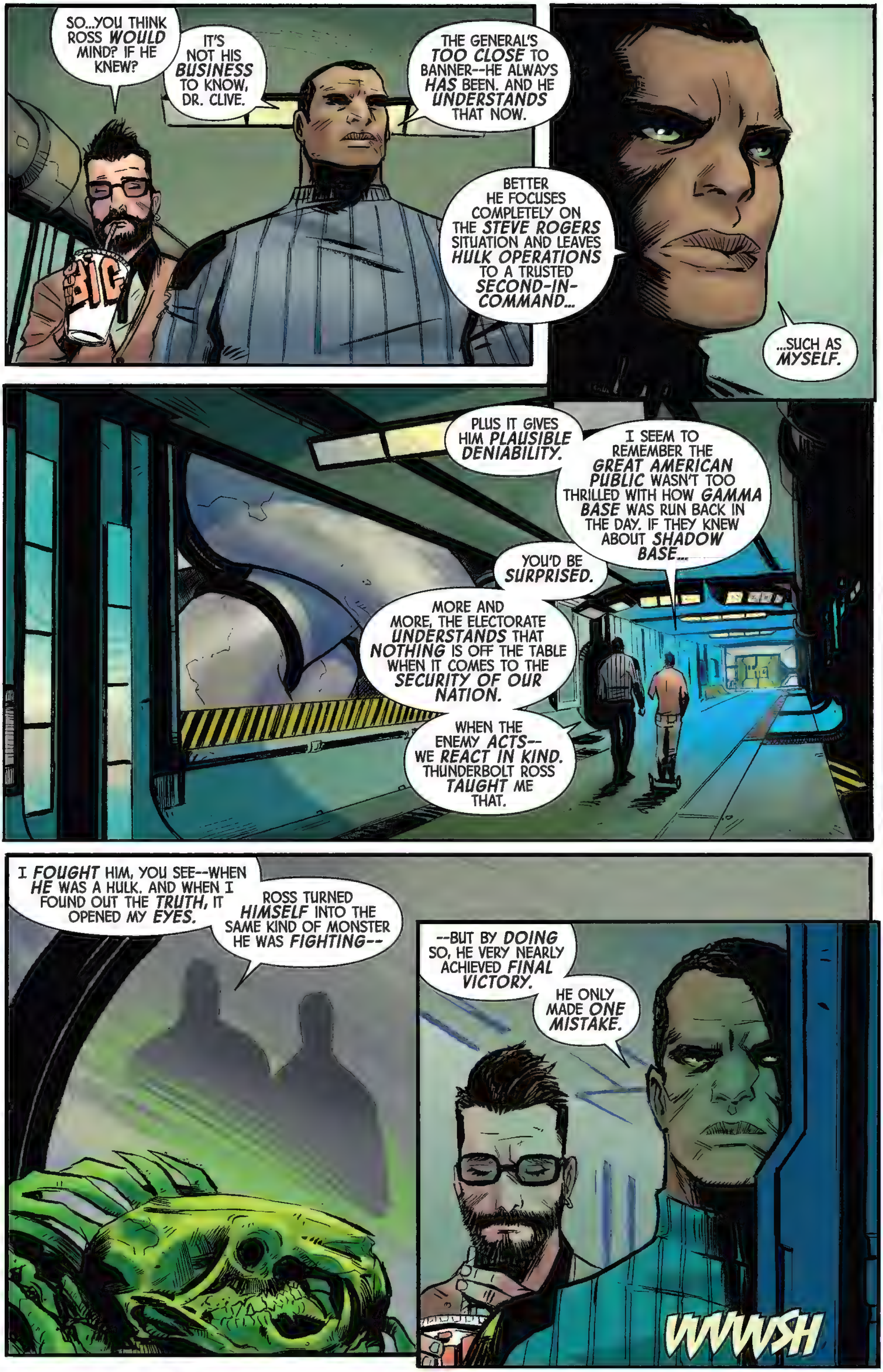

HE'S BEEN LIKE THIS FOR TWO DAYS NOW. WHILE I'VE BEEN DOING THE HARD WORK OF SURVIVAL--STEALING CLOTHES, FOOD, A CREDIT CARD FOR A MOTEL--
--HE'S BEEN BANGING ON THE INSIDE OF THE MIRROR.
I HAVEN'T DARED LET HIM OUT SINCE THE FIGHT WITH WALTER LANGKOWSKI.
NESOT
SOMETHING HAD INFECTED WALTER'S SASQUATCH FORM--HIS ATTEMPT TO CREATE A CONTROLLED HULK BY SUBJECTING HIMSELF TO GAMMA RADIATION.
THE MEMORIES ARE HAZY, BUT...HULK DEFEATED SASQUATCH BY DRAINING WALTER'S GAMMA ENERGY INTO HIMSELF.
INTO US.
AND I'M STARTING TO SUSPECT...
...SOMETHING ELSE CAME WITH IT.

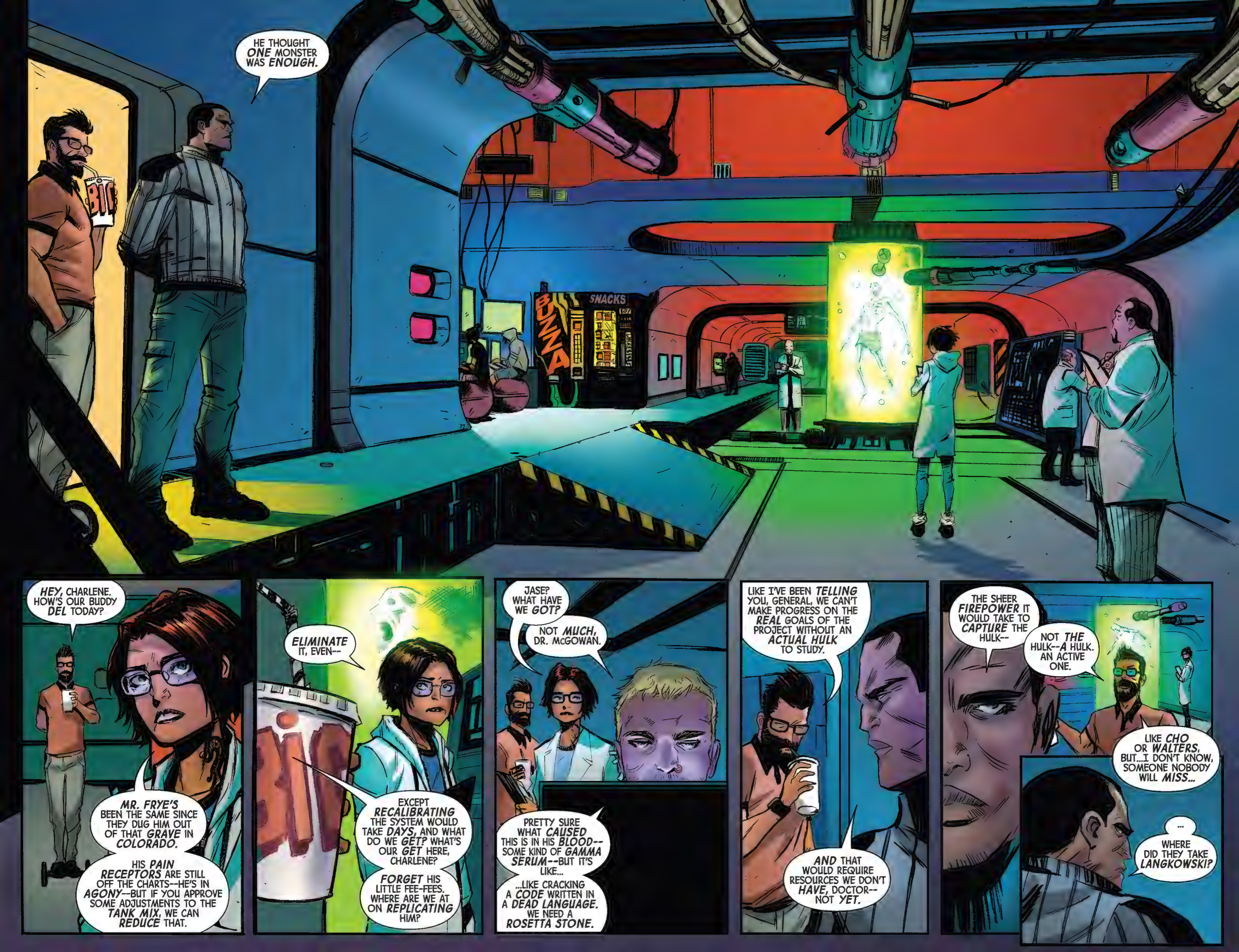

I NEED TO TALK TO HIM.
WE USED TO BE *ABLE* TO. DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCES IN BAROQUE MINDSCAPES. METAPHORICAL WRESTLING MATCHES.
NOW...I NEED *OTHER* METHODS.
I CLOSE MY EYES. TAKE A BREATH. LET IT GO.
EMPTY MY MIND.
LET MY HAND MOVE AS IT WILL. NOTHING *GUIDING* THE PEN ON THE PAPER...
...BUT MY *UNCONSCIOUS.*
NOW WHAT DOES *THAT* MEAN, HULK?
AUTOMATIC WRITING.
THE MAGICIAN *JOHN DEE* USED IT TO TRANSCRIBE THE LANGUAGE OF *ANGELS.*
THE *IRONY* DOESN'T ESCAPE ME.
HOME
WHERE'S *"HOME"*...?

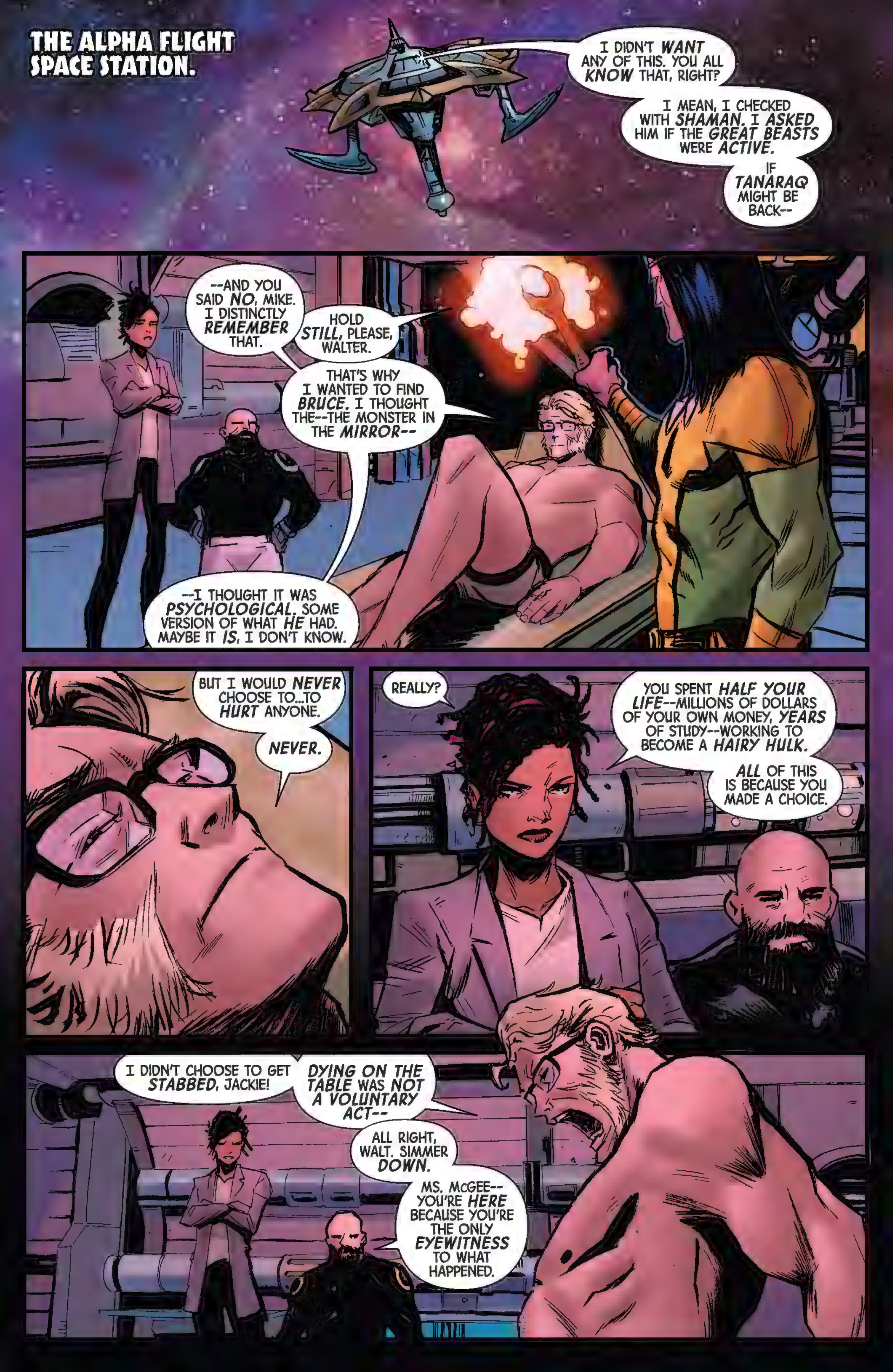

CALIFORNIA.
--AUTHORITIES REMAIN SILENT ON THE EVENTS THAT LEFT FOUR DEAD IN A MINNESOTA HOSPITAL-- BUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA, THE RUMORS WON'T GO AWAY.
WE'LL HAVE MORE ON THE DEADLIEST HULK SIGHTING YET AFTER THESE MESSAGES--
FOUR KILLED IN ALLEGED HULK ATTACK
IT ISN'T HIM.
JUST STOP IT, BETTY. STOP DOING THIS TO YOURSELF.
IT ISN'T HIM.
YOUR HUSBAND ISN'T BACK FROM THE DEAD.
KLIK
IF HE WERE BACK, HE'D HAVE--
--HE'D HAVE LET ME KNOW--HE'D-- HE'D HAVE--
IT ISN'T HIM.
IT CAN'T BE...
OUCH.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU GUYS...

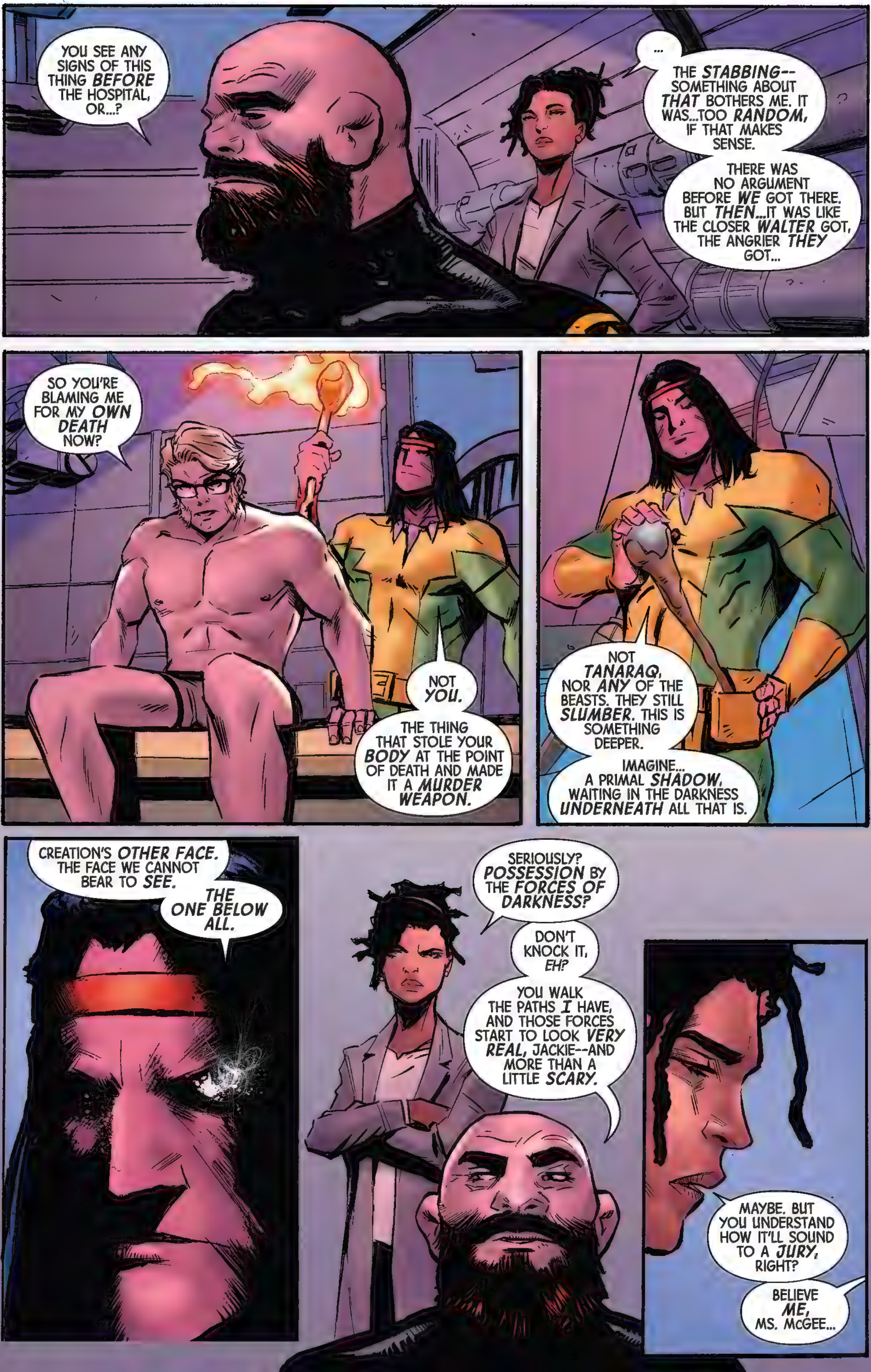

ELSEWHERE.
SUBJECT: LEONARD SAMSON 15:04:54 EDT
JUNG
SUBJECT: RICHARD JONES 18:04:54 PDT
SUBJECT: ELIZABETH ROSS BANNER 18:04:54 PDT
...BUT I'M STARTING TO FEEL LIKE A CREEP.
WHY? IT'S JUST MONITORING.
HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO KNOW IF BANNER'S CONTACTING HIS SUPPORT NETWORK IF WE DON'T KEEP TABS ON THEM?
I HONESTLY FIGURED HE'D SHOW UP WHEN CHO WENT CRAZY IN NEW YORK--
HE SHOULD'VE SHOWED UP FOR A LOT OF THINGS.
BANNER HASN'T EVEN VISITED RICK JONES' GRAVE. THAT'S JUST COLD.
SORRY, ARE WE--IS THIS DATA LOGGING?
MONITOR FIVE--NO CONTACT WITH SUBJECT SKAAR IN THE LAST 24 HOURS, LOG AND RECORD--
NO, WE'RE JUST--IT'S A CONVERSATION, FIVE. C'MON.
ALL I'M SAYING IS, THIS ISN'T JUST A CIVILIAN, THIS IS--IT'S GENERAL ROSS' DAUGHTER. THE BOSS OF OUR BOSS.
IT JUST FEELS LIKE--
--THIS JOB IS TOO MUCH FOR YOU.

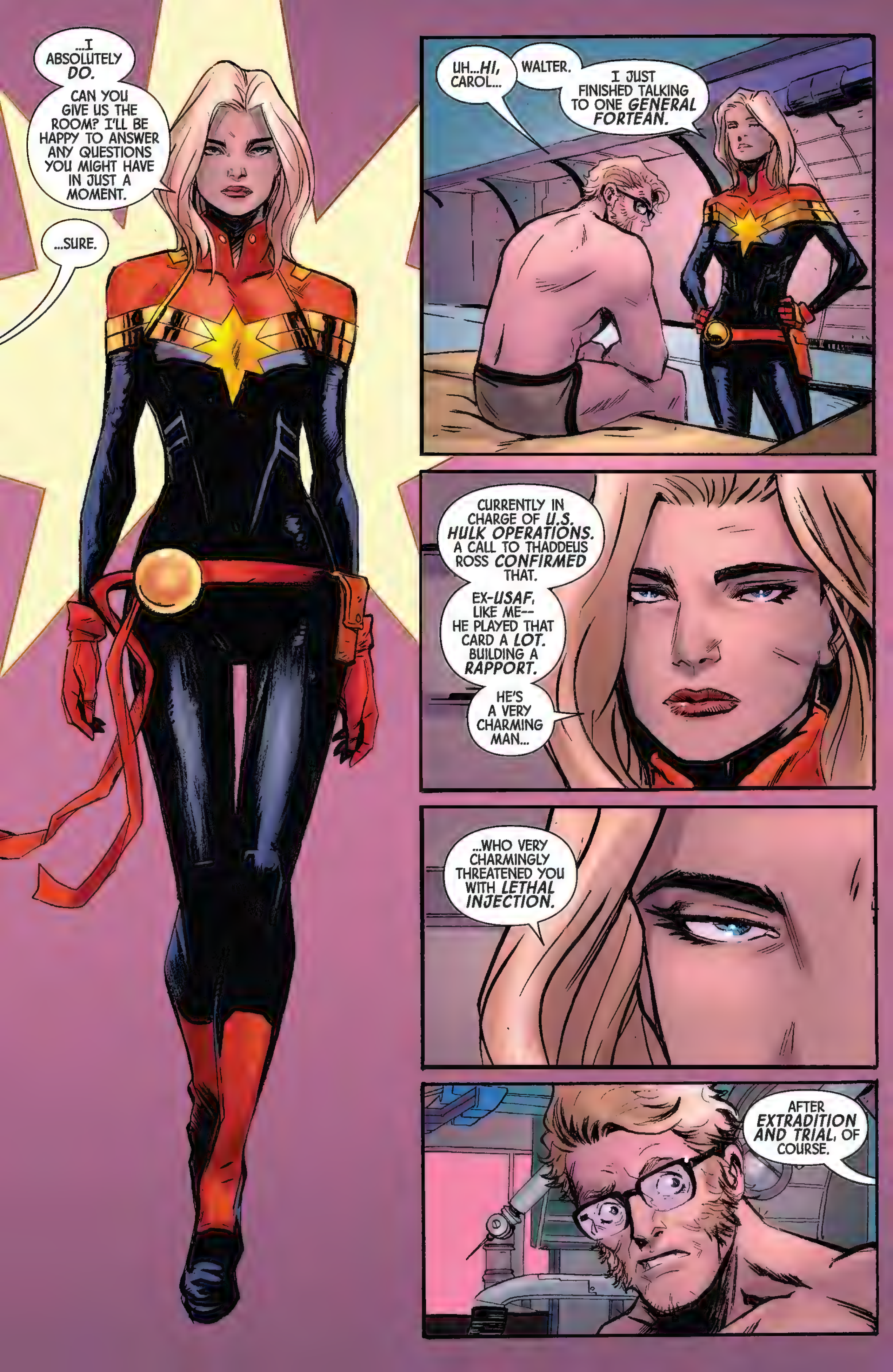

GENERAL FORTEAN...?
I WAS LISTENING IN. EVEN THE MONITORS NEED TO BE MONITORED.
MONITOR WORK TAKES DEDICATION, YOU SEE. UNQUESTIONING DEDICATION.
MAYBE WE SHOULD PUT YOU TO WORK ON SOMETHING MORE YOUR SPEED.
I-- SIR, I WAS ONLY--
BDOOP
WE'LL HAVE YOUR IMPLANT PROCEDURES REVERSED BY 0600. THEN YOU CAN REPORT TO SANITATION FOR A MOP.
MONITOR FIVE WILL HANDLE YOUR FEED UNTIL WE INSTALL YOUR REPLACEMENT. HE UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK.
THE REST OF YOU--THE PEOPLE ON THOSE SCREENS ARE NOT INNOCENT BYSTANDERS.
THEY ARE NOT CIVILIANS. THEY ARE NOT FRIENDLIES.
THEY HAVE ALL GIVEN AID AND COMFORT TO THE HULK.
THAT MAKES THEM THE ENEMY.
AS YOU WERE.
OOF.
SORRY, BRO.

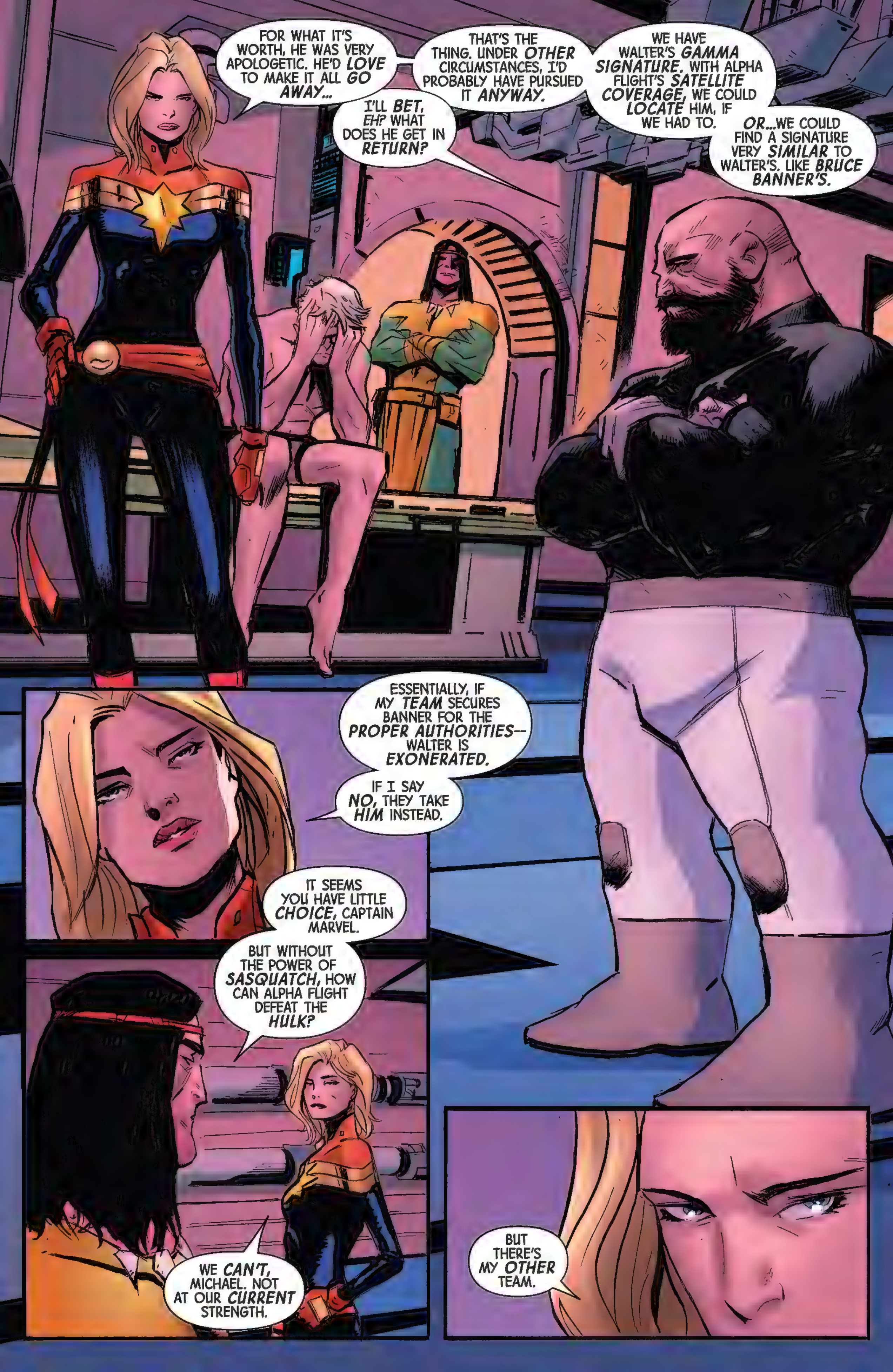

SO...YOU THINK ROSS *WOULD* MIND? IF HE KNEW?
IT'S NOT HIS *BUSINESS* TO KNOW, DR. CLIVE.
THE GENERAL'S *TOO CLOSE* TO BANNER--HE ALWAYS *HAS* BEEN. AND HE *UNDERSTANDS* THAT NOW.
BETTER HE FOCUSES COMPLETELY ON THE *STEVE ROGERS* SITUATION AND LEAVES *HULK OPERATIONS* TO A TRUSTED *SECOND-IN-COMMAND...*
...SUCH AS *MYSELF.*
PLUS IT GIVES HIM *PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY.*
I SEEM TO REMEMBER THE *GREAT AMERICAN PUBLIC* WASN'T TOO THRILLED WITH HOW *GAMMA BASE* WAS RUN BACK IN THE DAY. IF THEY KNEW ABOUT *SHADOW BASE...*
YOU'D BE *SURPRISED.*
MORE AND MORE, THE ELECTORATE *UNDERSTANDS* THAT *NOTHING* IS OFF THE TABLE WHEN IT COMES TO THE *SECURITY OF OUR NATION.*
WHEN THE ENEMY *ACTS*-- WE *REACT IN KIND.* THUNDERBOLT ROSS *TAUGHT* ME THAT.
I *FOUGHT* HIM, YOU SEE--WHEN *HE* WAS A HULK. AND WHEN I FOUND OUT THE *TRUTH,* IT OPENED MY *EYES.*
ROSS TURNED *HIMSELF* INTO THE SAME KIND OF MONSTER HE WAS *FIGHTING--*
--BUT BY *DOING* SO, HE VERY NEARLY ACHIEVED *FINAL VICTORY.*
HE ONLY MADE *ONE MISTAKE.*
VVVWSH

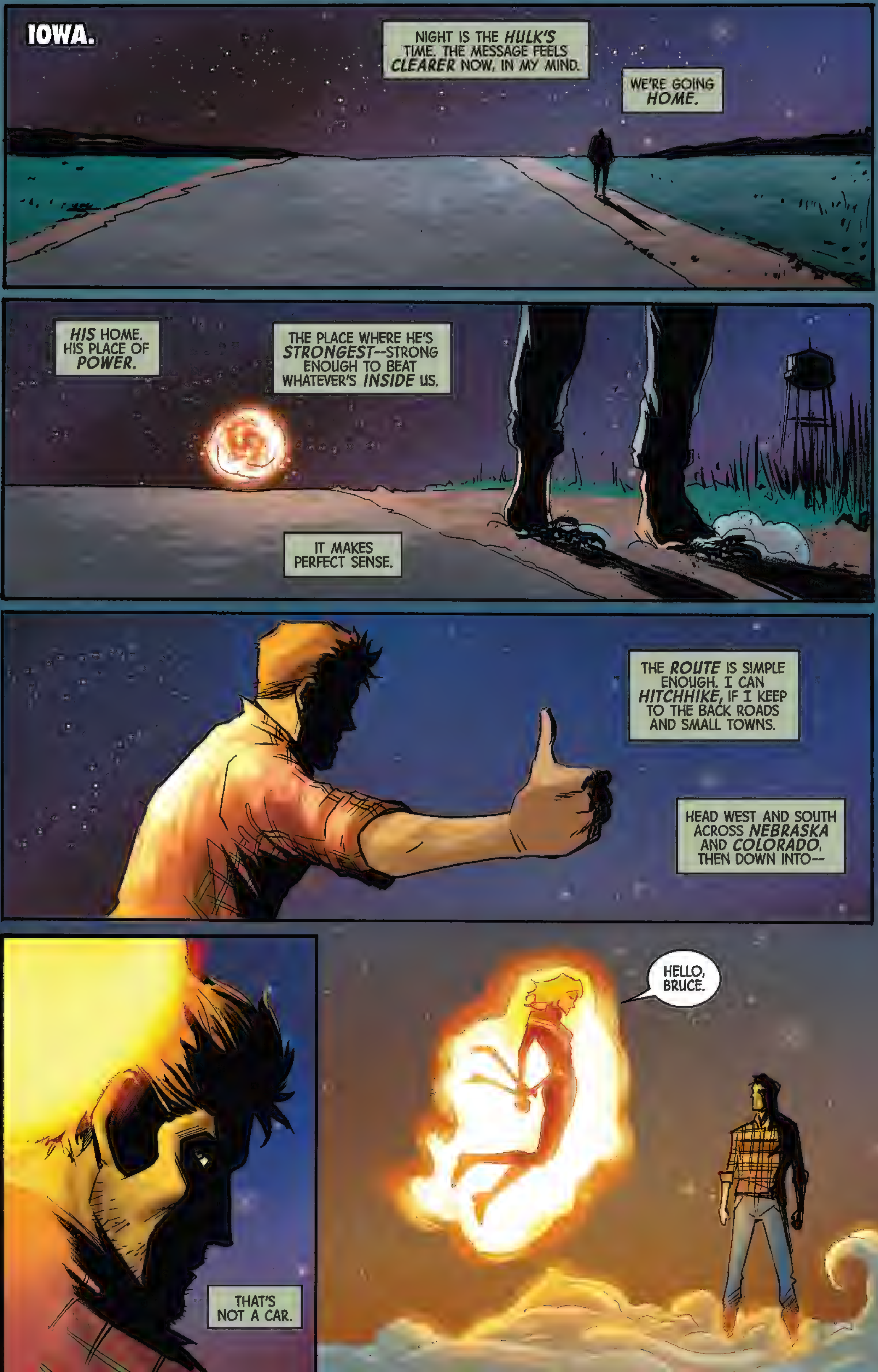

HE THOUGHT *ONE* MONSTER WAS *ENOUGH.*
BIG
BUZZA
SNACKS
HEY, CHARLENE. HOW'S OUR BUDDY *DEL* TODAY?
MR. FRYE'S BEEN THE SAME SINCE THEY DUG HIM OUT OF THAT *GRAVE* IN *COLORADO.*
HIS *PAIN RECEPTORS* ARE STILL OFF THE CHARTS--HE'S IN *AGONY*--BUT IF YOU APPROVE SOME ADJUSTMENTS TO THE *TANK MIX,* WE CAN *REDUCE* THAT.
ELIMINATE IT, EVEN--
BIG
EXCEPT *RECALIBRATING* THE SYSTEM WOULD TAKE *DAYS,* AND WHAT DO WE *GET?* WHAT'S OUR *GET* HERE, CHARLENE?
FORGET HIS LITTLE FEE-FEES. WHERE ARE WE AT ON *REPLICATING* HIM?
JASE? WHAT HAVE WE *GOT?*
NOT *MUCH,* DR. McGOWAN.
PRETTY SURE WHAT *CAUSED* THIS IS IN HIS *BLOOD*--SOME KIND OF *GAMMA SERUM*--BUT IT'S LIKE...
...LIKE CRACKING A *CODE* WRITTEN IN A *DEAD LANGUAGE.* WE NEED A *ROSETTA STONE.*
LIKE I'VE BEEN *TELLING* YOU, GENERAL, WE CAN'T MAKE PROGRESS ON THE *REAL* GOALS OF THE PROJECT WITHOUT AN *ACTUAL HULK* TO STUDY.
AND THAT WOULD REQUIRE RESOURCES WE DON'T *HAVE,* DOCTOR--NOT *YET.*
THE SHEER *FIREPOWER* IT WOULD TAKE TO *CAPTURE* THE HULK--
NOT *THE* HULK--*A* HULK. AN ACTIVE ONE.
LIKE *CHO* OR *WALTERS,* BUT...I DON'T KNOW, SOMEONE NOBODY WILL *MISS...*
...
WHERE DID THEY TAKE *LANGKOWSKI?*

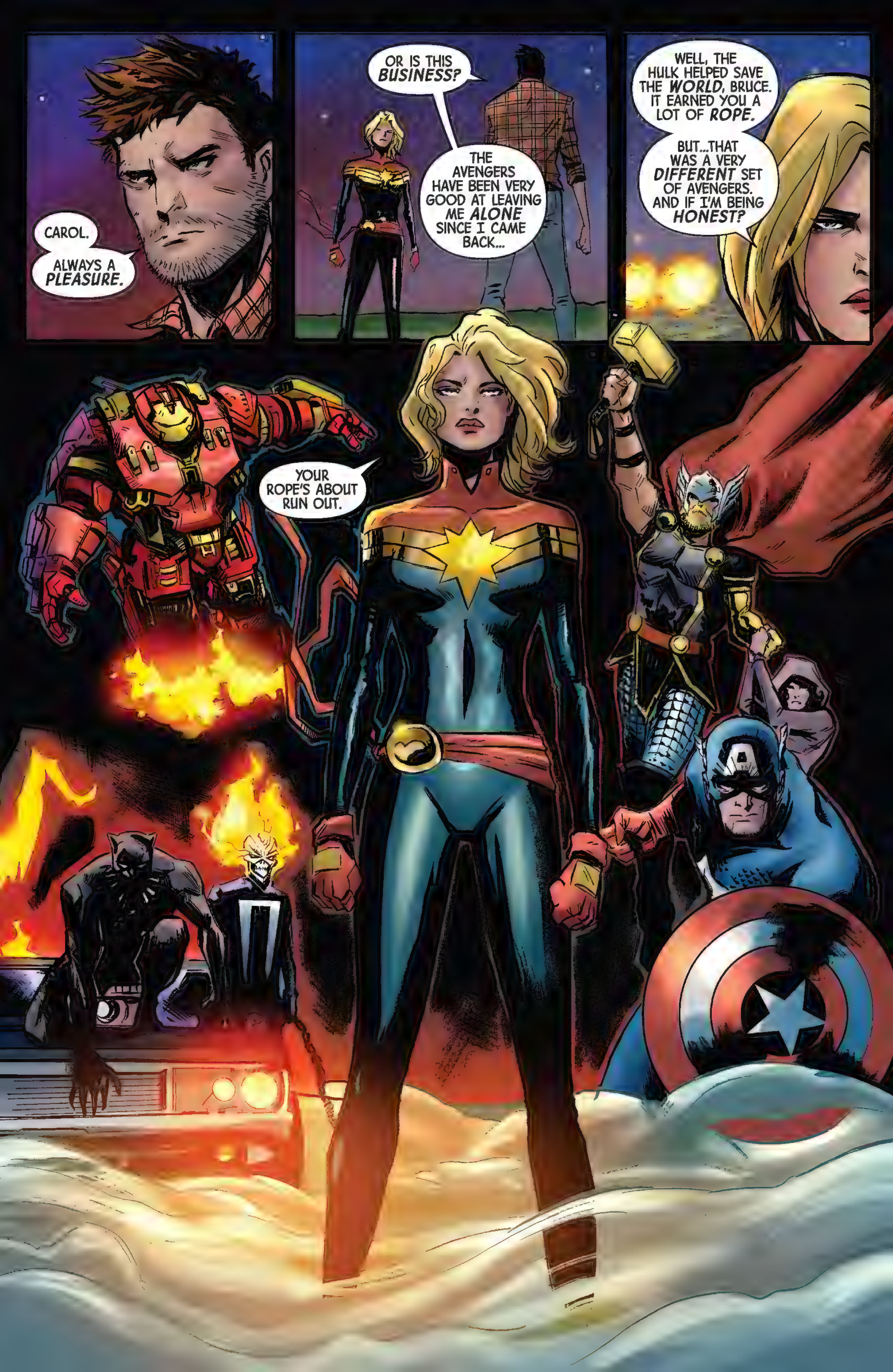

THE ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
I DIDN'T *WANT* ANY OF THIS. YOU ALL *KNOW* THAT, RIGHT?
I MEAN, I CHECKED WITH *SHAMAN*. I *ASKED* HIM IF THE *GREAT BEASTS* WERE *ACTIVE*.
IF *TANARAQ* MIGHT BE BACK--
--AND YOU SAID *NO*, MIKE. I DISTINCTLY *REMEMBER* THAT.
HOLD *STILL*, PLEASE, WALTER.
THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO FIND *BRUCE*. I THOUGHT THE--THE MONSTER IN THE *MIRROR*--
--I THOUGHT IT WAS *PSYCHOLOGICAL*. SOME VERSION OF WHAT *HE* HAD. MAYBE IT *IS*, I DON'T KNOW.
BUT I WOULD *NEVER* CHOOSE TO...TO *HURT* ANYONE.
NEVER.
REALLY?
YOU SPENT *HALF YOUR LIFE*--MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF YOUR OWN MONEY, *YEARS* OF STUDY--WORKING TO BECOME A *HAIRY HULK*.
ALL OF THIS IS BECAUSE YOU MADE A CHOICE.
I DIDN'T CHOOSE TO GET *STABBED*, JACKIE!
DYING ON THE TABLE WAS *NOT A VOLUNTARY ACT*--
ALL RIGHT, WALT. SIMMER *DOWN*.
MS. McGEE-- YOU'RE *HERE* BECAUSE YOU'RE THE ONLY *EYEWITNESS* TO WHAT HAPPENED.

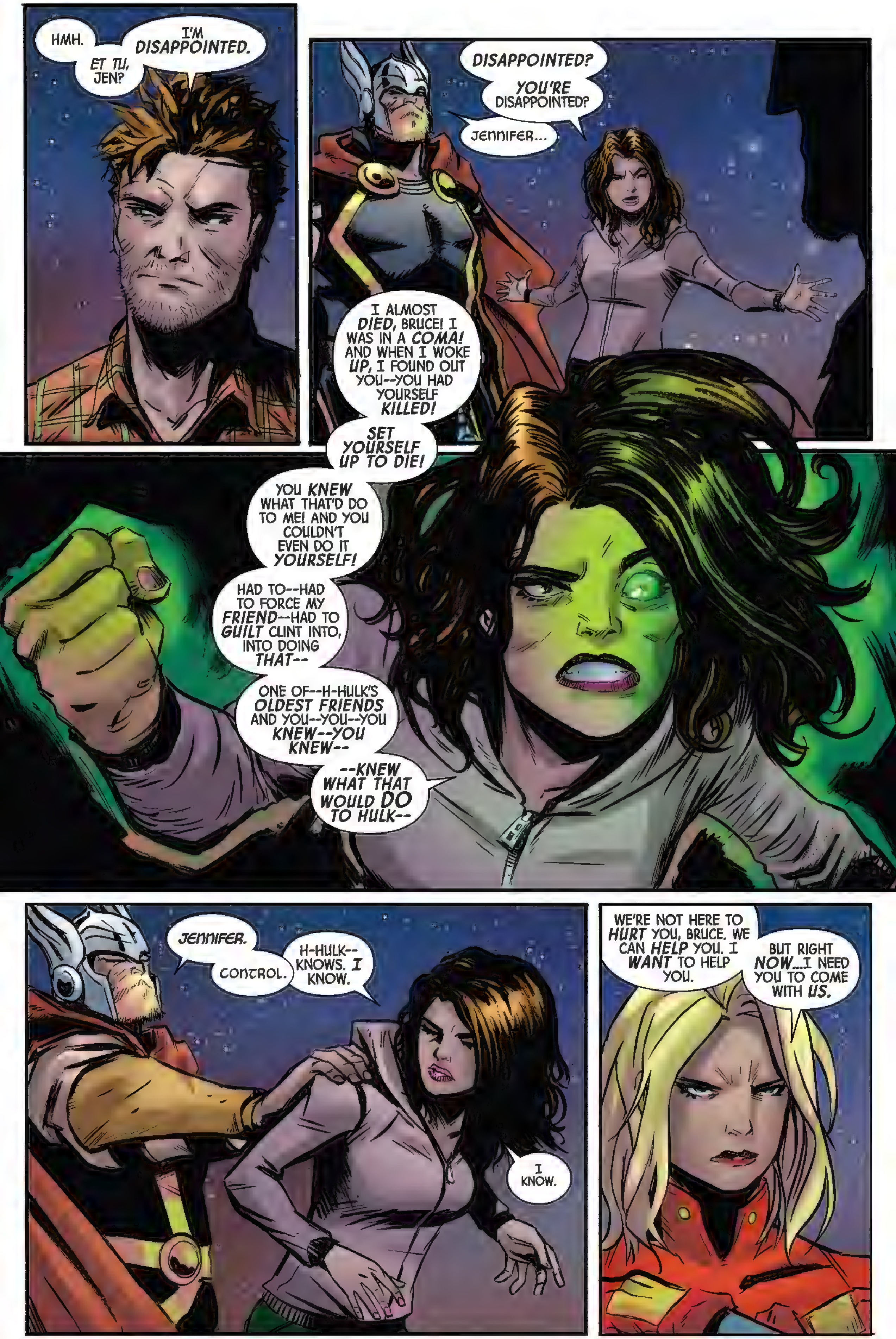

YOU SEE ANY SIGNS OF THIS THING *BEFORE* THE HOSPITAL, OR...?
...
THE *STABBING*--SOMETHING ABOUT *THAT* BOTHERS ME. IT WAS...TOO *RANDOM,* IF THAT MAKES SENSE.
THERE WAS NO ARGUMENT BEFORE *WE* GOT THERE. BUT *THEN*...IT WAS LIKE THE CLOSER *WALTER* GOT, THE ANGRIER *THEY* GOT...
SO YOU'RE BLAMING ME FOR MY *OWN DEATH* NOW?
NOT *YOU.*
THE THING THAT STOLE YOUR *BODY* AT THE POINT OF DEATH AND MADE IT A *MURDER WEAPON.*
NOT *TANARAQ,* NOR *ANY* OF THE BEASTS. THEY STILL *SLUMBER.* THIS IS SOMETHING DEEPER.
IMAGINE... A PRIMAL *SHADOW,* WAITING IN THE DARKNESS *UNDERNEATH* ALL THAT IS.
CREATION'S *OTHER FACE.* THE FACE WE CANNOT BEAR TO *SEE.*
THE ONE BELOW ALL.
SERIOUSLY? *POSSESSION* BY THE *FORCES OF DARKNESS?*
DON'T KNOCK IT, EH?
YOU WALK THE PATHS *I* HAVE, AND THOSE FORCES START TO LOOK *VERY REAL,* JACKIE--AND MORE THAN A LITTLE *SCARY.*
MAYBE. BUT YOU UNDERSTAND HOW IT'LL SOUND TO A *JURY,* RIGHT?
BELIEVE *ME,* MS. McGEE...

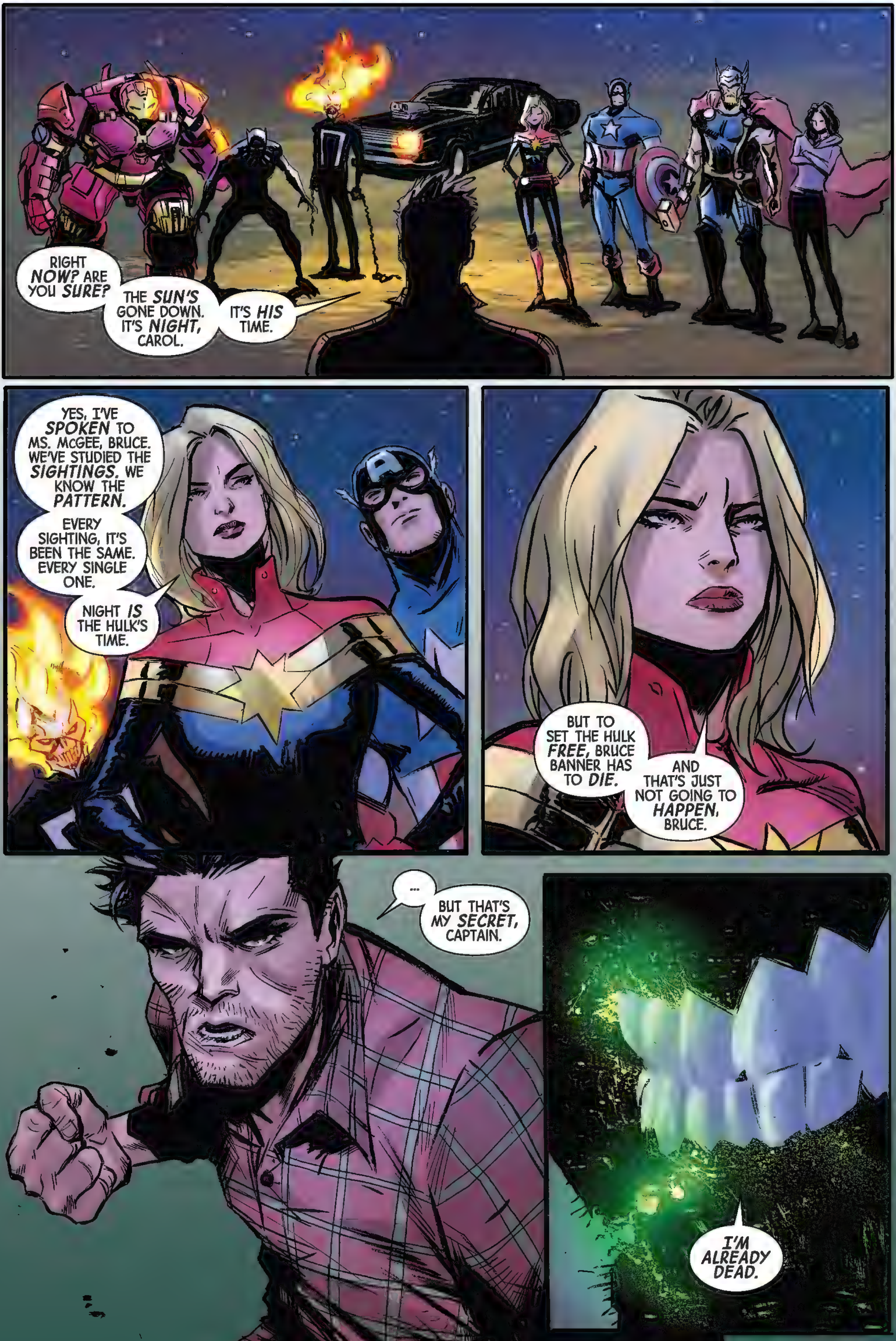

...I ABSOLUTELY *DO.*
CAN YOU GIVE US THE ROOM? I'LL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE IN JUST A MOMENT.
...SURE.
UH...*HI,* CAROL...
WALTER.
I JUST FINISHED TALKING TO ONE *GENERAL FORTEAN.*
CURRENTLY IN CHARGE OF *U.S. HULK OPERATIONS.* A CALL TO THADDEUS ROSS *CONFIRMED* THAT.
EX-*USAF,* LIKE ME-- HE PLAYED THAT CARD A *LOT.* BUILDING A *RAPPORT.*
HE'S A VERY CHARMING MAN...
...WHO VERY CHARMINGLY THREATENED YOU WITH *LETHAL INJECTION.*
AFTER *EXTRADITION AND TRIAL,* OF COURSE.


FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, HE WAS VERY APOLOGETIC. HE'D *LOVE* TO MAKE IT ALL *GO AWAY*...
I'LL *BET*, *EH?* WHAT DOES HE GET IN *RETURN?*
THAT'S THE THING. UNDER *OTHER* CIRCUMSTANCES, I'D PROBABLY HAVE PURSUED IT *ANYWAY*.
WE HAVE WALTER'S *GAMMA SIGNATURE*. WITH ALPHA FLIGHT'S *SATELLITE COVERAGE*, WE COULD *LOCATE* HIM, IF WE HAD TO.
OR...WE COULD FIND A SIGNATURE VERY *SIMILAR* TO WALTER'S. LIKE *BRUCE BANNER'S*.
ESSENTIALLY, IF MY *TEAM* SECURES BANNER FOR THE *PROPER AUTHORITIES*-- WALTER IS *EXONERATED*.
IF I SAY *NO*, THEY TAKE *HIM* INSTEAD.
IT SEEMS YOU HAVE LITTLE *CHOICE*, CAPTAIN MARVEL.
BUT WITHOUT THE POWER OF *SASQUATCH*, HOW CAN ALPHA FLIGHT DEFEAT THE *HULK?*
WE *CAN'T*, MICHAEL. NOT AT OUR *CURRENT* STRENGTH.
BUT THERE'S MY *OTHER* TEAM.


IOWA.
NIGHT IS THE HULK'S TIME. THE MESSAGE FEELS CLEARER NOW, IN MY MIND.
WE'RE GOING HOME.
HIS HOME. HIS PLACE OF POWER.
THE PLACE WHERE HE'S STRONGEST--STRONG ENOUGH TO BEAT WHATEVER'S INSIDE US.
IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE.
THE ROUTE IS SIMPLE ENOUGH. I CAN HITCHHIKE, IF I KEEP TO THE BACK ROADS AND SMALL TOWNS.
HEAD WEST AND SOUTH ACROSS NEBRASKA AND COLORADO, THEN DOWN INTO--
THAT'S NOT A CAR.
HELLO, BRUCE.


CAROL.
ALWAYS A *PLEASURE.*
OR IS THIS *BUSINESS?*
THE AVENGERS HAVE BEEN VERY GOOD AT LEAVING ME *ALONE* SINCE I CAME BACK...
WELL, THE HULK HELPED SAVE THE *WORLD*, BRUCE. IT EARNED YOU A LOT OF *ROPE.*
BUT...THAT WAS A VERY *DIFFERENT* SET OF AVENGERS. AND IF I'M BEING *HONEST?*
YOUR ROPE'S ABOUT RUN OUT.


HMH.
I'M *DISAPPOINTED.*
ET TU, JEN?
DISAPPOINTED?
YOU'RE DISAPPOINTED?
JENNIFER...
I ALMOST *DIED,* BRUCE! I WAS IN A *COMA!* AND WHEN I WOKE *UP,* I FOUND OUT YOU--YOU HAD YOURSELF *KILLED!*
SET YOURSELF UP TO DIE!
YOU *KNEW* WHAT THAT'D DO TO ME! AND YOU COULDN'T EVEN DO IT *YOURSELF!*
HAD TO--HAD TO FORCE MY *FRIEND*--HAD TO *GUILT* CLINT INTO, INTO DOING *THAT--*
ONE OF--H-HULK'S *OLDEST FRIENDS* AND YOU--YOU--YOU *KNEW--YOU KNEW--*
--KNEW WHAT THAT WOULD DO TO HULK--
JENNIFER.
CONTROL.
H-HULK--KNOWS. *I* KNOW.
I KNOW.
WE'RE NOT HERE TO *HURT* YOU, BRUCE. WE CAN *HELP* YOU. I *WANT* TO HELP YOU.
BUT RIGHT *NOW...*I NEED YOU TO COME WITH *US.*


RIGHT *NOW?* ARE YOU *SURE?*
THE *SUN'S* GONE DOWN. IT'S *NIGHT,* CAROL.
IT'S *HIS* TIME.
YES, I'VE *SPOKEN* TO MS. McGEE, BRUCE. WE'VE STUDIED THE *SIGHTINGS.* WE KNOW THE *PATTERN.*
EVERY SIGHTING, IT'S BEEN THE SAME. EVERY SINGLE ONE.
NIGHT *IS* THE HULK'S TIME.
BUT TO SET THE HULK *FREE,* BRUCE BANNER HAS TO *DIE.*
AND THAT'S JUST NOT GOING TO *HAPPEN,* BRUCE.
...
BUT THAT'S MY *SECRET,* CAPTAIN.
I'M ALREADY DEAD.

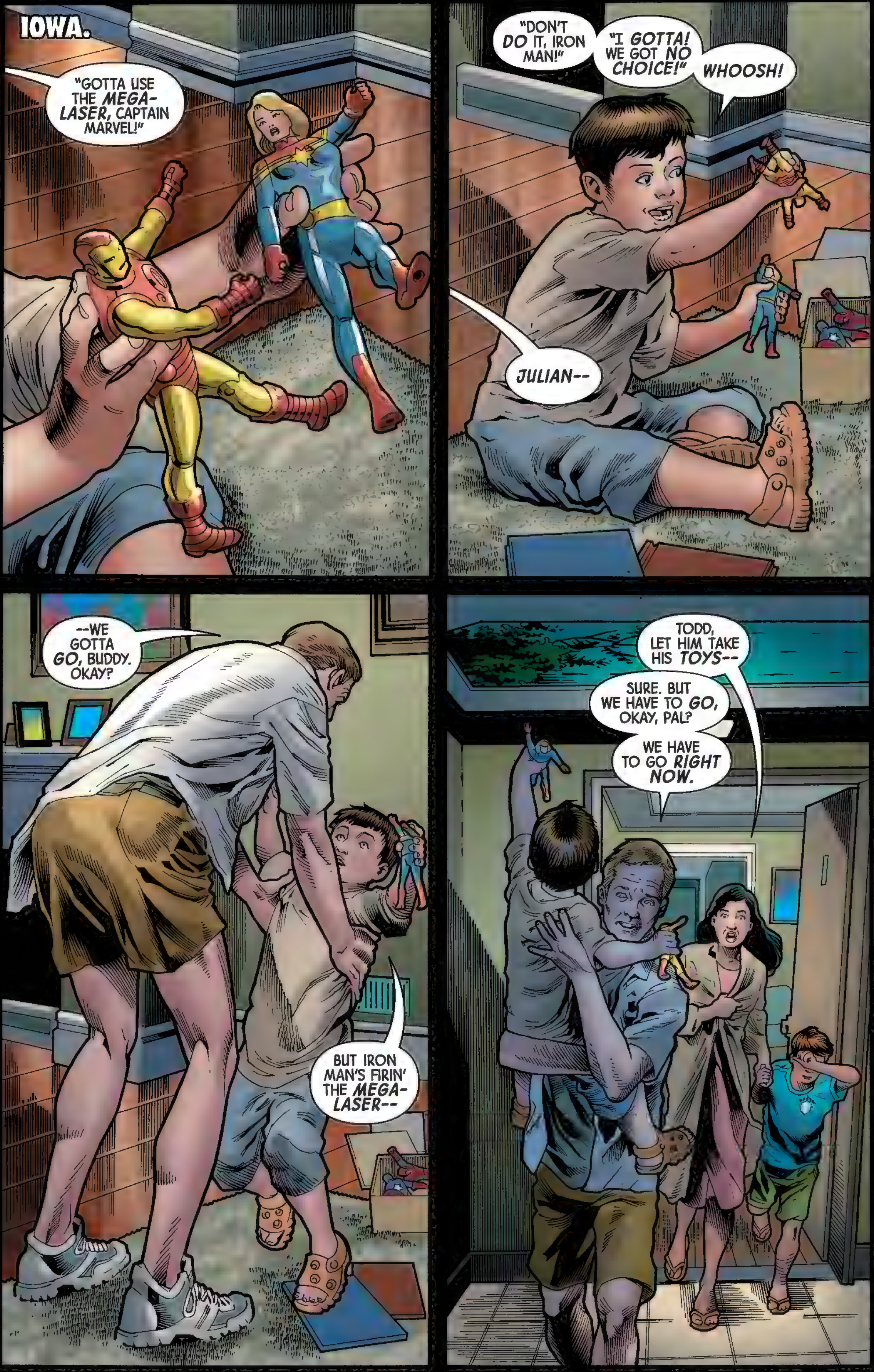
ACTION/ REACTION

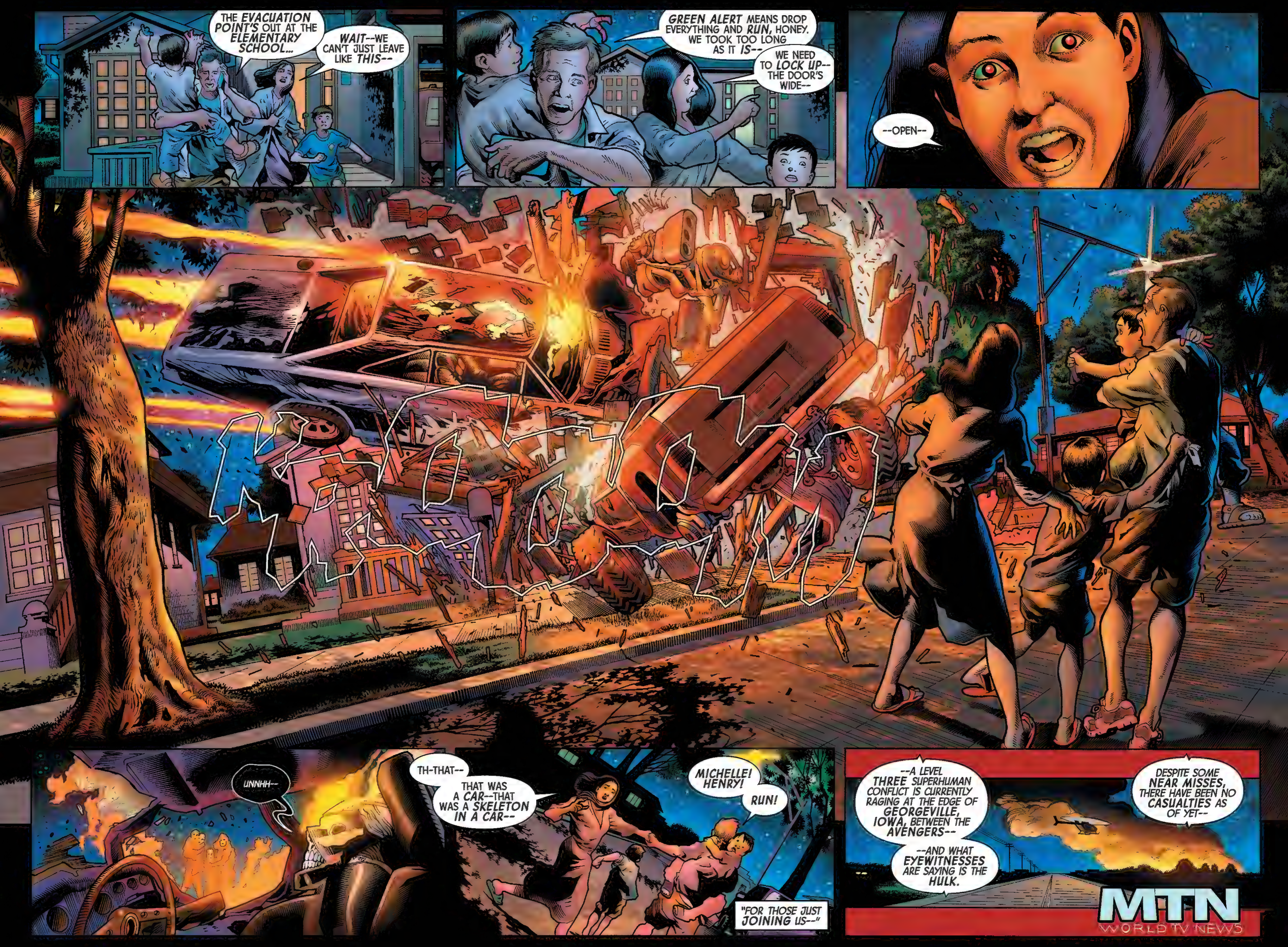
7

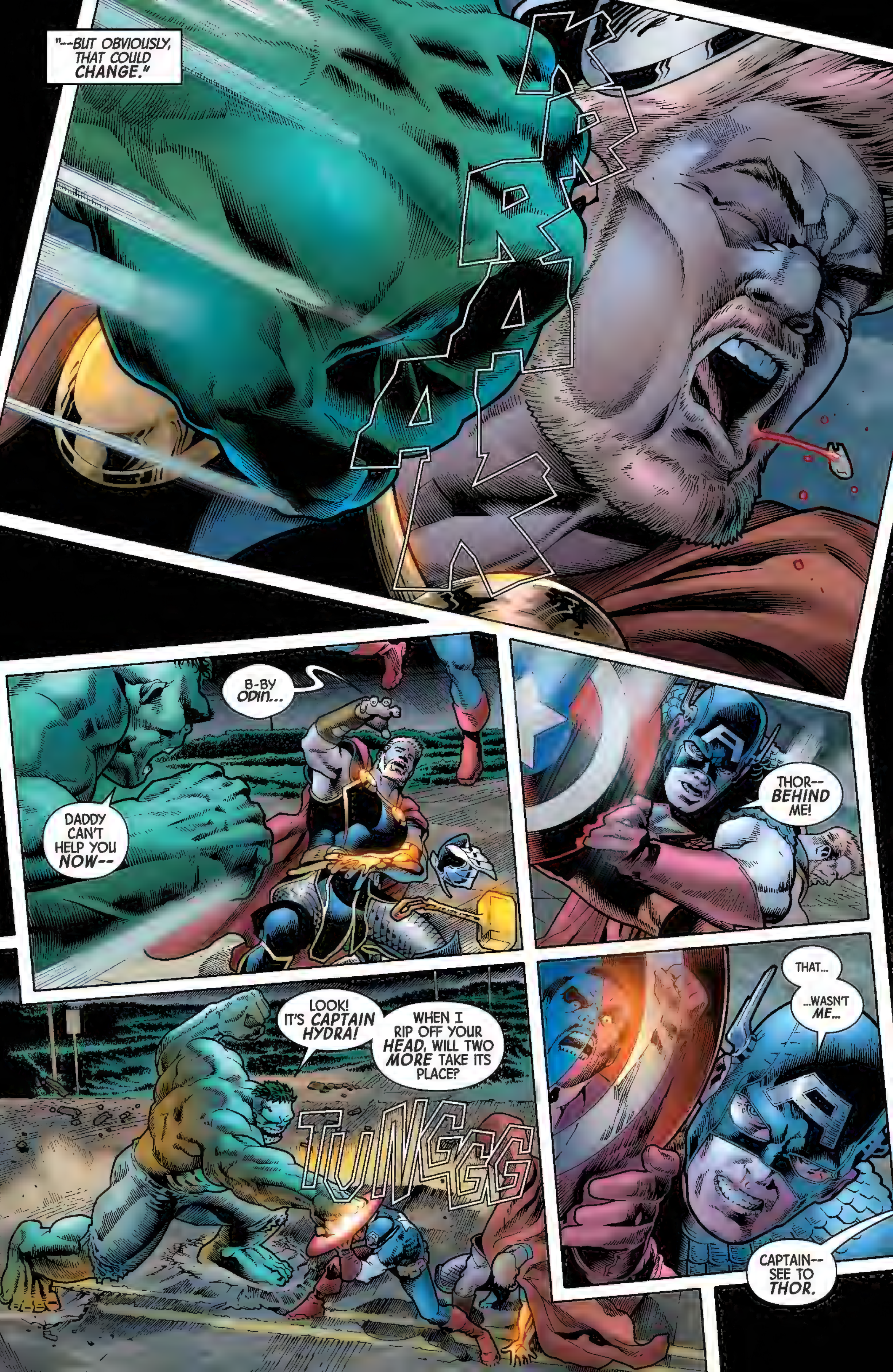
"Many names hath God given him, names of mystery, secret and terrible... the Destroyer, for his arm breaketh and grindeth to pieces, wherefore the fear and dread of him are upon all flesh. And the Avenger, for he is the anger of God, his breath shall burn up all the souls of the wicked."

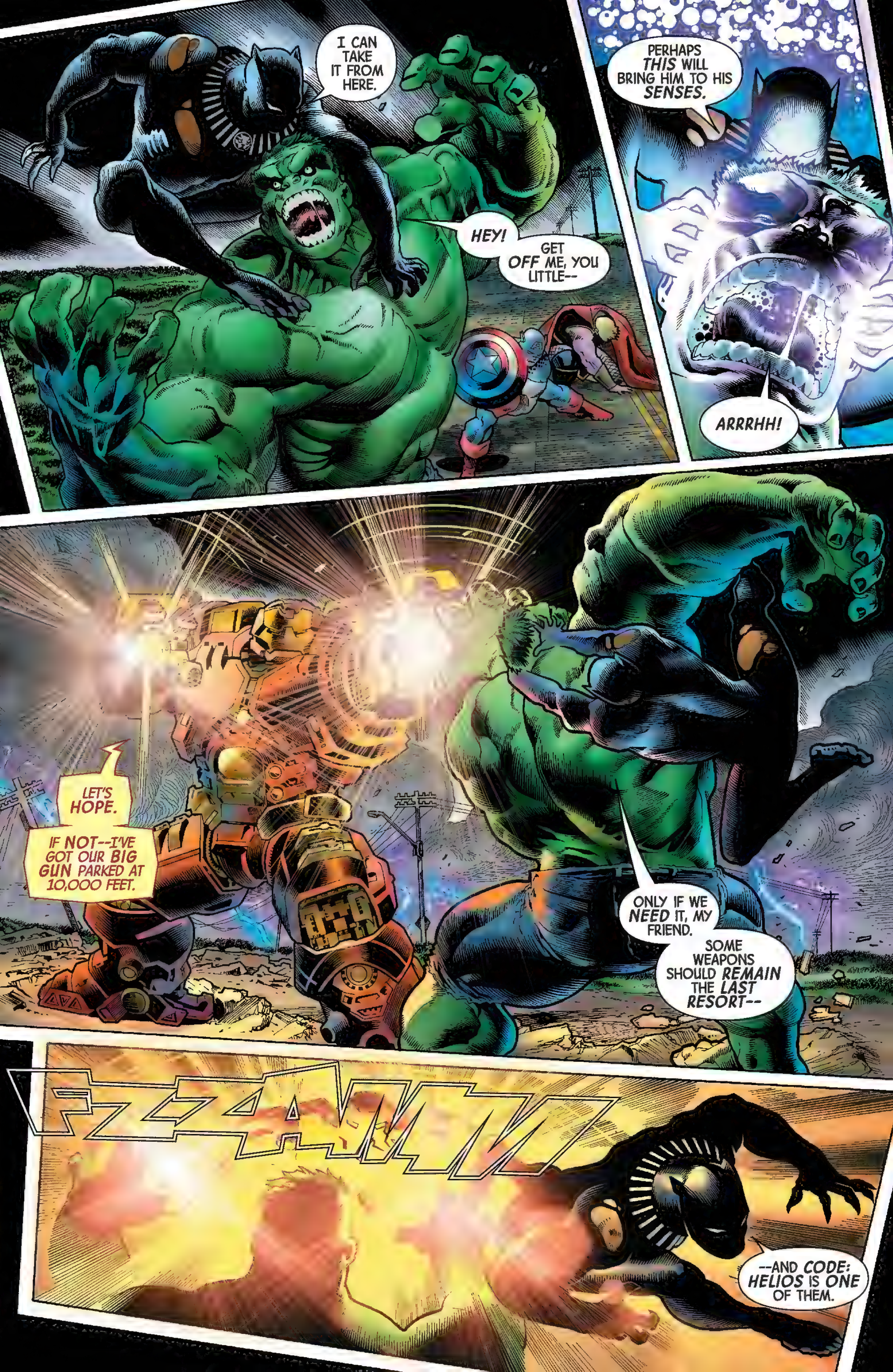
– Anna Kingsford

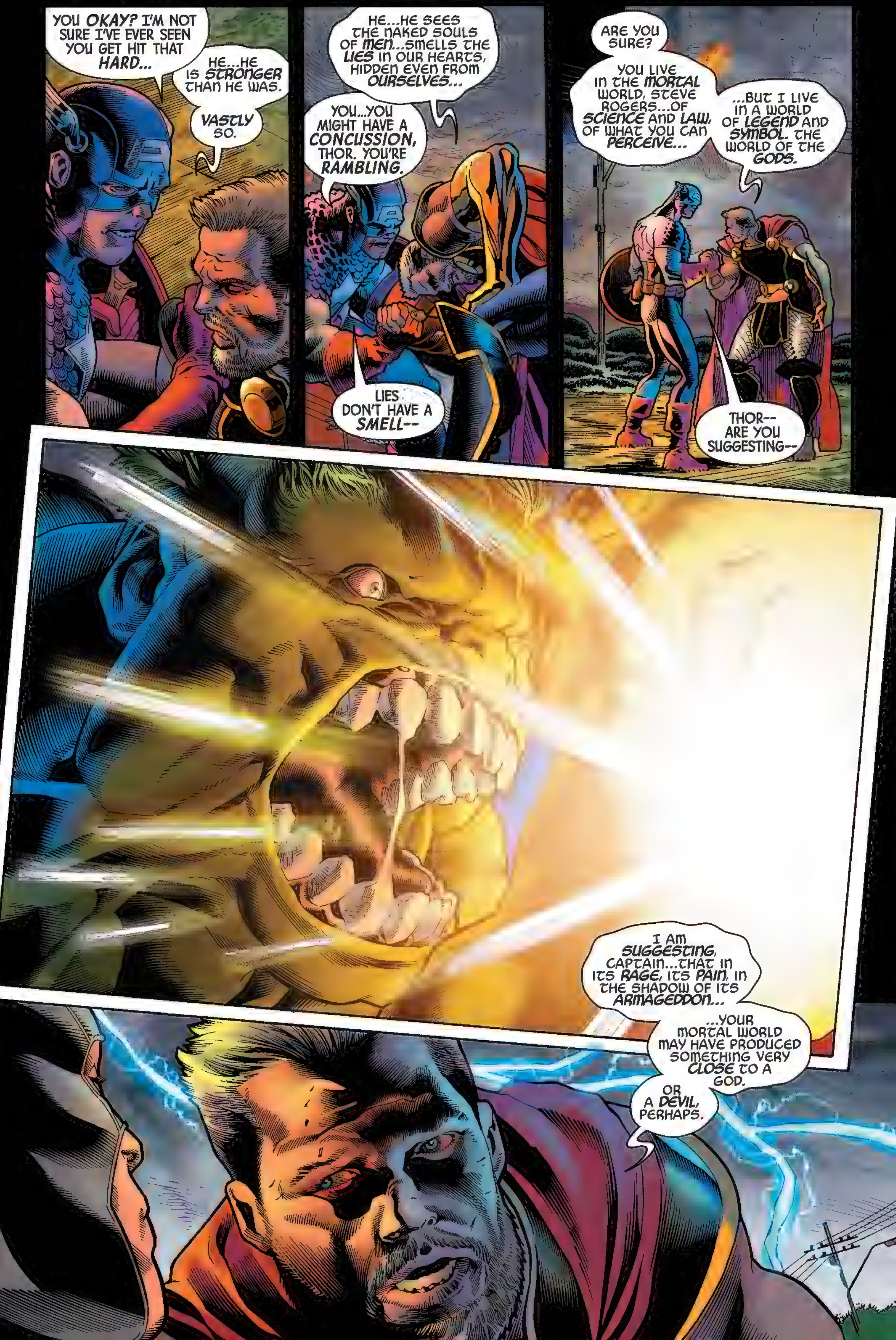
Clothed with the Sun

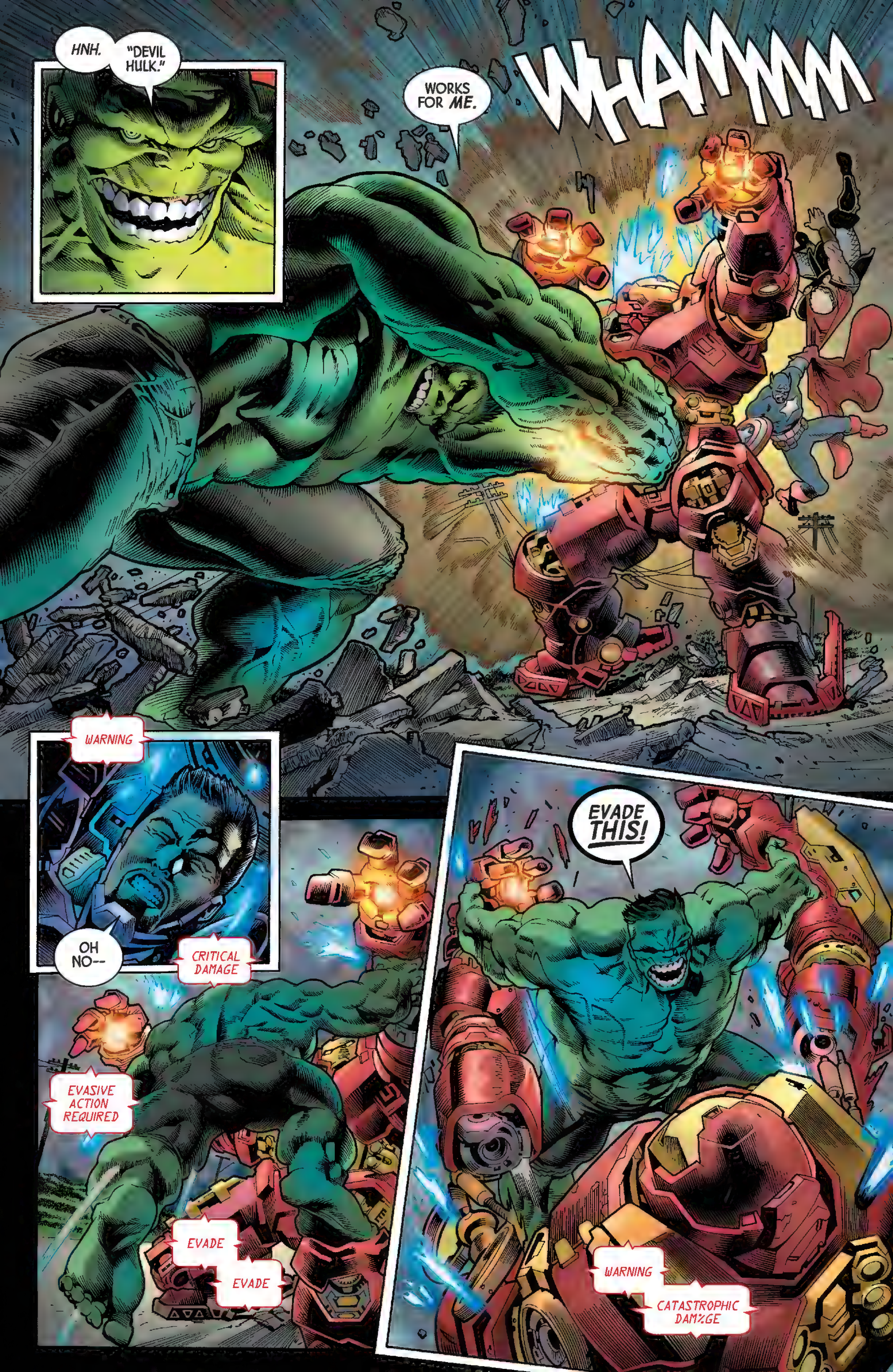

IOWA.
"GOTTA USE THE *MEGA-LASER*, CAPTAIN MARVEL!"
"DON'T *DO* IT, IRON MAN!"
"I *GOTTA!* WE GOT *NO CHOICE!*"
WHOOSH!
JULIAN--
--WE GOTTA *GO*, BUDDY. OKAY?
BUT IRON MAN'S FIRIN' THE *MEGA-LASER--*
TODD, LET HIM TAKE HIS *TOYS--*
SURE. BUT WE HAVE TO *GO*, OKAY, PAL?
WE HAVE TO GO *RIGHT NOW.*

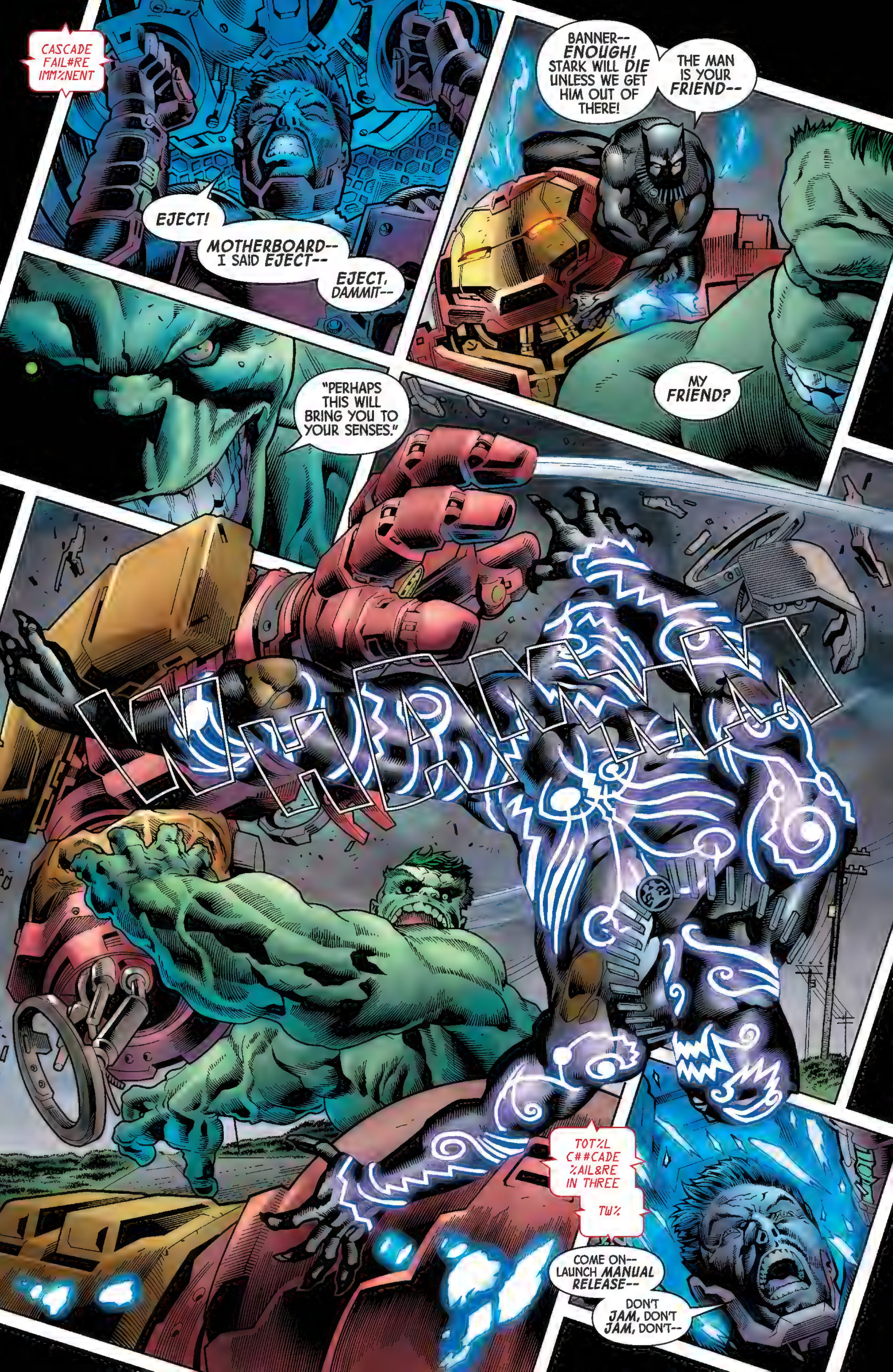

THE EVACUATION POINT'S OUT AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL...
WAIT--WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE LIKE THIS--
GREEN ALERT MEANS DROP EVERYTHING AND RUN, HONEY. WE TOOK TOO LONG AS IT IS--
WE NEED TO LOCK UP-- THE DOOR'S WIDE--
--OPEN--
KROOOM
UNNHH--
TH-THAT-- THAT WAS A CAR--THAT WAS A SKELETON IN A CAR--
MICHELLE! HENRY!
RUN!
"FOR THOSE JUST JOINING US--"
--A LEVEL THREE SUPERHUMAN CONFLICT IS CURRENTLY RAGING AT THE EDGE OF GEORGEVILLE, IOWA, BETWEEN THE AVENGERS--
--AND WHAT EYEWITNESSES ARE SAYING IS THE HULK.
DESPITE SOME NEAR MISSES, THERE HAVE BEEN NO CASUALTIES AS OF YET--
MTN
WORLD TV NEWS

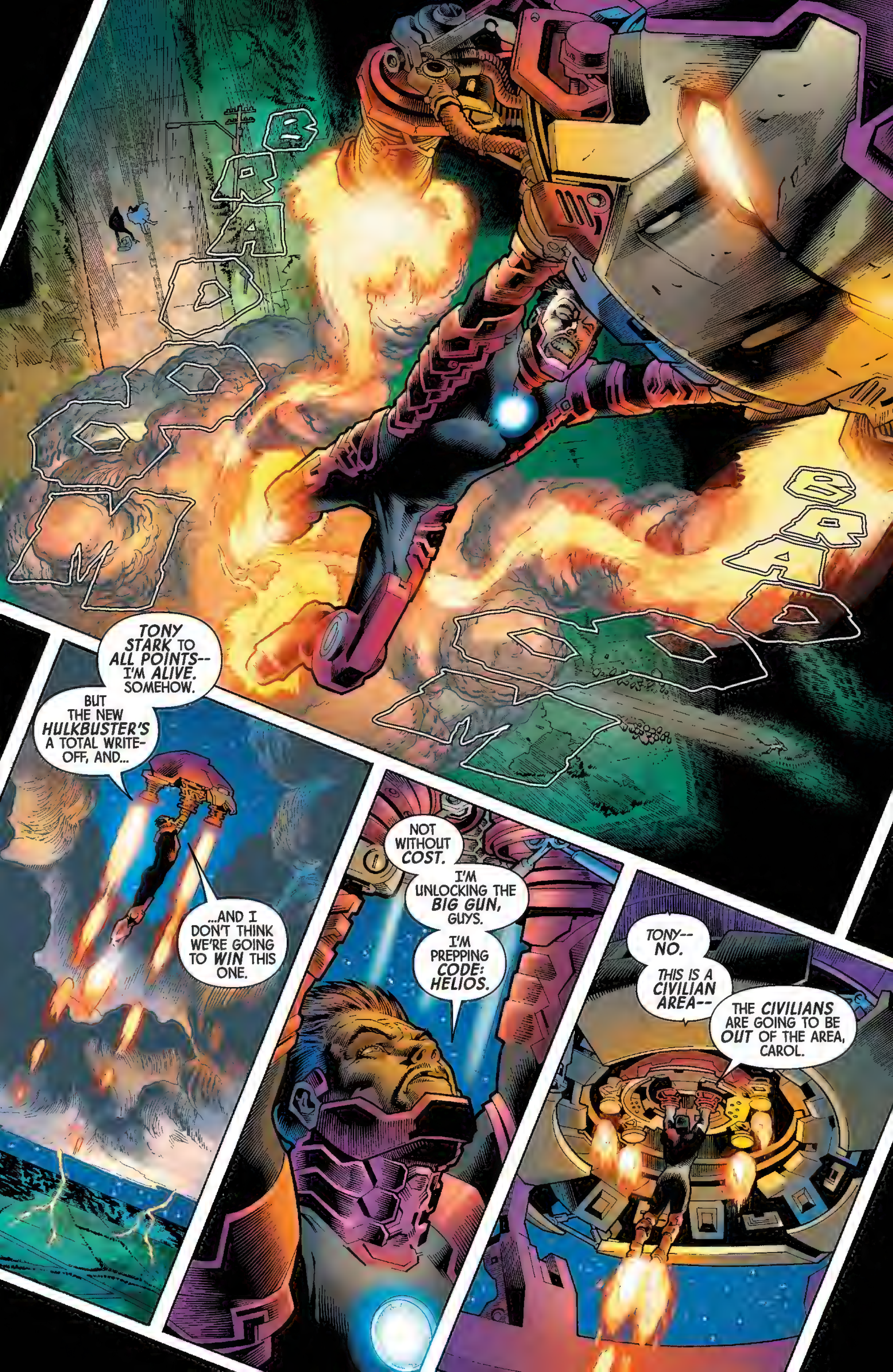

"--BUT OBVIOUSLY, THAT COULD CHANGE."
B-BY ODIN...
DADDY CAN'T HELP YOU NOW--
THOR-- BEHIND ME!
LOOK! IT'S CAPTAIN HYDRA!
WHEN I RIP OFF YOUR HEAD, WILL TWO MORE TAKE ITS PLACE?
TUNGGG
THAT...
...WASN'T ME...
CAPTAIN-- SEE TO THOR.

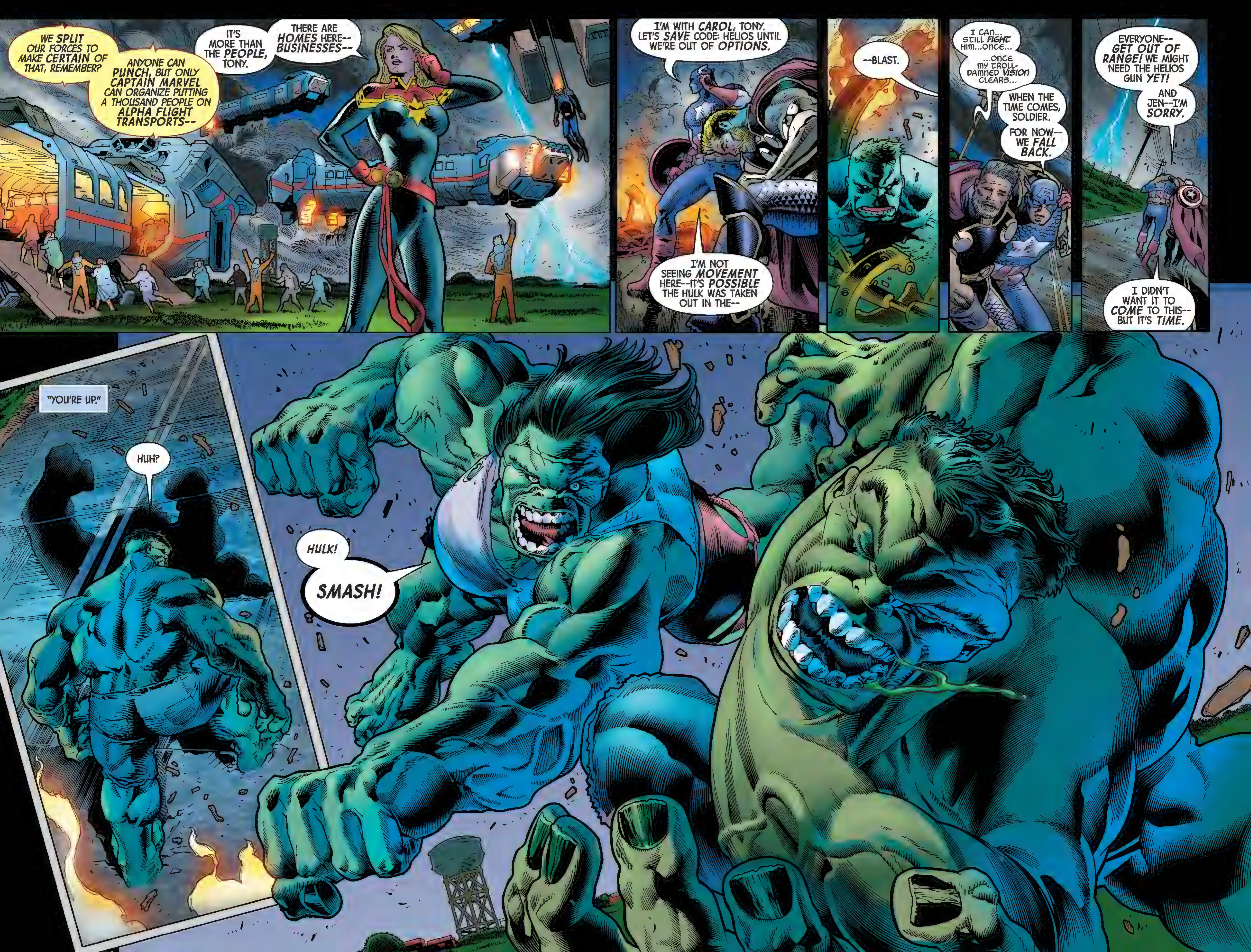

I CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE.
HEY! GET OFF ME, YOU LITTLE--
PERHAPS THIS WILL BRING HIM TO HIS SENSES.
ARRRHH!
LET'S HOPE.
IF NOT--I'VE GOT OUR BIG GUN PARKED AT 10,000 FEET.
ONLY IF WE NEED IT, MY FRIEND.
SOME WEAPONS SHOULD REMAIN THE LAST RESORT--
FZZAMM
--AND CODE: HELIOS IS ONE OF THEM.

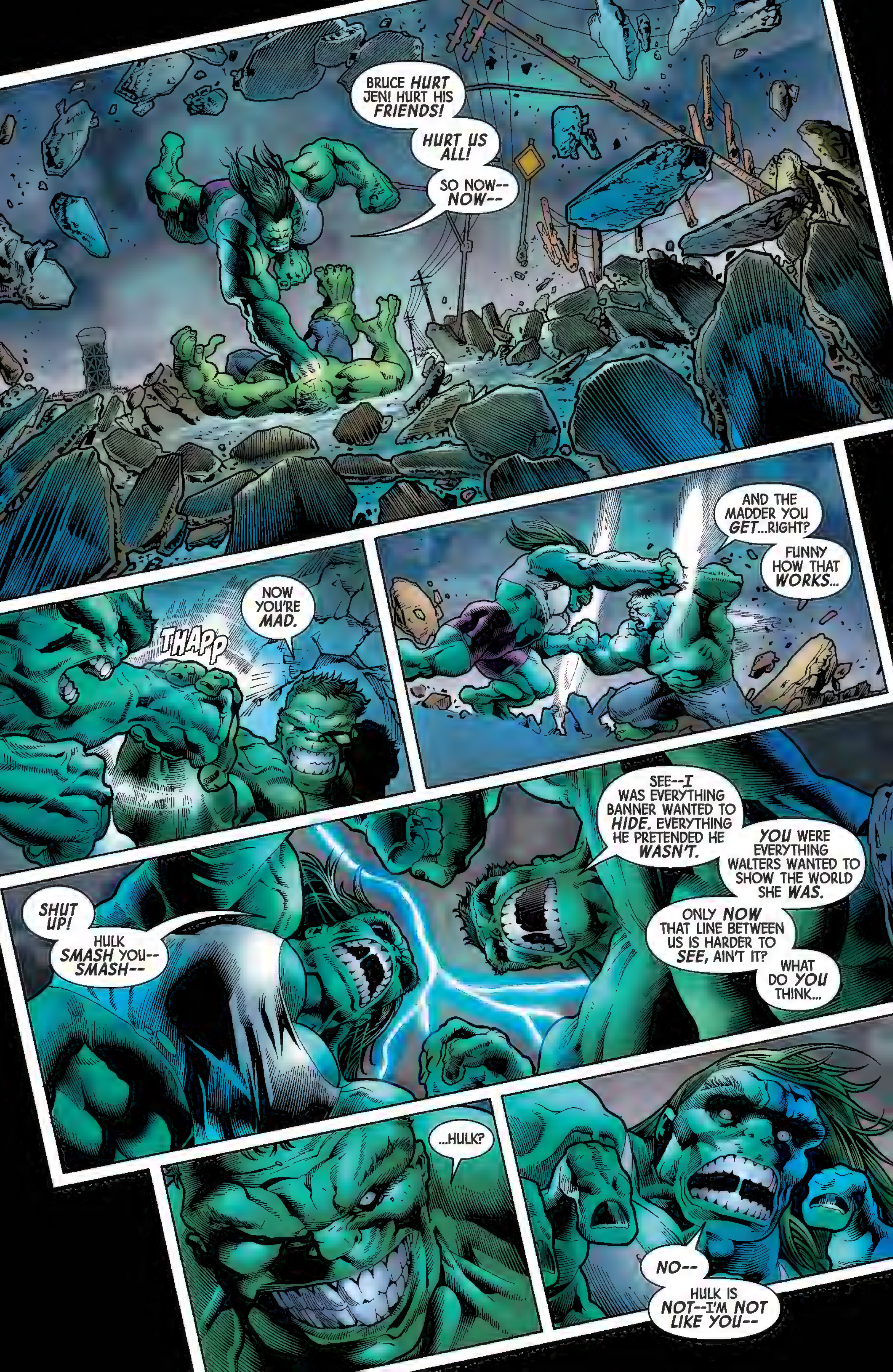

YOU OKAY? I'M NOT SURE I'VE EVER SEEN YOU GET HIT THAT HARD...
HE...HE IS STRONGER THAN HE WAS.
VASTLY SO.
HE...HE SEES THE NAKED SOULS OF MEN...SMELLS THE LIES IN OUR HEARTS, HIDDEN EVEN FROM OURSELVES...
YOU...YOU MIGHT HAVE A CONCUSSION, THOR. YOU'RE RAMBLING.
LIES DON'T HAVE A SMELL--
ARE YOU SURE?
YOU LIVE IN THE MORTAL WORLD, STEVE ROGERS...OF SCIENCE AND LAW, OF WHAT YOU CAN PERCEIVE...
...BUT I LIVE IN A WORLD OF LEGEND AND SYMBOL. THE WORLD OF THE GODS.
THOR-- ARE YOU SUGGESTING--
I AM SUGGESTING, CAPTAIN...THAT IN ITS RAGE, ITS PAIN, IN THE SHADOW OF ITS ARMAGEDDON...
...YOUR MORTAL WORLD MAY HAVE PRODUCED SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO A GOD.
OR A DEVIL, PERHAPS.

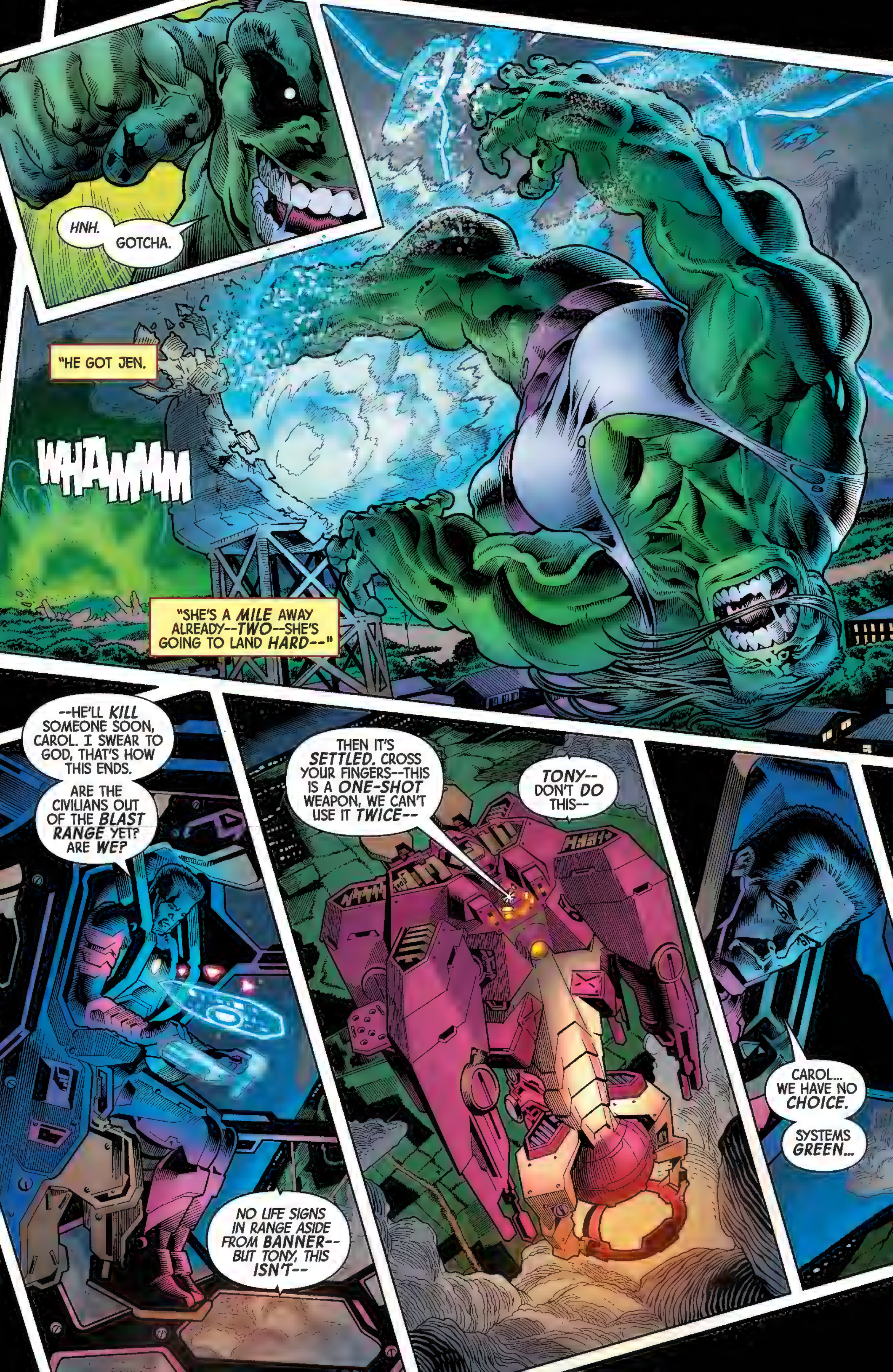

HNH.
"DEVIL HULK."
WORKS FOR ME.
WHAMMM
WARNING
OH NO--
CRITICAL DAMAGE
EVASIVE ACTION REQUIRED
EVADE
EVADE
EVADE THIS!
WARNING
CATASTROPHIC DAM%GE

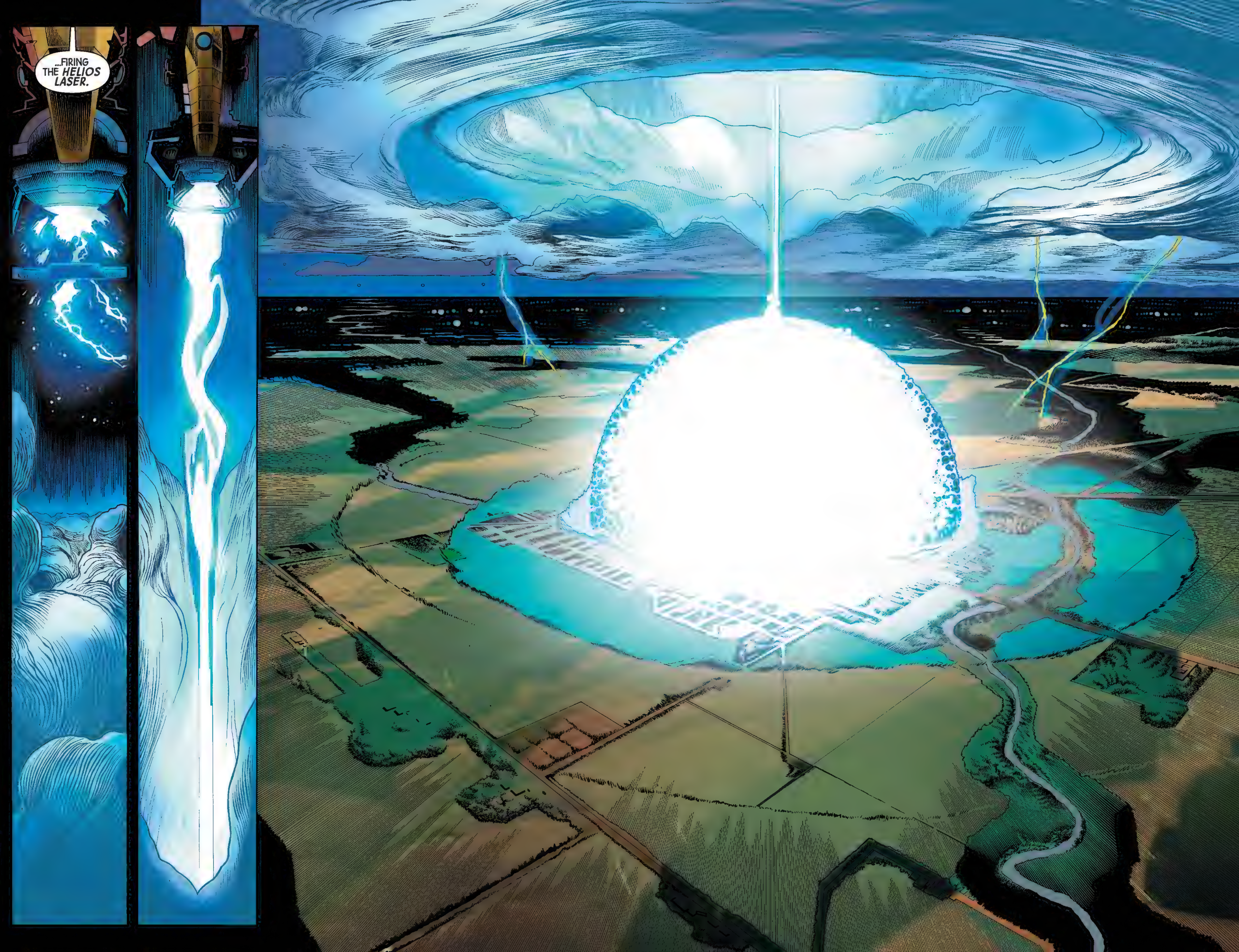

CASCADE FAIL#RE IMM%NENT
EJECT!
MOTHERBOARD-- I SAID EJECT--
EJECT, DAMMIT--
BANNER-- ENOUGH! STARK WILL DIE UNLESS WE GET HIM OUT OF THERE!
THE MAN IS YOUR FRIEND--
MY FRIEND?
"PERHAPS THIS WILL BRING YOU TO YOUR SENSES."
WHAMM
TOT%L C##CADE %AIL&RE IN THREE
TW%
COME ON-- LAUNCH MANUAL RELEASE--
DON'T JAM, DON'T JAM, DON'T--

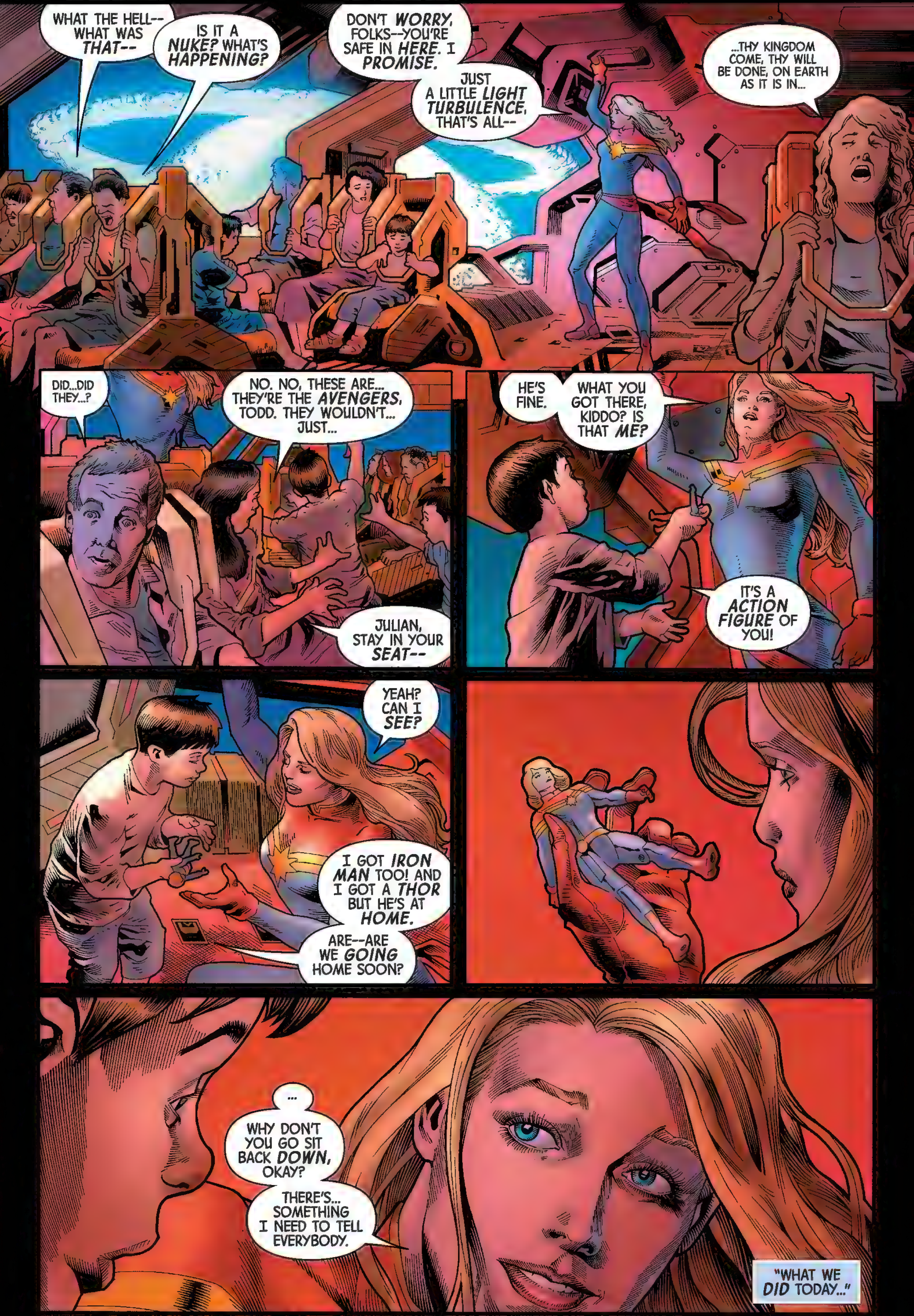

BRADOOM
BRADOOM
TONY STARK TO ALL POINTS-- I'M ALIVE. SOMEHOW.
BUT THE NEW HULKBUSTER'S A TOTAL WRITE-OFF, AND...
...AND I DON'T THINK WE'RE GOING TO WIN THIS ONE.
NOT WITHOUT COST.
I'M UNLOCKING THE BIG GUN, GUYS.
I'M PREPPING CODE: HELIOS.
TONY-- NO.
THIS IS A CIVILIAN AREA--
THE CIVILIANS ARE GOING TO BE OUT OF THE AREA, CAROL.

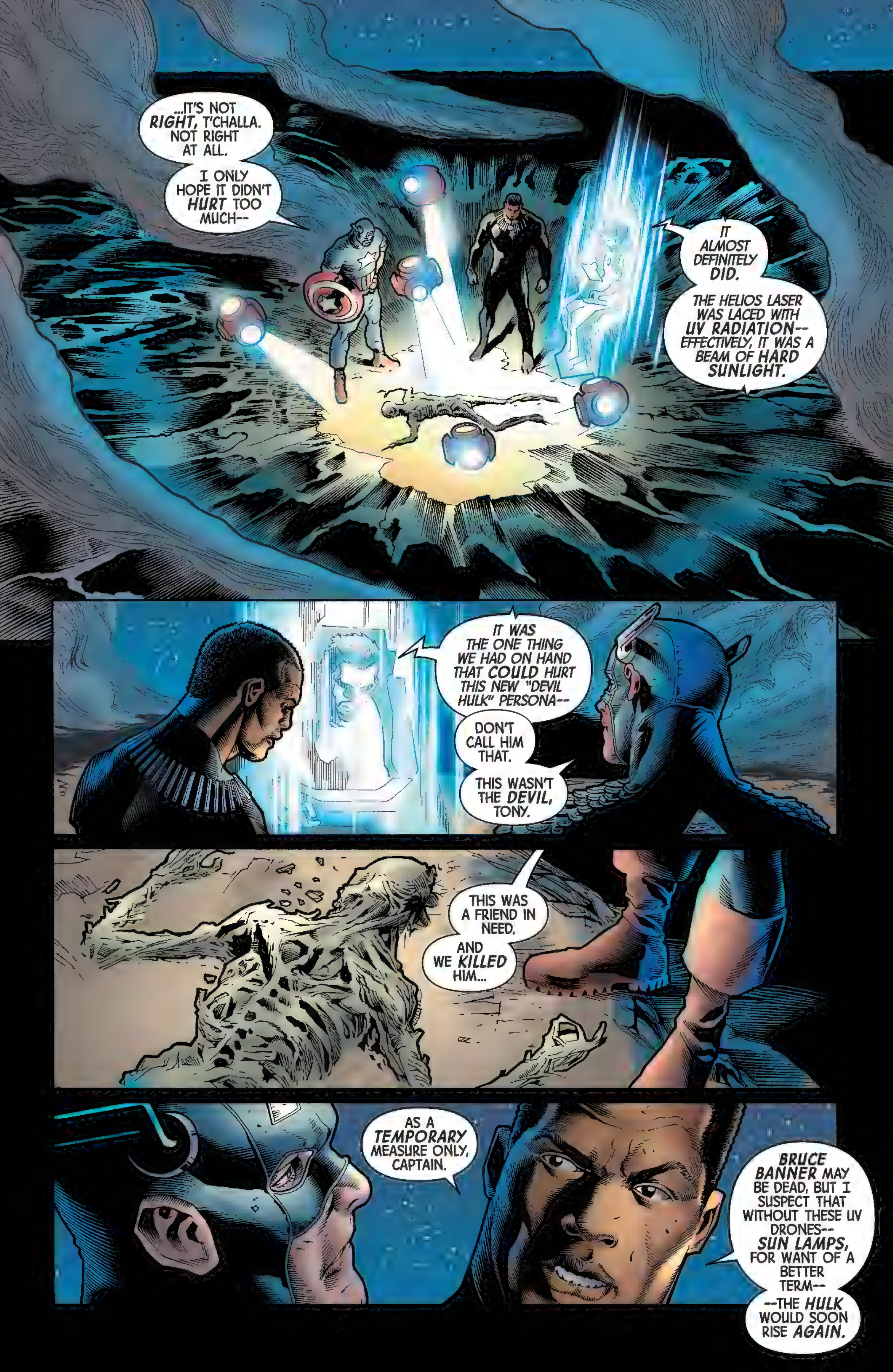

WE SPLIT OUR FORCES TO MAKE CERTAIN OF THAT, REMEMBER?
ANYONE CAN PUNCH, BUT ONLY CAPTAIN MARVEL CAN ORGANIZE PUTTING A THOUSAND PEOPLE ON ALPHA FLIGHT TRANSPORTS--
IT'S MORE THAN THE PEOPLE, TONY.
THERE ARE HOMES HERE-- BUSINESSES--
I'M WITH CAROL, TONY. LET'S SAVE CODE: HELIOS UNTIL WE'RE OUT OF OPTIONS.
I'M NOT SEEING MOVEMENT HERE--IT'S POSSIBLE THE HULK WAS TAKEN OUT IN THE--
--BLAST.
I CAN... STILL FIGHT HIM...ONCE...
...ONCE MY TROLL-DAMNED VISION CLEARS...
WHEN THE TIME COMES, SOLDIER.
FOR NOW-- WE FALL BACK.
EVERYONE-- GET OUT OF RANGE! WE MIGHT NEED THE HELIOS GUN YET!
AND JEN--I'M SORRY.
I DIDN'T WANT IT TO COME TO THIS-- BUT IT'S TIME.
"YOU'RE UP."
HUH?
HULK!
SMASH!

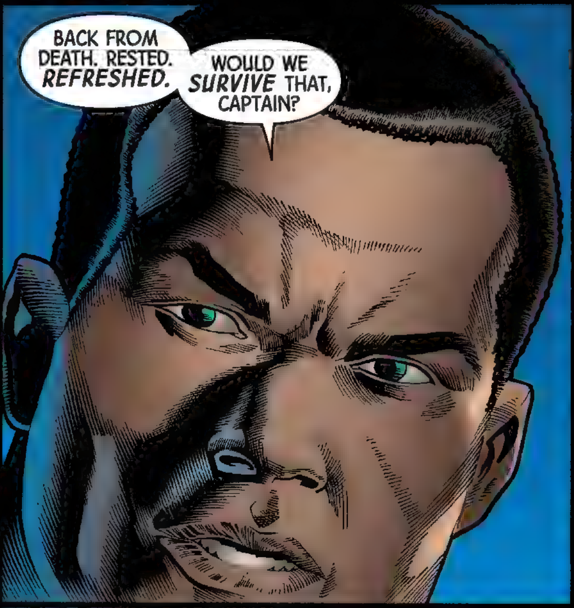

BRUCE *HURT* JEN! HURT HIS *FRIENDS!*
HURT US ALL!
SO NOW-- *NOW--*
NOW YOU'RE *MAD.*
THAPP
AND THE MADDER YOU *GET*...RIGHT?
FUNNY HOW THAT *WORKS*...
SEE--*I* WAS EVERYTHING BANNER WANTED TO *HIDE.* EVERYTHING HE PRETENDED HE *WASN'T.*
YOU WERE EVERYTHING WALTERS WANTED TO SHOW THE WORLD SHE *WAS.*
ONLY *NOW* THAT LINE BETWEEN US IS HARDER TO *SEE,* AIN'T IT?
WHAT DO *YOU* THINK...
SHUT UP!
HULK *SMASH* YOU-- *SMASH--*
...HULK?
NO--
HULK IS *NOT*--I'M *NOT LIKE YOU--*

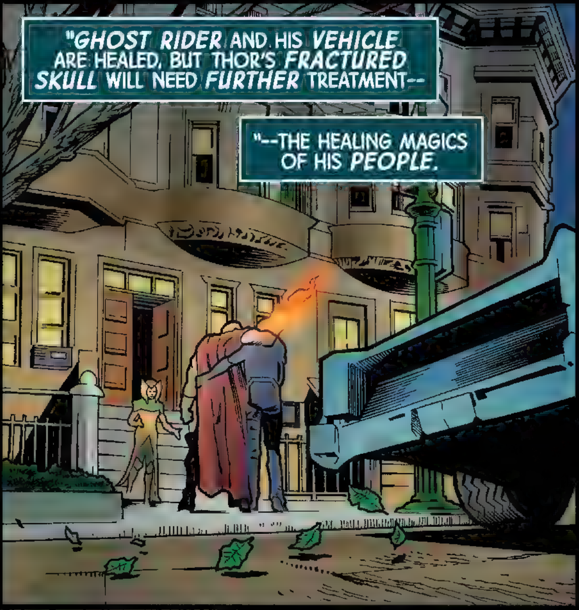

HNH.
GOTCHA.
"HE GOT JEN.
WHAMMM
"SHE'S A MILE AWAY ALREADY--TWO--SHE'S GOING TO LAND HARD--"
--HE'LL KILL SOMEONE SOON, CAROL. I SWEAR TO GOD, THAT'S HOW THIS ENDS.
ARE THE CIVILIANS OUT OF THE BLAST RANGE YET? ARE WE?
NO LIFE SIGNS IN RANGE ASIDE FROM BANNER-- BUT TONY, THIS ISN'T--
THEN IT'S SETTLED. CROSS YOUR FINGERS--THIS IS A ONE-SHOT WEAPON, WE CAN'T USE IT TWICE--
TONY-- DON'T DO THIS--
CAROL... WE HAVE NO CHOICE.
SYSTEMS GREEN...

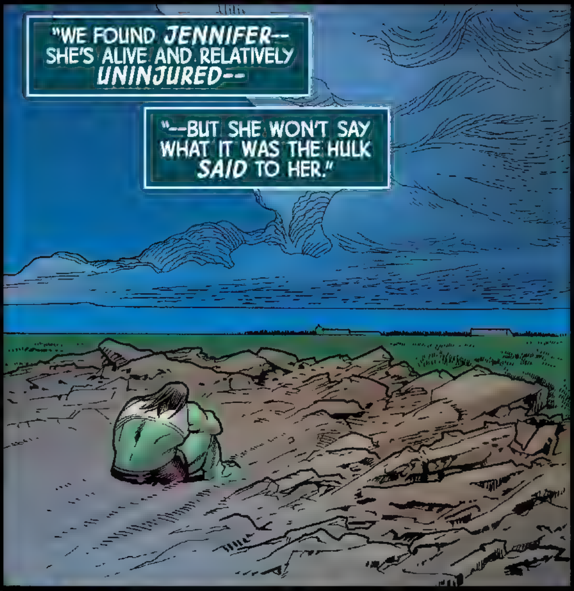

...FIRING THE *HELIOS* LASER.

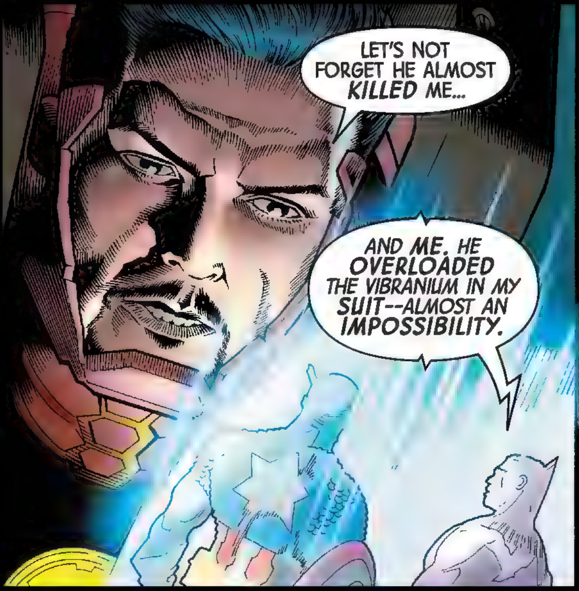

WHAT THE HELL-- WHAT WAS *THAT*--
IS IT A *NUKE?* WHAT'S *HAPPENING?*
DON'T *WORRY,* FOLKS--YOU'RE SAFE IN *HERE.* I *PROMISE.*
JUST A LITTLE *LIGHT TURBULENCE,* THAT'S ALL--
...THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN...
DID...DID THEY...?
NO. NO, THESE ARE... THEY'RE THE *AVENGERS,* TODD. THEY WOULDN'T... JUST...
JULIAN, STAY IN YOUR *SEAT--*
HE'S FINE.
WHAT YOU GOT THERE, KIDDO? IS THAT *ME?*
IT'S A *ACTION FIGURE* OF YOU!
YEAH? CAN I *SEE?*
I GOT *IRON MAN* TOO! AND I GOT A *THOR* BUT HE'S AT *HOME.*
ARE--ARE WE *GOING* HOME SOON?
...
WHY DON'T YOU GO SIT BACK *DOWN,* OKAY?
THERE'S... SOMETHING I NEED TO TELL EVERYBODY.
"WHAT WE *DID* TODAY..."

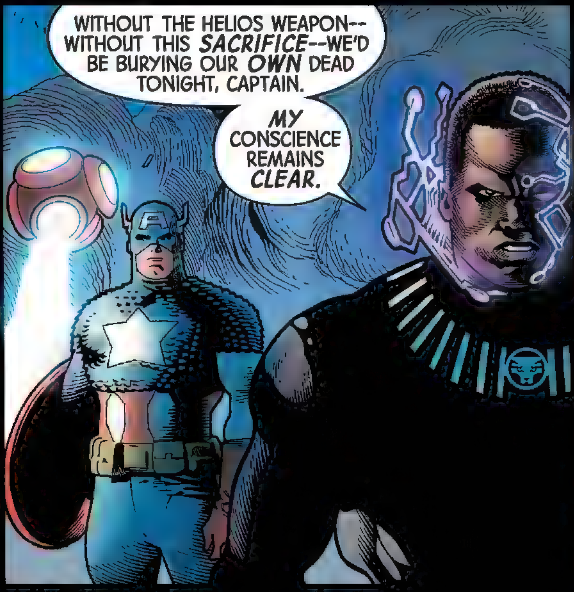

...IT'S NOT RIGHT, T'CHALLA. NOT RIGHT AT ALL.
I ONLY HOPE IT DIDN'T HURT TOO MUCH--
IT ALMOST DEFINITELY DID.
THE HELIOS LASER WAS LACED WITH UV RADIATION-- EFFECTIVELY, IT WAS A BEAM OF HARD SUNLIGHT.
IT WAS THE ONE THING WE HAD ON HAND THAT COULD HURT THIS NEW "DEVIL HULK" PERSONA--
DON'T CALL HIM THAT.
THIS WASN'T THE DEVIL, TONY.
THIS WAS A FRIEND IN NEED.
AND WE KILLED HIM...
AS A TEMPORARY MEASURE ONLY, CAPTAIN.
BRUCE BANNER MAY BE DEAD, BUT I SUSPECT THAT WITHOUT THESE UV DRONES-- SUN LAMPS, FOR WANT OF A BETTER TERM--
--THE HULK WOULD SOON RISE AGAIN.

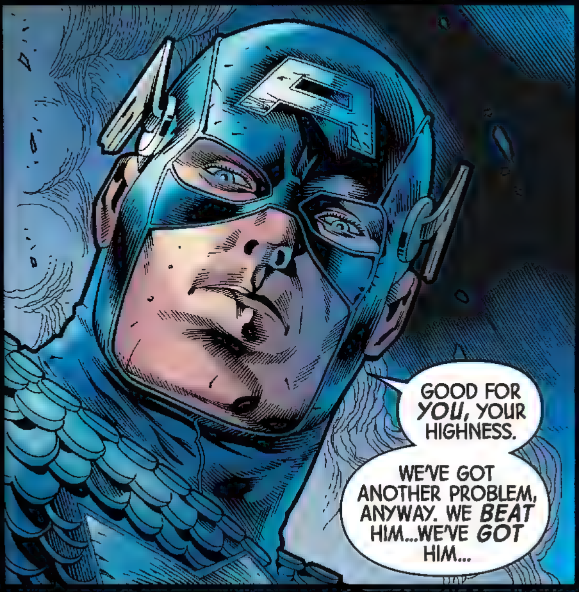

BACK FROM DEATH. RESTED. *REFRESHED.*
WOULD WE *SURVIVE* THAT, CAPTAIN?

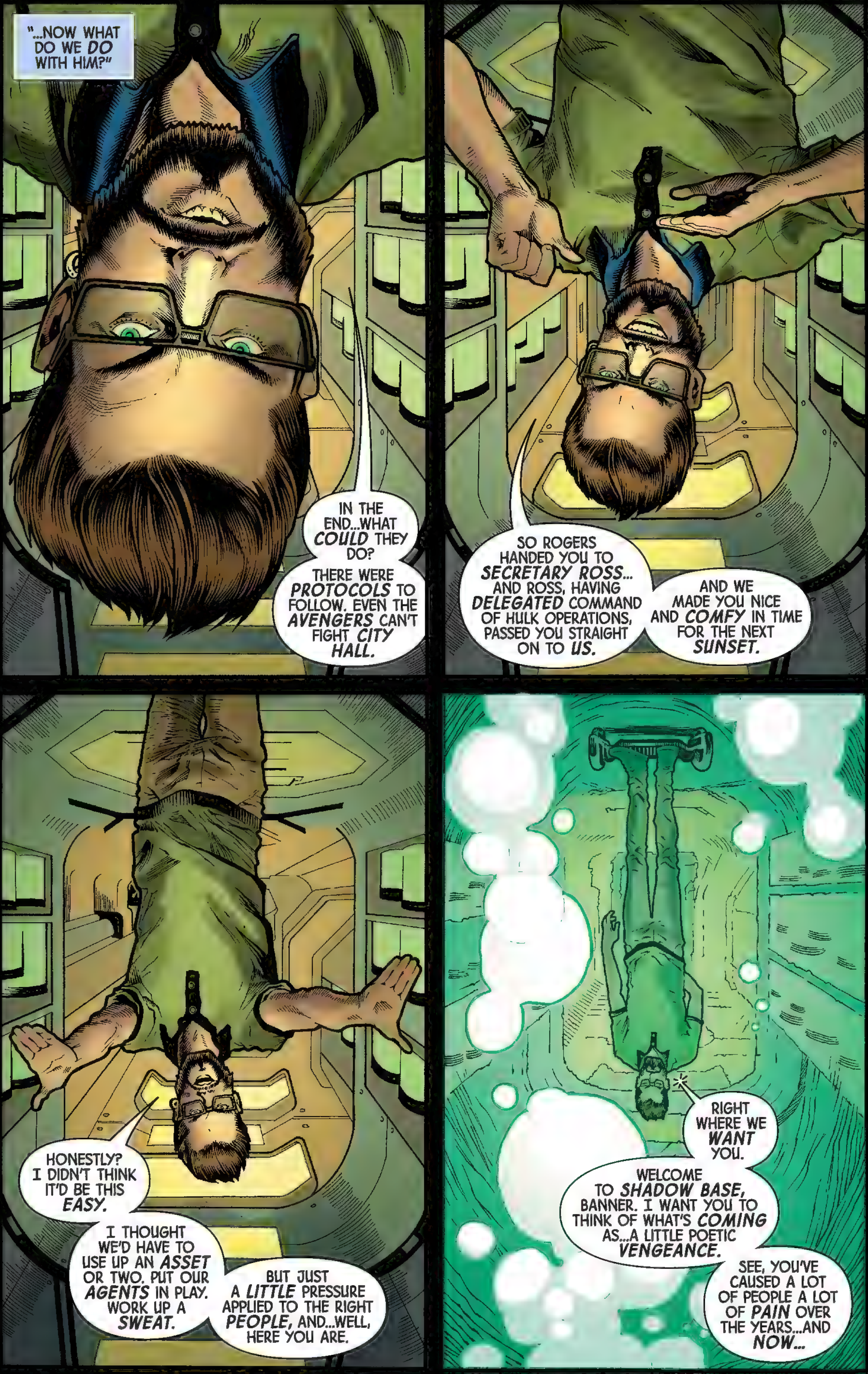

"*GHOST RIDER* AND HIS *VEHICLE* ARE HEALED, BUT THOR'S *FRACTURED SKULL* WILL NEED *FURTHER* TREATMENT--
"--THE HEALING MAGICS OF HIS *PEOPLE.*

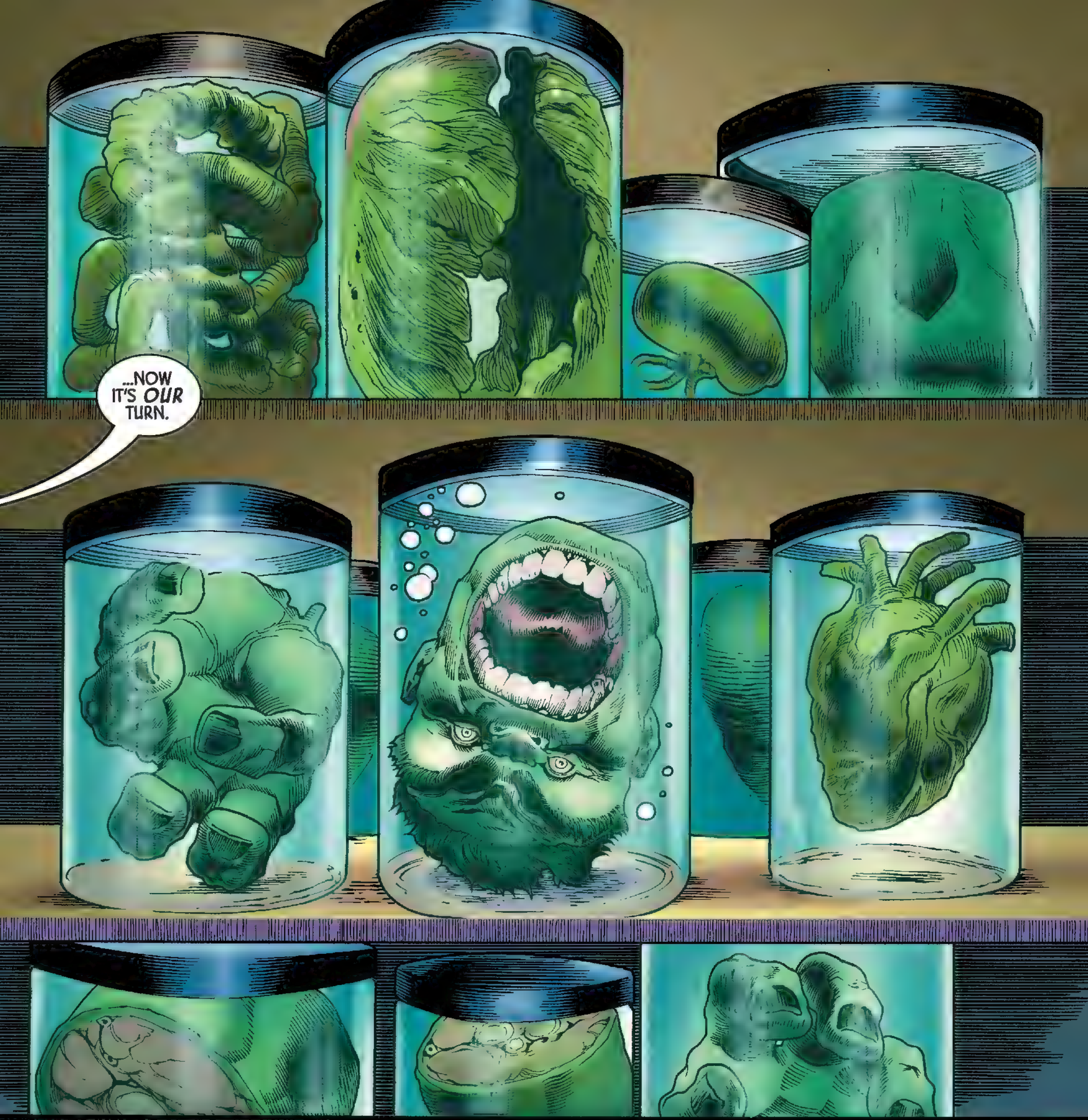

"WE FOUND *JENNIFER*-- SHE'S ALIVE AND RELATIVELY *UNINJURED*--
"--BUT SHE WON'T SAY WHAT IT WAS THE HULK *SAID* TO HER."


LET'S NOT FORGET HE ALMOST *KILLED* ME...
AND *ME.* HE *OVERLOADED* THE VIBRANIUM IN MY *SUIT*--ALMOST AN *IMPOSSIBILITY.*


WITHOUT THE HELIOS WEAPON-- WITHOUT THIS *SACRIFICE*--WE'D BE BURYING OUR *OWN* DEAD TONIGHT, CAPTAIN.
MY CONSCIENCE REMAINS *CLEAR.*


GOOD FOR *YOU,* YOUR HIGHNESS.
WE'VE GOT ANOTHER PROBLEM, ANYWAY. WE *BEAT* HIM...WE'VE *GOT* HIM...


"...NOW WHAT DO WE *DO* WITH HIM?"
IN THE END...WHAT *COULD* THEY DO?
THERE WERE *PROTOCOLS* TO FOLLOW. EVEN THE *AVENGERS* CAN'T FIGHT *CITY HALL.*
SO ROGERS HANDED YOU TO *SECRETARY ROSS...* AND ROSS, HAVING *DELEGATED* COMMAND OF HULK OPERATIONS, PASSED YOU STRAIGHT ON TO *US.*
AND WE MADE YOU NICE AND *COMFY* IN TIME FOR THE NEXT *SUNSET.*
HONESTLY? I DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE THIS *EASY.*
I THOUGHT WE'D HAVE TO USE UP AN *ASSET* OR TWO. PUT OUR *AGENTS* IN PLAY. WORK UP A *SWEAT.*
BUT JUST A *LITTLE* PRESSURE APPLIED TO THE RIGHT *PEOPLE,* AND...WELL, HERE YOU ARE.
RIGHT WHERE WE *WANT* YOU.
WELCOME TO *SHADOW BASE,* BANNER. I WANT YOU TO THINK OF WHAT'S *COMING* AS...A LITTLE POETIC *VENGEANCE.*
SEE, YOU'VE CAUSED A LOT OF PEOPLE A LOT OF *PAIN* OVER THE YEARS...AND *NOW...*

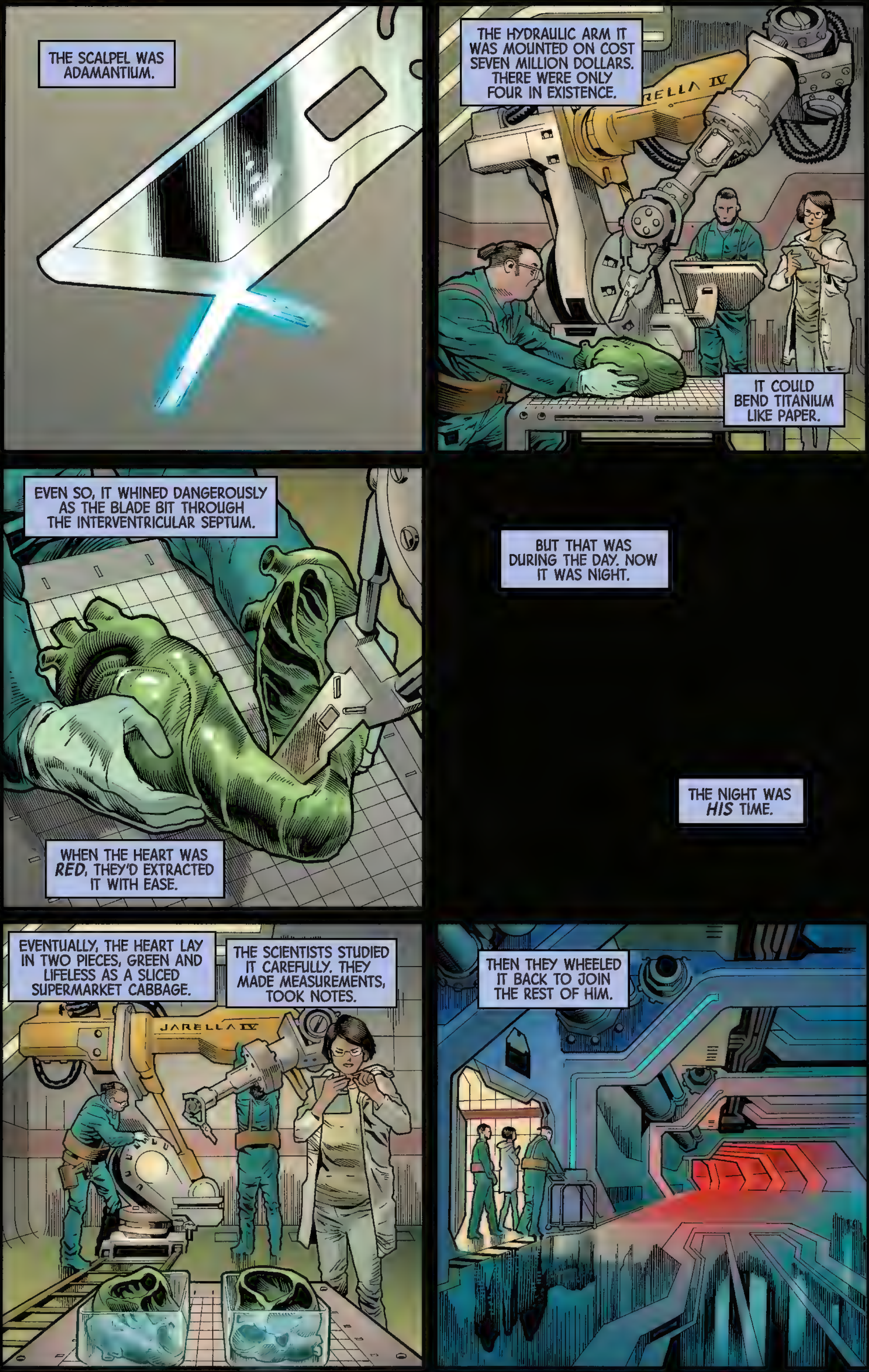

...NOW IT'S *OUR* TURN.

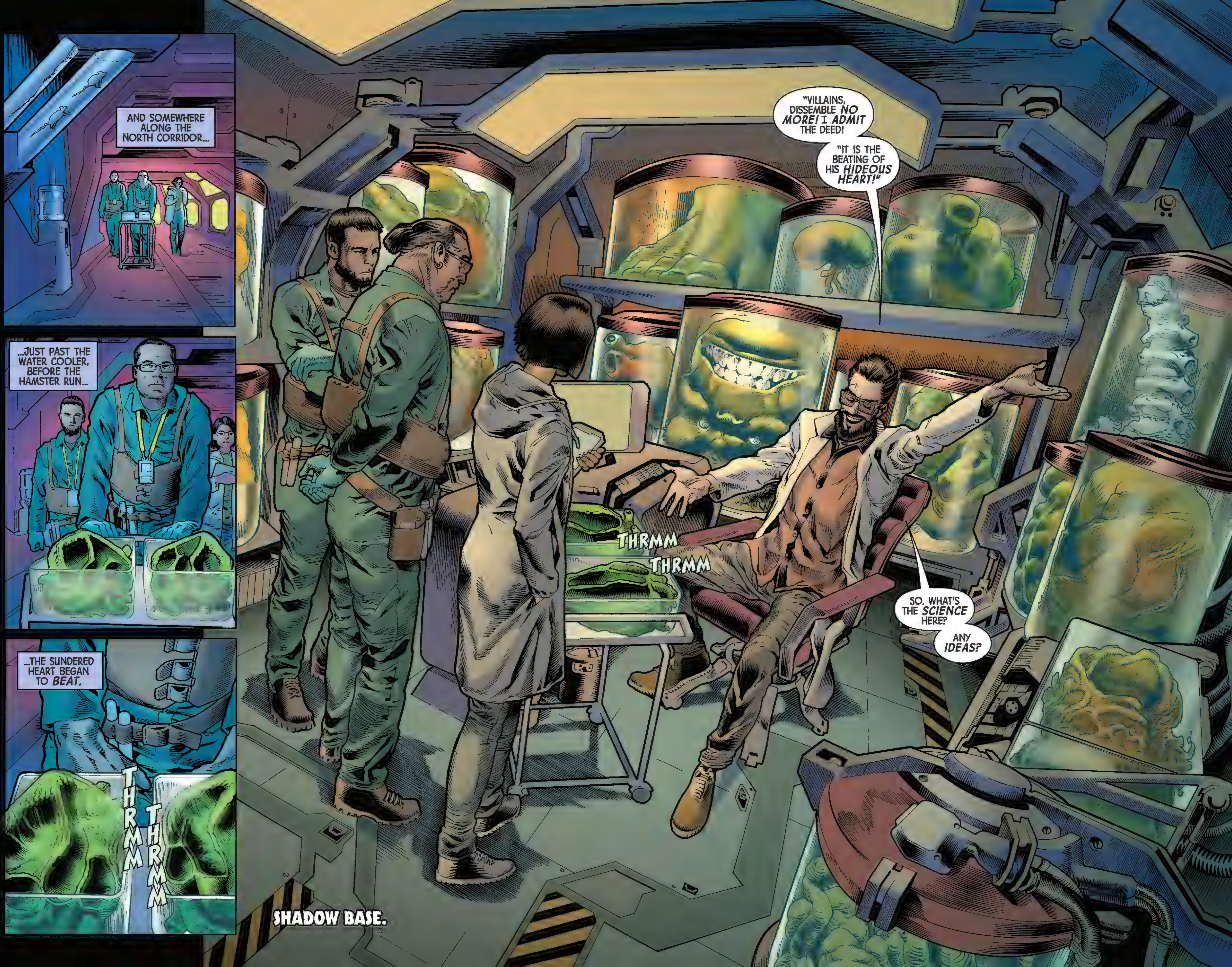
THE AVENGERS

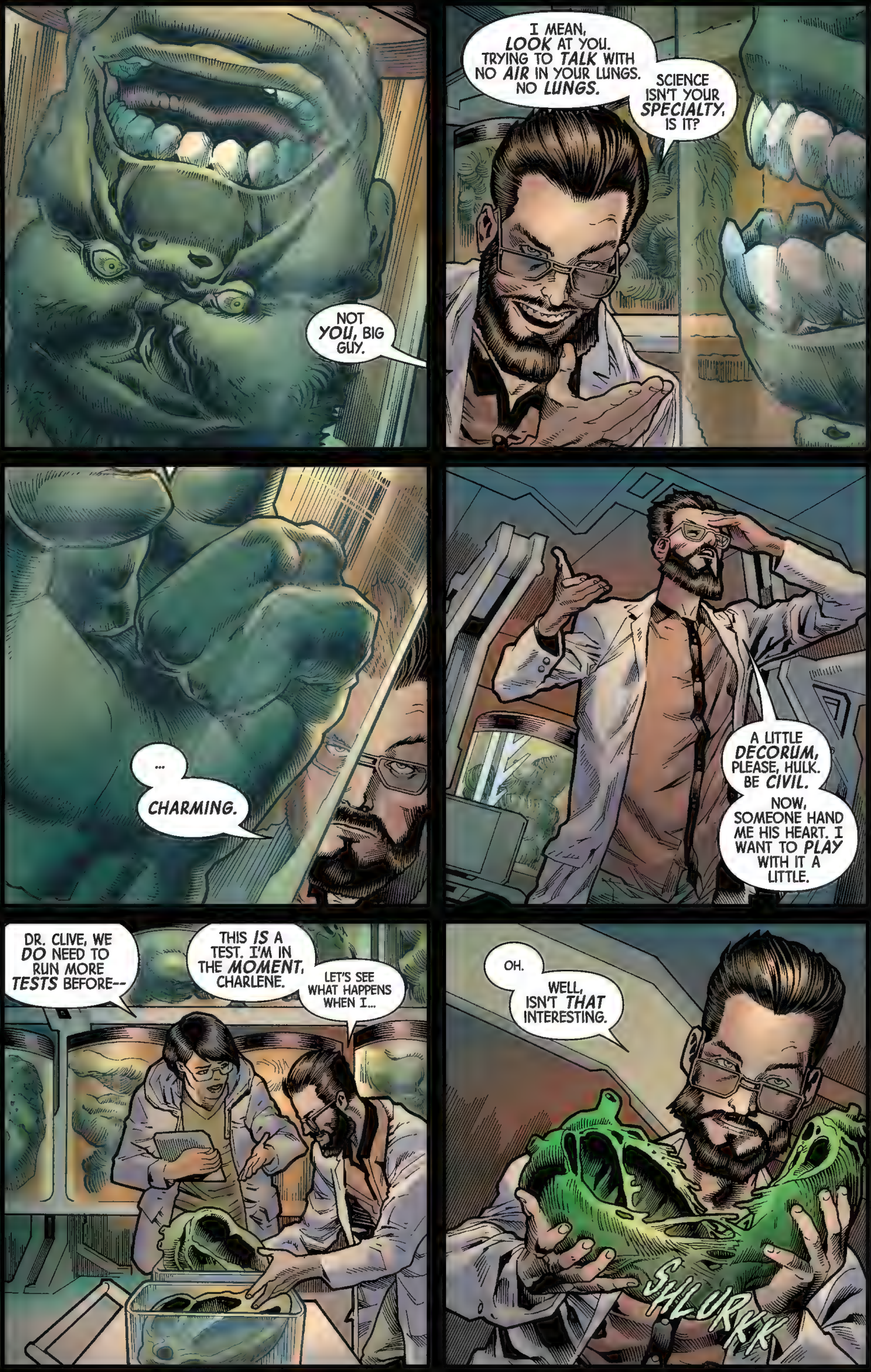
8

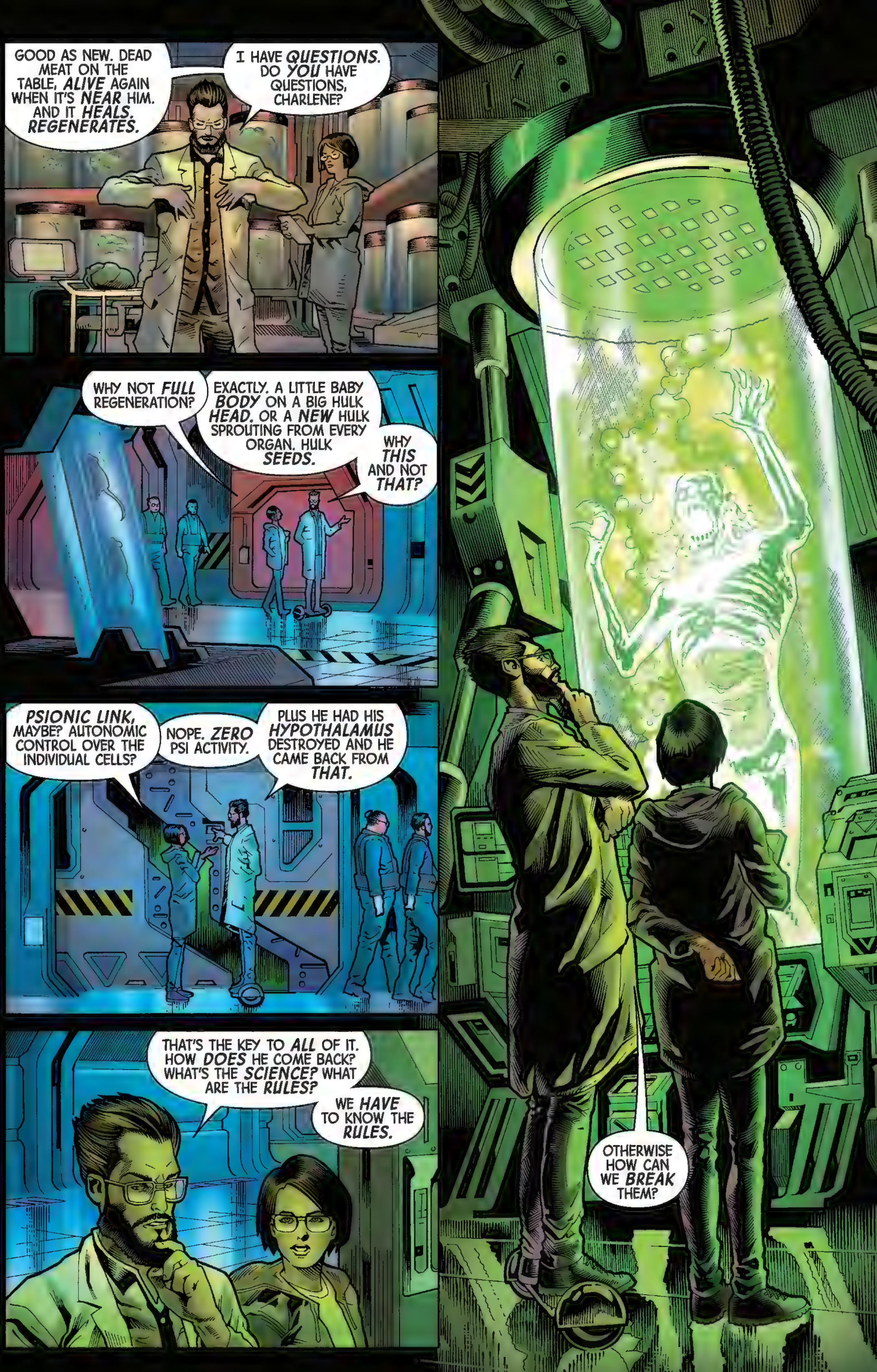
"Did he who made the
lamb make thee?"

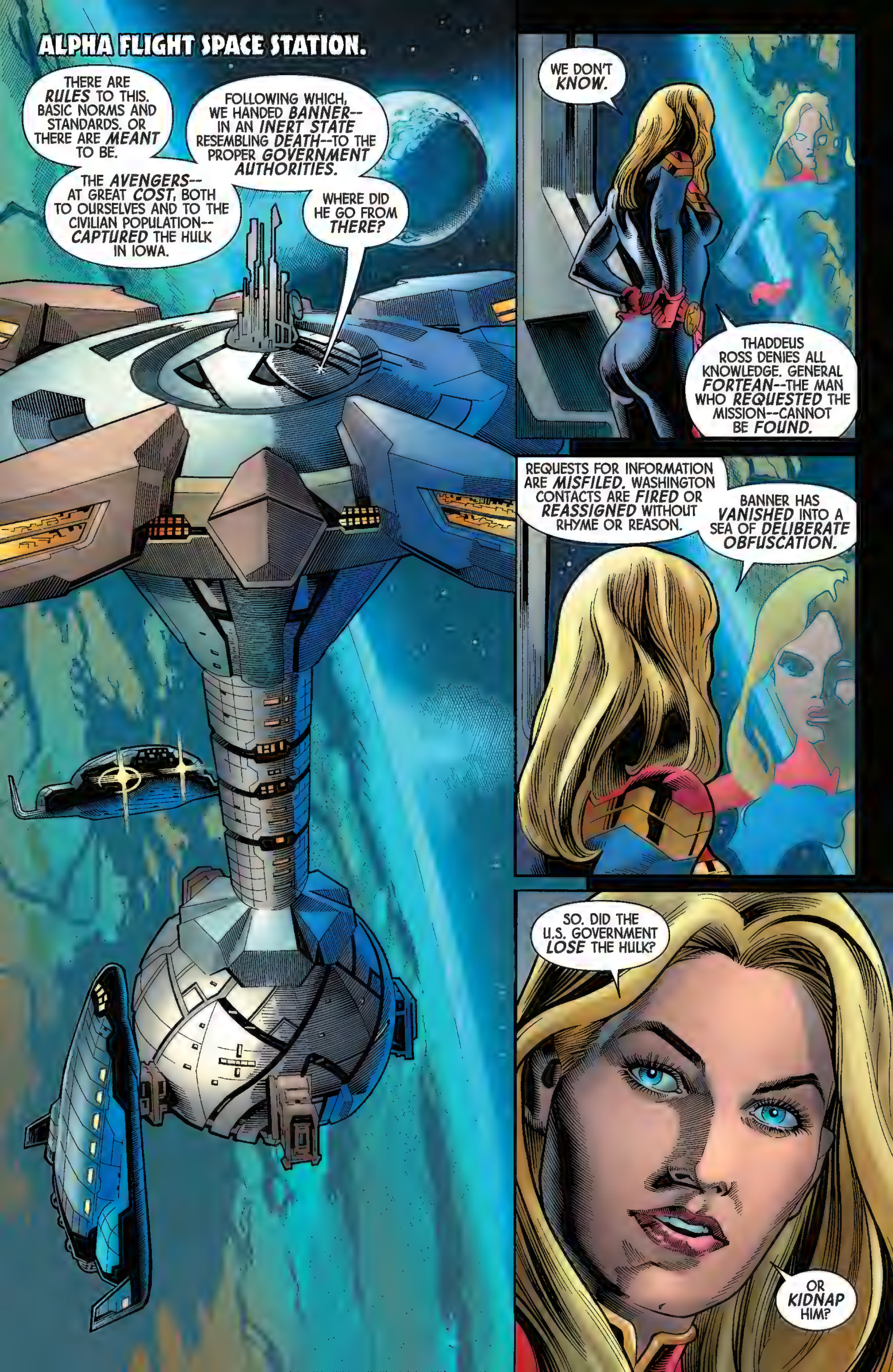
– William Blake
"The Tyger"

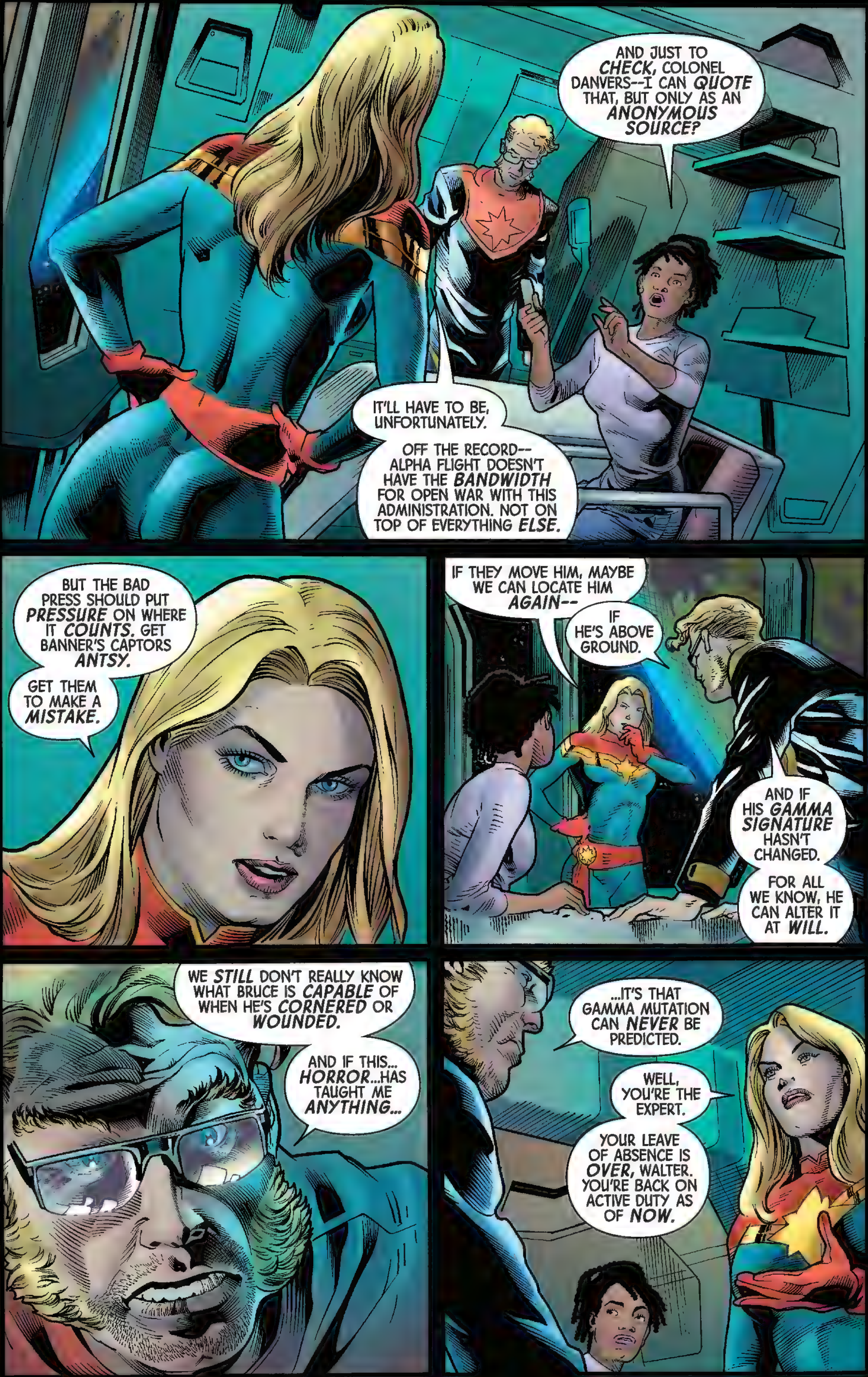

THE SCALPEL WAS ADAMANTIUM.
THE HYDRAULIC ARM IT WAS MOUNTED ON COST SEVEN MILLION DOLLARS. THERE WERE ONLY FOUR IN EXISTENCE.
JARELLA IV
IT COULD BEND TITANIUM LIKE PAPER.
EVEN SO, IT WHINED DANGEROUSLY AS THE BLADE BIT THROUGH THE INTERVENTRICULAR SEPTUM.
WHEN THE HEART WAS *RED*, THEY'D EXTRACTED IT WITH EASE.
BUT THAT WAS DURING THE DAY. NOW IT WAS NIGHT.
THE NIGHT WAS *HIS* TIME.
EVENTUALLY, THE HEART LAY IN TWO PIECES, GREEN AND LIFELESS AS A SLICED SUPERMARKET CABBAGE.
THE SCIENTISTS STUDIED IT CAREFULLY. THEY MADE MEASUREMENTS, TOOK NOTES.
JARELLA IV
THEN THEY WHEELED IT BACK TO JOIN THE REST OF HIM.

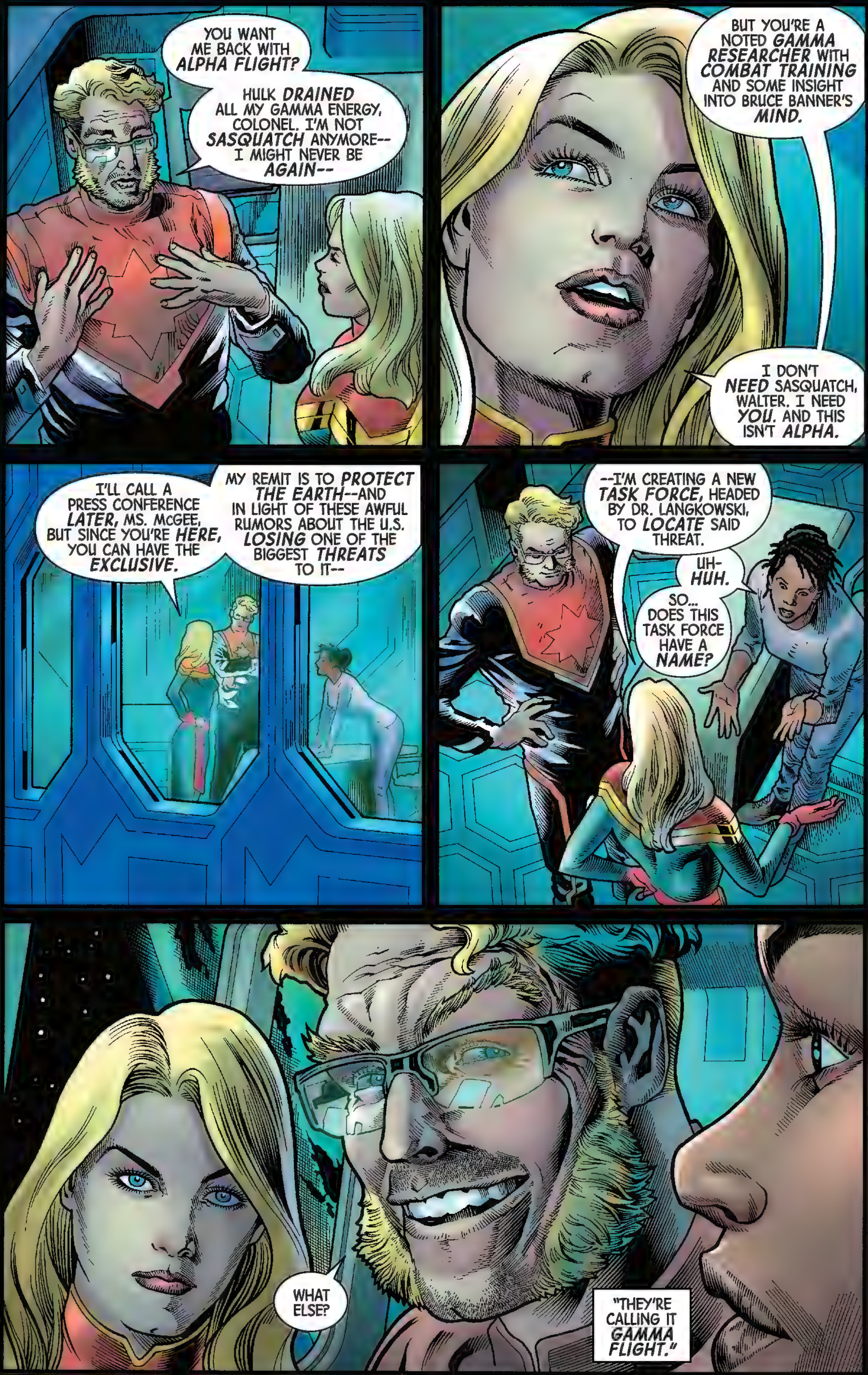

AND SOMEWHERE ALONG THE NORTH CORRIDOR...
...JUST PAST THE WATER COOLER, BEFORE THE HAMSTER RUN...
...THE SUNDERED HEART BEGAN TO *BEAT.*
THRMM THRMM
SHADOW BASE.
THRMM THRMM
"VILLAINS, DISSEMBLE *NO MORE!* I *ADMIT* THE DEED!
"IT IS THE BEATING OF HIS *HIDEOUS HEART!*"
SO. WHAT'S THE *SCIENCE* HERE?
ANY *IDEAS?*

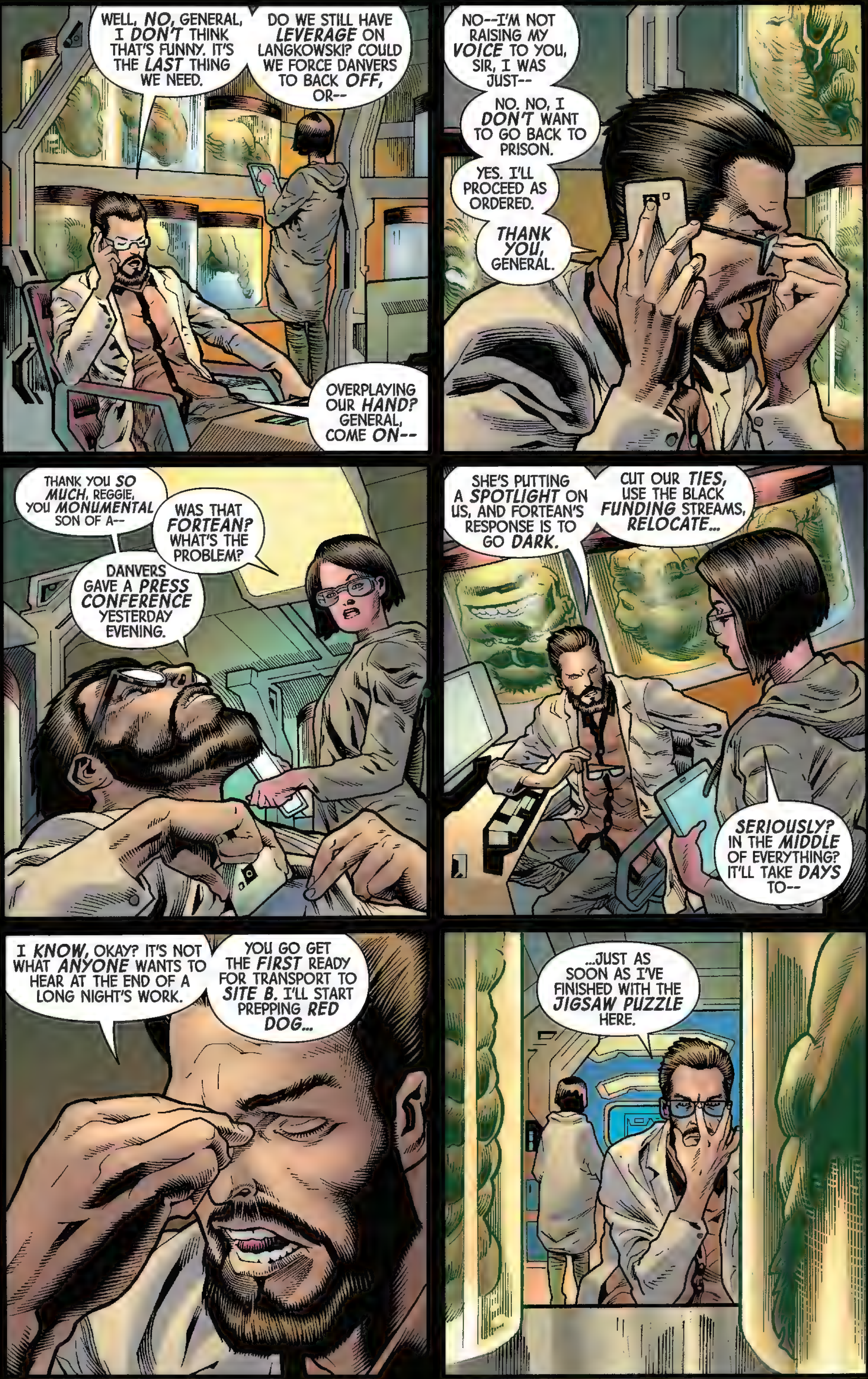

NOT *YOU*, BIG GUY.
I MEAN, *LOOK* AT YOU. TRYING TO *TALK* WITH NO *AIR* IN YOUR LUNGS. NO *LUNGS*.
SCIENCE ISN'T YOUR *SPECIALTY*, IS IT?
...
CHARMING.
A LITTLE *DECORUM*, PLEASE, HULK. BE *CIVIL*.
NOW, SOMEONE HAND ME HIS HEART. I WANT TO *PLAY* WITH IT A LITTLE.
DR. CLIVE, WE *DO* NEED TO RUN MORE *TESTS* BEFORE--
THIS *IS* A TEST. I'M IN THE *MOMENT*, CHARLENE.
LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I...
OH.
WELL, ISN'T *THAT* INTERESTING.
SHLURKK

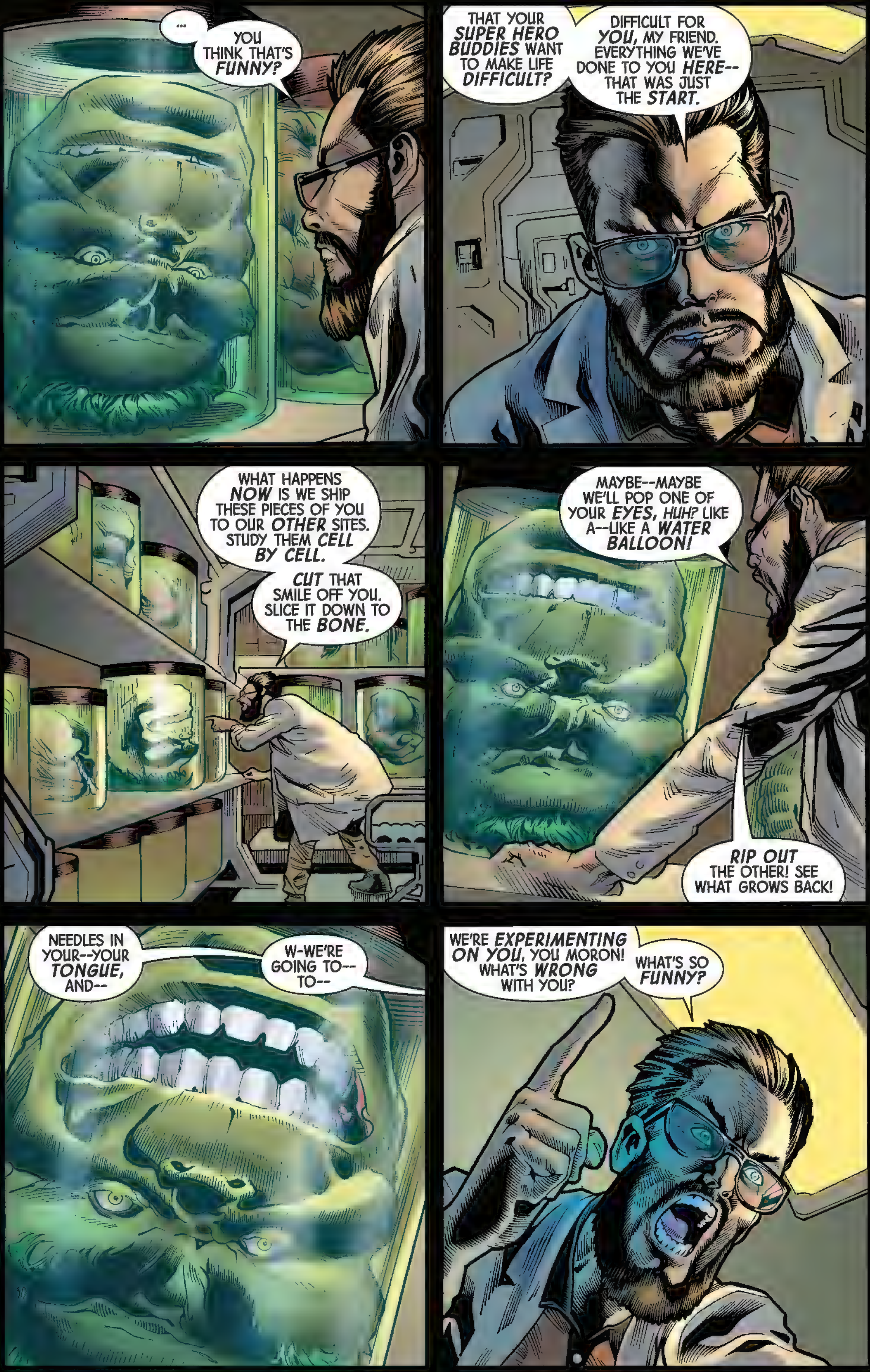

GOOD AS NEW. DEAD MEAT ON THE TABLE, *ALIVE* AGAIN WHEN IT'S *NEAR* HIM. AND IT *HEALS. REGENERATES.*
I HAVE *QUESTIONS.* DO *YOU* HAVE QUESTIONS, CHARLENE?
WHY NOT *FULL* REGENERATION?
EXACTLY. A LITTLE BABY *BODY* ON A BIG HULK *HEAD.* OR A *NEW* HULK SPROUTING FROM EVERY ORGAN. HULK *SEEDS.*
WHY *THIS* AND NOT *THAT?*
PSIONIC LINK, MAYBE? AUTONOMIC CONTROL OVER THE INDIVIDUAL CELLS?
NOPE. *ZERO* PSI ACTIVITY.
PLUS HE HAD HIS *HYPOTHALAMUS* DESTROYED AND HE CAME BACK FROM *THAT.*
THAT'S THE KEY TO *ALL* OF IT. HOW *DOES* HE COME BACK? WHAT'S THE *SCIENCE?* WHAT ARE THE *RULES?*
WE *HAVE* TO KNOW THE *RULES.*
OTHERWISE HOW CAN WE *BREAK* THEM?

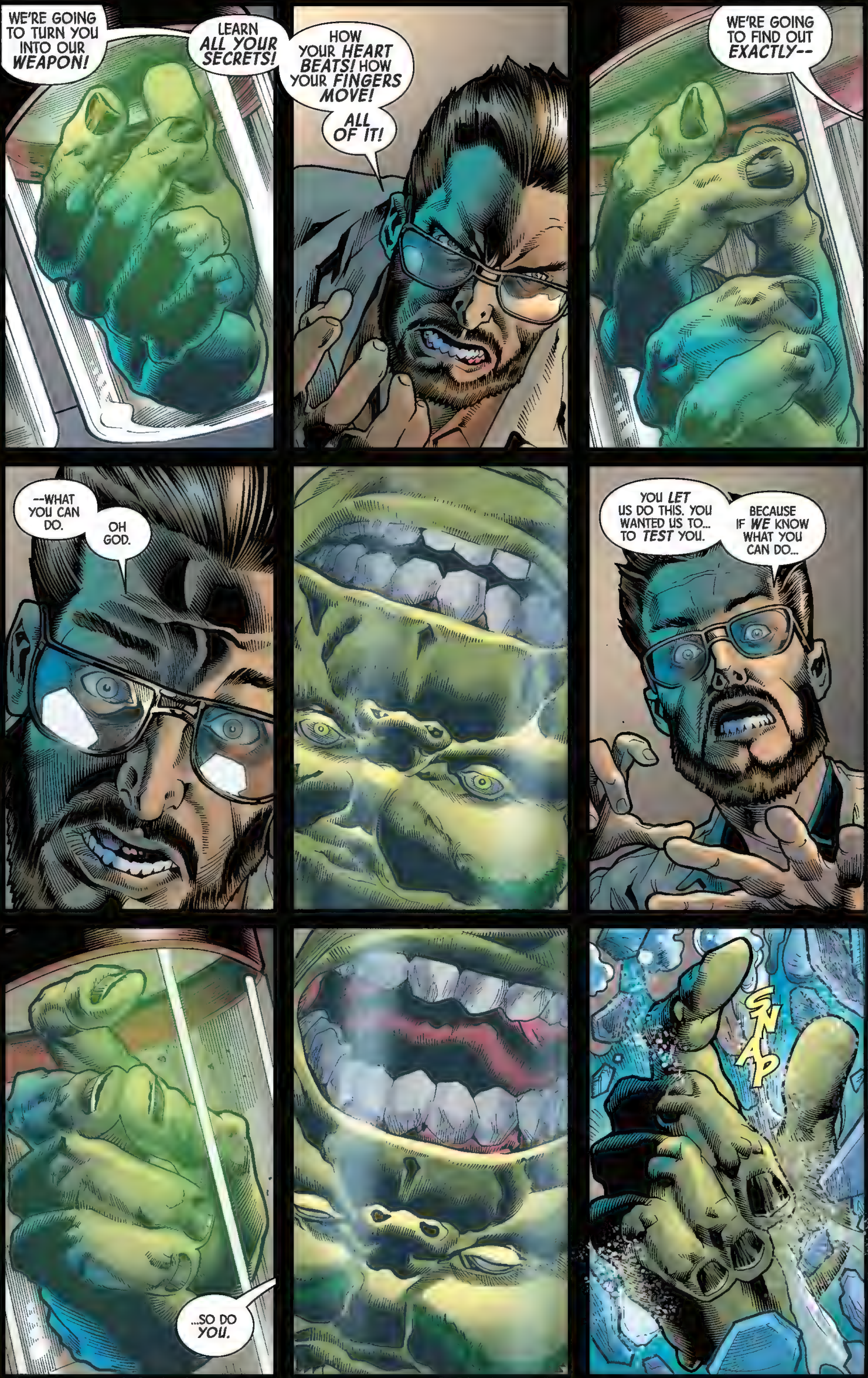

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
THERE ARE *RULES* TO THIS. BASIC NORMS AND STANDARDS. OR THERE ARE *MEANT* TO BE.
THE *AVENGERS*-- AT GREAT *COST*, BOTH TO OURSELVES AND TO THE CIVILIAN POPULATION-- *CAPTURED* THE HULK IN IOWA.
FOLLOWING WHICH, WE HANDED *BANNER*-- IN AN *INERT STATE* RESEMBLING *DEATH*--TO THE PROPER *GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES.*
WHERE DID HE GO FROM *THERE?*
WE DON'T *KNOW.*
THADDEUS ROSS DENIES ALL KNOWLEDGE. GENERAL *FORTEAN*--THE MAN WHO *REQUESTED* THE MISSION--CANNOT BE *FOUND.*
REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ARE *MISFILED.* WASHINGTON CONTACTS ARE *FIRED* OR *REASSIGNED* WITHOUT RHYME OR REASON.
BANNER HAS *VANISHED* INTO A SEA OF *DELIBERATE OBFUSCATION.*
SO. DID THE U.S. GOVERNMENT *LOSE* THE HULK?
OR *KIDNAP* HIM?

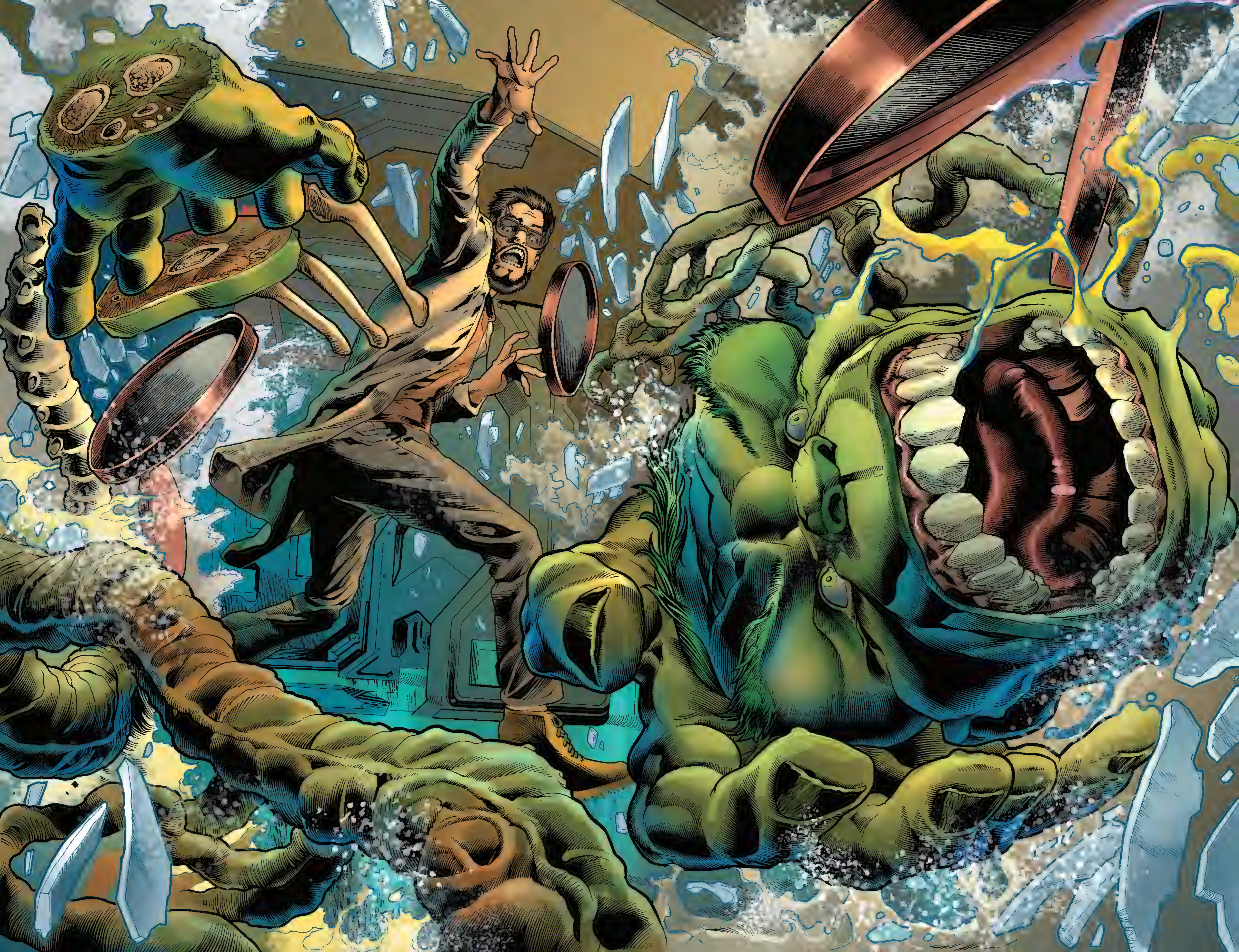

AND JUST TO *CHECK*, COLONEL DANVERS--I CAN *QUOTE* THAT, BUT ONLY AS AN *ANONYMOUS SOURCE?*
IT'LL HAVE TO BE, UNFORTUNATELY.
OFF THE RECORD-- ALPHA FLIGHT DOESN'T HAVE THE *BANDWIDTH* FOR OPEN WAR WITH THIS ADMINISTRATION. NOT ON TOP OF EVERYTHING *ELSE*.
BUT THE BAD PRESS SHOULD PUT *PRESSURE* ON WHERE IT *COUNTS*. GET BANNER'S CAPTORS *ANTSY*.
GET THEM TO MAKE A *MISTAKE*.
IF THEY MOVE HIM, MAYBE WE CAN LOCATE HIM *AGAIN*--
IF HE'S ABOVE GROUND.
AND IF HIS *GAMMA SIGNATURE* HASN'T CHANGED.
FOR ALL WE KNOW, HE CAN ALTER IT AT *WILL*.
WE *STILL* DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT BRUCE IS *CAPABLE* OF WHEN HE'S *CORNERED* OR *WOUNDED*.
AND IF THIS... *HORROR*...HAS TAUGHT ME *ANYTHING*...
...IT'S THAT GAMMA MUTATION CAN *NEVER* BE PREDICTED.
WELL, YOU'RE THE EXPERT.
YOUR LEAVE OF ABSENCE IS *OVER*, WALTER. YOU'RE BACK ON ACTIVE DUTY AS OF *NOW*.

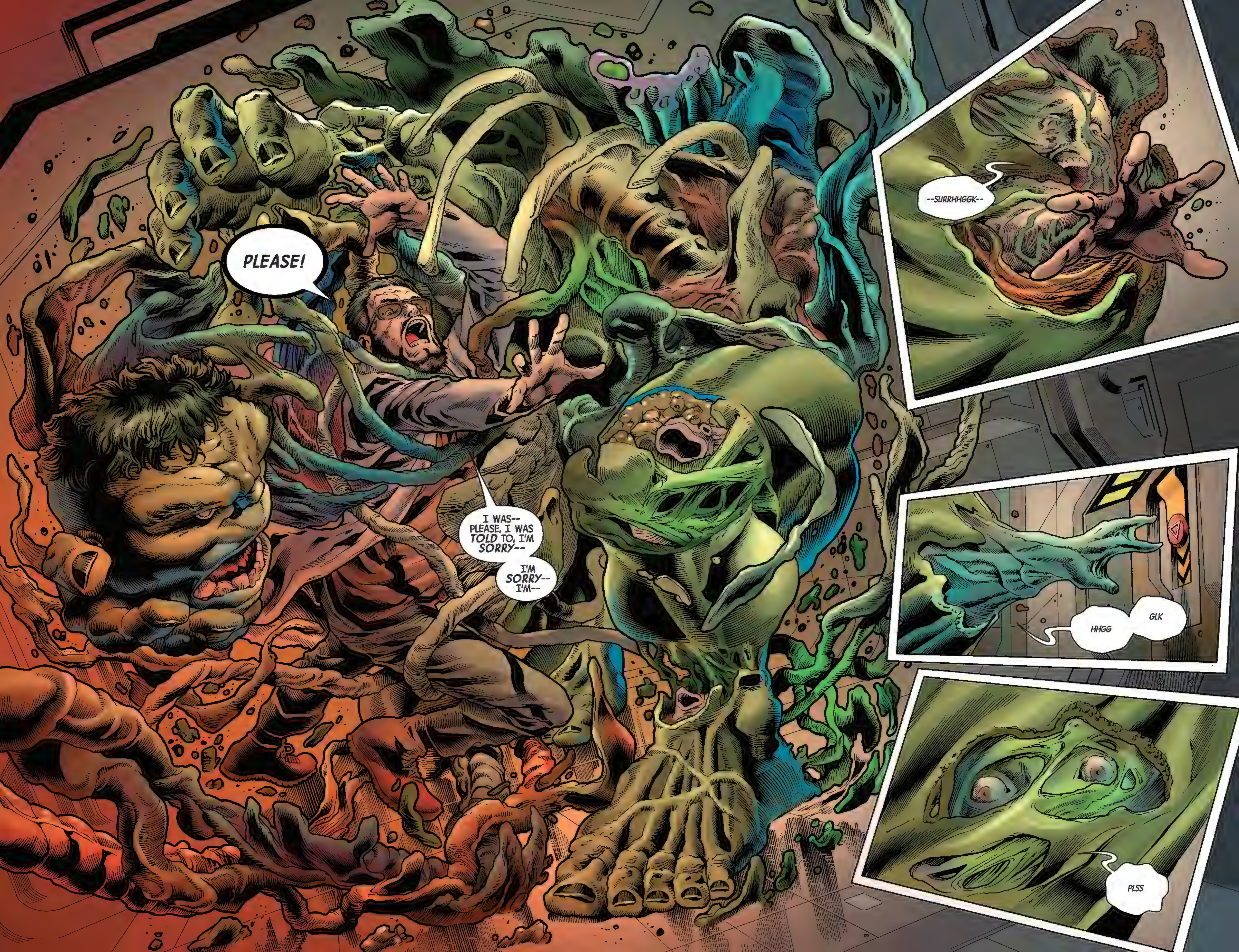

YOU WANT ME BACK WITH *ALPHA FLIGHT?*
HULK *DRAINED* ALL MY GAMMA ENERGY, COLONEL. I'M NOT *SASQUATCH* ANYMORE-- I MIGHT NEVER BE *AGAIN*--
BUT YOU'RE A NOTED *GAMMA RESEARCHER* WITH *COMBAT TRAINING* AND SOME INSIGHT INTO BRUCE BANNER'S *MIND.*
I DON'T *NEED* SASQUATCH, WALTER. I NEED *YOU.* AND THIS ISN'T *ALPHA.*
I'LL CALL A PRESS CONFERENCE *LATER,* MS. McGEE, BUT SINCE YOU'RE *HERE,* YOU CAN HAVE THE *EXCLUSIVE.*
MY REMIT IS TO *PROTECT THE EARTH*--AND IN LIGHT OF THESE AWFUL RUMORS ABOUT THE U.S. *LOSING* ONE OF THE BIGGEST *THREATS* TO IT--
--I'M CREATING A NEW *TASK FORCE,* HEADED BY DR. LANGKOWSKI, TO *LOCATE* SAID THREAT.
UH-*HUH.*
SO... DOES THIS TASK FORCE HAVE A *NAME?*
WHAT ELSE?
"THEY'RE CALLING IT *GAMMA FLIGHT.*"

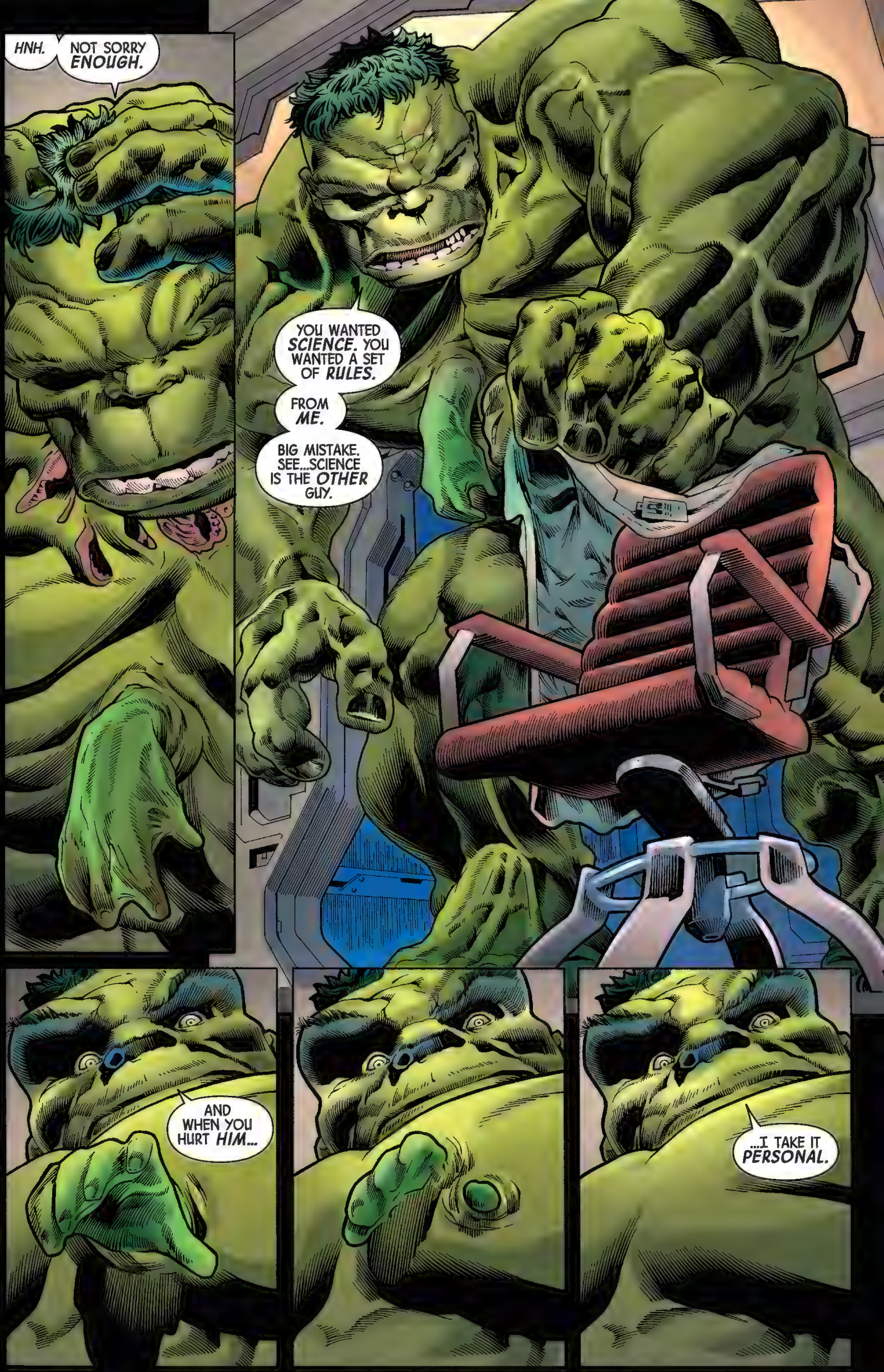

WELL, NO, GENERAL, I DON'T THINK THAT'S FUNNY. IT'S THE LAST THING WE NEED.
DO WE STILL HAVE LEVERAGE ON LANGKOWSKI? COULD WE FORCE DANVERS TO BACK OFF, OR--
OVERPLAYING OUR HAND? GENERAL, COME ON--
NO--I'M NOT RAISING MY VOICE TO YOU, SIR, I WAS JUST--
NO, NO, I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO PRISON.
YES. I'LL PROCEED AS ORDERED.
THANK YOU, GENERAL.
THANK YOU SO MUCH, REGGIE, YOU MONUMENTAL SON OF A--
WAS THAT FORTEAN? WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
DANVERS GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY EVENING.
SHE'S PUTTING A SPOTLIGHT ON US, AND FORTEAN'S RESPONSE IS TO GO DARK.
CUT OUR TIES, USE THE BLACK FUNDING STREAMS, RELOCATE...
SERIOUSLY? IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYTHING? IT'LL TAKE DAYS TO--
I KNOW, OKAY? IT'S NOT WHAT ANYONE WANTS TO HEAR AT THE END OF A LONG NIGHT'S WORK.
YOU GO GET THE FIRST READY FOR TRANSPORT TO SITE B. I'LL START PREPPING RED DOG...
...JUST AS SOON AS I'VE FINISHED WITH THE JIGSAW PUZZLE HERE.

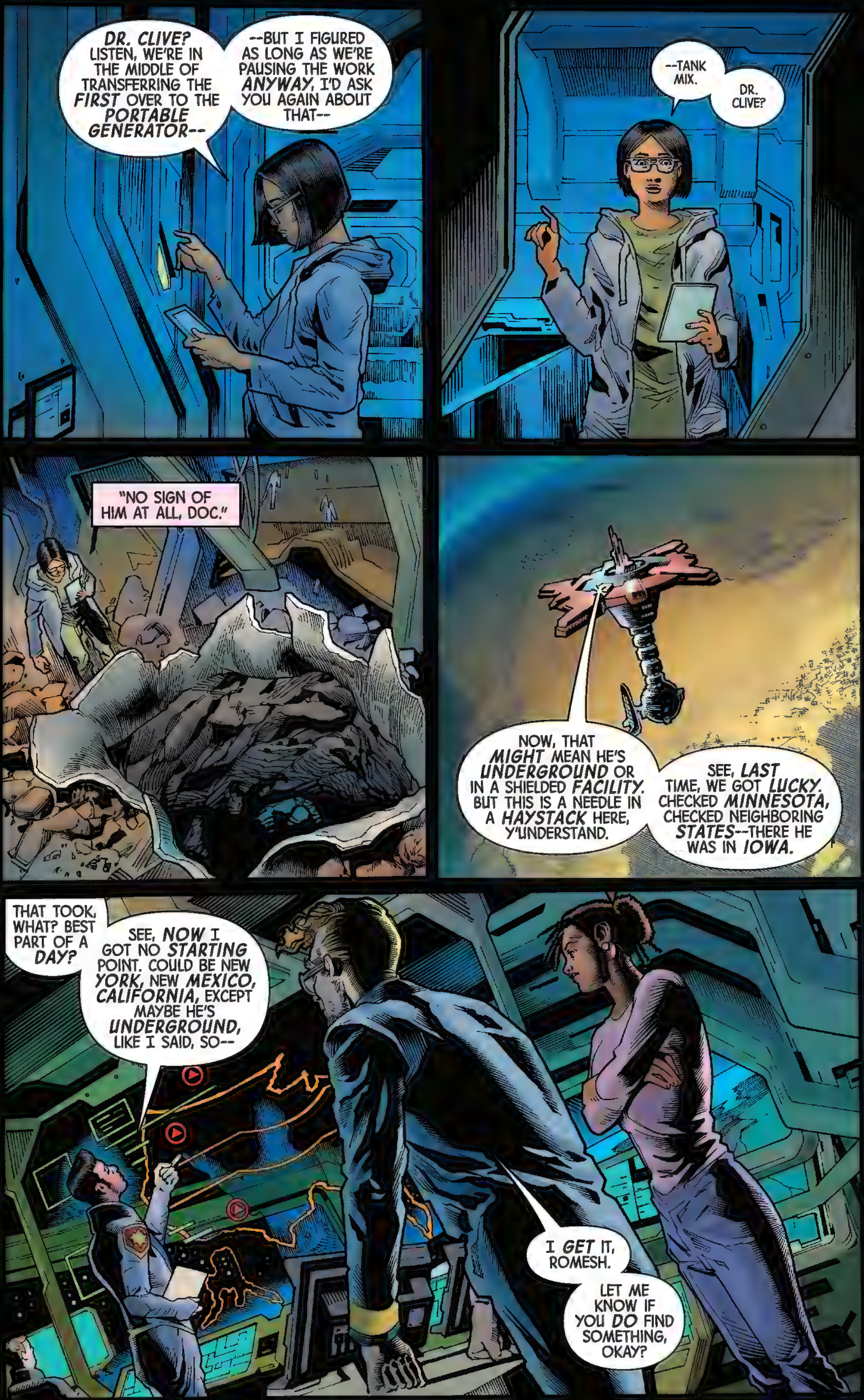

...
YOU THINK THAT'S *FUNNY?*
THAT YOUR *SUPER HERO BUDDIES* WANT TO MAKE LIFE *DIFFICULT?*
DIFFICULT FOR *YOU,* MY FRIEND. EVERYTHING WE'VE DONE TO YOU *HERE*--THAT WAS JUST THE *START.*
WHAT HAPPENS *NOW* IS WE SHIP THESE PIECES OF YOU TO OUR *OTHER* SITES. STUDY THEM *CELL BY CELL.*
CUT THAT SMILE OFF YOU. SLICE IT DOWN TO THE *BONE.*
MAYBE--MAYBE WE'LL POP ONE OF YOUR *EYES, HUH?* LIKE A--LIKE A *WATER BALLOON!*
RIP OUT THE OTHER! SEE WHAT GROWS BACK!
NEEDLES IN YOUR--YOUR *TONGUE,* AND--
W-WE'RE GOING TO--TO--
WE'RE *EXPERIMENTING ON YOU,* YOU MORON! WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH YOU?
WHAT'S SO *FUNNY?*

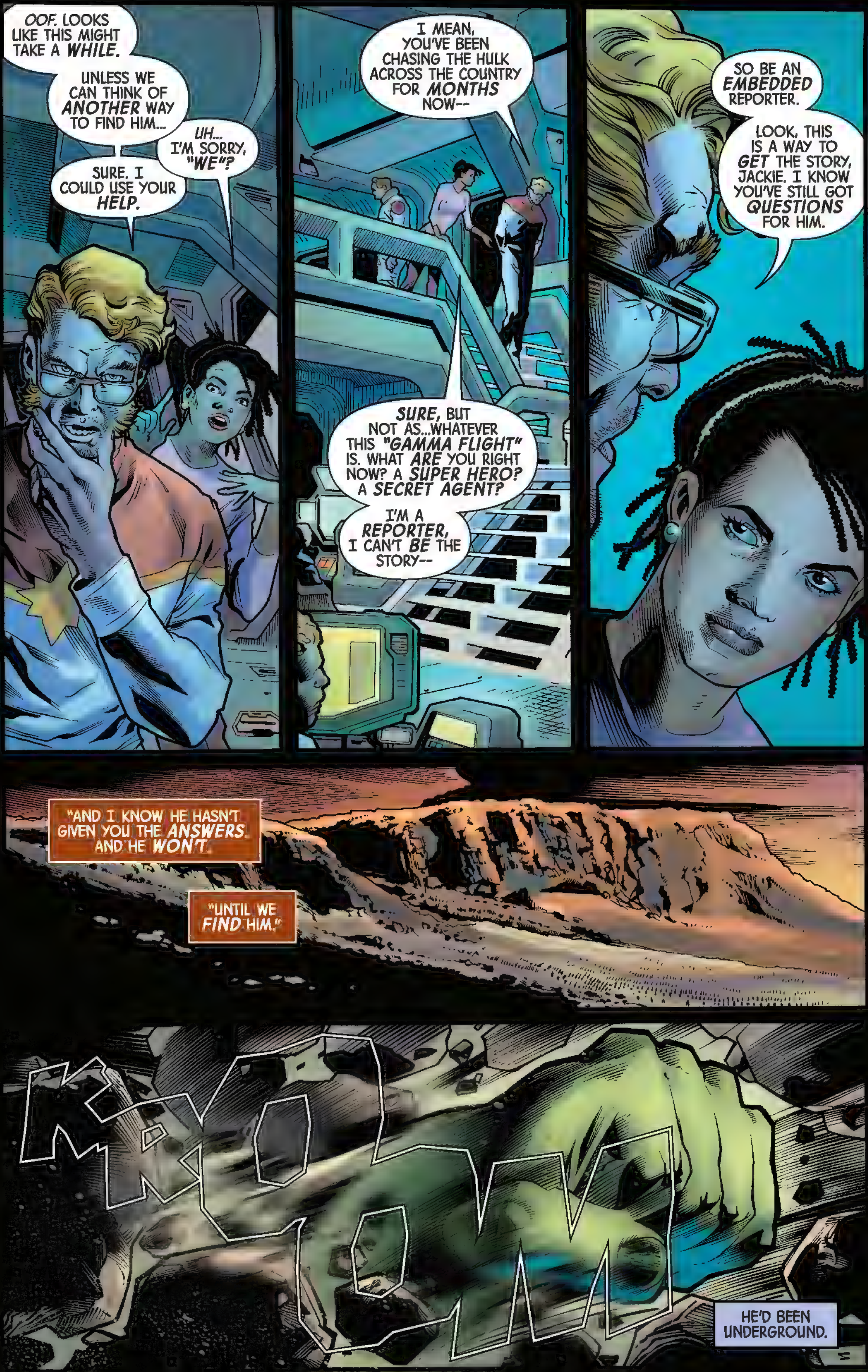

WE'RE GOING TO TURN YOU INTO OUR WEAPON!
LEARN ALL YOUR SECRETS!
HOW YOUR HEART BEATS! HOW YOUR FINGERS MOVE!
ALL OF IT!
WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT EXACTLY--
--WHAT YOU CAN DO.
OH GOD.
YOU LET US DO THIS. YOU WANTED US TO... TO TEST YOU.
BECAUSE IF WE KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO...
...SO DO YOU.
SNAP

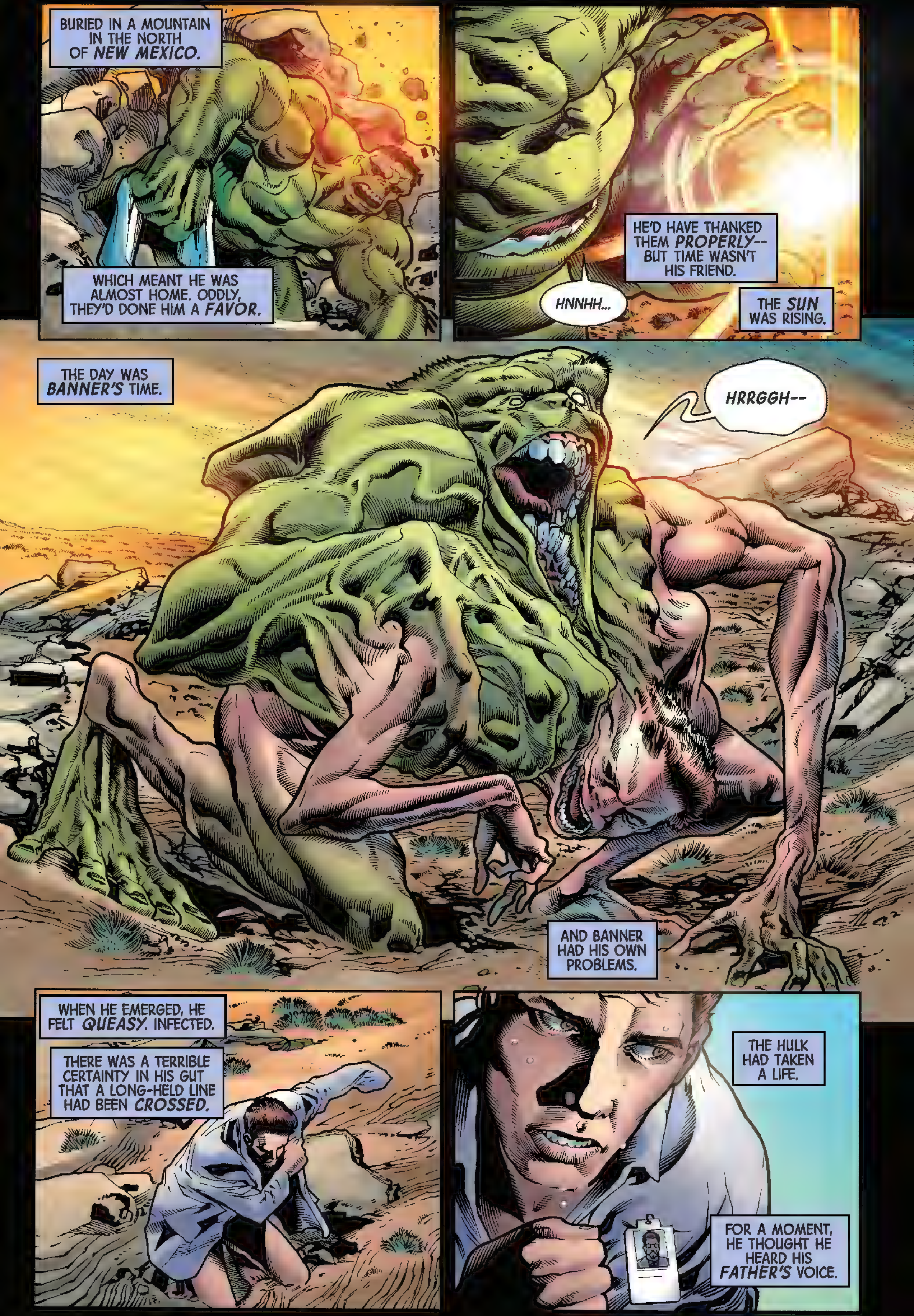


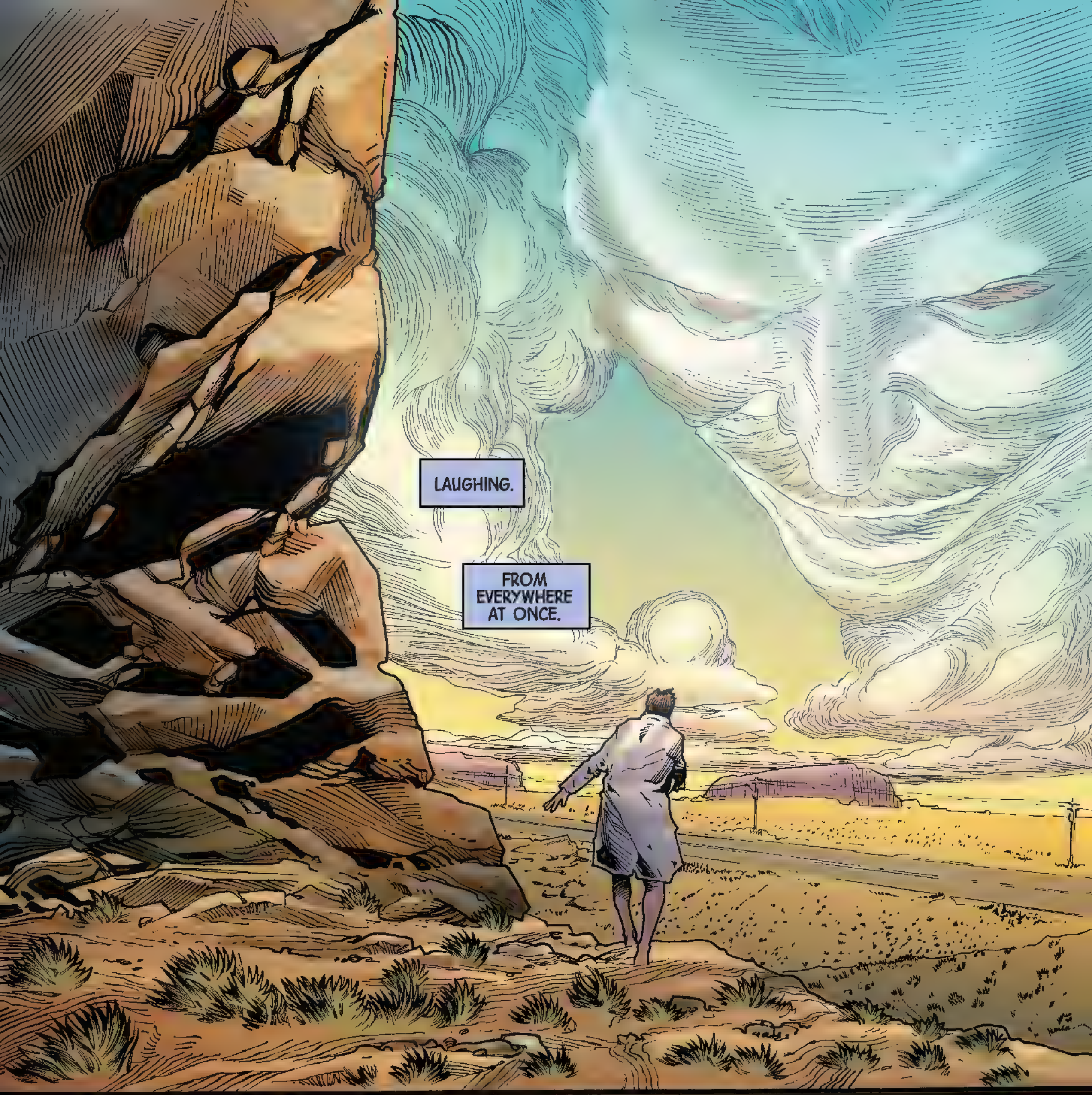

PLEASE!
I WAS-- PLEASE, I WAS TOLD TO, I'M SORRY--
I'M SORRY-- I'M--
--SURRHHGGK--
HHGG
GLK
PLSS


HNH.
NOT SORRY *ENOUGH.*
YOU WANTED *SCIENCE.* YOU WANTED A SET OF *RULES.*
FROM *ME.*
BIG MISTAKE. SEE...SCIENCE IS THE *OTHER* GUY.
AND WHEN YOU HURT *HIM*...
...I TAKE IT *PERSONAL.*


DR. CLIVE? LISTEN, WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF TRANSFERRING THE FIRST OVER TO THE PORTABLE GENERATOR--
--BUT I FIGURED AS LONG AS WE'RE PAUSING THE WORK ANYWAY, I'D ASK YOU AGAIN ABOUT THAT--
--TANK MIX.
DR. CLIVE?
"NO SIGN OF HIM AT ALL, DOC."
NOW, THAT MIGHT MEAN HE'S UNDERGROUND OR IN A SHIELDED FACILITY. BUT THIS IS A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK HERE, Y'UNDERSTAND.
SEE, LAST TIME, WE GOT LUCKY. CHECKED MINNESOTA, CHECKED NEIGHBORING STATES--THERE HE WAS IN IOWA.
THAT TOOK, WHAT? BEST PART OF A DAY?
SEE, NOW I GOT NO STARTING POINT. COULD BE NEW YORK, NEW MEXICO, CALIFORNIA, EXCEPT MAYBE HE'S UNDERGROUND, LIKE I SAID, SO--
I GET IT, ROMESH.
LET ME KNOW IF YOU DO FIND SOMETHING, OKAY?

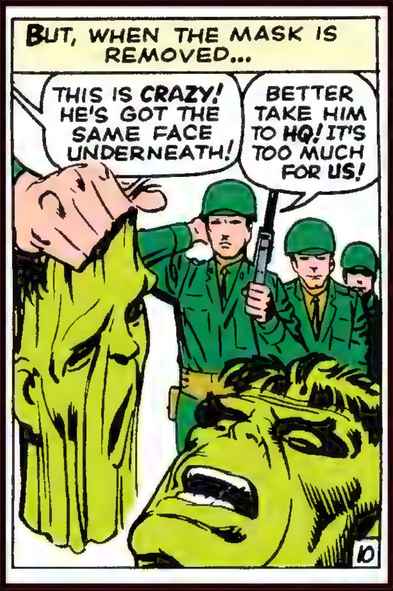

OOF. LOOKS LIKE THIS MIGHT TAKE A *WHILE.*
UNLESS WE CAN THINK OF *ANOTHER* WAY TO FIND HIM...
UH... I'M SORRY, *"WE"?*
SURE. I COULD USE YOUR *HELP.*
I MEAN, YOU'VE BEEN CHASING THE HULK ACROSS THE COUNTRY FOR *MONTHS* NOW--
SURE, BUT NOT AS...WHATEVER THIS *"GAMMA FLIGHT"* IS. WHAT *ARE* YOU RIGHT NOW? A *SUPER HERO?* A *SECRET AGENT?*
I'M A *REPORTER,* I CAN'T *BE* THE STORY--
SO BE AN *EMBEDDED* REPORTER.
LOOK, THIS IS A WAY TO *GET* THE STORY, JACKIE. I KNOW YOU'VE STILL GOT *QUESTIONS* FOR HIM.
"AND I KNOW HE HASN'T GIVEN YOU THE *ANSWERS.* AND HE *WON'T.*
"UNTIL WE *FIND* HIM."
KRAKOOOM
HE'D BEEN UNDERGROUND.

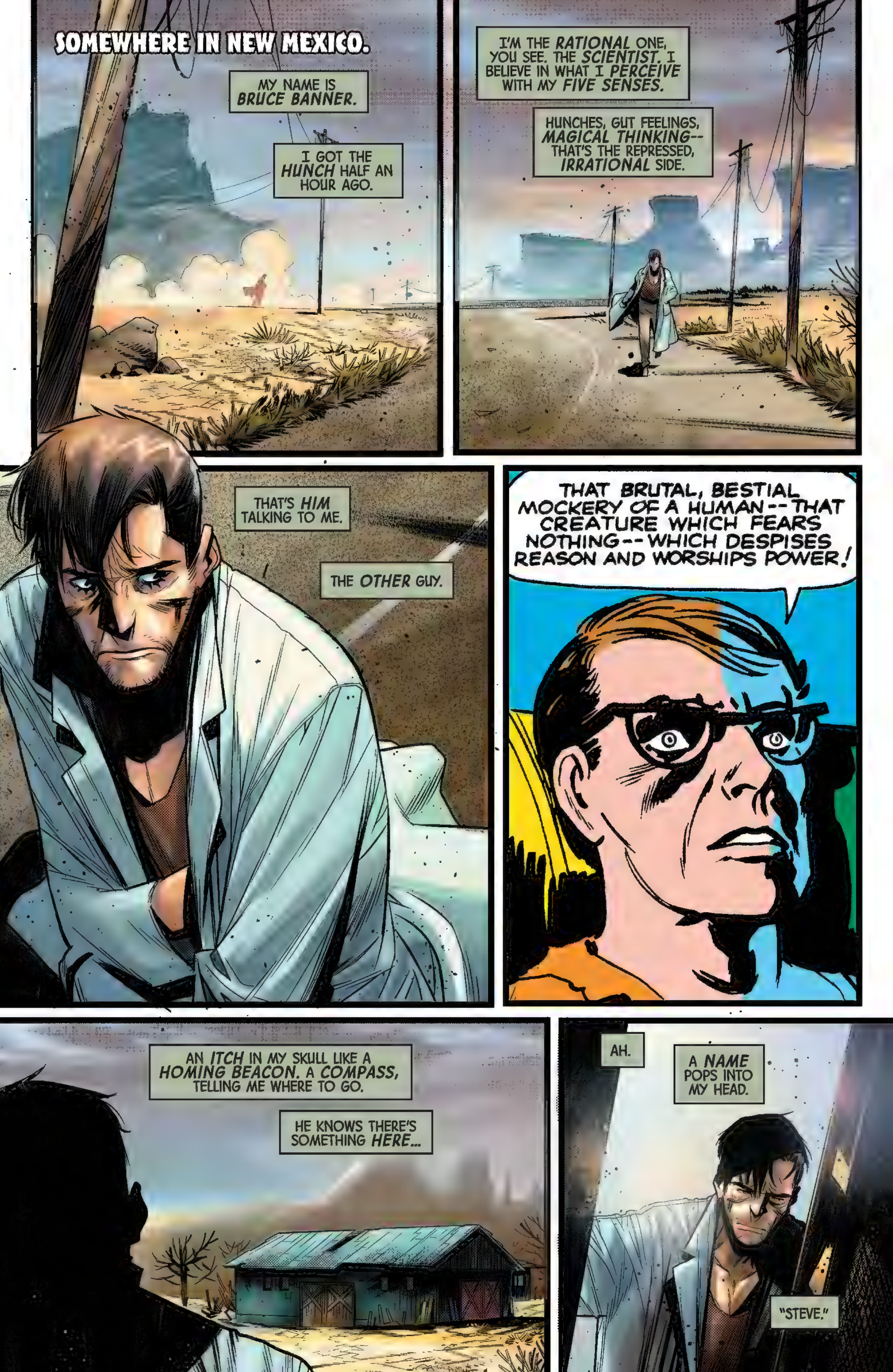

BURIED IN A MOUNTAIN IN THE NORTH OF *NEW MEXICO.*
WHICH MEANT HE WAS ALMOST HOME. ODDLY, THEY'D DONE HIM A *FAVOR.*
HE'D HAVE THANKED THEM *PROPERLY*-- BUT TIME WASN'T HIS FRIEND.
HNNHH...
THE *SUN* WAS RISING.
THE DAY WAS *BANNER'S* TIME.
HRRGGH--
AND BANNER HAD HIS OWN PROBLEMS.
WHEN HE EMERGED, HE FELT *QUEASY.* INFECTED.
THERE WAS A TERRIBLE CERTAINTY IN HIS GUT THAT A LONG-HELD LINE HAD BEEN *CROSSED.*
THE HULK HAD TAKEN A LIFE.
FOR A MOMENT, HE THOUGHT HE HEARD HIS *FATHER'S* VOICE.

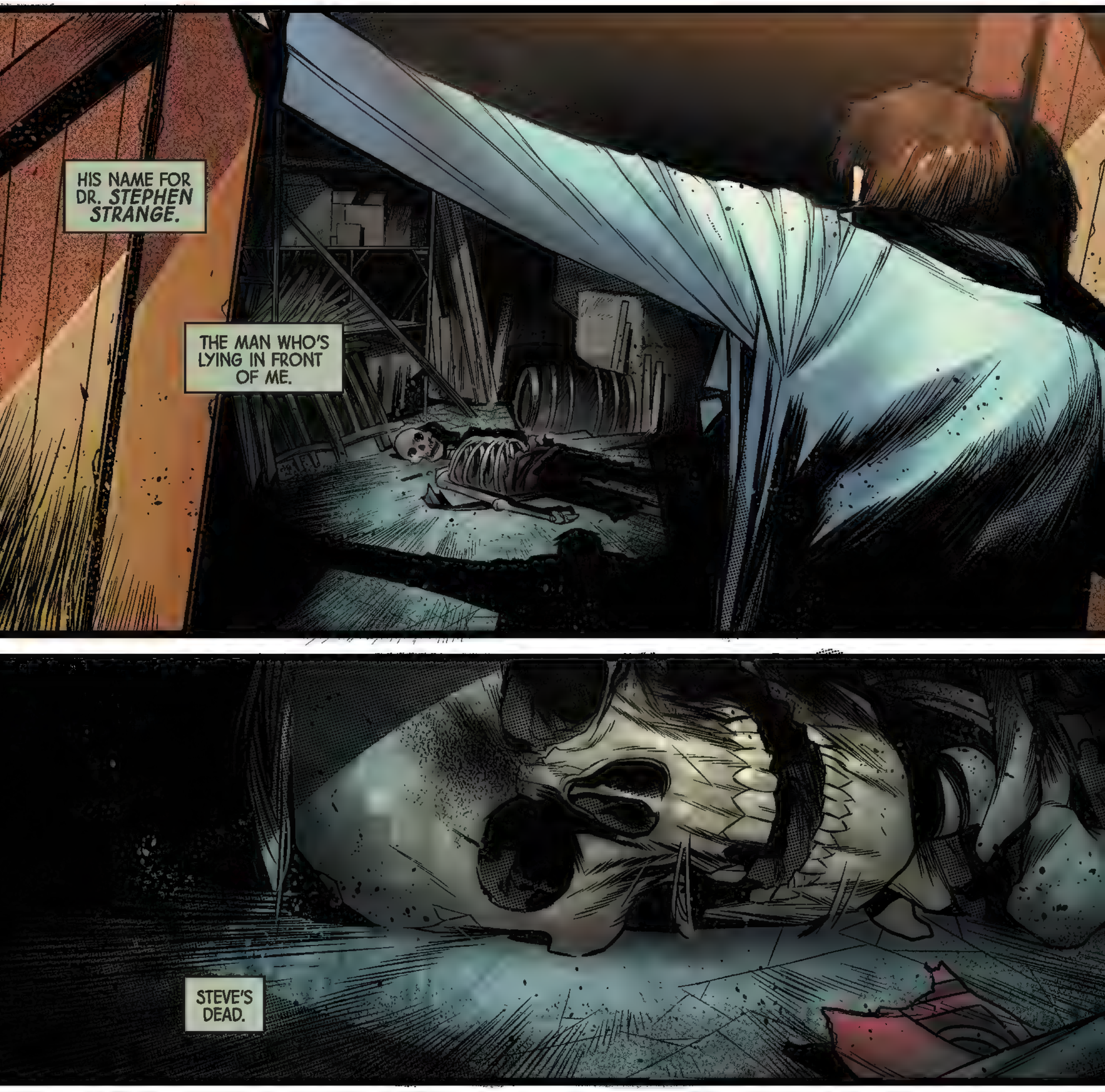

LAUGHING.
FROM EVERYWHERE AT ONCE.

HIS HIDEOUS HEART

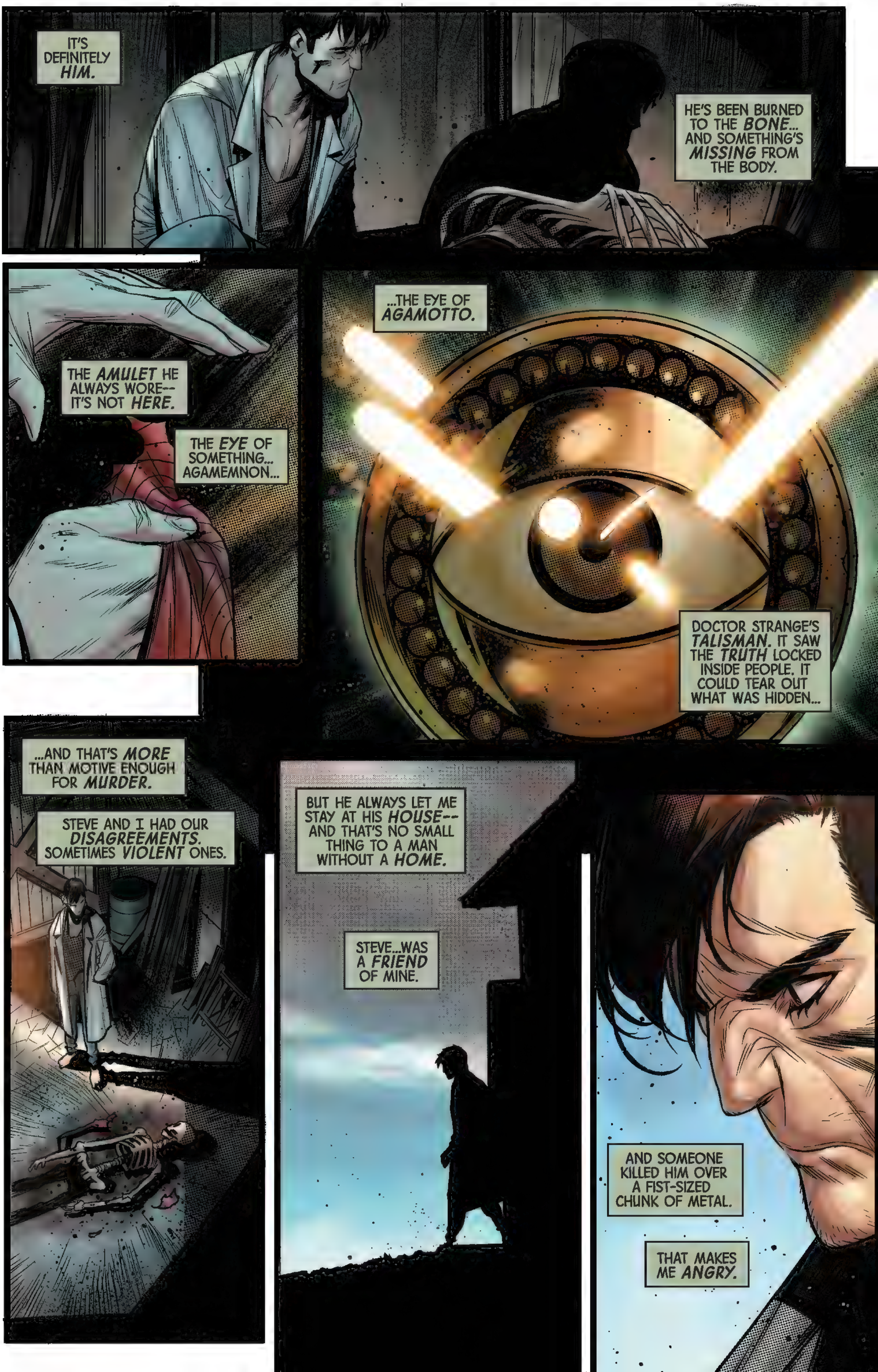
IMMORTAL HULK: BEST DEFENSE

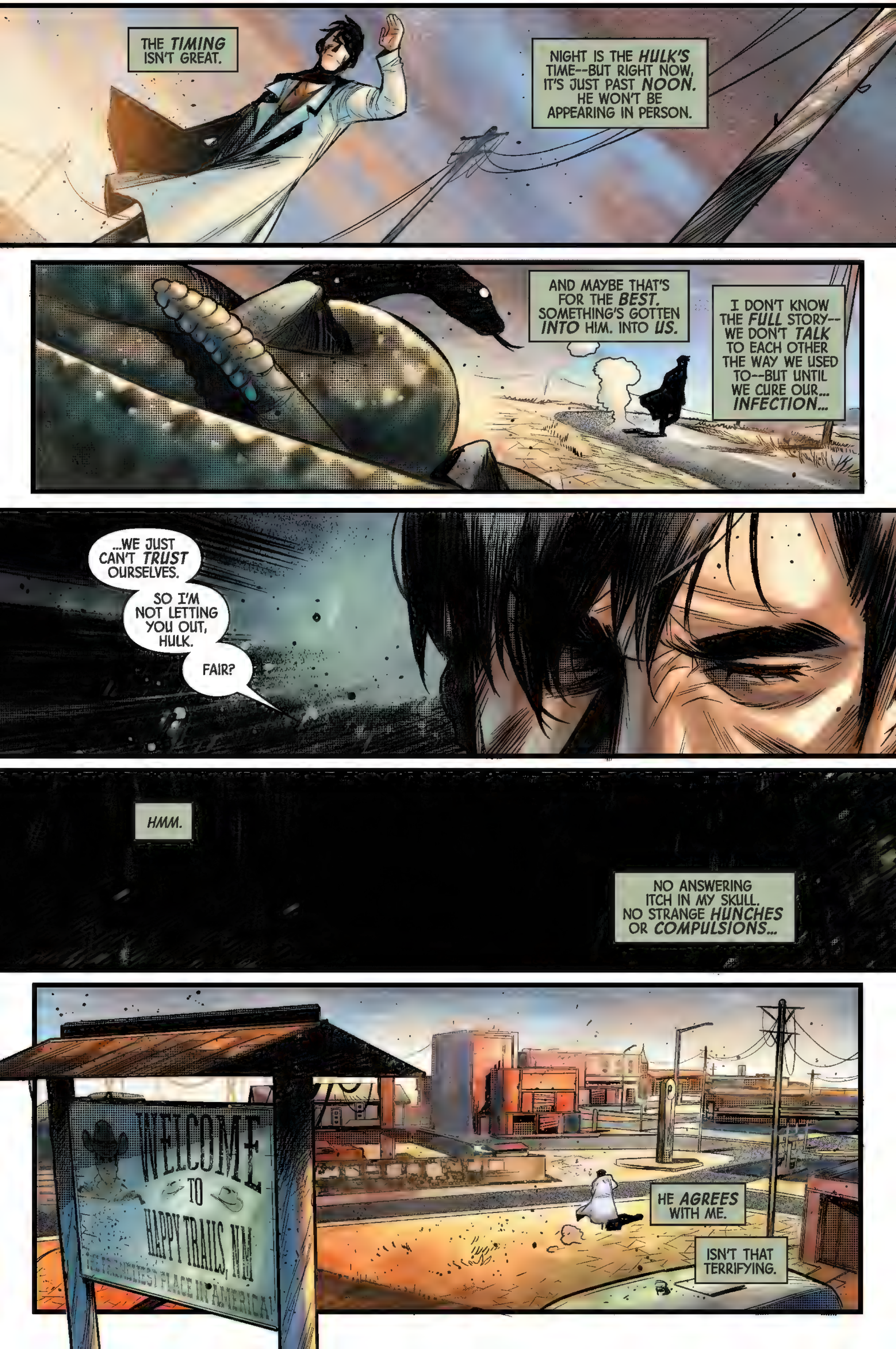

BUT, WHEN THE MASK IS REMOVED...
THIS IS CRAZY! HE'S GOT THE SAME FACE UNDERNEATH!
BETTER TAKE HIM TO HQ! IT'S TOO MUCH FOR US!
10

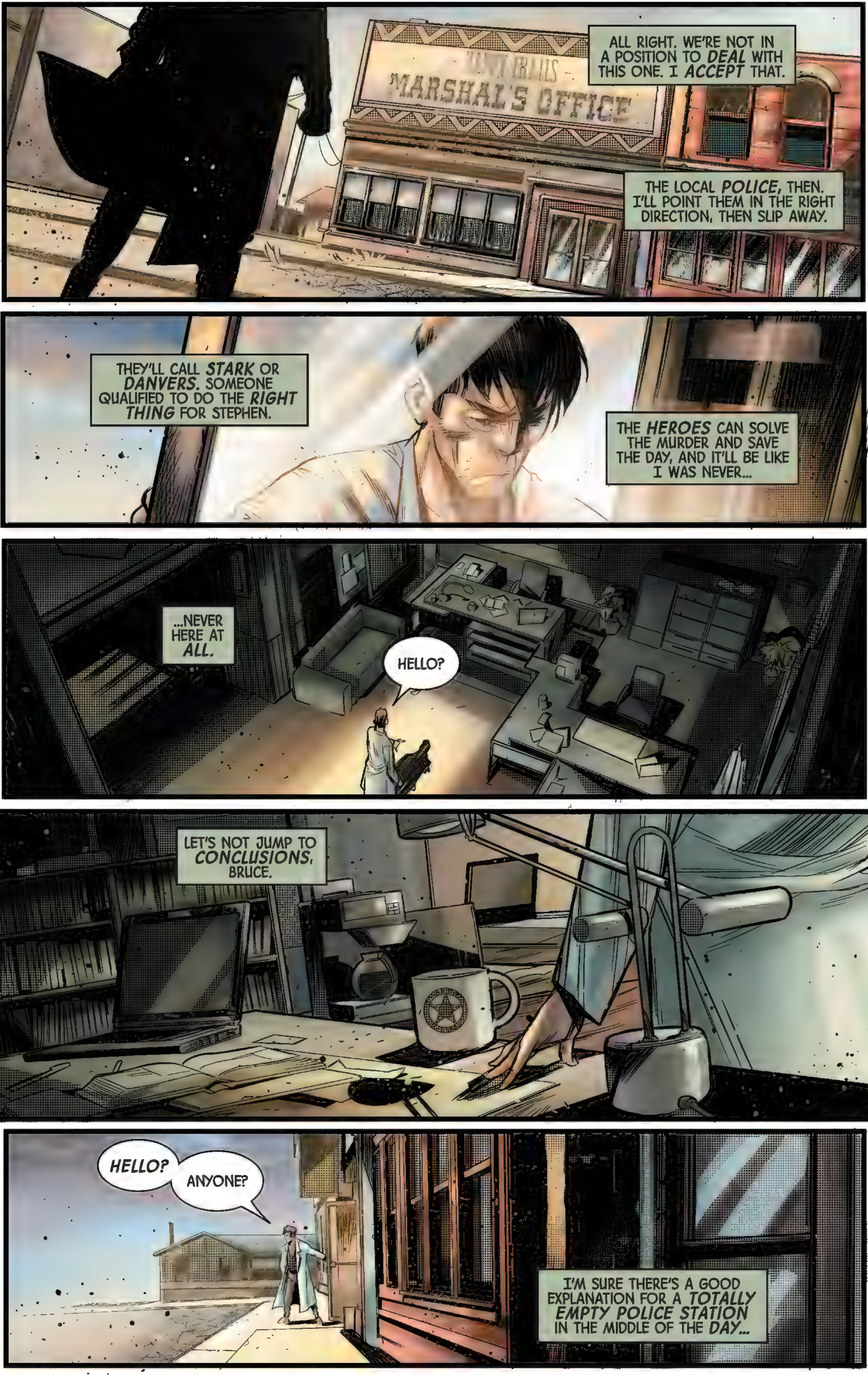

SOMEWHERE IN NEW MEXICO.
MY NAME IS BRUCE BANNER.
I GOT THE HUNCH HALF AN HOUR AGO.
I'M THE RATIONAL ONE, YOU SEE. THE SCIENTIST. I BELIEVE IN WHAT I PERCEIVE WITH MY FIVE SENSES.
HUNCHES, GUT FEELINGS, MAGICAL THINKING-- THAT'S THE REPRESSED, IRRATIONAL SIDE.
THAT'S HIM TALKING TO ME.
THE OTHER GUY.
THAT BRUTAL, BESTIAL MOCKERY OF A HUMAN--THAT CREATURE WHICH FEARS NOTHING--WHICH DESPISES REASON AND WORSHIPS POWER!
AN ITCH IN MY SKULL LIKE A HOMING BEACON. A COMPASS, TELLING ME WHERE TO GO.
HE KNOWS THERE'S SOMETHING HERE...
AH.
A NAME POPS INTO MY HEAD.
"STEVE."

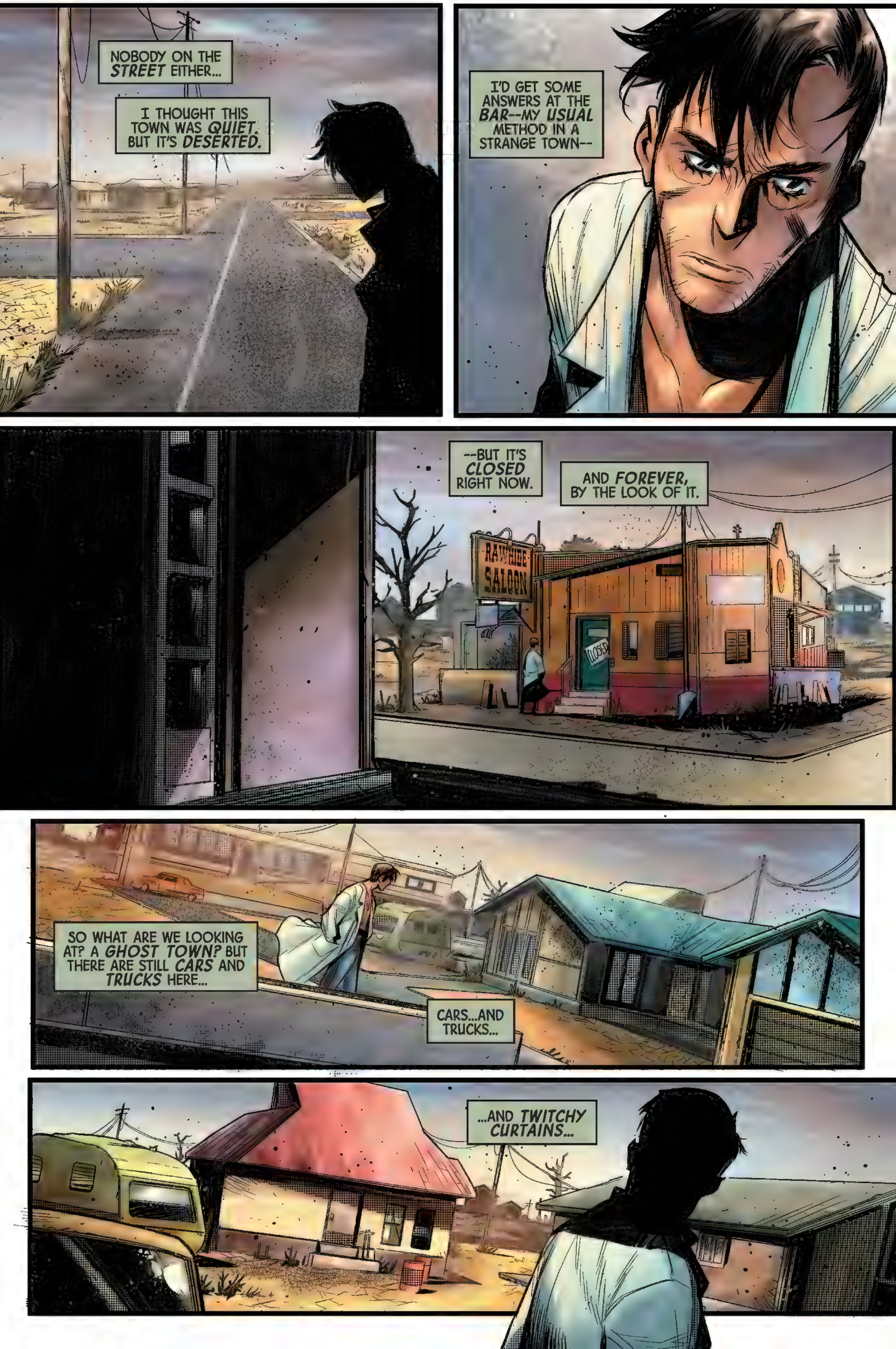

HIS NAME FOR DR. *STEPHEN STRANGE.*
THE MAN WHO'S LYING IN FRONT OF ME.
STEVE'S DEAD.

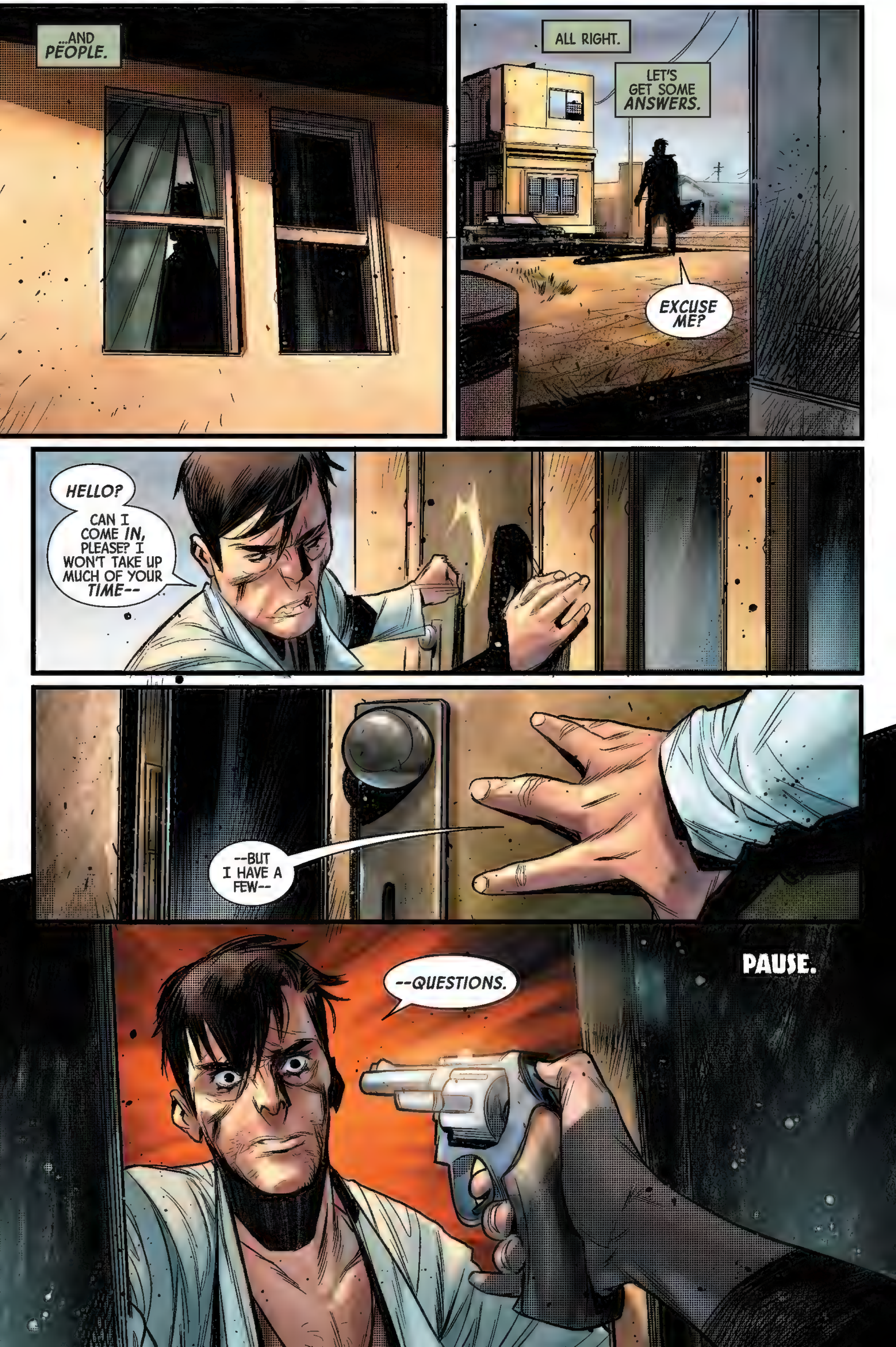
THE FACE UNDERNEATH

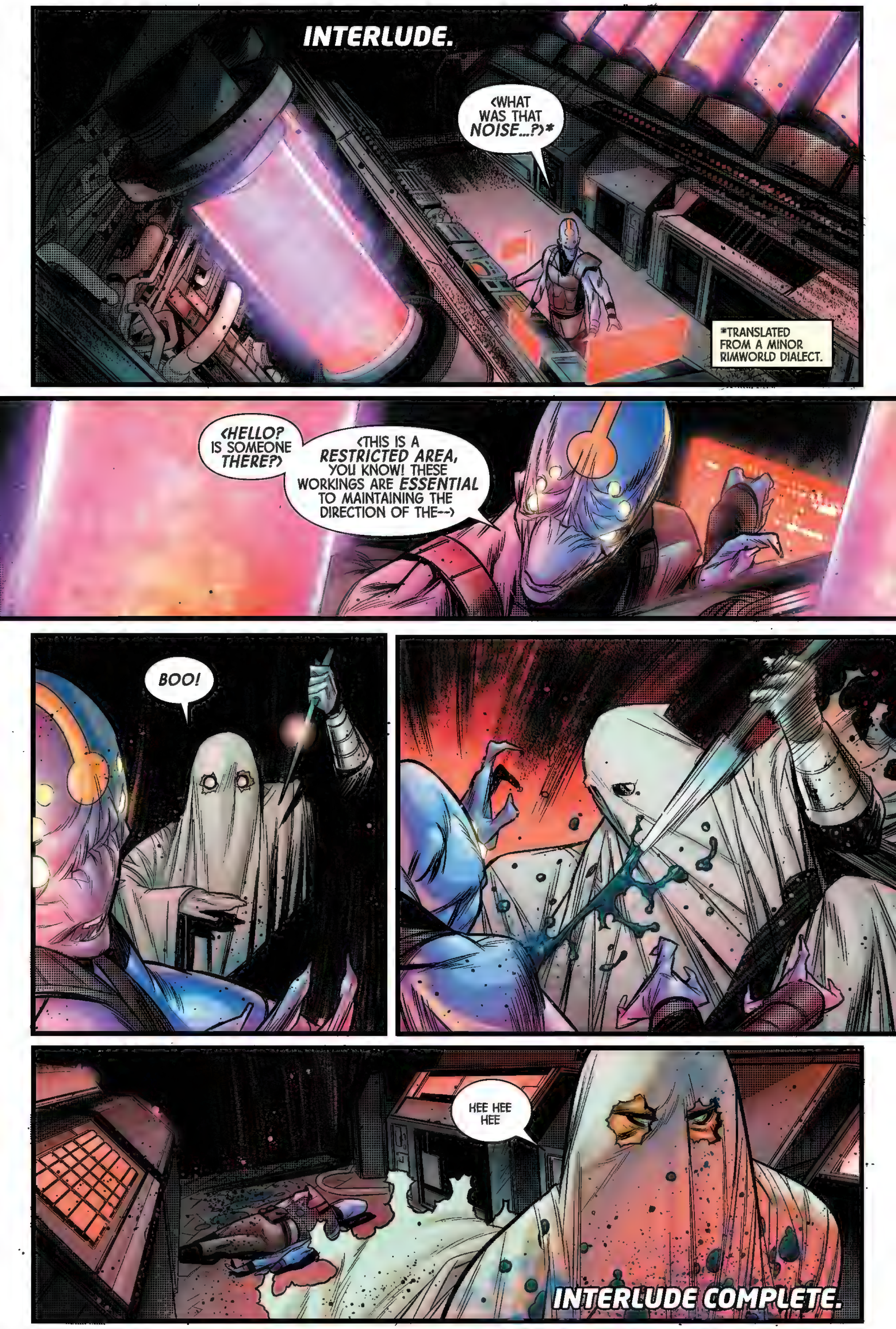

IT'S DEFINITELY *HIM.*
HE'S BEEN BURNED TO THE *BONE*... AND SOMETHING'S *MISSING* FROM THE BODY.
THE *AMULET* HE ALWAYS WORE-- IT'S NOT *HERE.*
THE *EYE* OF SOMETHING... AGAMEMNON...
...THE EYE OF *AGAMOTTO.*
DOCTOR STRANGE'S *TALISMAN.* IT SAW THE *TRUTH* LOCKED INSIDE PEOPLE. IT COULD TEAR OUT WHAT WAS HIDDEN...
...AND THAT'S *MORE* THAN MOTIVE ENOUGH FOR *MURDER.*
STEVE AND I HAD OUR *DISAGREEMENTS.* SOMETIMES *VIOLENT* ONES.
BUT HE ALWAYS LET ME STAY AT HIS *HOUSE*-- AND THAT'S NO SMALL THING TO A MAN WITHOUT A *HOME.*
STEVE...WAS A *FRIEND* OF MINE.
AND SOMEONE KILLED HIM OVER A FIST-SIZED CHUNK OF METAL.
THAT MAKES ME *ANGRY.*

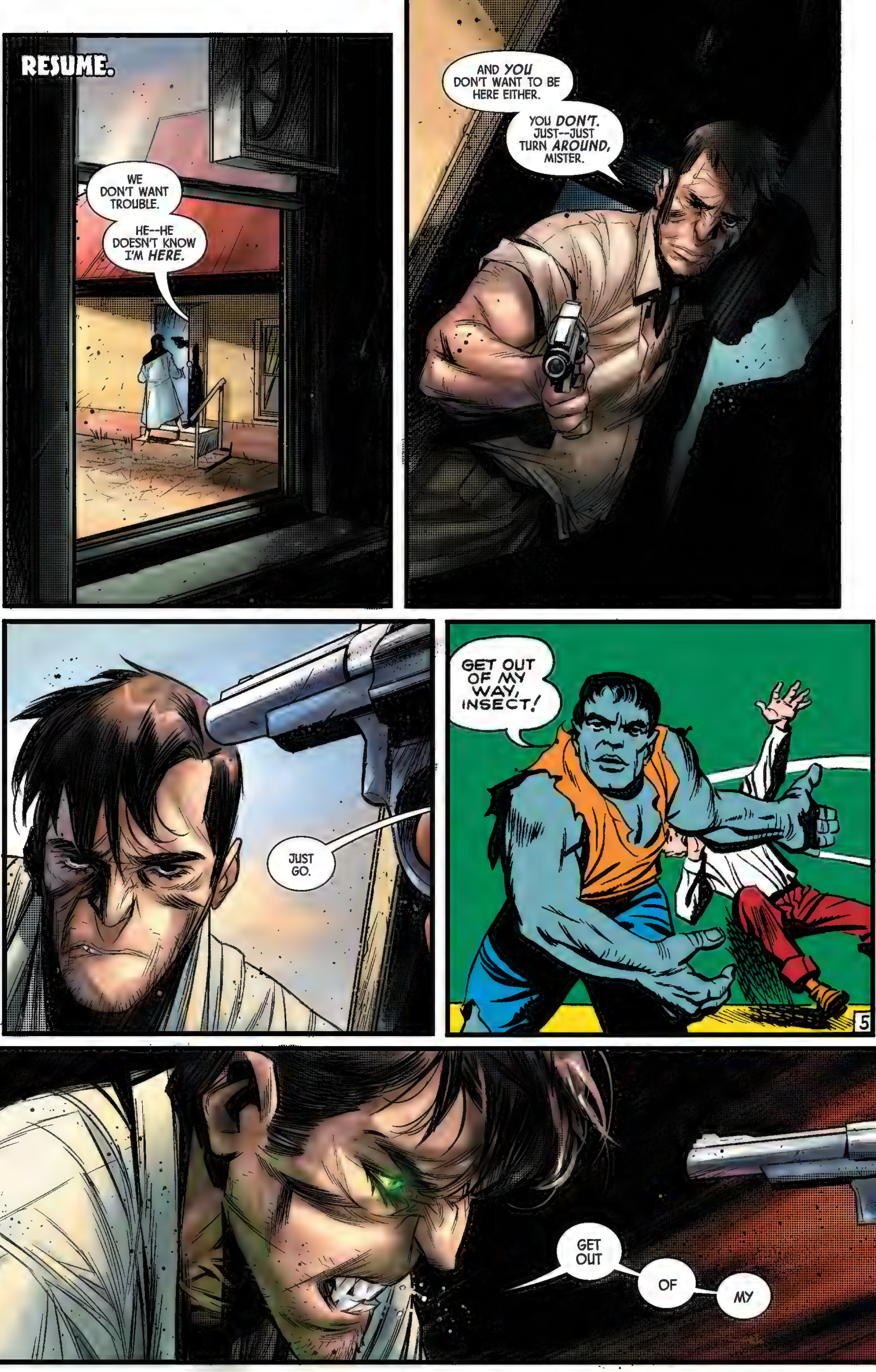

THE *TIMING* ISN'T GREAT.
NIGHT IS THE *HULK'S* TIME--BUT RIGHT NOW, IT'S JUST PAST *NOON.* HE WON'T BE APPEARING IN PERSON.
AND MAYBE THAT'S FOR THE *BEST.* SOMETHING'S GOTTEN *INTO* HIM. INTO *US.*
I DON'T KNOW THE *FULL* STORY--WE DON'T *TALK* TO EACH OTHER THE WAY WE USED TO--BUT UNTIL WE CURE OUR... *INFECTION*...
...WE JUST CAN'T *TRUST* OURSELVES.
SO I'M NOT LETTING YOU OUT, HULK.
FAIR?
HMM.
NO ANSWERING ITCH IN MY SKULL. NO STRANGE *HUNCHES* OR *COMPULSIONS*...
WELCOME TO HAPPY TRAILS, NM
THE FRIENDLIEST PLACE IN AMERICA!
HE *AGREES* WITH ME.
ISN'T THAT TERRIFYING.

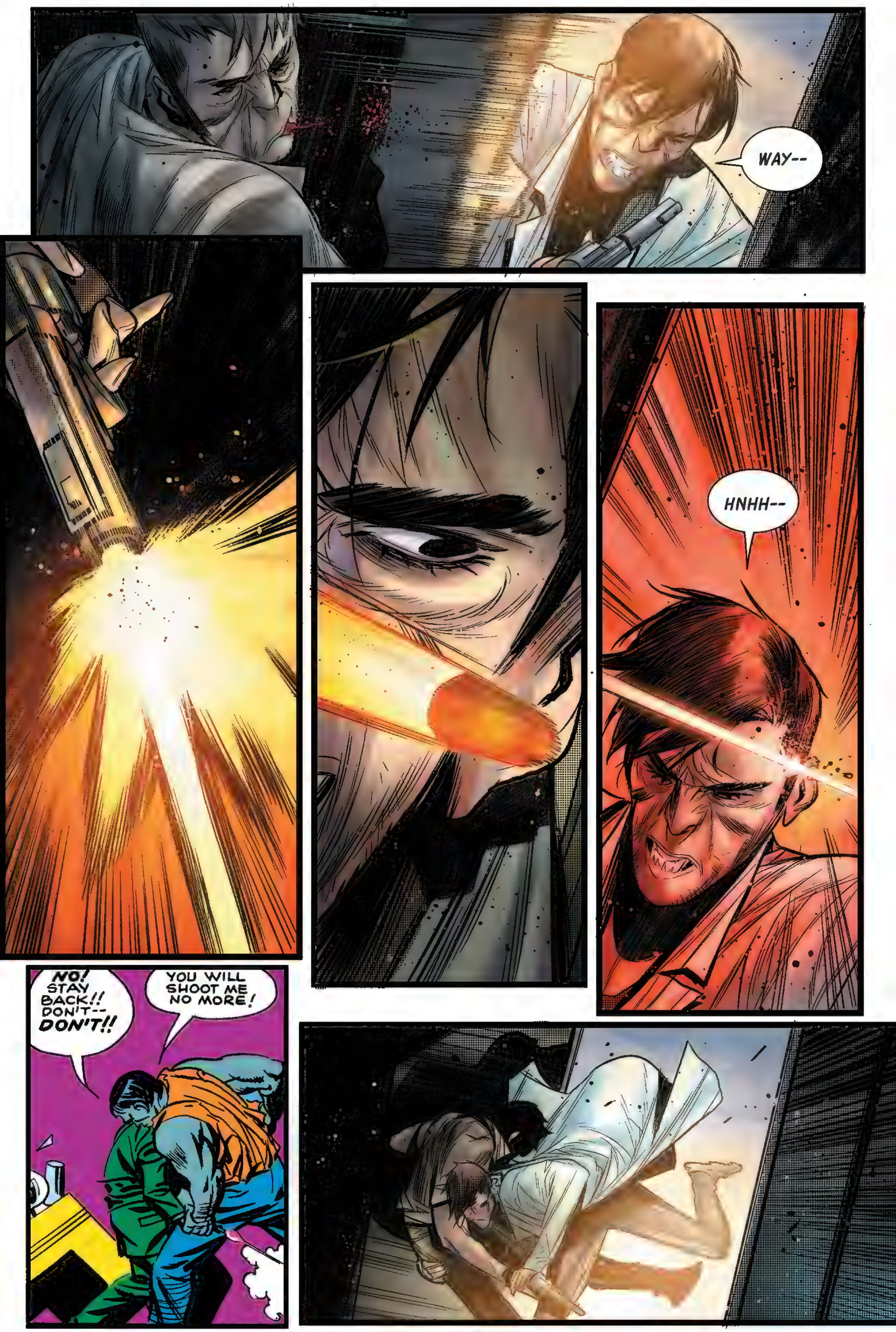

MARSHAL'S OFFICE
ALL RIGHT. WE'RE NOT IN A POSITION TO *DEAL* WITH THIS ONE. I *ACCEPT* THAT.
THE LOCAL *POLICE*, THEN. I'LL POINT THEM IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, THEN SLIP AWAY.
THEY'LL CALL *STARK* OR *DANVERS*. SOMEONE QUALIFIED TO DO THE *RIGHT THING* FOR STEPHEN.
THE *HEROES* CAN SOLVE THE MURDER AND SAVE THE DAY, AND IT'LL BE LIKE I WAS NEVER...
...NEVER HERE AT *ALL*.
HELLO?
LET'S NOT JUMP TO *CONCLUSIONS*, BRUCE.
HELLO?
ANYONE?
I'M SURE THERE'S A GOOD EXPLANATION FOR A *TOTALLY EMPTY POLICE STATION* IN THE MIDDLE OF THE *DAY*...

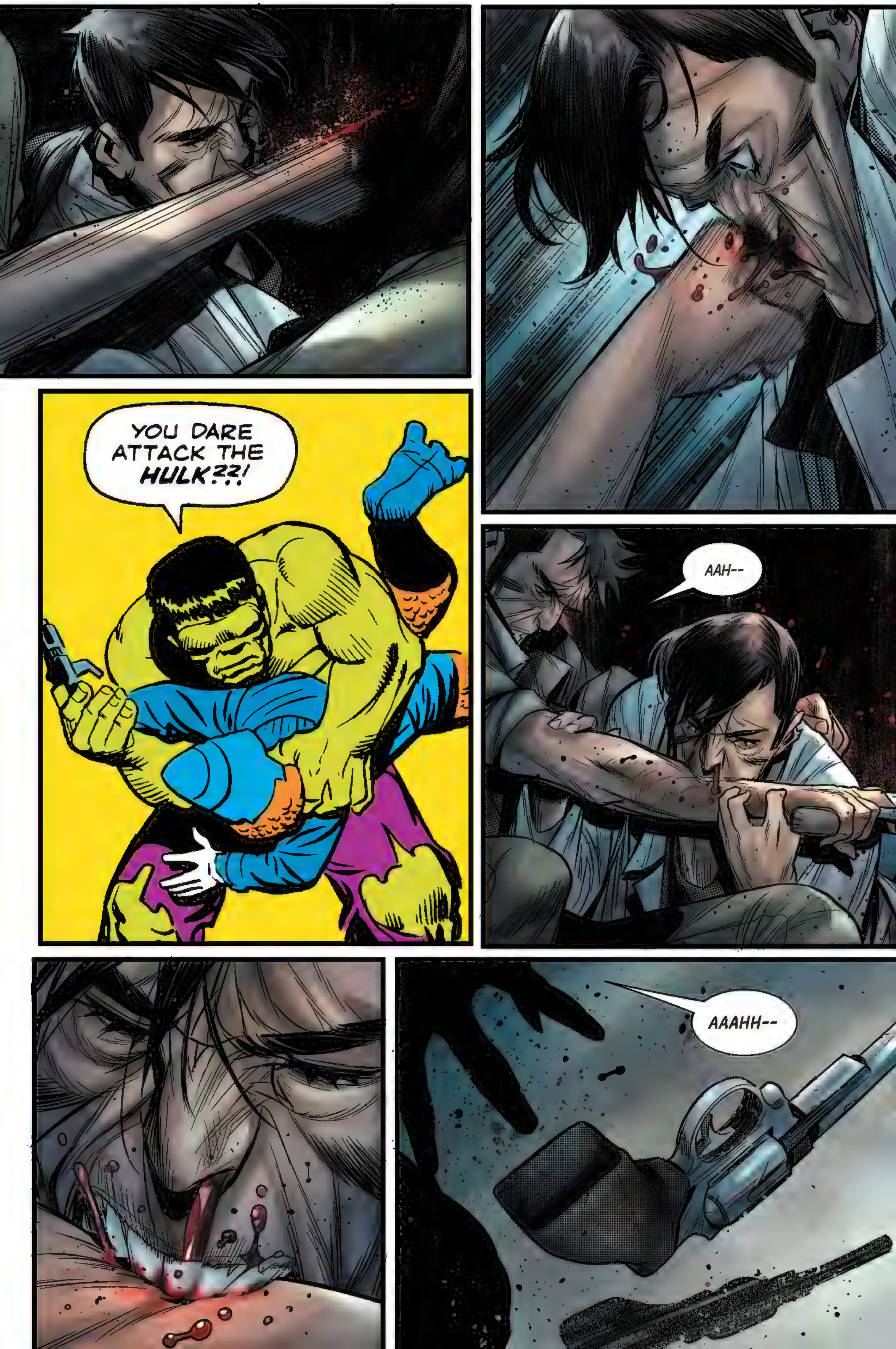

NOBODY ON THE *STREET* EITHER...
I THOUGHT THIS TOWN WAS *QUIET*. BUT IT'S *DESERTED*.
I'D GET SOME ANSWERS AT THE *BAR*--MY *USUAL* METHOD IN A STRANGE TOWN--
--BUT IT'S *CLOSED* RIGHT NOW.
AND *FOREVER*, BY THE LOOK OF IT.
RAWHIDE SALOON
CLOSED
SO WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT? A *GHOST TOWN?* BUT THERE ARE STILL *CARS* AND *TRUCKS* HERE...
CARS...AND TRUCKS...
...AND *TWITCHY CURTAINS*...

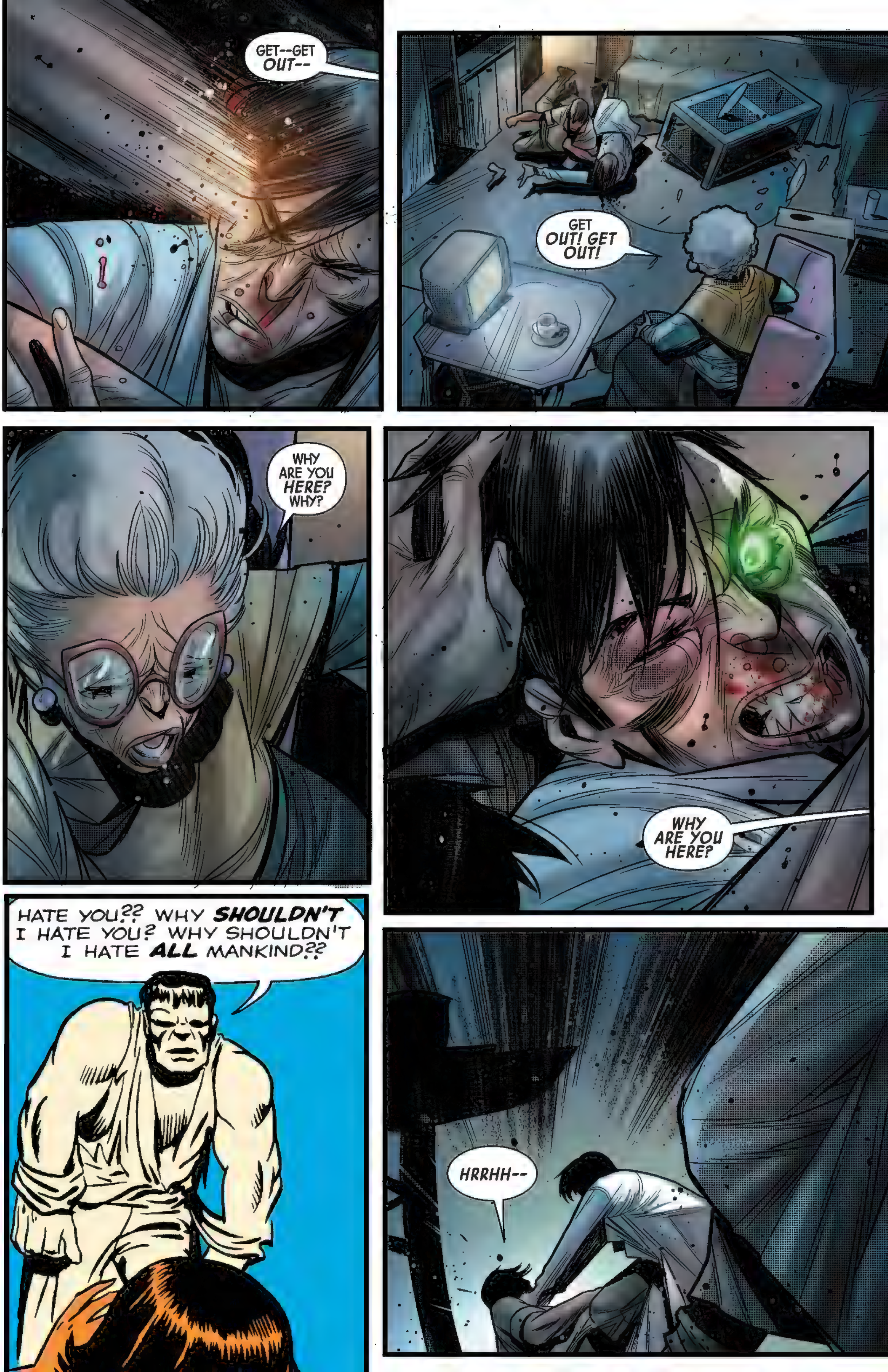

...AND *PEOPLE.*
ALL RIGHT.
LET'S GET SOME *ANSWERS.*
EXCUSE ME?
HELLO?
CAN I COME *IN,* PLEASE? I WON'T TAKE UP MUCH OF YOUR *TIME--*
--BUT I HAVE A FEW--
--*QUESTIONS.*
PAUSE.

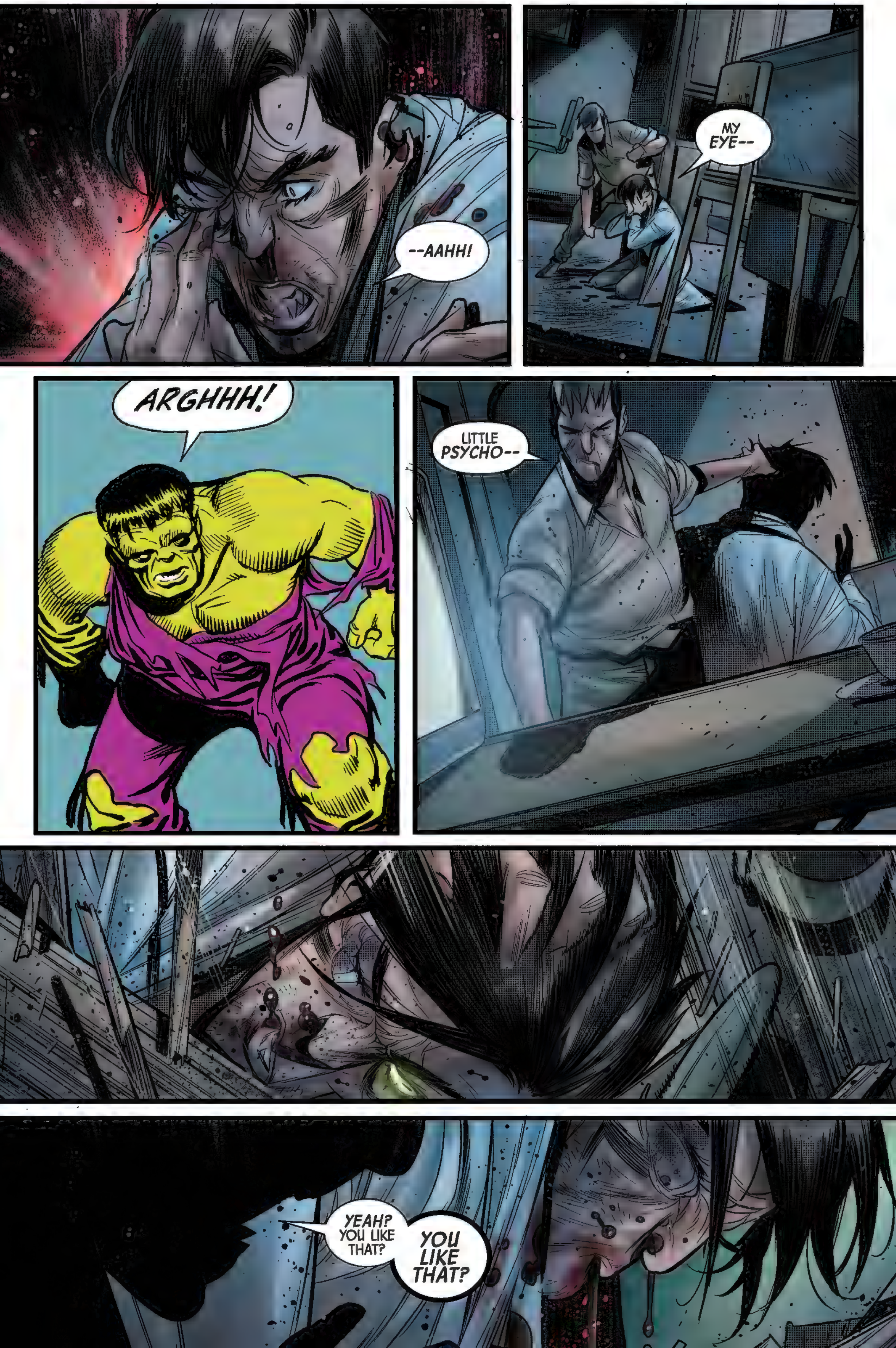

INTERLUDE.
<WHAT WAS THAT NOISE...?>*
*TRANSLATED FROM A MINOR RIMWORLD DIALECT.
<HELLO? IS SOMEONE THERE?>
<THIS IS A RESTRICTED AREA, YOU KNOW! THESE WORKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAINING THE DIRECTION OF THE-->
BOO!
HEE HEE HEE
INTERLUDE COMPLETE.

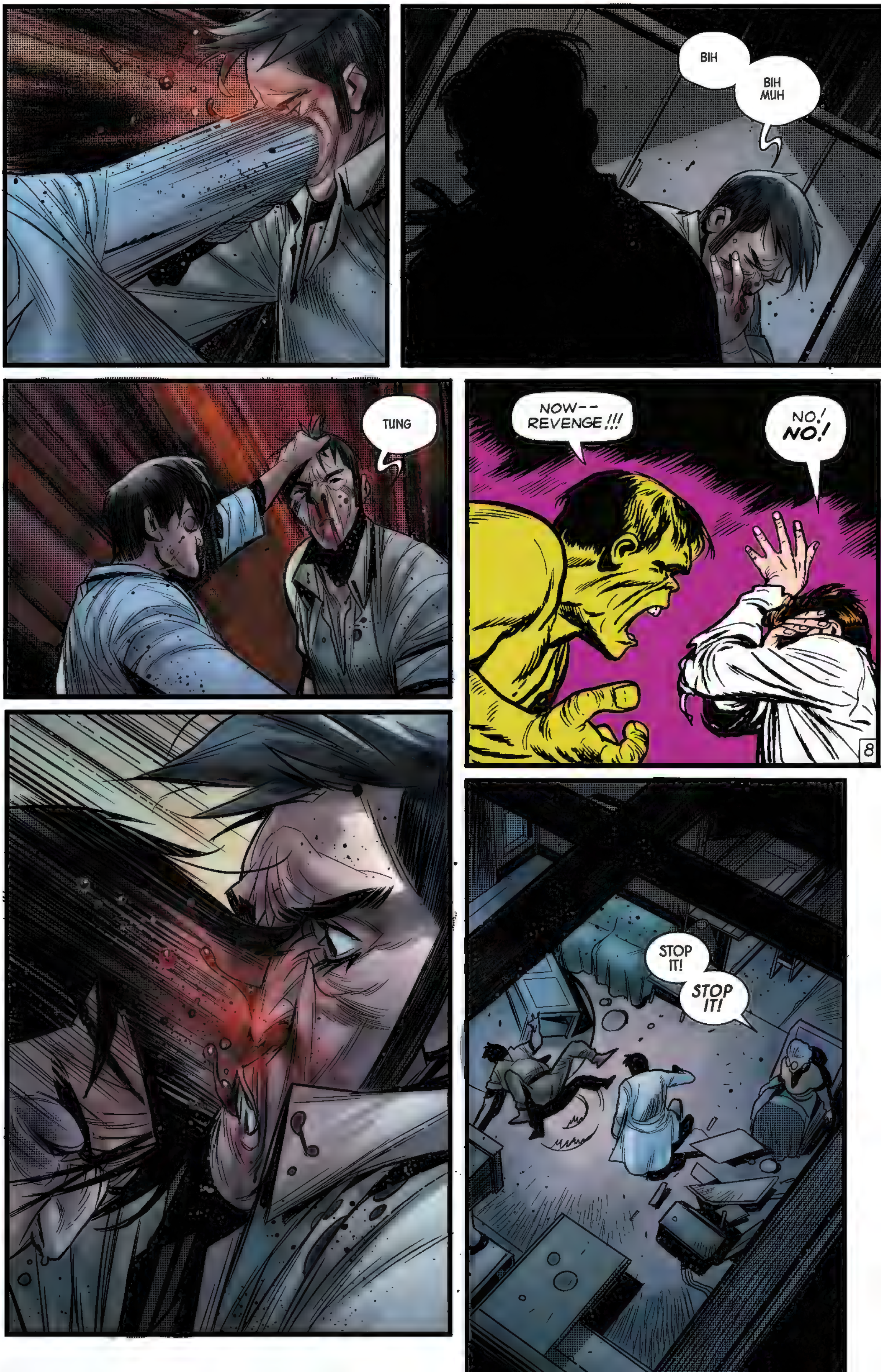

RESUME.
WE DON'T WANT TROUBLE.
HE--HE DOESN'T KNOW I'M *HERE*.
AND *YOU* DON'T WANT TO BE HERE EITHER.
YOU *DON'T*. JUST--JUST TURN *AROUND*, MISTER.
JUST GO.
GET OUT OF MY WAY, INSECT!
5
GET OUT
OF
MY

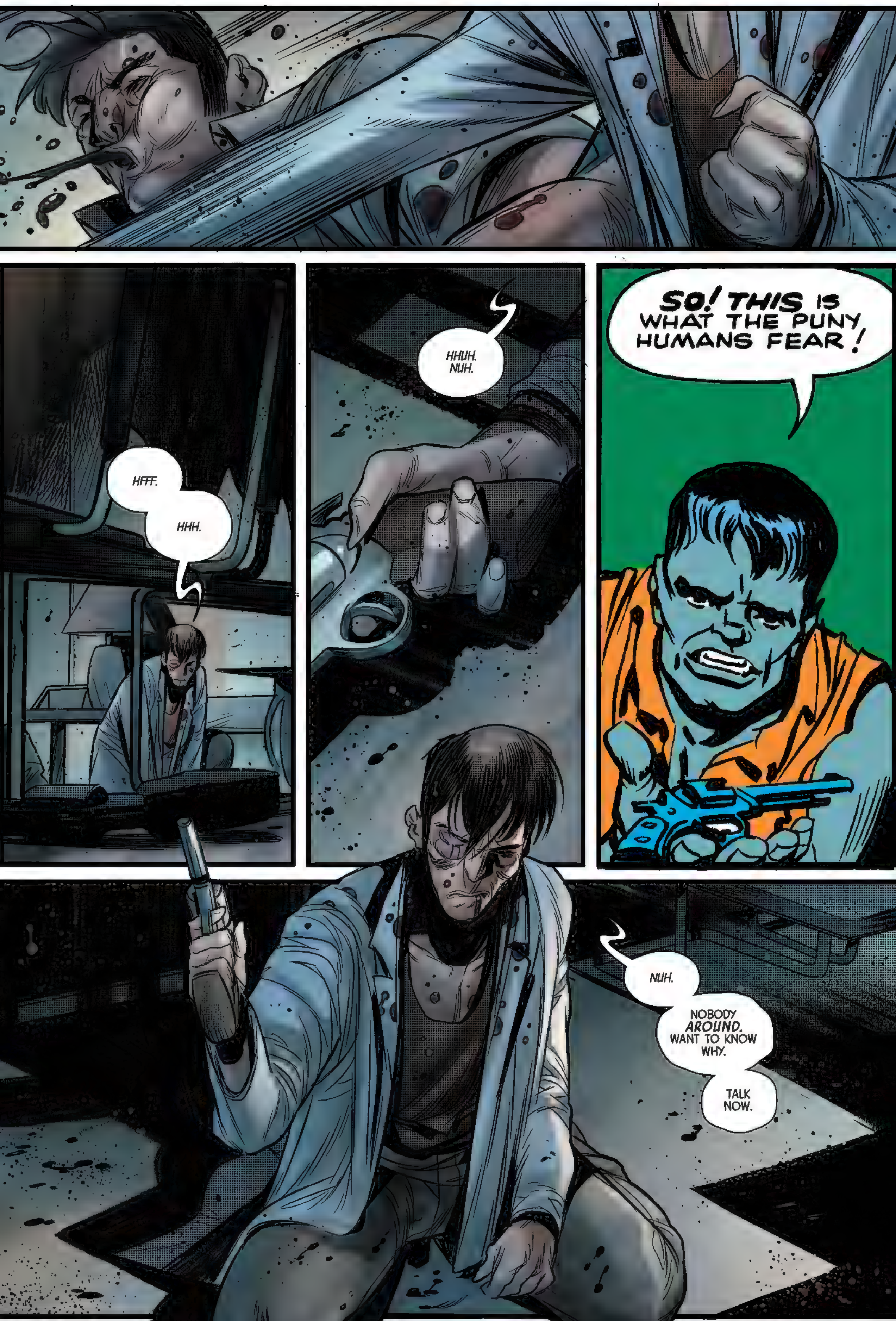

WAY--
HNHH--
NO! STAY BACK!! DON'T-- DON'T!!
YOU WILL SHOOT ME NO MORE!

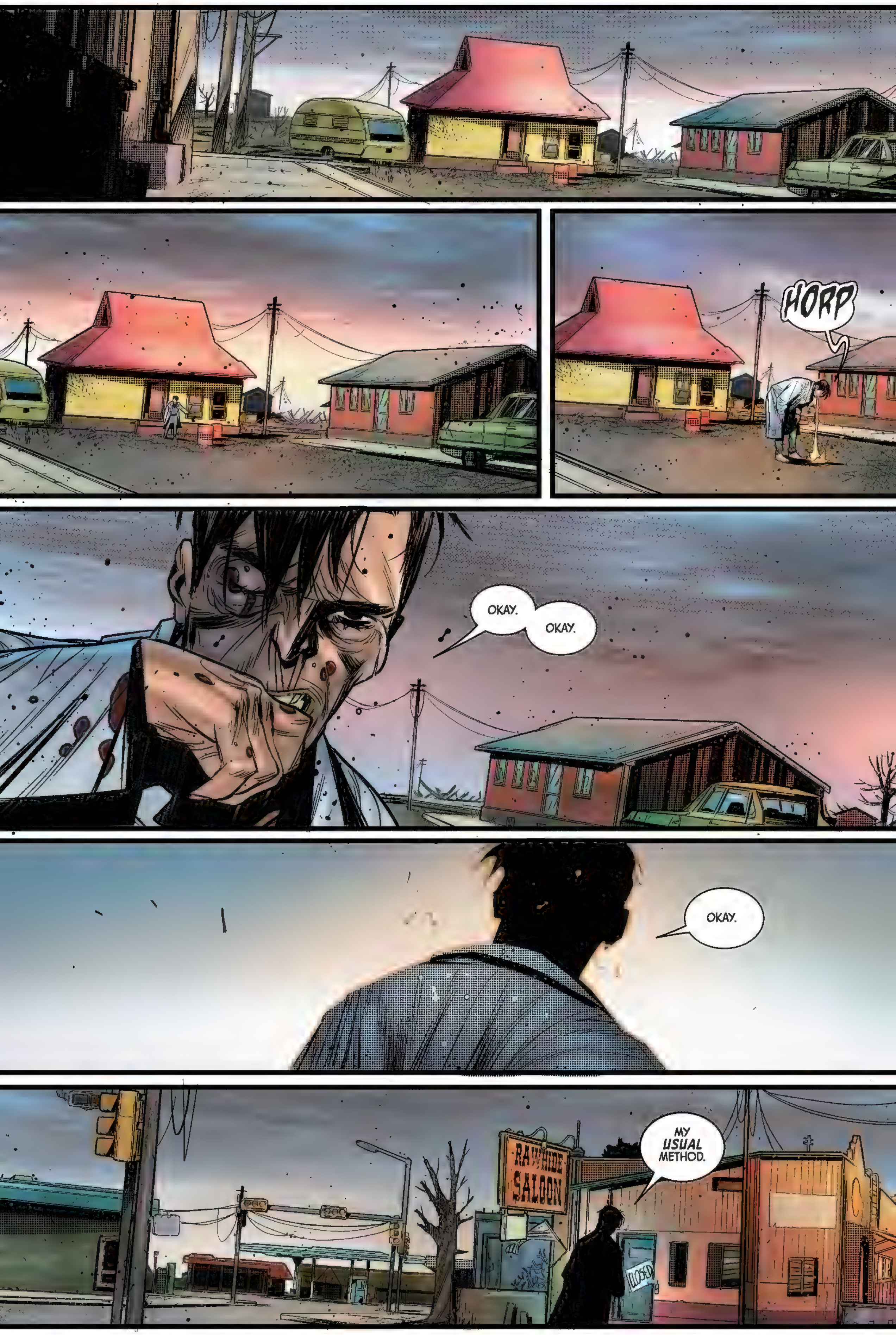

YOU DARE ATTACK THE HULK??!
AAH--
AAAHH--

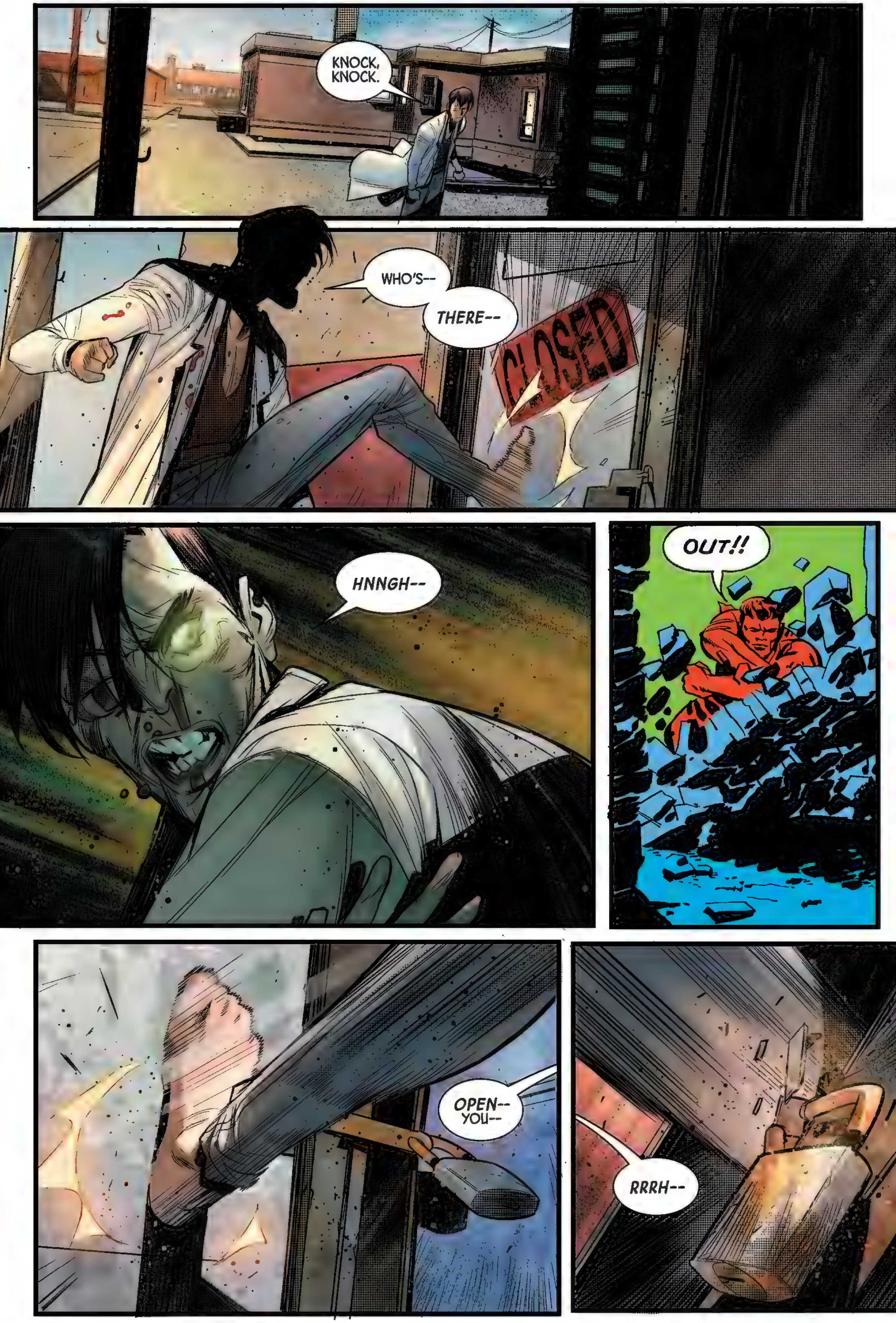

GET--GET OUT--
GET OUT! GET OUT!
WHY ARE YOU HERE? WHY?
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
HATE YOU?? WHY SHOULDN'T I HATE YOU? WHY SHOULDN'T I HATE ALL MANKIND??
HRRHH--

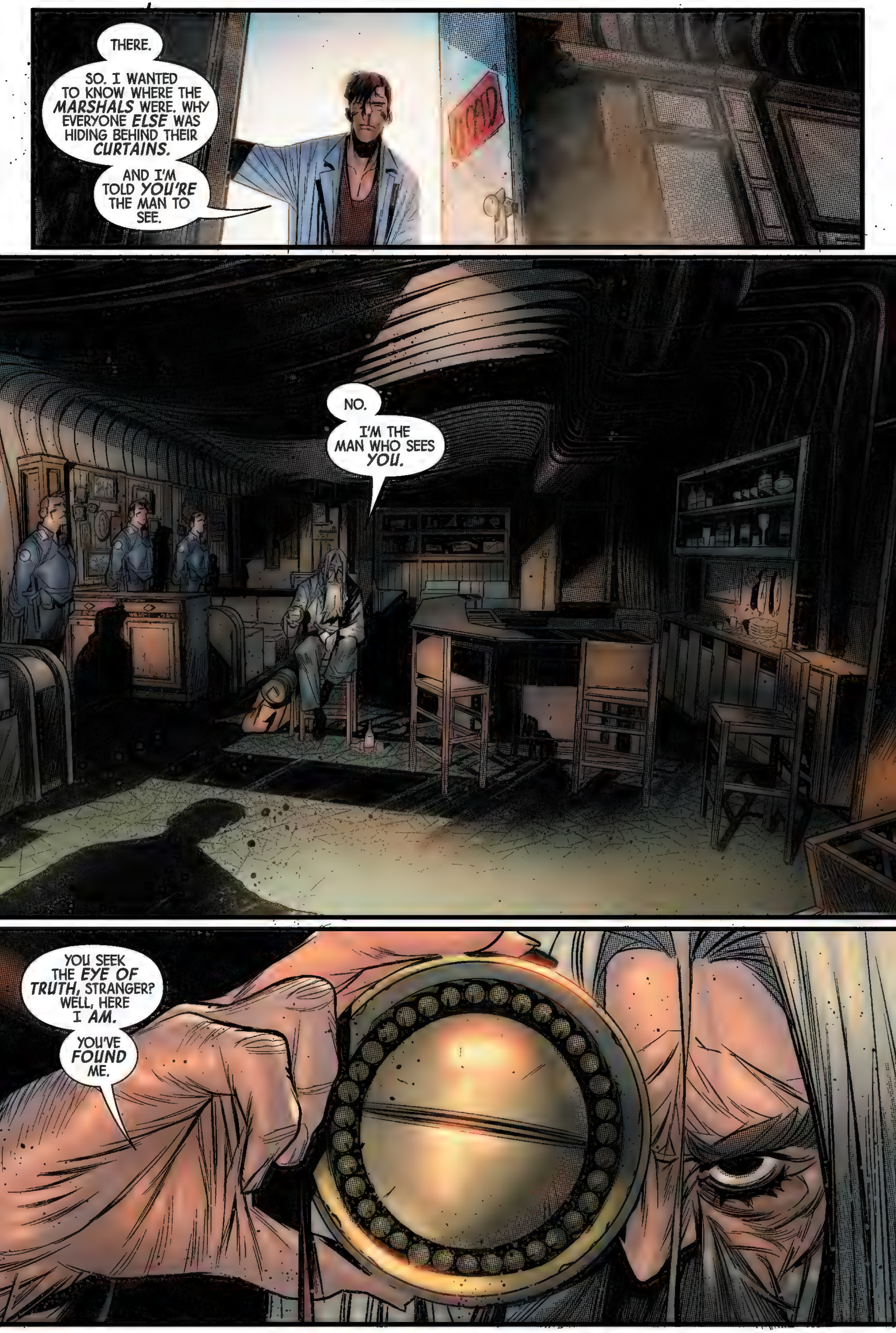

--AAHH!
MY EYE--
ARGHHH!
LITTLE PSYCHO--
YEAH? YOU LIKE THAT?
YOU LIKE THAT?

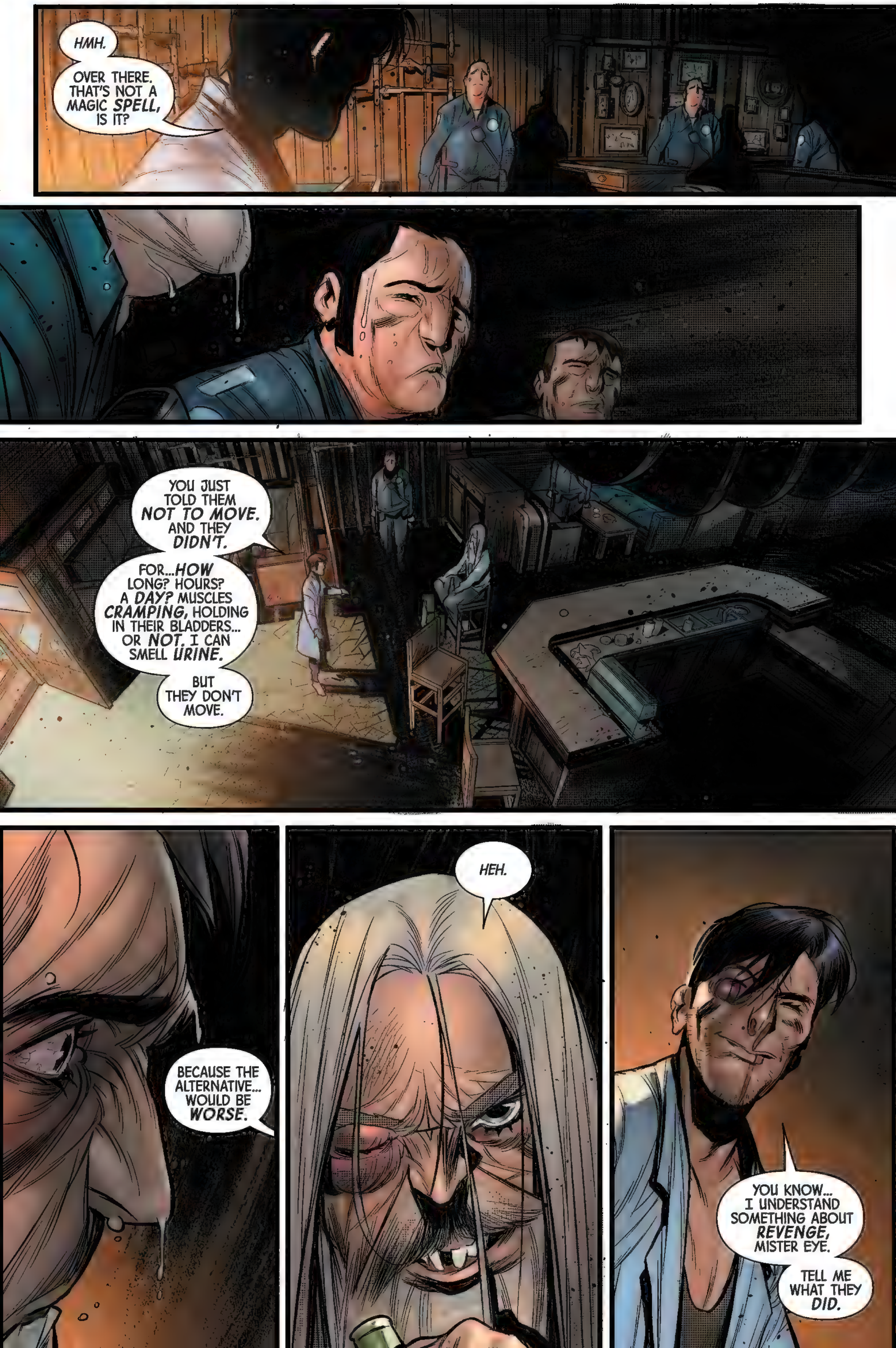

BIH
BIH MUH
TUNG
NOW-- REVENGE!!!
NO! NO!
8
STOP IT!
STOP IT!

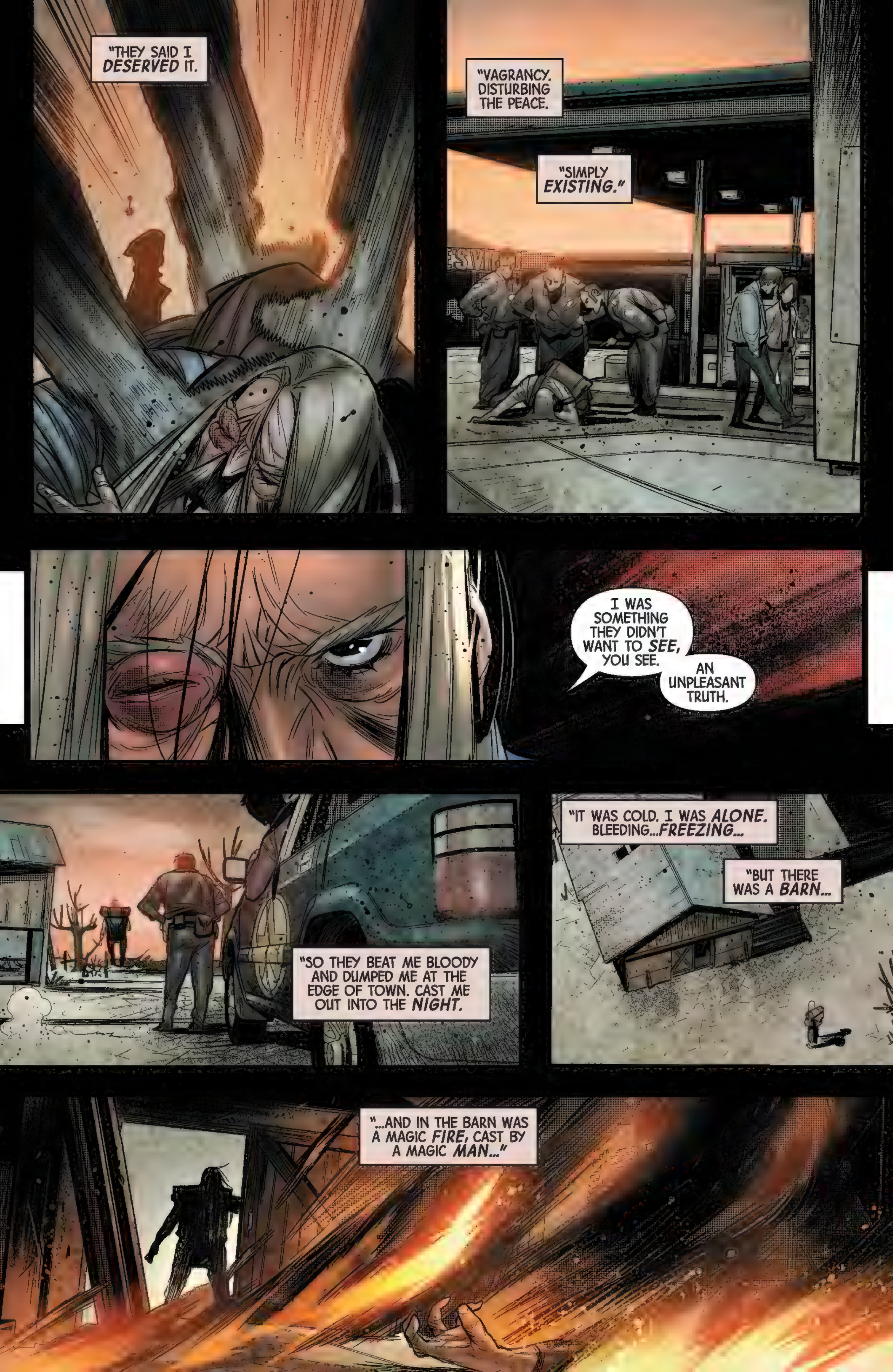

HFFF.
HHH.
HHUH. NUH.
SO! THIS IS WHAT THE PUNY HUMANS FEAR!
NUH.
NOBODY AROUND. WANT TO KNOW WHY.
TALK NOW.

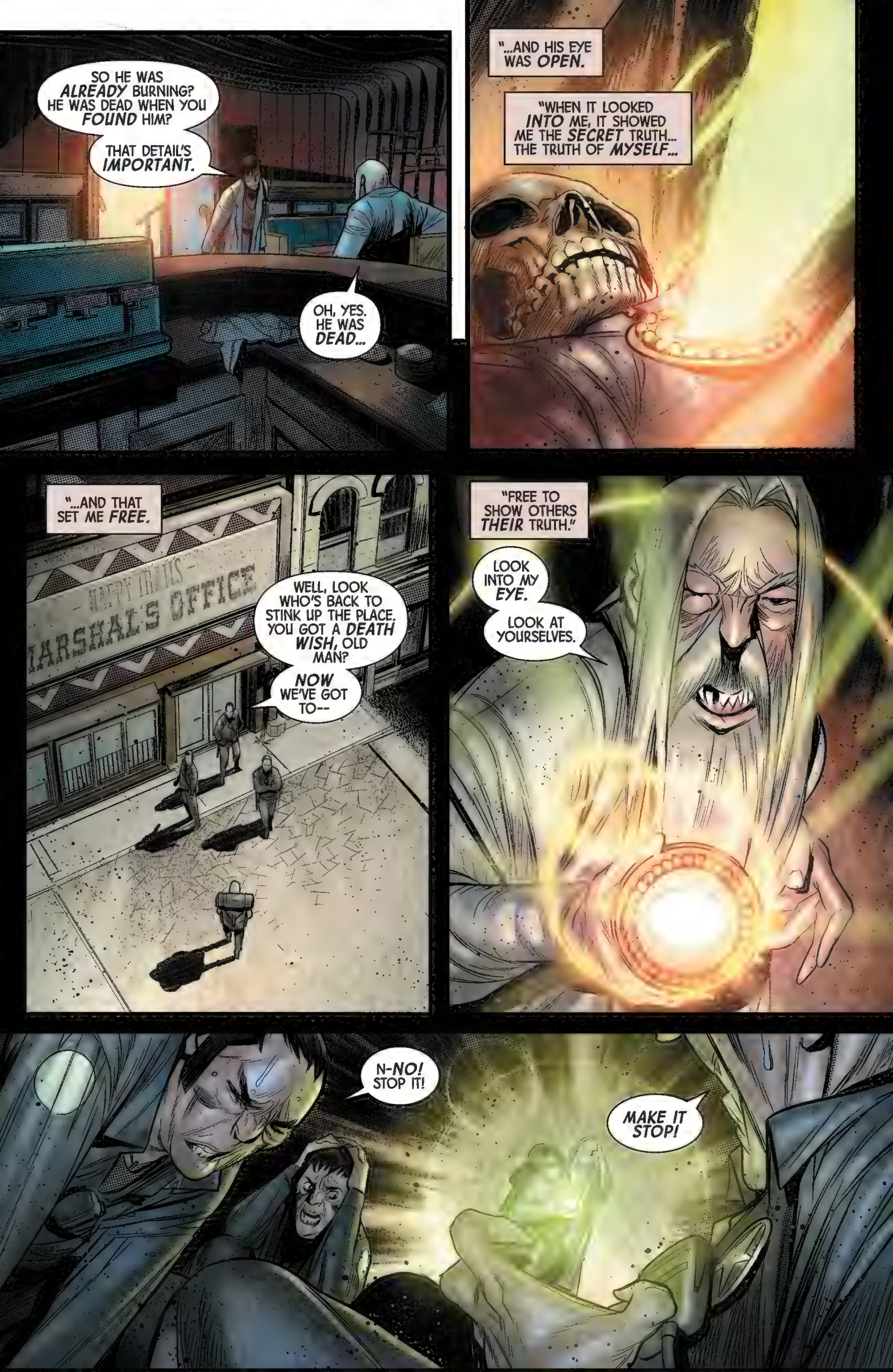

HORP
OKAY.
OKAY.
OKAY.
RAWHIDE SALOON
CLOSED
MY USUAL METHOD.

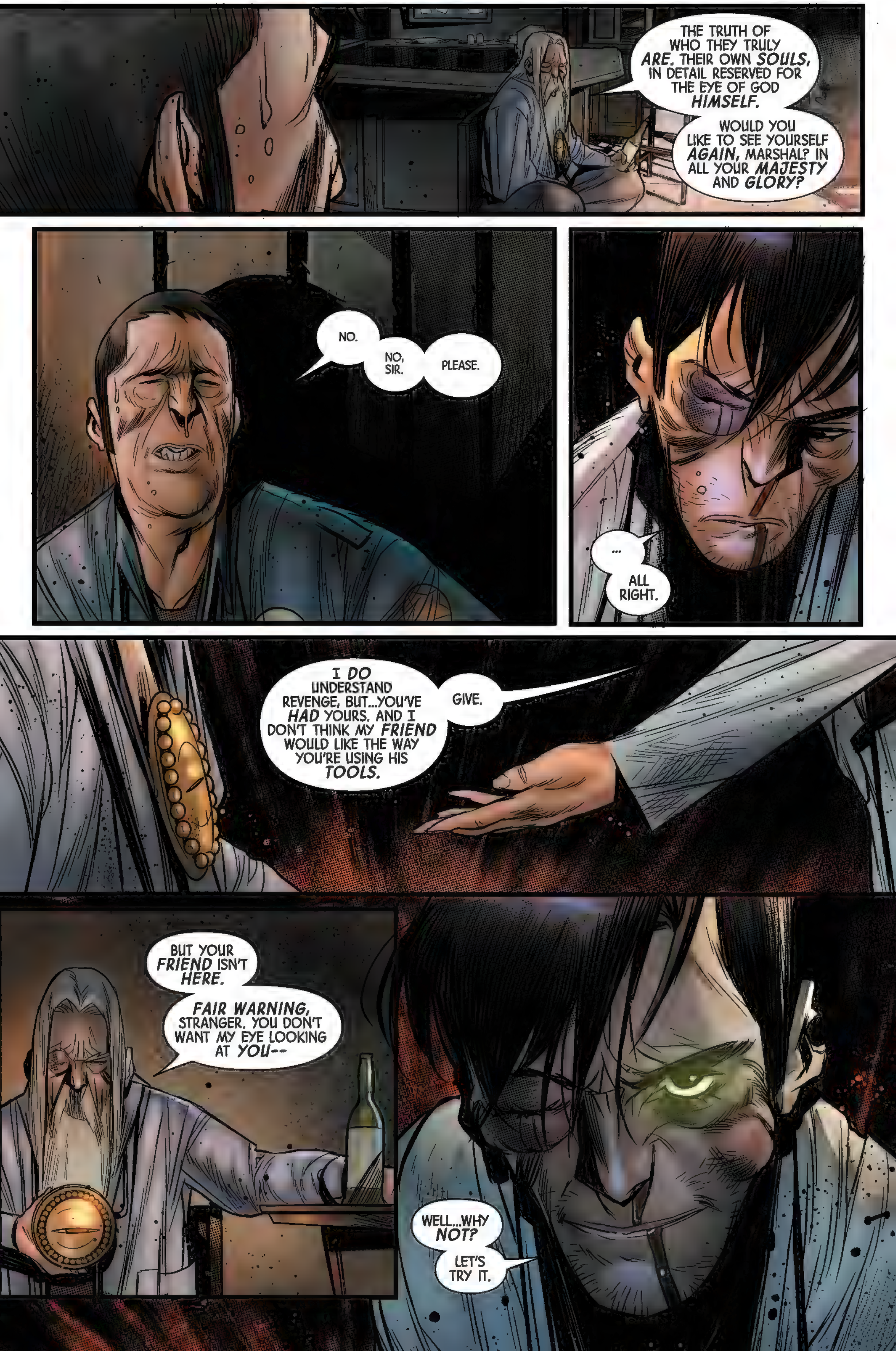

KNOCK, KNOCK.
WHO'S--
THERE--
CLOSED
HNNGH--
OUT!!
OPEN-- YOU--
RRRH--

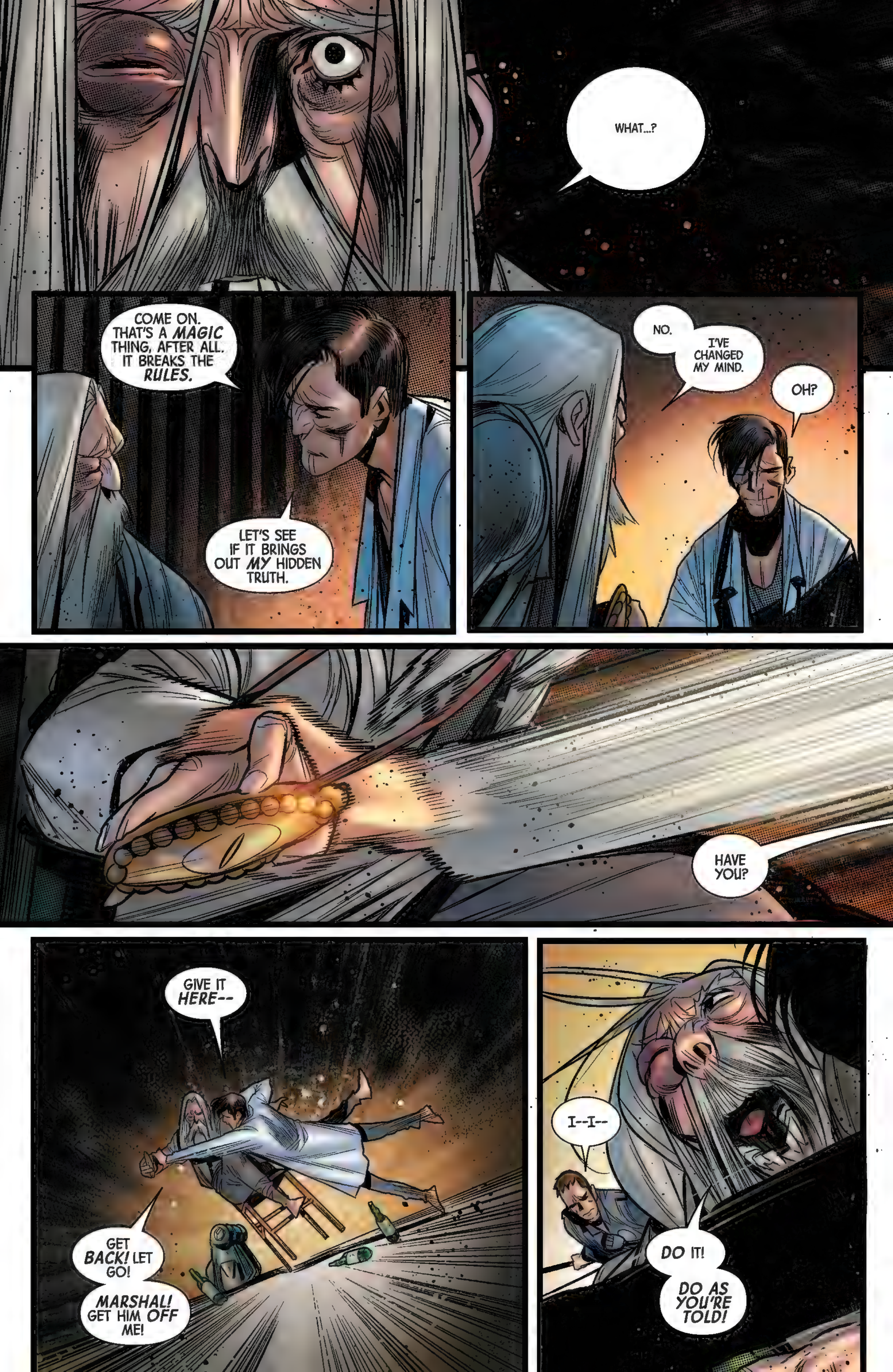

THERE.
SO. I WANTED TO KNOW WHERE THE *MARSHALS* WERE. WHY EVERYONE *ELSE* WAS HIDING BEHIND THEIR *CURTAINS.*
AND I'M TOLD *YOU'RE* THE MAN TO SEE.
NO.
I'M THE MAN WHO SEES *YOU.*
YOU SEEK THE *EYE OF TRUTH,* STRANGER? WELL, HERE I *AM.*
YOU'VE *FOUND* ME.

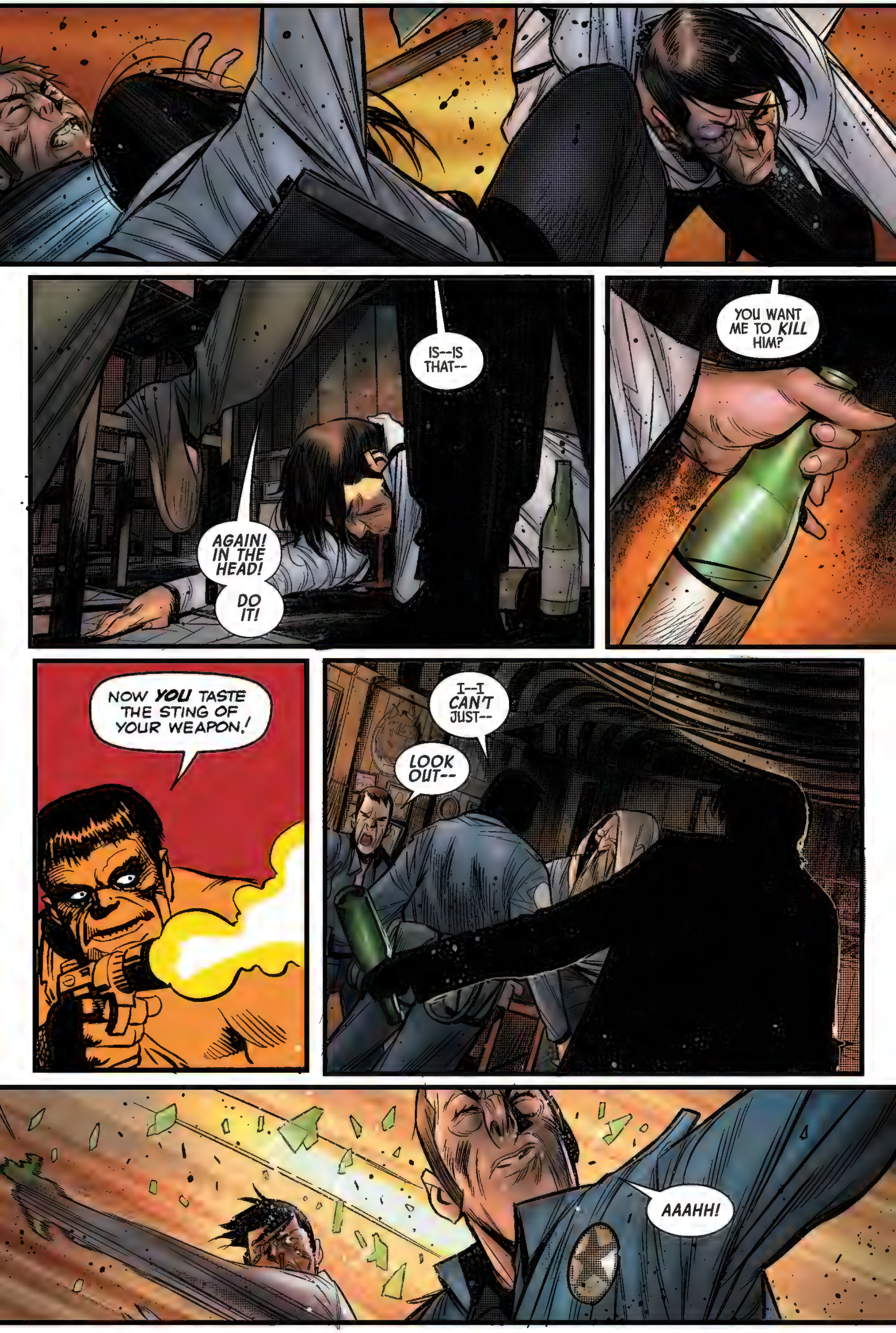

HMH.
OVER THERE. THAT'S NOT A MAGIC *SPELL,* IS IT?
YOU JUST TOLD THEM *NOT TO MOVE,* AND THEY *DIDN'T.*
FOR...*HOW* LONG? HOURS? A *DAY?* MUSCLES *CRAMPING,* HOLDING IN THEIR BLADDERS... OR *NOT.* I CAN SMELL *URINE.*
BUT THEY DON'T MOVE.
BECAUSE THE ALTERNATIVE... WOULD BE *WORSE.*
HEH.
YOU KNOW... I UNDERSTAND SOMETHING ABOUT *REVENGE,* MISTER EYE.
TELL ME WHAT THEY *DID.*

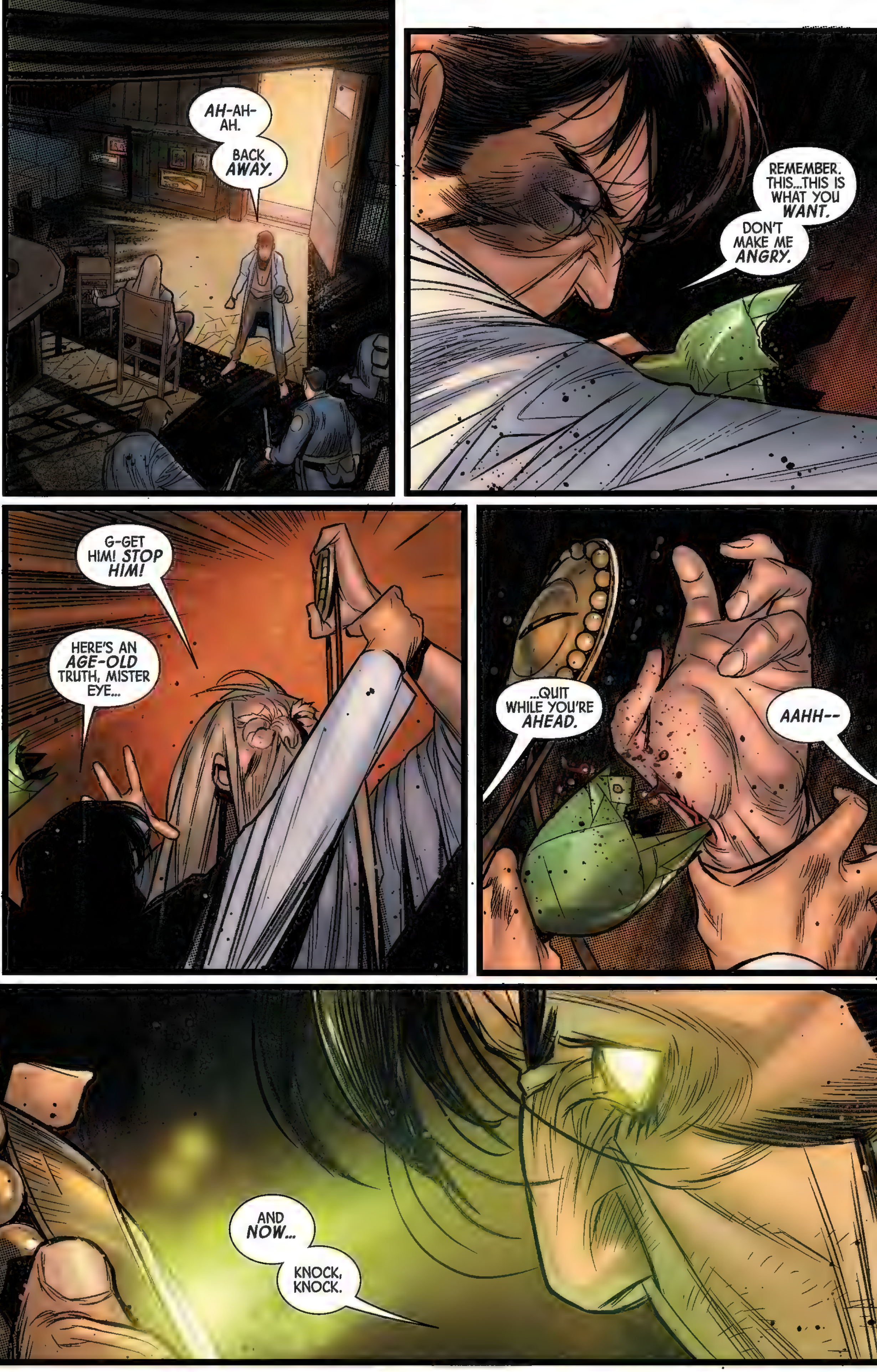

"THEY SAID I *DESERVED* IT.
"VAGRANCY. DISTURBING THE PEACE.
"SIMPLY *EXISTING.*"
I WAS SOMETHING THEY DIDN'T WANT TO *SEE,* YOU SEE.
AN UNPLEASANT TRUTH.
"SO THEY BEAT ME BLOODY AND DUMPED ME AT THE EDGE OF TOWN. CAST ME OUT INTO THE *NIGHT.*
"IT WAS COLD. I WAS *ALONE.* BLEEDING...*FREEZING*...
"BUT THERE WAS A *BARN*...
"...AND IN THE BARN WAS A MAGIC *FIRE,* CAST BY A MAGIC *MAN*..."

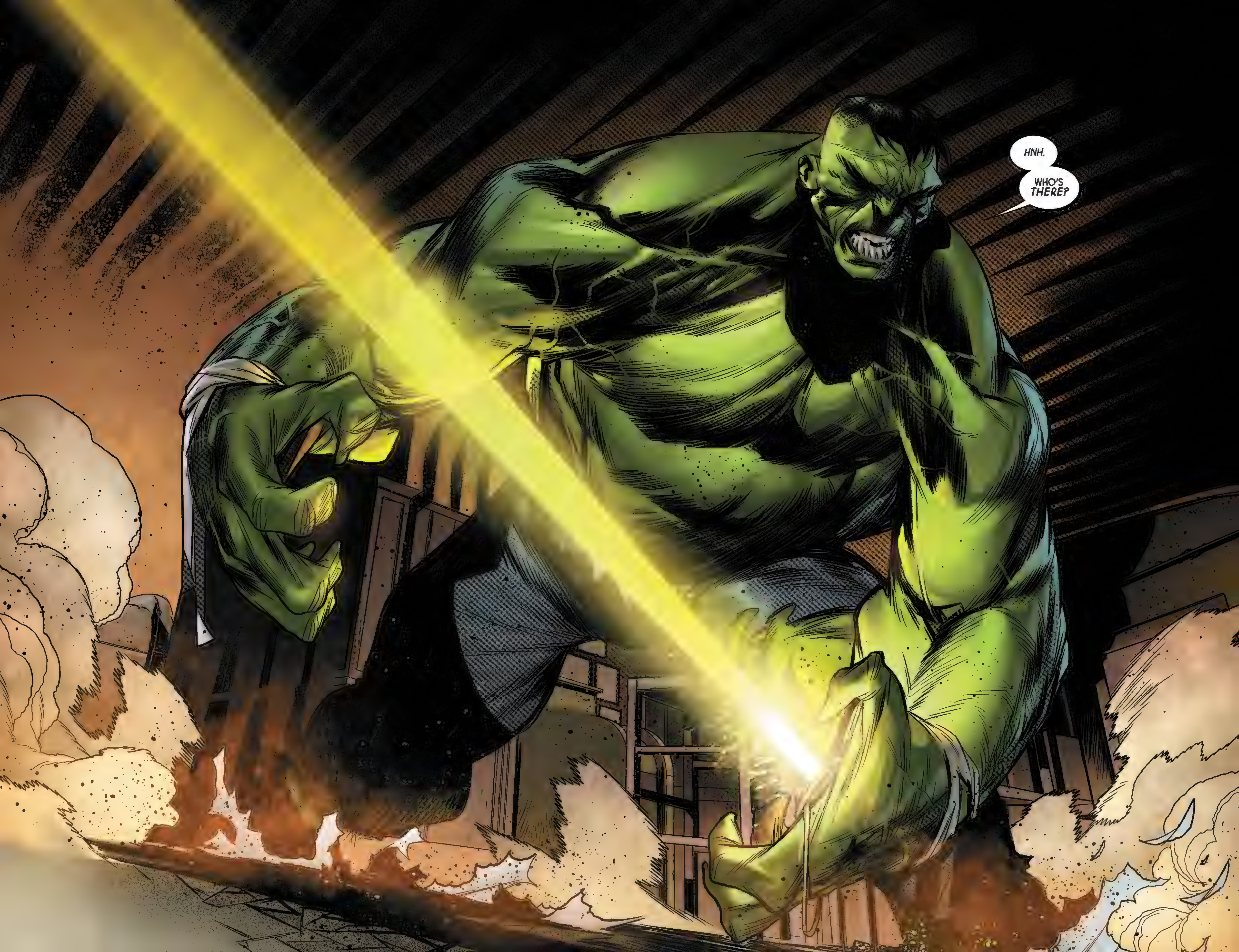

SO HE WAS *ALREADY* BURNING? HE WAS DEAD WHEN YOU *FOUND* HIM?
THAT DETAIL'S *IMPORTANT.*
OH, YES. HE WAS *DEAD*...
"...AND HIS EYE WAS *OPEN.*
"WHEN IT LOOKED *INTO* ME, IT SHOWED ME THE *SECRET* TRUTH... THE TRUTH OF *MYSELF*...
"...AND THAT SET ME *FREE.*
ARSHAL'S OFFICE
WELL, LOOK WHO'S BACK TO STINK UP THE PLACE. YOU GOT A *DEATH WISH,* OLD MAN?
NOW WE'VE GOT TO--
"FREE TO SHOW OTHERS *THEIR* TRUTH."
LOOK INTO MY *EYE.*
LOOK AT YOURSELVES.
N-*NO!* STOP IT!
MAKE IT STOP!

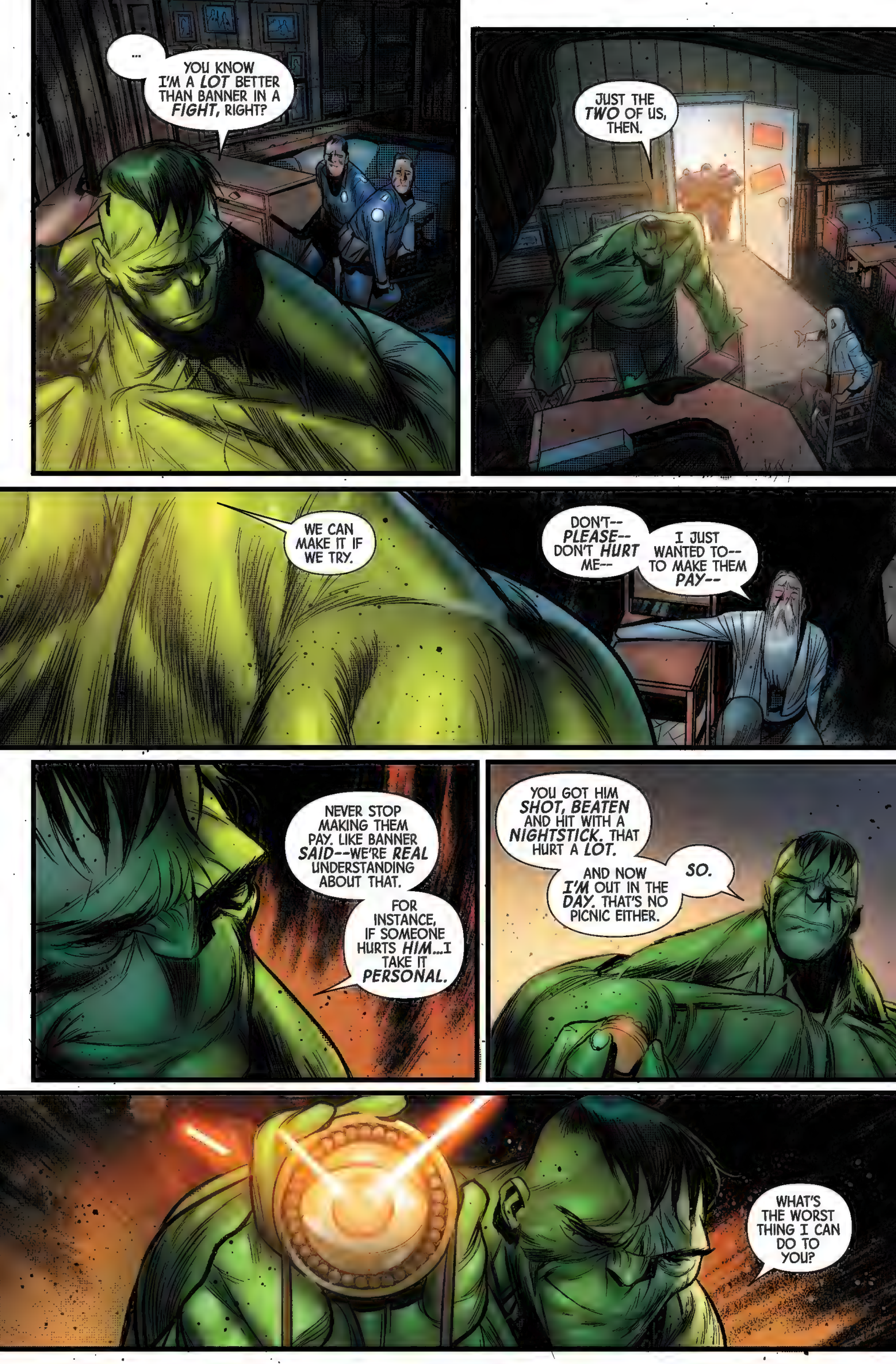

THE TRUTH OF WHO THEY TRULY *ARE*. THEIR OWN *SOULS*, IN DETAIL RESERVED FOR THE EYE OF GOD *HIMSELF*.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOURSELF *AGAIN*, MARSHAL? IN ALL YOUR *MAJESTY* AND *GLORY*?
NO.
NO, SIR.
PLEASE.
...
ALL RIGHT.
I *DO* UNDERSTAND REVENGE, BUT...YOU'VE *HAD* YOURS. AND I DON'T THINK MY *FRIEND* WOULD LIKE THE WAY YOU'RE USING HIS *TOOLS*.
GIVE.
BUT YOUR *FRIEND* ISN'T *HERE*.
FAIR WARNING, STRANGER. YOU DON'T WANT MY EYE LOOKING AT *YOU*--
WELL...WHY *NOT*?
LET'S TRY IT.

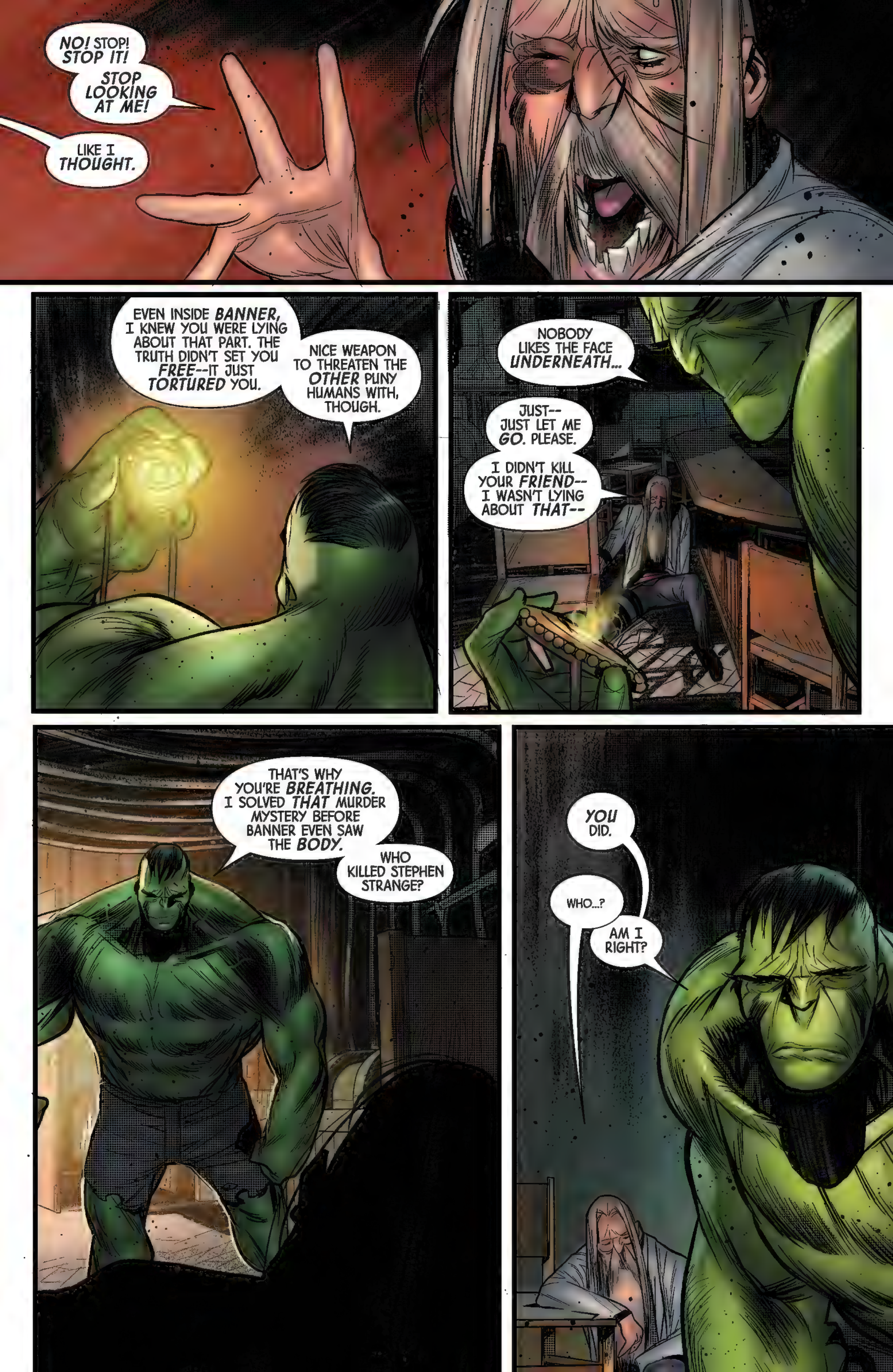

WHAT...?
COME ON. THAT'S A *MAGIC* THING, AFTER ALL. IT BREAKS THE *RULES.*
LET'S SEE IF IT BRINGS OUT *MY* HIDDEN TRUTH.
NO.
I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.
OH?
HAVE YOU?
GIVE IT *HERE--*
GET *BACK!* LET GO!
MARSHAL! GET HIM *OFF* ME!
I--I--
DO IT!
DO AS YOU'RE TOLD!

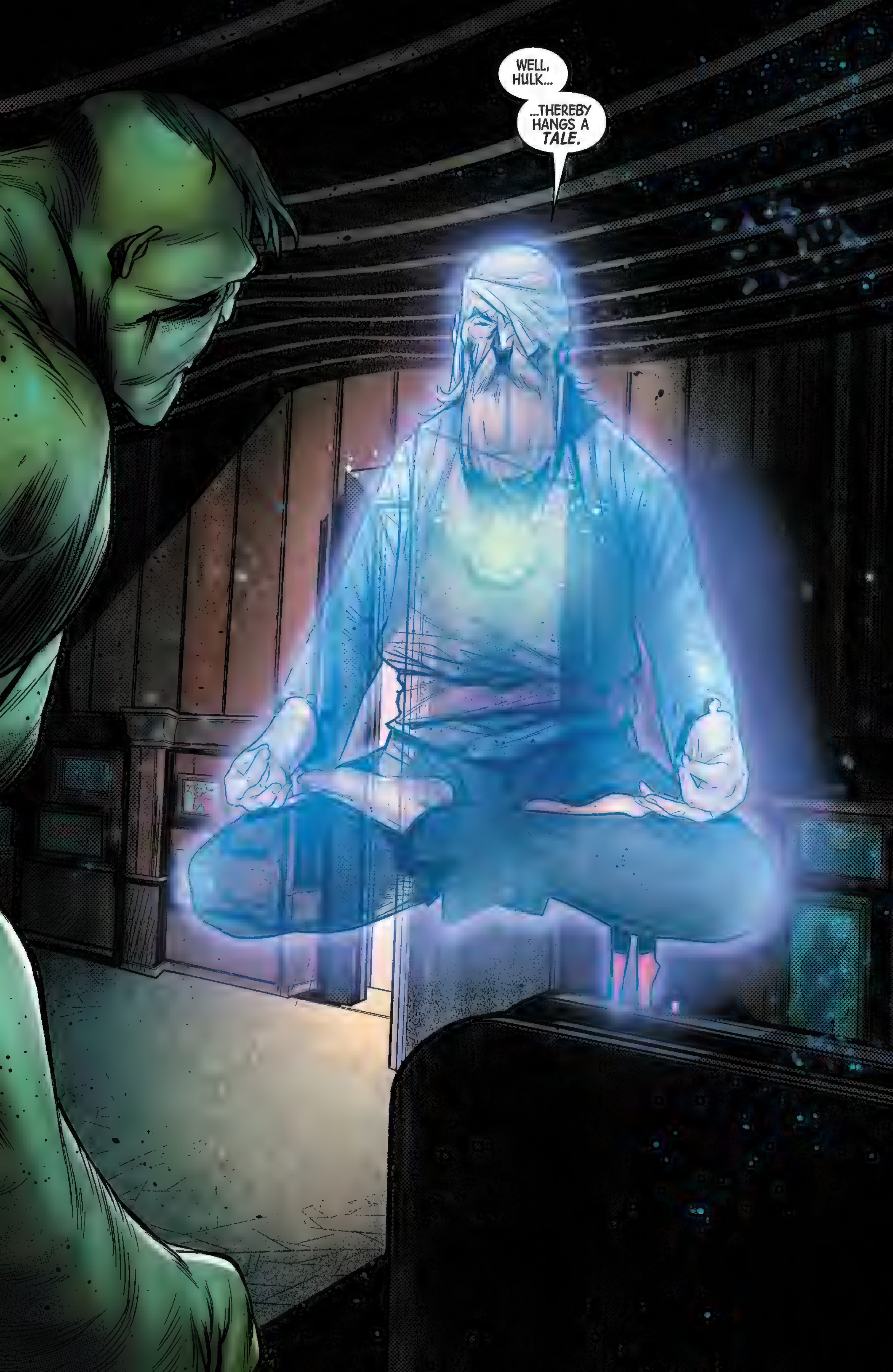

IS--IS THAT--
AGAIN! IN THE HEAD!
DO IT!
YOU WANT ME TO KILL HIM?
NOW YOU TASTE THE STING OF YOUR WEAPON!
I--I CAN'T JUST--
LOOK OUT--
AAAHH!


AH-AH-AH.
BACK AWAY.
REMEMBER. THIS...THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT.
DON'T MAKE ME ANGRY.
G-GET HIM! STOP HIM!
HERE'S AN AGE-OLD TRUTH, MISTER EYE...
...QUIT WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD.
AAHH--
AND NOW...
KNOCK, KNOCK.


HNH.
WHO'S *THERE?*

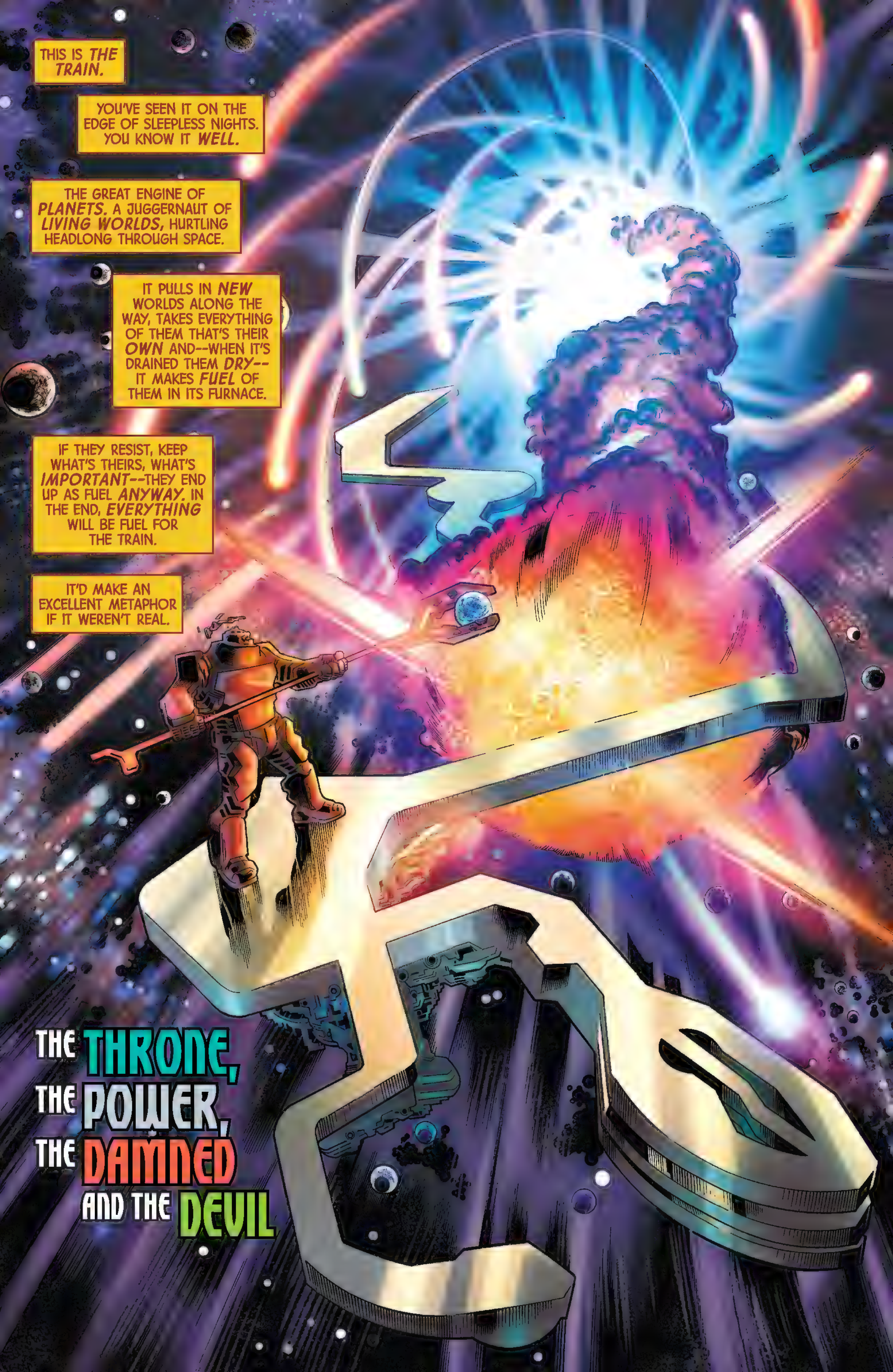

...
YOU KNOW I'M A *LOT* BETTER THAN BANNER IN A *FIGHT*, RIGHT?
JUST THE *TWO* OF US, THEN.
WE CAN MAKE IT IF WE TRY.
DON'T-- *PLEASE*-- DON'T *HURT* ME--
I JUST WANTED TO-- TO MAKE THEM *PAY*--
NEVER STOP MAKING THEM PAY. LIKE BANNER *SAID*--WE'RE *REAL* UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THAT.
FOR INSTANCE, IF SOMEONE HURTS *HIM*...I TAKE IT *PERSONAL*.
YOU GOT HIM *SHOT*, *BEATEN* AND HIT WITH A *NIGHTSTICK*. THAT HURT A *LOT*.
AND NOW *I'M* OUT IN THE *DAY*. THAT'S NO PICNIC EITHER.
SO.
WHAT'S THE WORST THING I CAN DO TO YOU?

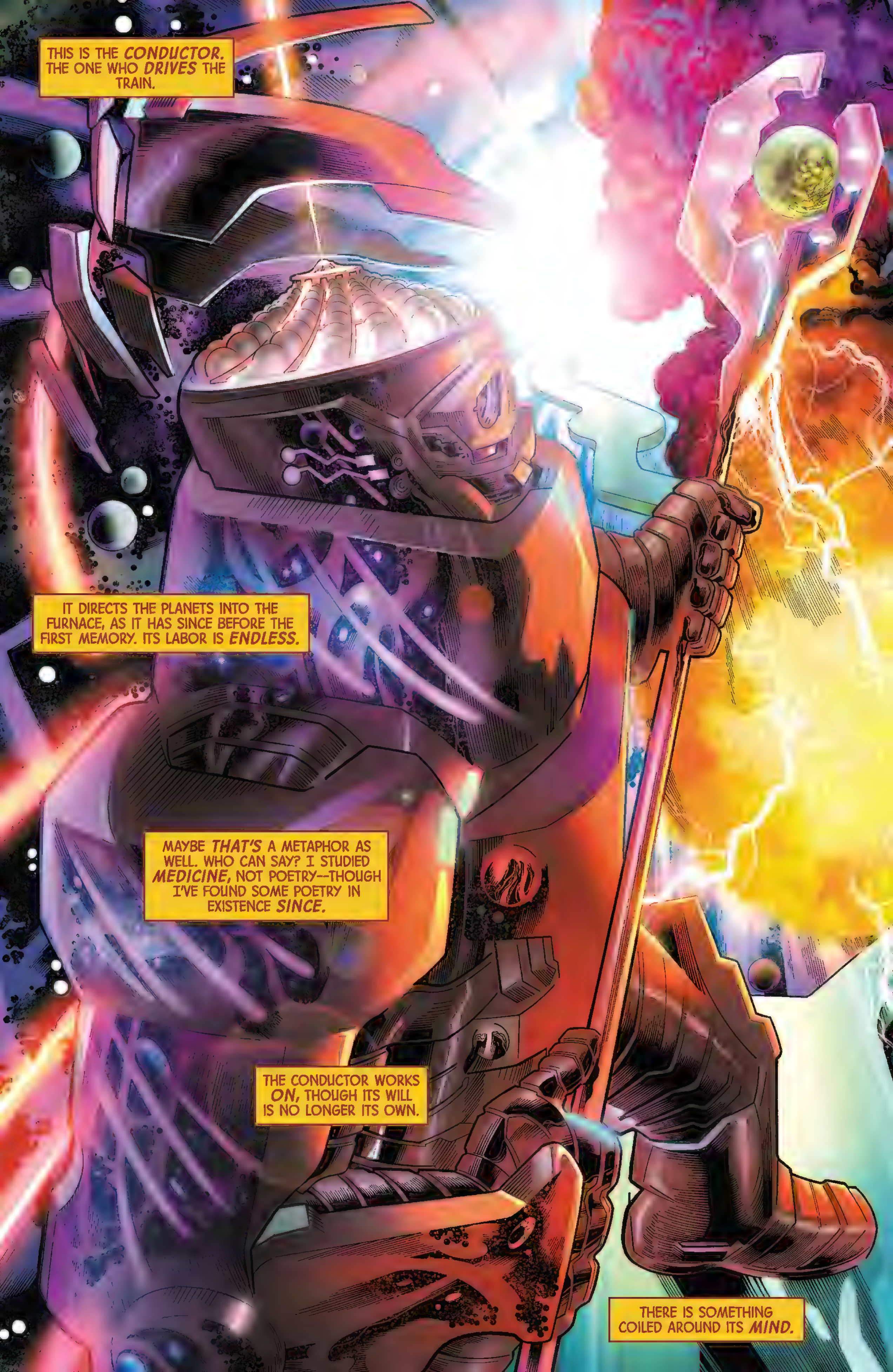

NO! STOP! STOP IT!
STOP LOOKING AT ME!
LIKE I THOUGHT.
EVEN INSIDE BANNER, I KNEW YOU WERE LYING ABOUT THAT PART. THE TRUTH DIDN'T SET YOU FREE--IT JUST TORTURED YOU.
NICE WEAPON TO THREATEN THE OTHER PUNY HUMANS WITH, THOUGH.
NOBODY LIKES THE FACE UNDERNEATH...
JUST-- JUST LET ME GO. PLEASE.
I DIDN'T KILL YOUR FRIEND-- I WASN'T LYING ABOUT THAT--
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE BREATHING. I SOLVED THAT MURDER MYSTERY BEFORE BANNER EVEN SAW THE BODY.
WHO KILLED STEPHEN STRANGE?
YOU DID.
WHO...?
AM I RIGHT?

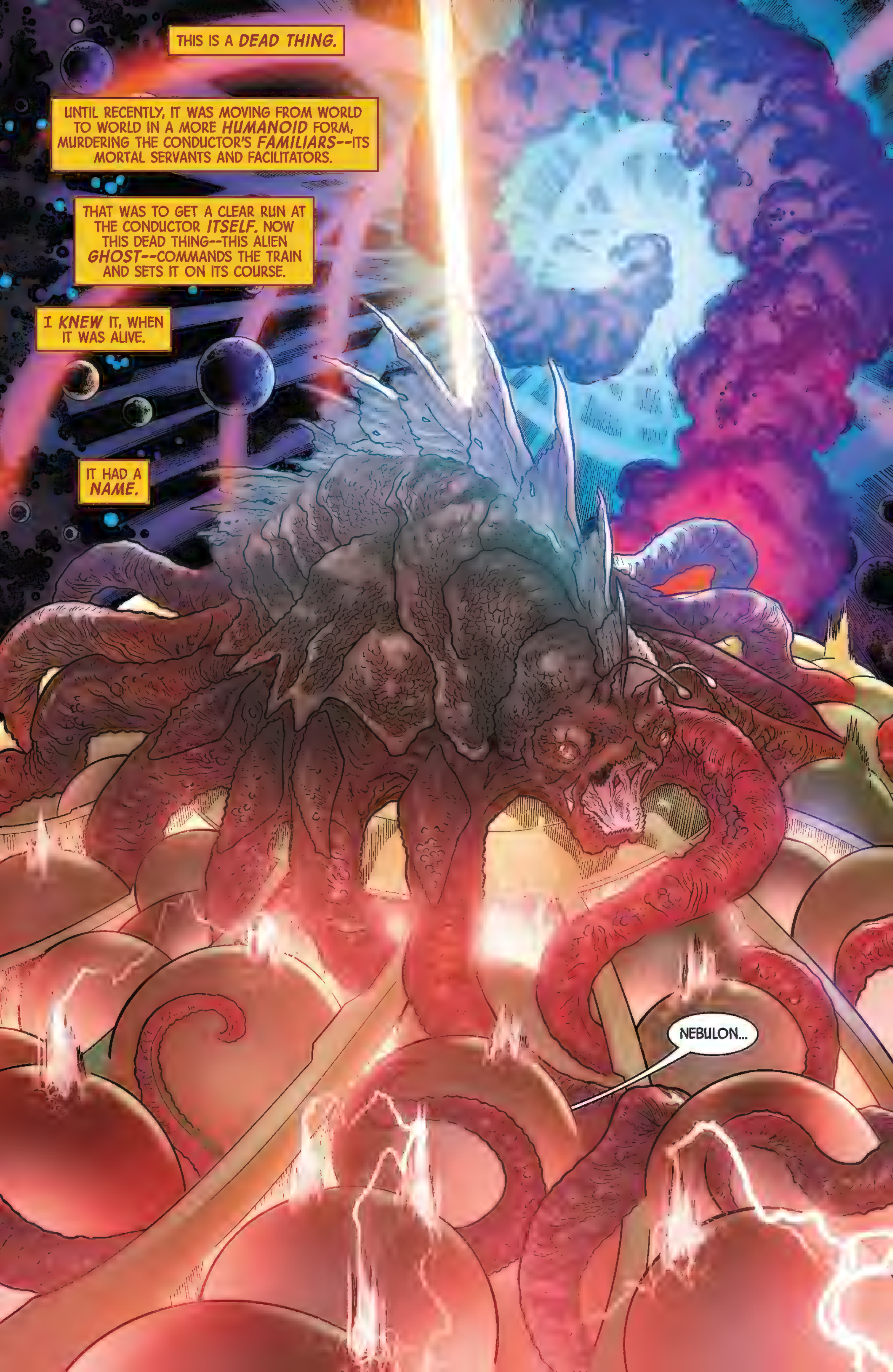

WELL, HULK...
...THEREBY HANGS A *TALE.*

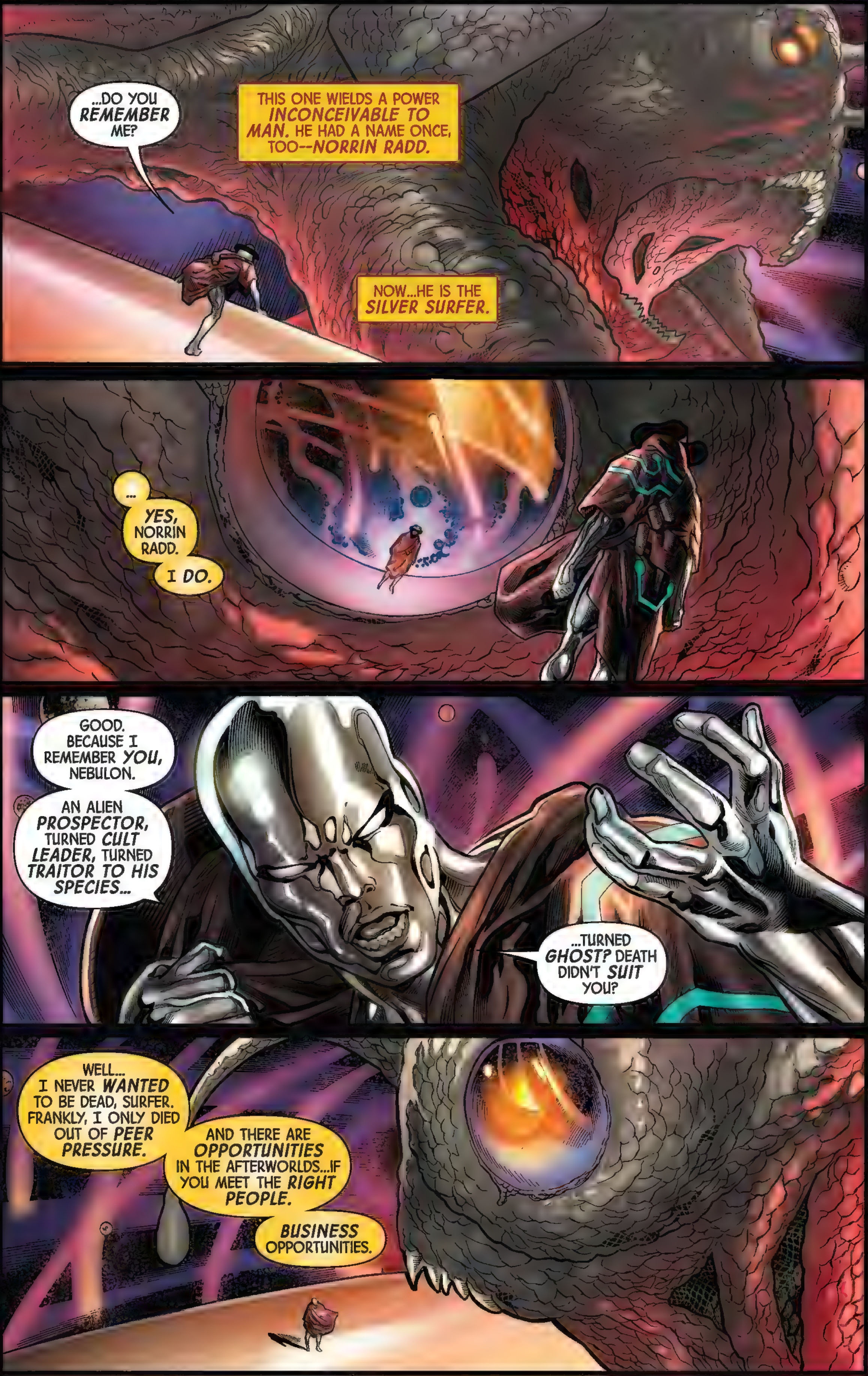
#1 VARIANT BY KAARE ANDREWS

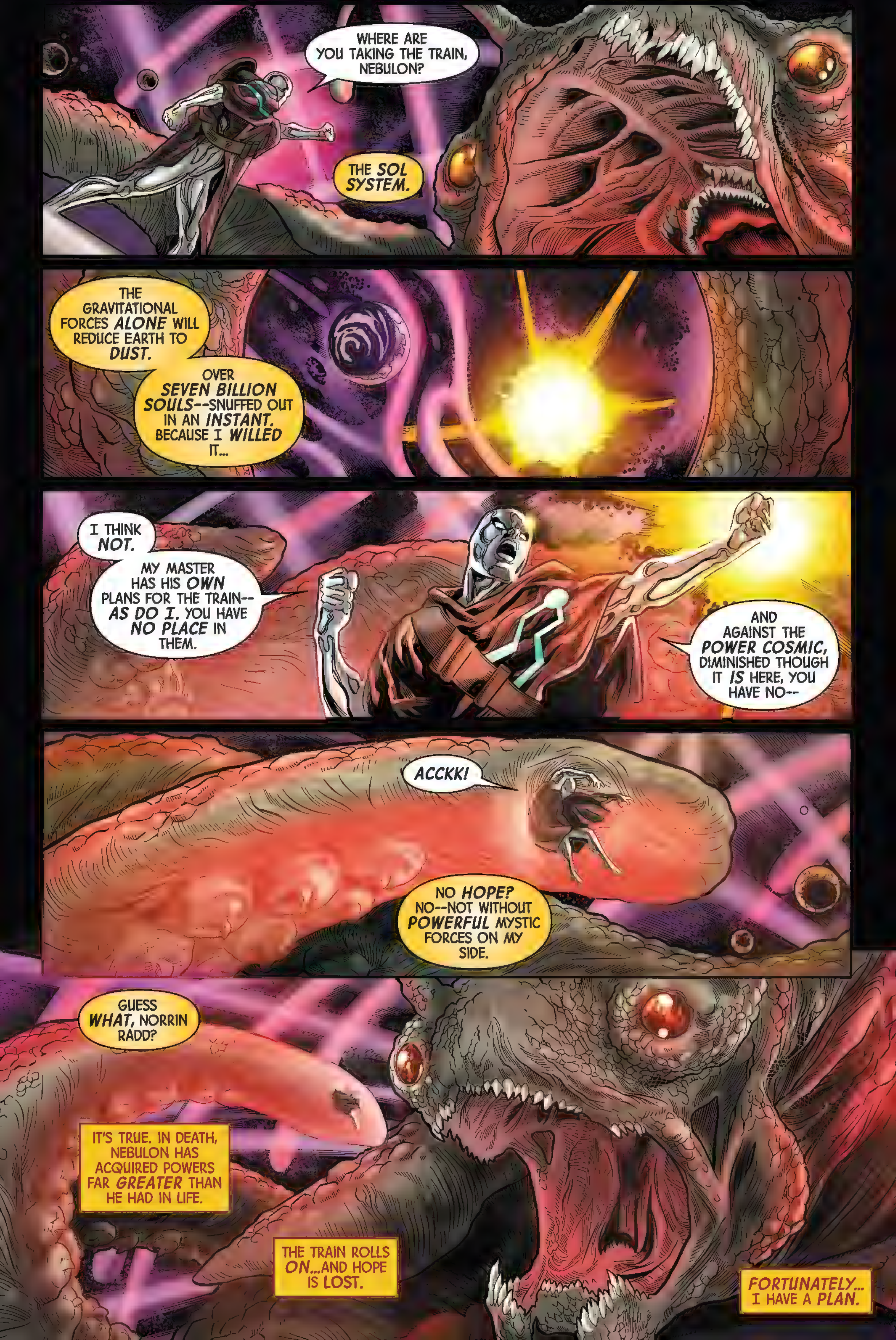
DEFENDERS:
BEST DEFENSE

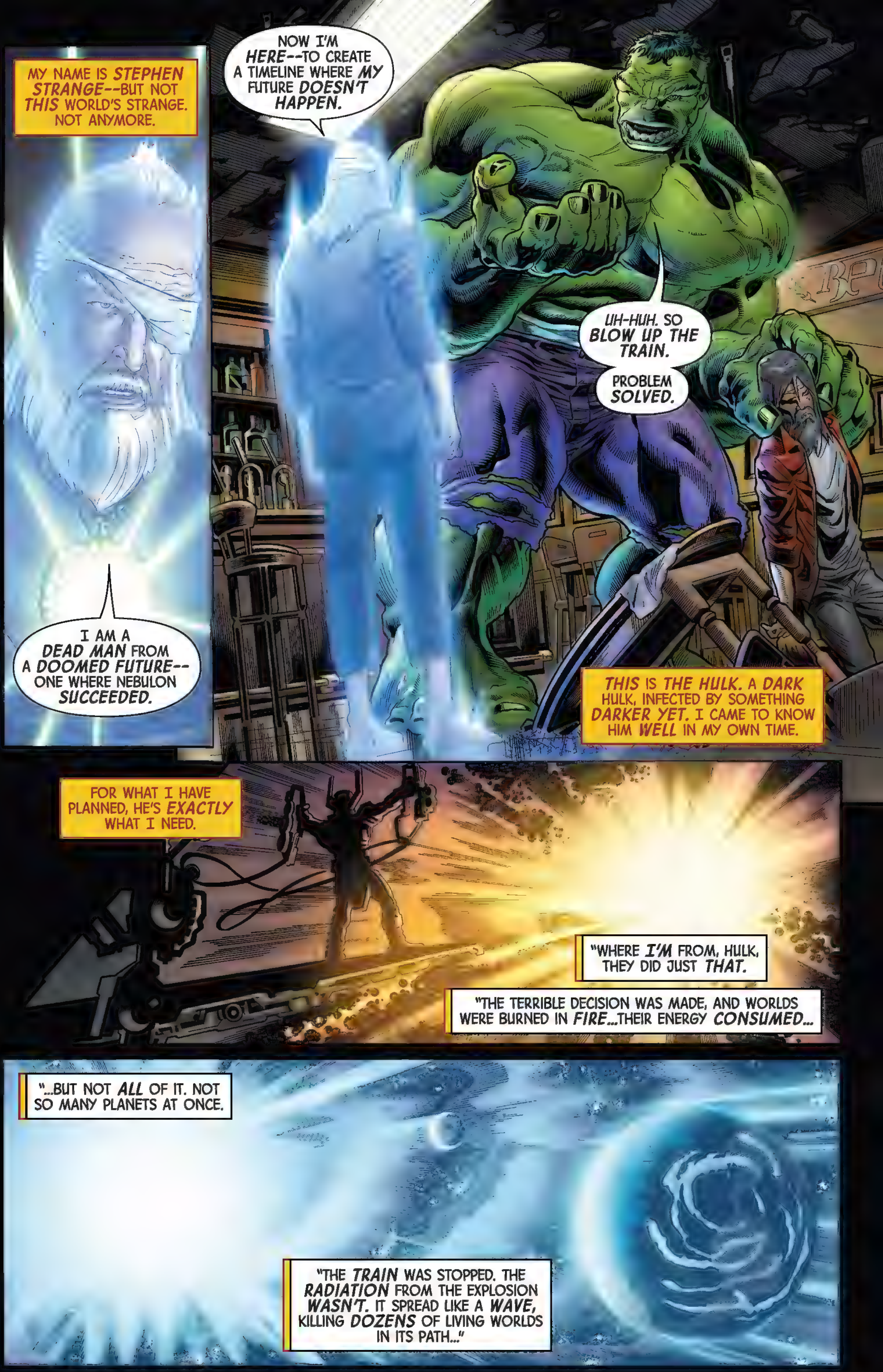

THIS IS *THE TRAIN.*
YOU'VE SEEN IT ON THE EDGE OF SLEEPLESS NIGHTS. YOU KNOW IT *WELL.*
THE GREAT ENGINE OF *PLANETS.* A JUGGERNAUT OF *LIVING WORLDS,* HURTLING HEADLONG THROUGH SPACE.
IT PULLS IN *NEW* WORLDS ALONG THE WAY, TAKES EVERYTHING OF THEM THAT'S THEIR *OWN* AND--WHEN IT'S DRAINED THEM *DRY*--IT MAKES *FUEL* OF THEM IN ITS FURNACE.
IF THEY RESIST, KEEP WHAT'S THEIRS, WHAT'S *IMPORTANT*--THEY END UP AS FUEL *ANYWAY.* IN THE END, *EVERYTHING* WILL BE FUEL FOR THE TRAIN.
IT'D MAKE AN EXCELLENT METAPHOR IF IT WEREN'T REAL.
THE THRONE, THE POWER, THE DAMNED AND THE DEVIL

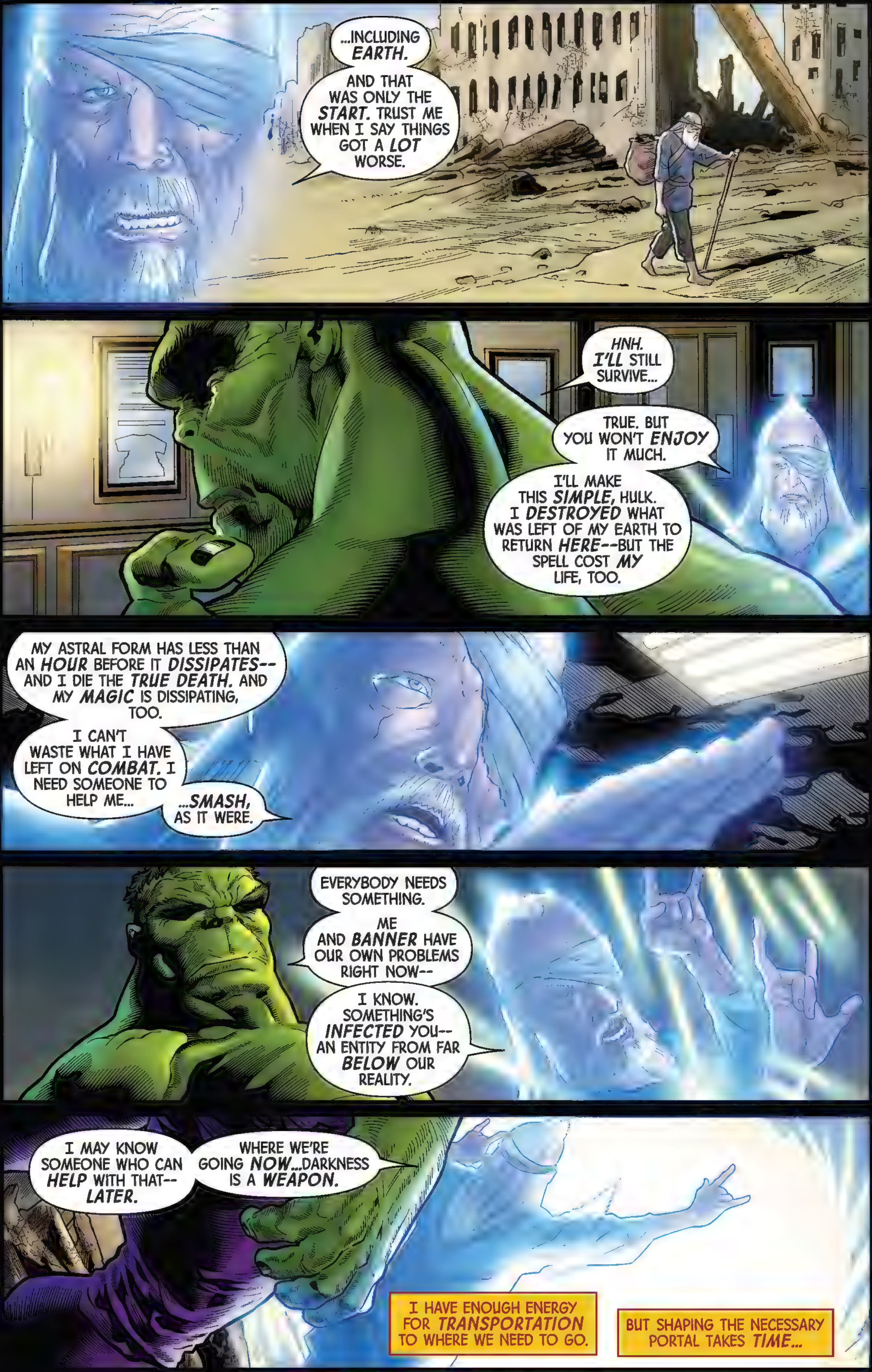

THIS IS THE *CONDUCTOR*. THE ONE WHO *DRIVES* THE TRAIN.
IT DIRECTS THE PLANETS INTO THE FURNACE, AS IT HAS SINCE BEFORE THE FIRST MEMORY. ITS LABOR IS *ENDLESS*.
MAYBE *THAT'S* A METAPHOR AS WELL. WHO CAN SAY? I STUDIED *MEDICINE*, NOT POETRY--THOUGH I'VE FOUND SOME POETRY IN EXISTENCE *SINCE*.
THE CONDUCTOR WORKS *ON*, THOUGH ITS WILL IS NO LONGER ITS OWN.
THERE IS SOMETHING COILED AROUND ITS *MIND*.

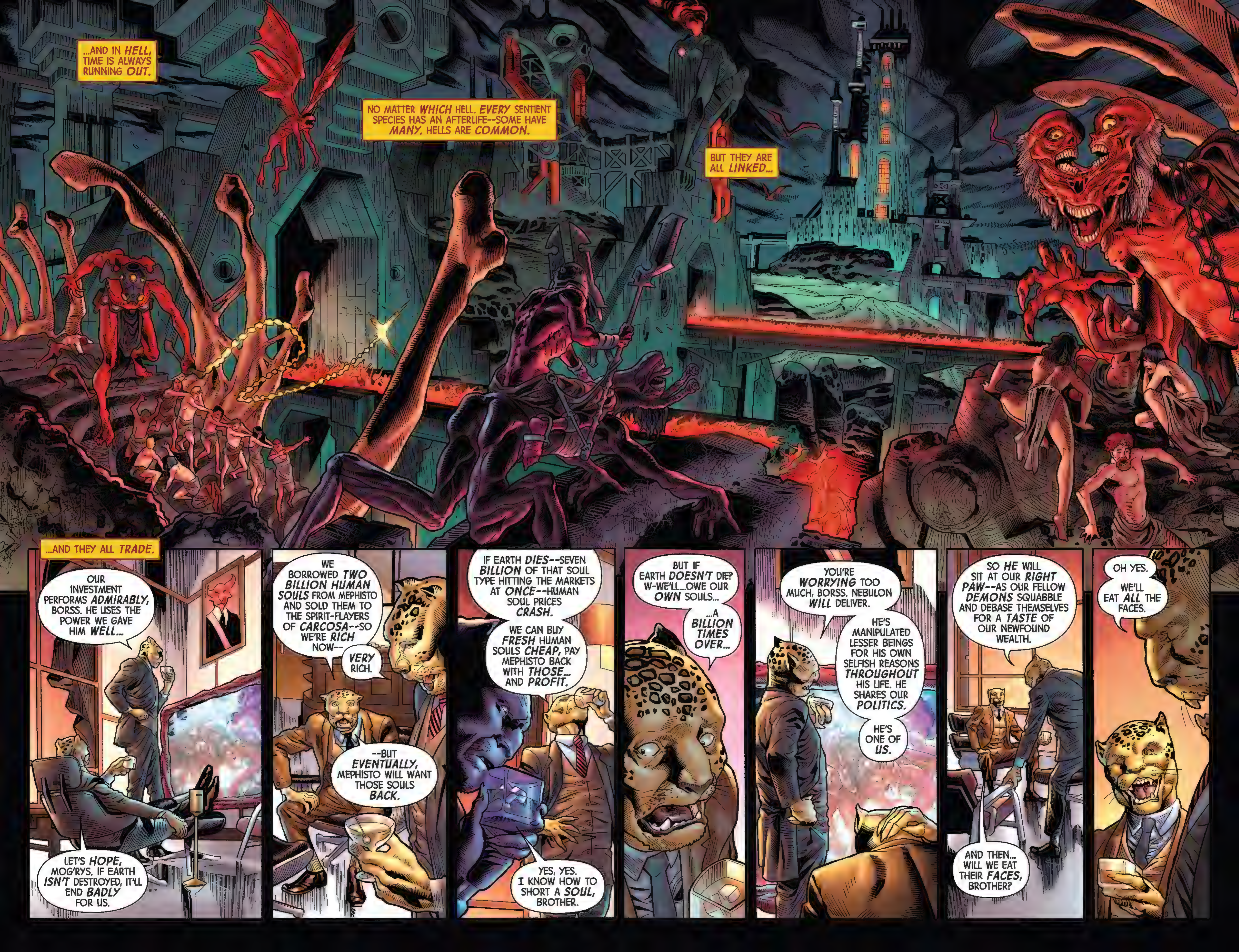

THIS IS A *DEAD THING.*
UNTIL RECENTLY, IT WAS MOVING FROM WORLD TO WORLD IN A MORE *HUMANOID* FORM, MURDERING THE CONDUCTOR'S *FAMILIARS*--ITS MORTAL SERVANTS AND FACILITATORS.
THAT WAS TO GET A CLEAR RUN AT THE CONDUCTOR *ITSELF.* NOW THIS DEAD THING--THIS ALIEN *GHOST*--COMMANDS THE TRAIN AND SETS IT ON ITS COURSE.
I *KNEW* IT, WHEN IT WAS ALIVE.
IT HAD A *NAME.*
NEBULON...

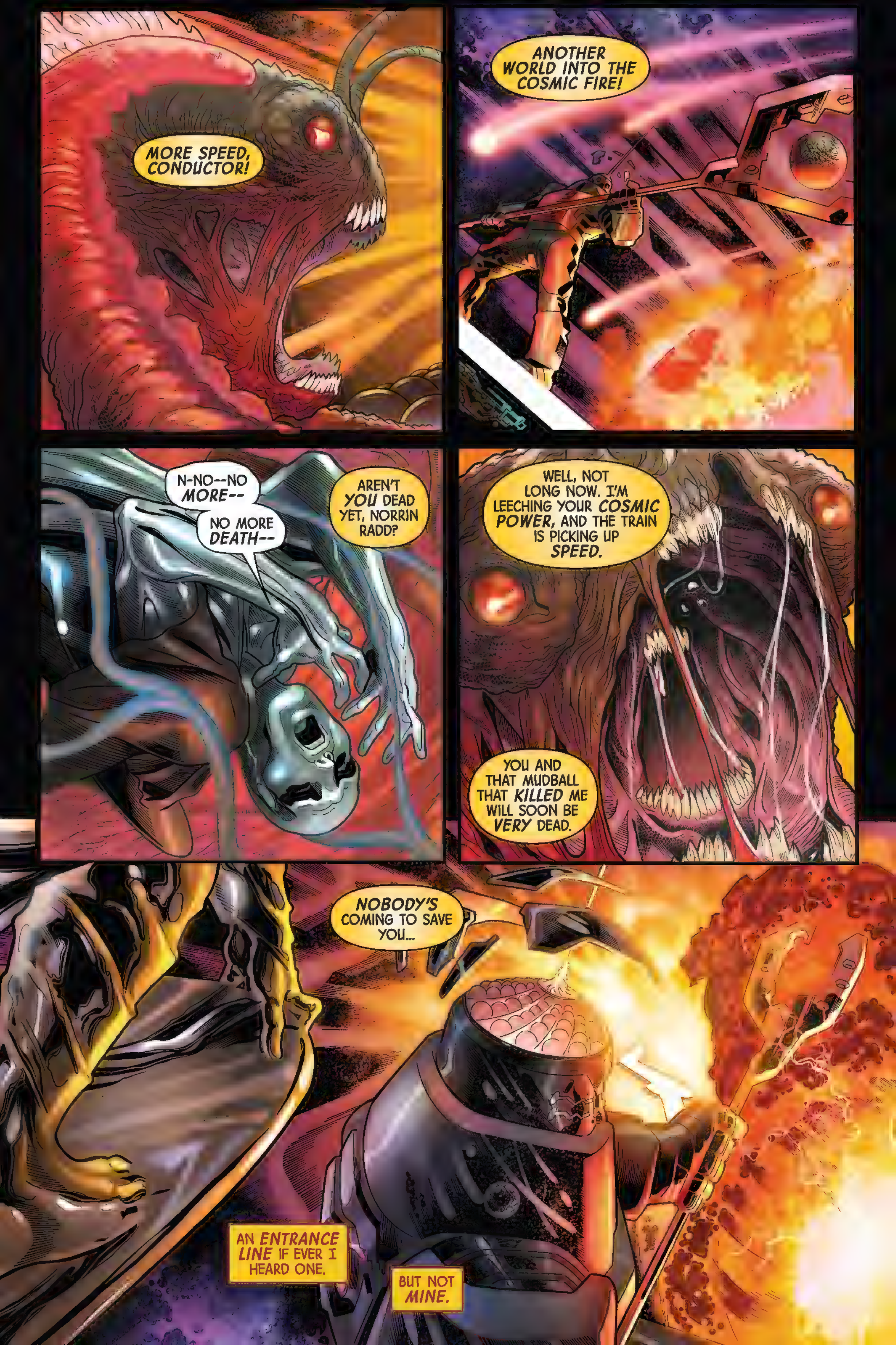

...DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
THIS ONE WIELDS A POWER INCONCEIVABLE TO MAN. HE HAD A NAME ONCE, TOO--NORRIN RADD.
NOW...HE IS THE SILVER SURFER.
...
YES, NORRIN RADD.
I DO.
GOOD. BECAUSE I REMEMBER YOU, NEBULON.
AN ALIEN PROSPECTOR, TURNED CULT LEADER, TURNED TRAITOR TO HIS SPECIES...
...TURNED GHOST? DEATH DIDN'T SUIT YOU?
WELL... I NEVER WANTED TO BE DEAD, SURFER. FRANKLY, I ONLY DIED OUT OF PEER PRESSURE.
AND THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AFTERWORLDS...IF YOU MEET THE RIGHT PEOPLE.
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES.

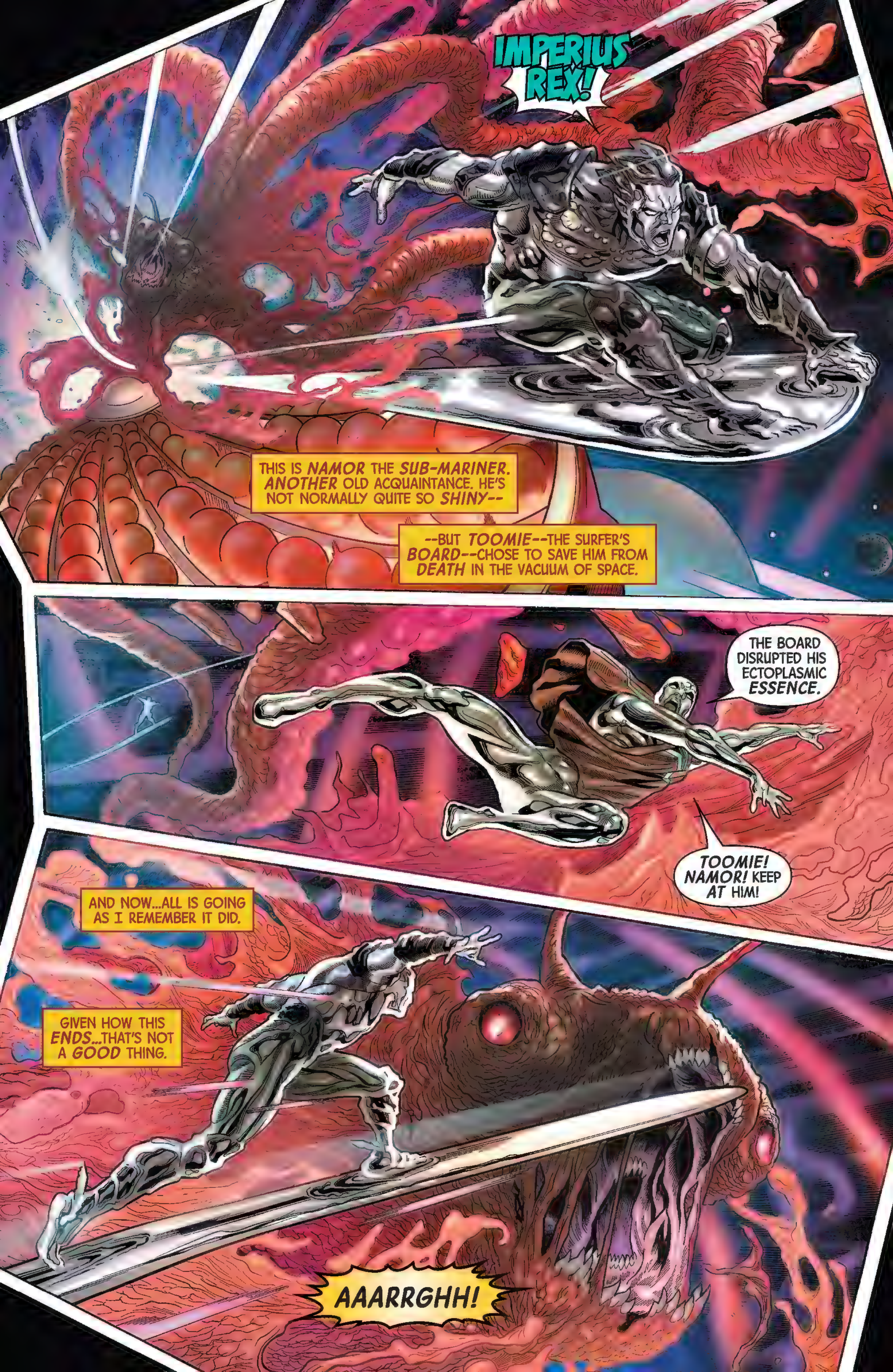

WHERE ARE YOU TAKING THE TRAIN, NEBULON?
THE SOL SYSTEM.
THE GRAVITATIONAL FORCES ALONE WILL REDUCE EARTH TO DUST.
OVER SEVEN BILLION SOULS--SNUFFED OUT IN AN INSTANT. BECAUSE I WILLED IT...
I THINK NOT.
MY MASTER HAS HIS OWN PLANS FOR THE TRAIN--AS DO I. YOU HAVE NO PLACE IN THEM.
AND AGAINST THE POWER COSMIC, DIMINISHED THOUGH IT IS HERE, YOU HAVE NO--
ACCKK!
NO HOPE? NO--NOT WITHOUT POWERFUL MYSTIC FORCES ON MY SIDE.
GUESS WHAT, NORRIN RADD?
IT'S TRUE. IN DEATH, NEBULON HAS ACQUIRED POWERS FAR GREATER THAN HE HAD IN LIFE.
THE TRAIN ROLLS ON...AND HOPE IS LOST.
FORTUNATELY... I HAVE A PLAN.

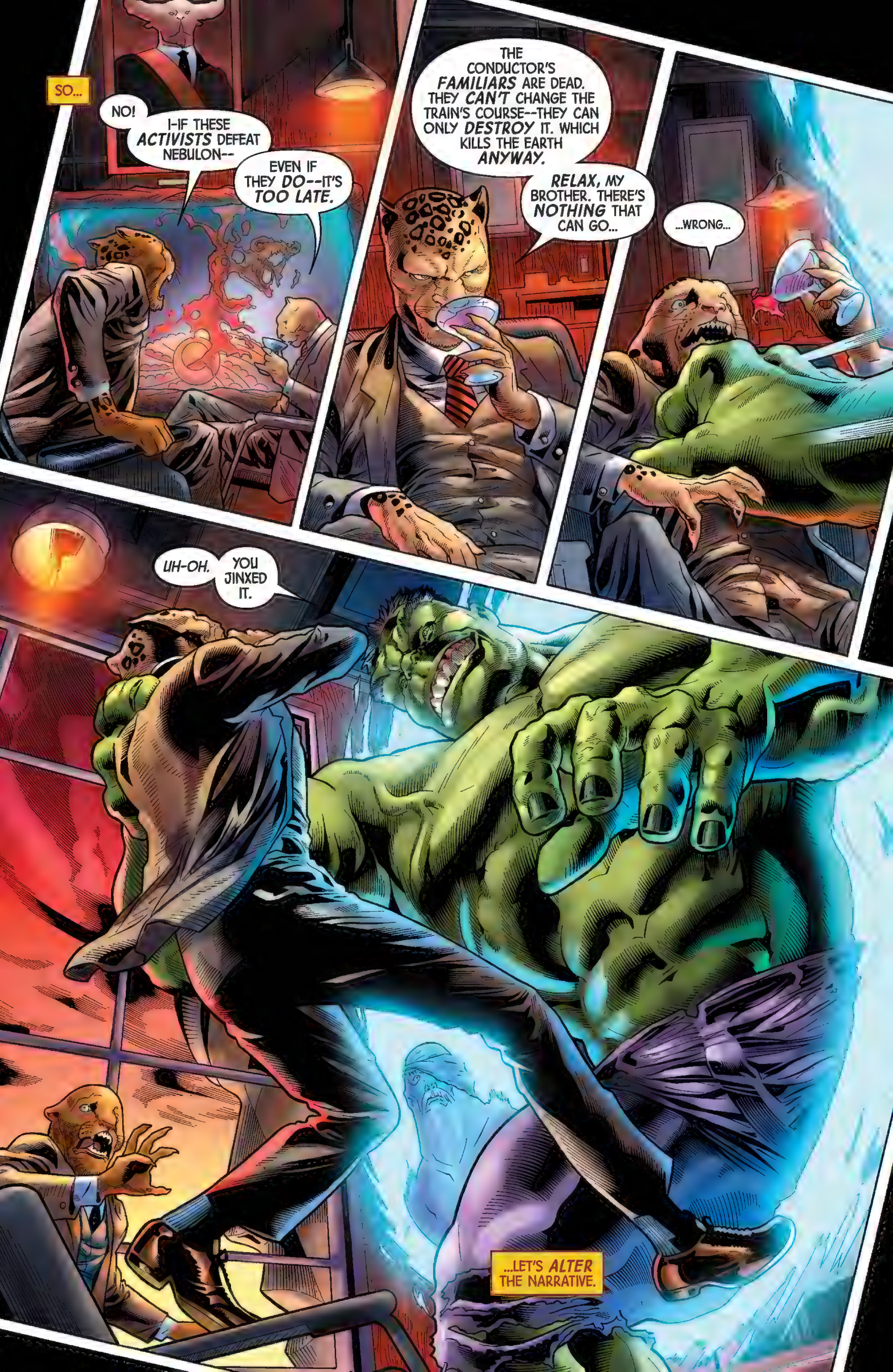

MY NAME IS *STEPHEN STRANGE*--BUT NOT *THIS* WORLD'S STRANGE. NOT ANYMORE.
NOW I'M *HERE*--TO CREATE A TIMELINE WHERE *MY* FUTURE *DOESN'T HAPPEN.*
UH-HUH. SO *BLOW UP THE TRAIN.*
PROBLEM *SOLVED.*
I AM A *DEAD MAN* FROM A *DOOMED FUTURE*--ONE WHERE NEBULON *SUCCEEDED.*
THIS IS *THE HULK.* A *DARK* HULK, INFECTED BY SOMETHING *DARKER YET.* I CAME TO KNOW HIM *WELL* IN MY OWN TIME.
FOR WHAT I HAVE PLANNED, HE'S *EXACTLY* WHAT I NEED.
"WHERE *I'M* FROM, HULK, THEY DID JUST *THAT.*
"THE TERRIBLE DECISION WAS MADE, AND WORLDS WERE BURNED IN *FIRE*...THEIR ENERGY *CONSUMED*...
"...BUT NOT *ALL* OF IT. NOT SO MANY PLANETS AT ONCE.
"THE *TRAIN* WAS STOPPED. THE *RADIATION* FROM THE EXPLOSION *WASN'T.* IT SPREAD LIKE A *WAVE,* KILLING *DOZENS* OF LIVING WORLDS IN ITS PATH..."

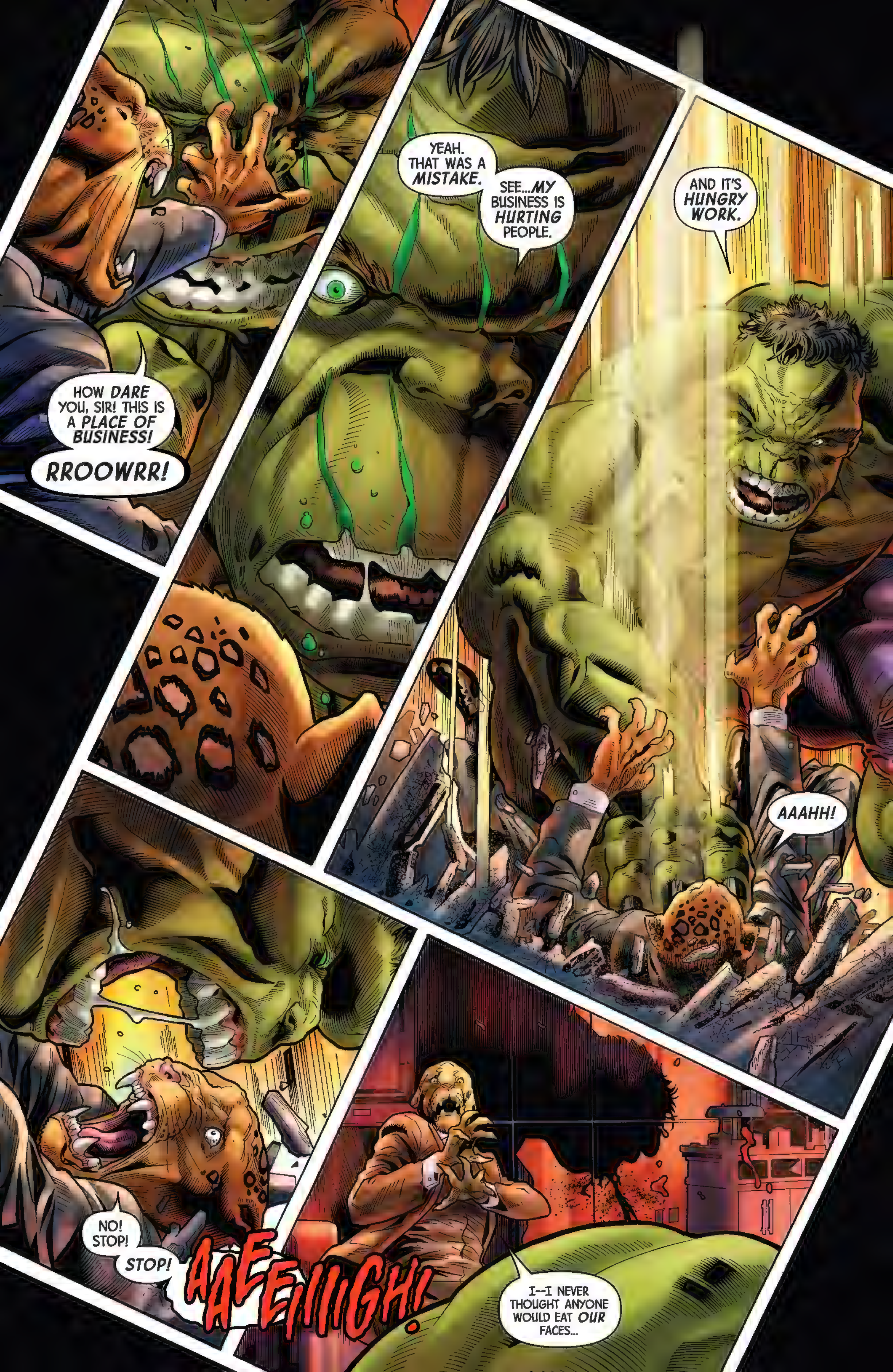

...INCLUDING *EARTH.*
AND THAT WAS ONLY THE *START.* TRUST ME WHEN I SAY THINGS GOT A *LOT* WORSE.
HNH. *I'LL* STILL SURVIVE...
TRUE. BUT YOU WON'T *ENJOY* IT MUCH.
I'LL MAKE THIS *SIMPLE,* HULK. I *DESTROYED* WHAT WAS LEFT OF MY EARTH TO RETURN *HERE*--BUT THE SPELL COST *MY* LIFE, TOO.
MY ASTRAL FORM HAS LESS THAN AN *HOUR* BEFORE IT *DISSIPATES*--AND I DIE THE *TRUE DEATH.* AND MY *MAGIC* IS DISSIPATING, TOO.
I CAN'T WASTE WHAT I HAVE LEFT ON *COMBAT.* I NEED SOMEONE TO HELP ME...
...*SMASH,* AS IT WERE.
EVERYBODY NEEDS SOMETHING.
ME AND *BANNER* HAVE OUR OWN PROBLEMS RIGHT NOW--
I KNOW. SOMETHING'S *INFECTED* YOU--AN ENTITY FROM FAR *BELOW* OUR REALITY.
I MAY KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN *HELP* WITH THAT--*LATER.*
WHERE WE'RE GOING *NOW*...DARKNESS IS A *WEAPON.*
I HAVE ENOUGH ENERGY FOR *TRANSPORTATION* TO WHERE WE NEED TO GO.
BUT SHAPING THE NECESSARY PORTAL TAKES *TIME*...

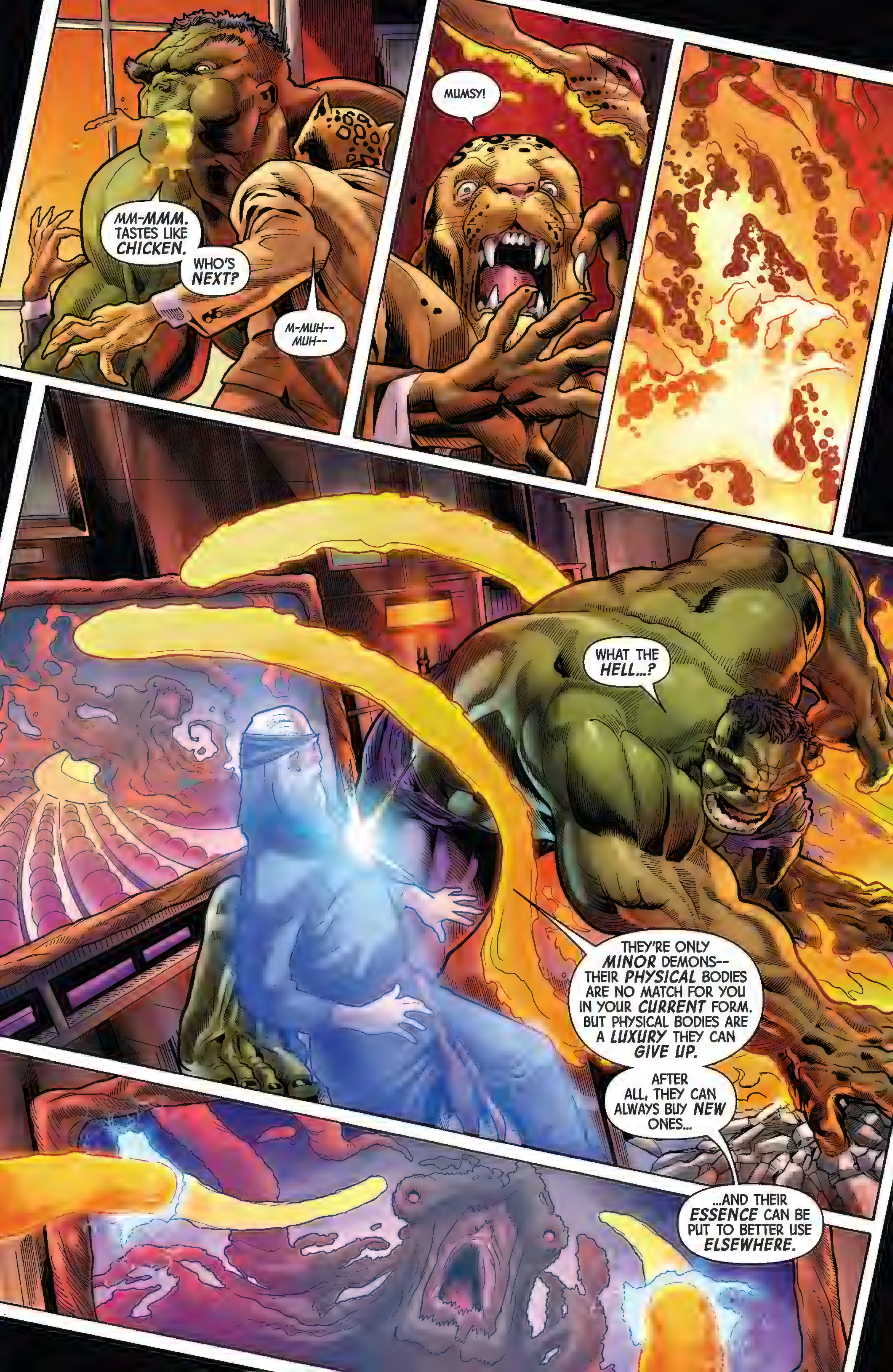

...AND IN *HELL*, TIME IS ALWAYS RUNNING *OUT*.
NO MATTER *WHICH* HELL. *EVERY* SENTIENT SPECIES HAS AN AFTERLIFE--SOME HAVE *MANY*. HELLS ARE *COMMON*.
BUT THEY ARE ALL *LINKED*...
...AND THEY ALL *TRADE*.
OUR INVESTMENT PERFORMS *ADMIRABLY*, BORSS. HE USES THE POWER WE GAVE HIM *WELL*...
LET'S *HOPE*, MOG'RYS. IF EARTH *ISN'T* DESTROYED, IT'LL END *BADLY* FOR US.
WE BORROWED *TWO BILLION HUMAN SOULS* FROM MEPHISTO AND SOLD THEM TO THE SPIRIT-FLAYERS OF *CARCOSA*--SO WE'RE *RICH* NOW--
VERY RICH.
--BUT *EVENTUALLY*, MEPHISTO WILL WANT THOSE SOULS *BACK*.
IF EARTH *DIES*--SEVEN *BILLION* OF THAT SOUL TYPE HITTING THE MARKETS AT *ONCE*--HUMAN SOUL PRICES *CRASH*.
WE CAN BUY *FRESH* HUMAN SOULS *CHEAP*, PAY MEPHISTO BACK WITH *THOSE*... AND *PROFIT*.
YES, YES. I KNOW HOW TO SHORT A *SOUL*, BROTHER.
BUT IF EARTH *DOESN'T* DIE? W-WE'LL...OWE OUR *OWN* SOULS...
...A *BILLION TIMES OVER*...
YOU'RE *WORRYING* TOO MUCH, BORSS. NEBULON *WILL* DELIVER.
HE'S *MANIPULATED* LESSER BEINGS FOR HIS OWN SELFISH REASONS *THROUGHOUT* HIS LIFE. HE SHARES OUR *POLITICS*.
HE'S ONE OF *US*.
SO *HE* WILL SIT AT OUR *RIGHT PAW*--AS OUR FELLOW *DEMONS* SQUABBLE AND DEBASE THEMSELVES FOR A *TASTE* OF OUR NEWFOUND WEALTH.
AND THEN... WILL WE EAT THEIR *FACES*, BROTHER?
OH YES.
WE'LL EAT *ALL* THE FACES.

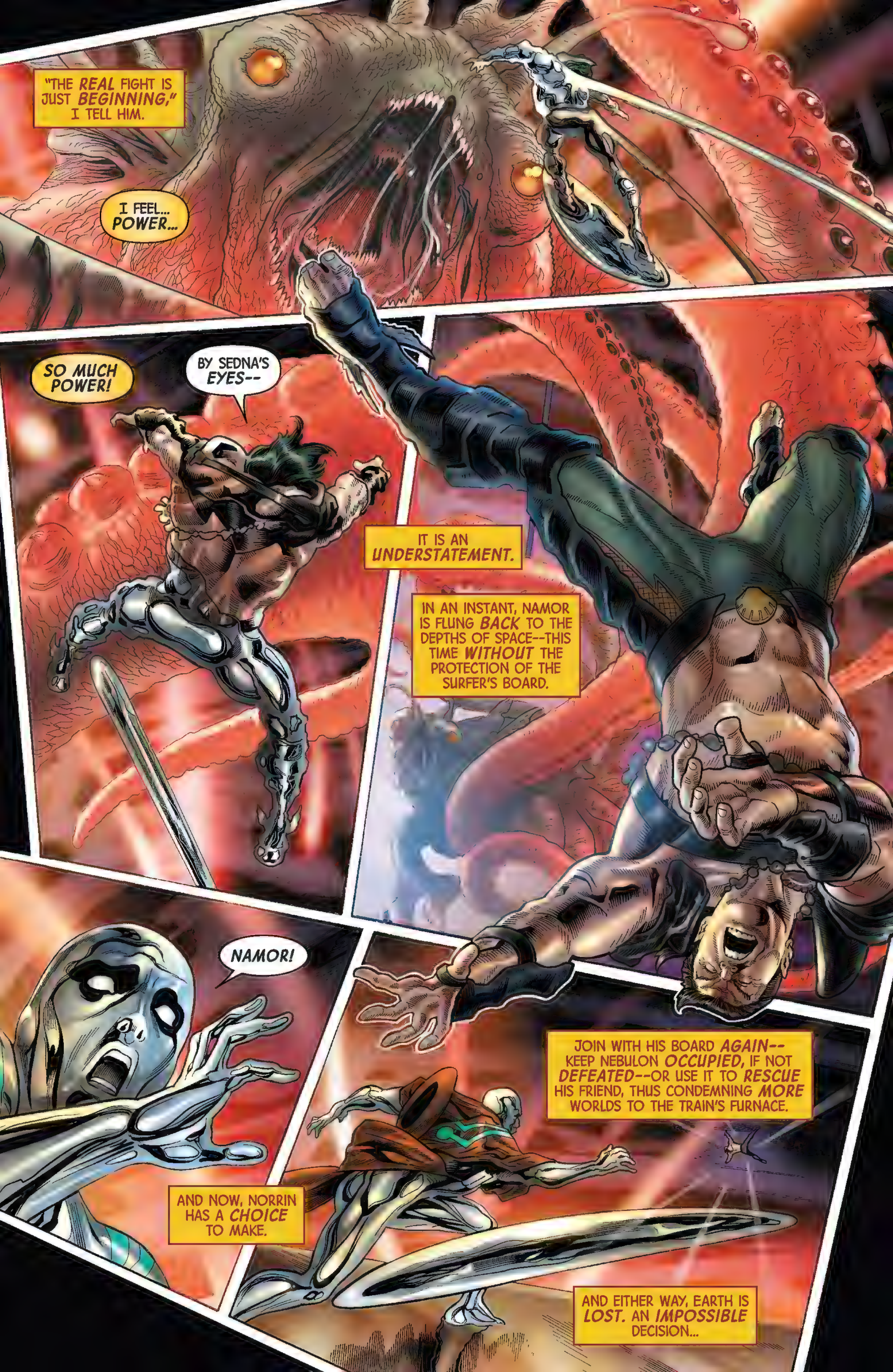

MORE SPEED, CONDUCTOR!
ANOTHER WORLD INTO THE COSMIC FIRE!
N-NO--NO MORE--
NO MORE DEATH--
AREN'T YOU DEAD YET, NORRIN RADD?
WELL, NOT LONG NOW. I'M LEECHING YOUR COSMIC POWER, AND THE TRAIN IS PICKING UP SPEED.
YOU AND THAT MUDBALL THAT KILLED ME WILL SOON BE VERY DEAD.
NOBODY'S COMING TO SAVE YOU...
AN ENTRANCE LINE IF EVER I HEARD ONE.
BUT NOT MINE.

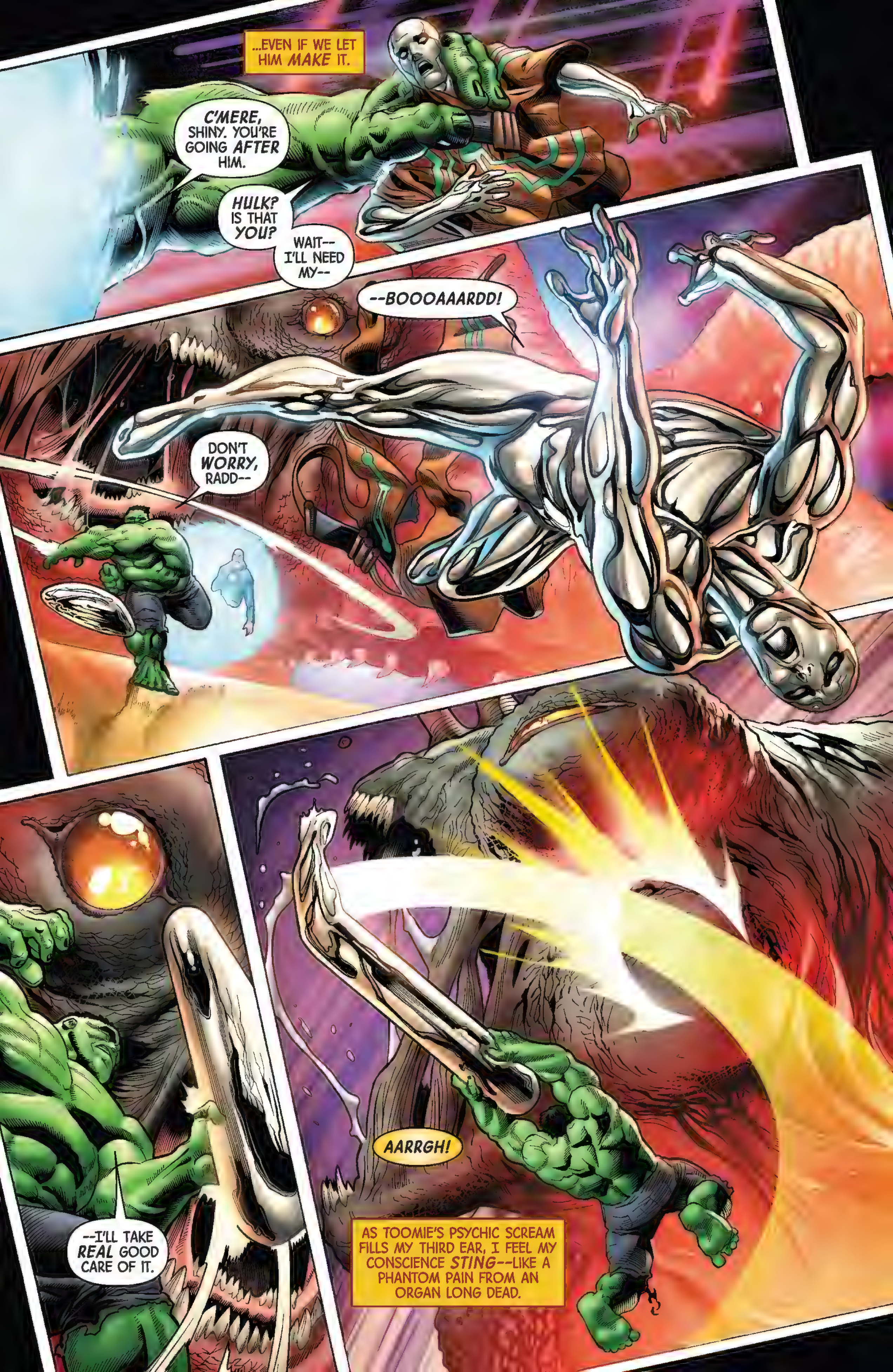

IMPERIUS REX!
THIS IS *NAMOR* THE *SUB-MARINER.* *ANOTHER* OLD ACQUAINTANCE. HE'S NOT NORMALLY QUITE SO *SHINY*--
--BUT *TOOMIE*--THE SURFER'S *BOARD*--CHOSE TO SAVE HIM FROM *DEATH* IN THE VACUUM OF SPACE.
THE BOARD DISRUPTED HIS ECTOPLASMIC *ESSENCE.*
TOOMIE! NAMOR! KEEP AT HIM!
AND NOW...ALL IS GOING AS I REMEMBER IT DID.
GIVEN HOW THIS *ENDS*...THAT'S NOT A *GOOD* THING.
AAARRGHH!

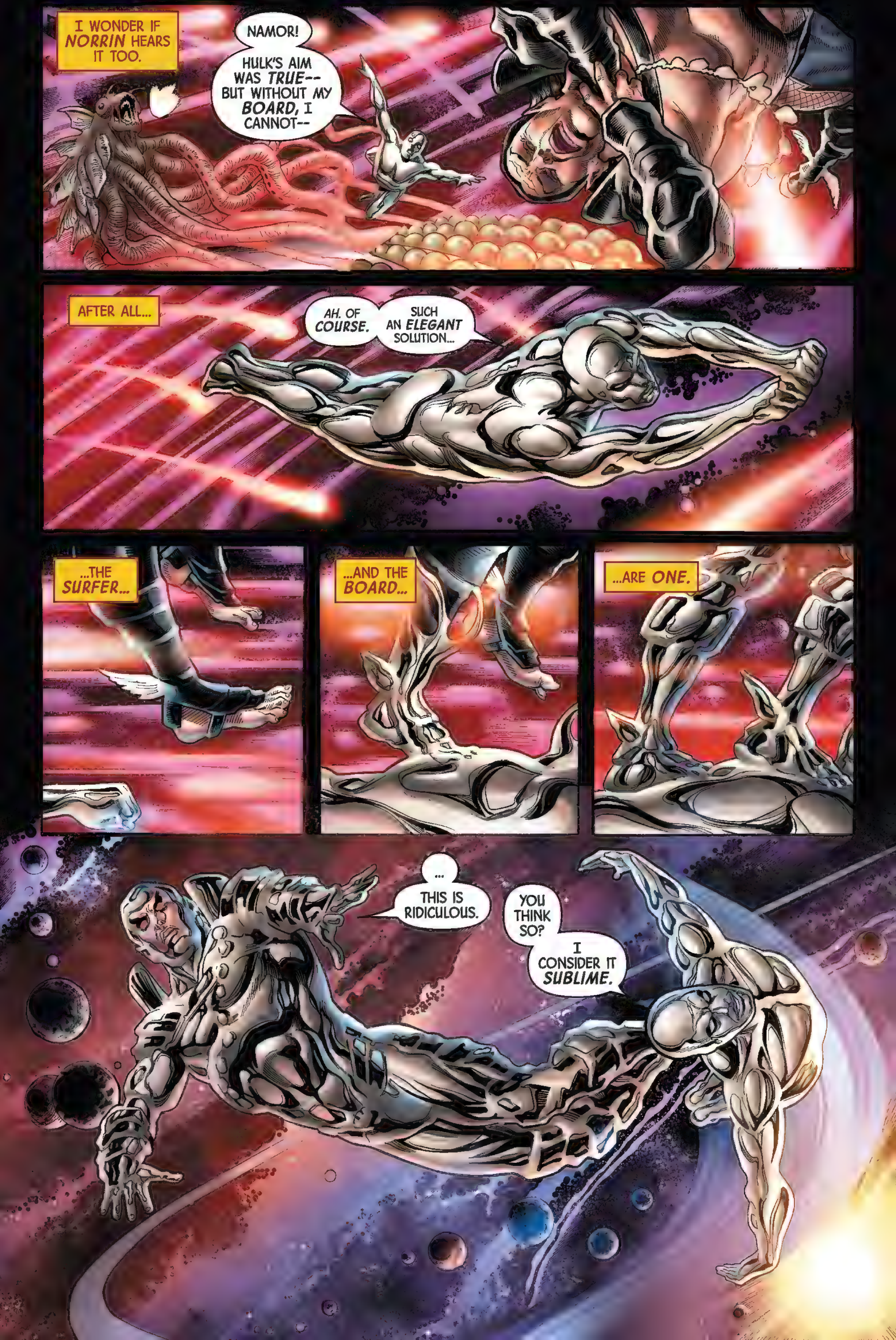

SO...
NO!
I-IF THESE ACTIVISTS DEFEAT NEBULON--
EVEN IF THEY DO--IT'S TOO LATE.
THE CONDUCTOR'S FAMILIARS ARE DEAD. THEY CAN'T CHANGE THE TRAIN'S COURSE--THEY CAN ONLY DESTROY IT. WHICH KILLS THE EARTH ANYWAY.
RELAX, MY BROTHER. THERE'S NOTHING THAT CAN GO...
...WRONG...
UH-OH.
YOU JINXED IT.
...LET'S ALTER THE NARRATIVE.

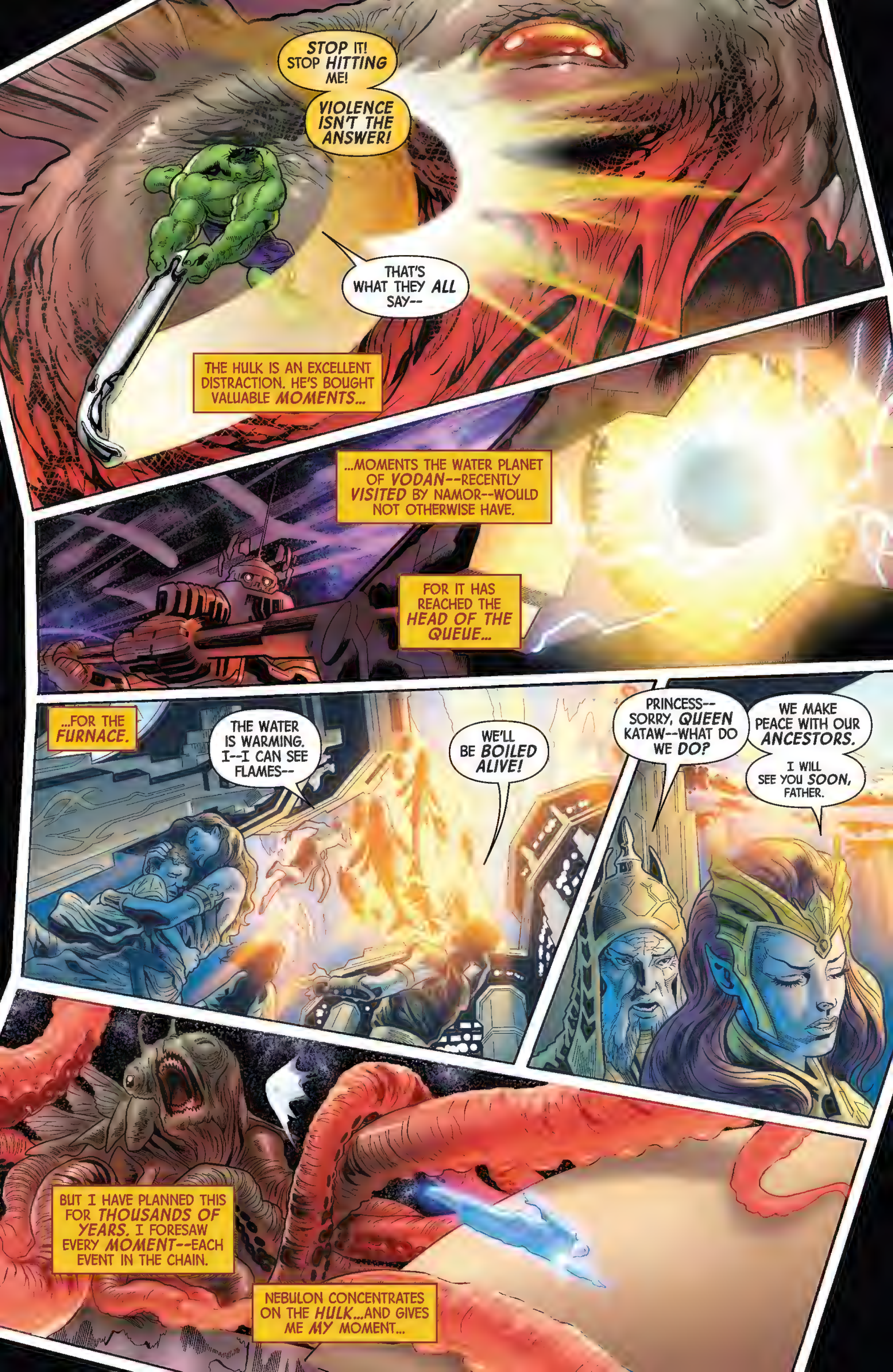

HOW *DARE* YOU, SIR! THIS IS A *PLACE OF BUSINESS!*
RROOWRR!
YEAH. THAT WAS A *MISTAKE.*
SEE...*MY* BUSINESS IS *HURTING* PEOPLE.
AND IT'S *HUNGRY WORK.*
AAAHH!
NO! STOP!
STOP!
AAEEIIIGH!
I--I NEVER THOUGHT ANYONE WOULD EAT *OUR* FACES...

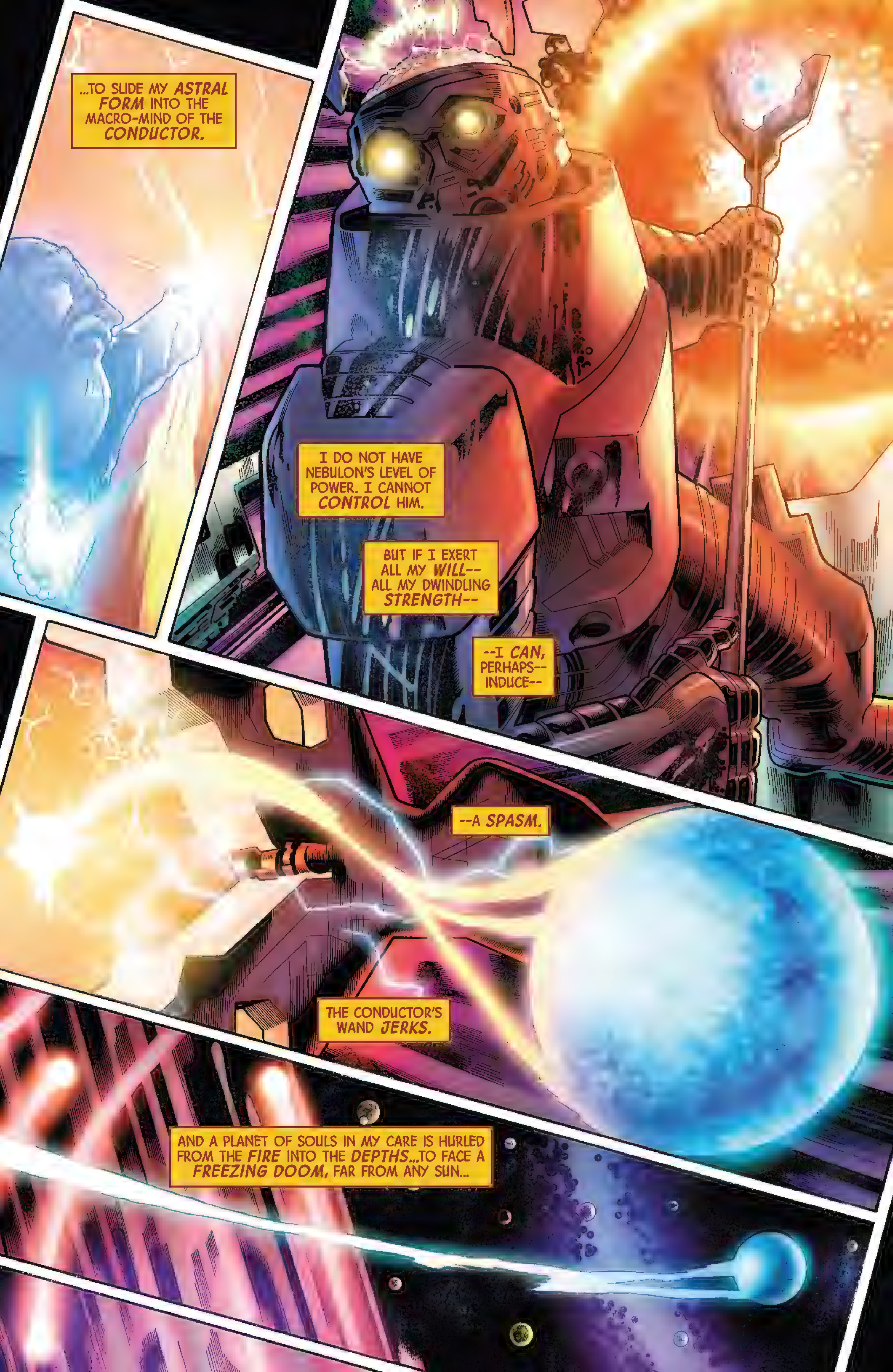

MM-MMM. TASTES LIKE CHICKEN.
WHO'S NEXT?
M-MUH-- MUH--
MUMSY!
WHAT THE HELL...?
THEY'RE ONLY MINOR DEMONS-- THEIR PHYSICAL BODIES ARE NO MATCH FOR YOU IN YOUR CURRENT FORM. BUT PHYSICAL BODIES ARE A LUXURY THEY CAN GIVE UP.
AFTER ALL, THEY CAN ALWAYS BUY NEW ONES...
...AND THEIR ESSENCE CAN BE PUT TO BETTER USE ELSEWHERE.

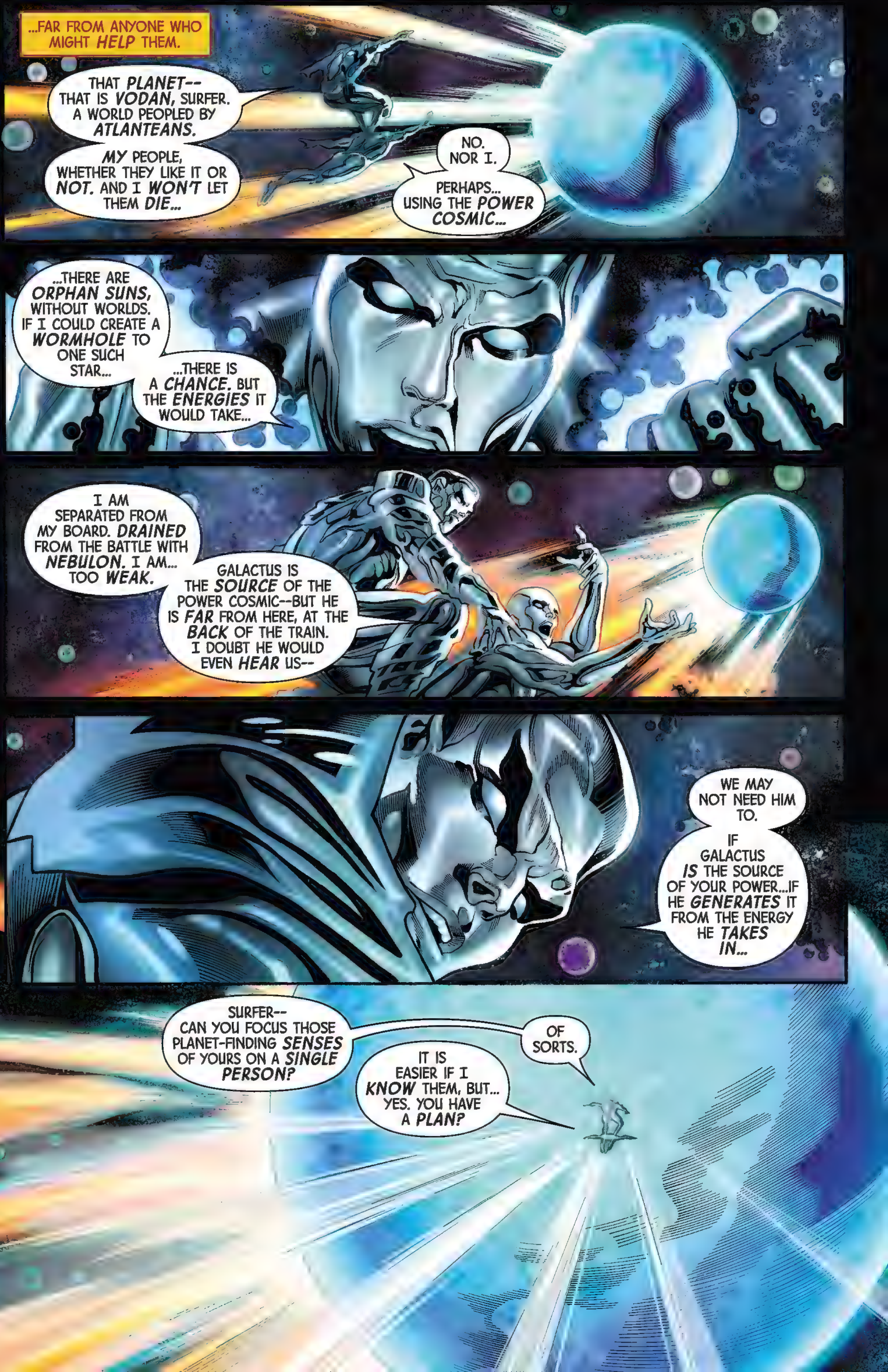

"THE REAL FIGHT IS JUST BEGINNING," I TELL HIM.
I FEEL... POWER...
SO MUCH POWER!
BY SEDNA'S EYES--
IT IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT.
IN AN INSTANT, NAMOR IS FLUNG BACK TO THE DEPTHS OF SPACE--THIS TIME WITHOUT THE PROTECTION OF THE SURFER'S BOARD.
NAMOR!
AND NOW, NORRIN HAS A CHOICE TO MAKE.
JOIN WITH HIS BOARD AGAIN--KEEP NEBULON OCCUPIED, IF NOT DEFEATED--OR USE IT TO RESCUE HIS FRIEND, THUS CONDEMNING MORE WORLDS TO THE TRAIN'S FURNACE.
AND EITHER WAY, EARTH IS LOST. AN IMPOSSIBLE DECISION...

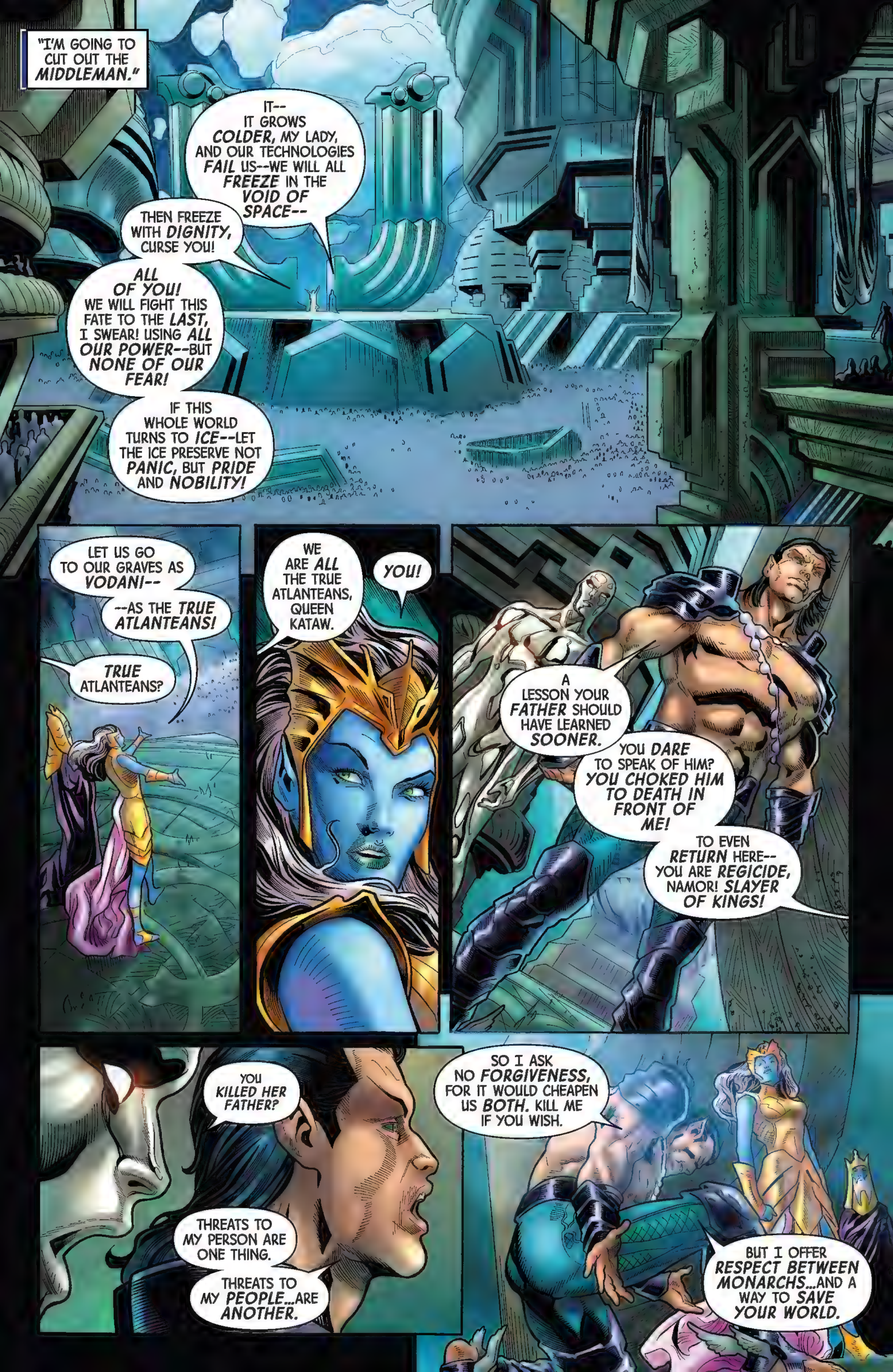

...EVEN IF WE LET HIM *MAKE* IT.
C'MERE, SHINY. YOU'RE GOING *AFTER* HIM.
HULK? IS THAT *YOU?*
WAIT-- I'LL NEED MY--
--*BOOOAAARDD!*
DON'T *WORRY*, RADD--
--I'LL TAKE *REAL* GOOD CARE OF IT.
AARRGH!
AS TOOMIE'S PSYCHIC SCREAM FILLS MY THIRD EAR, I FEEL MY CONSCIENCE *STING*--LIKE A PHANTOM PAIN FROM AN ORGAN LONG DEAD.

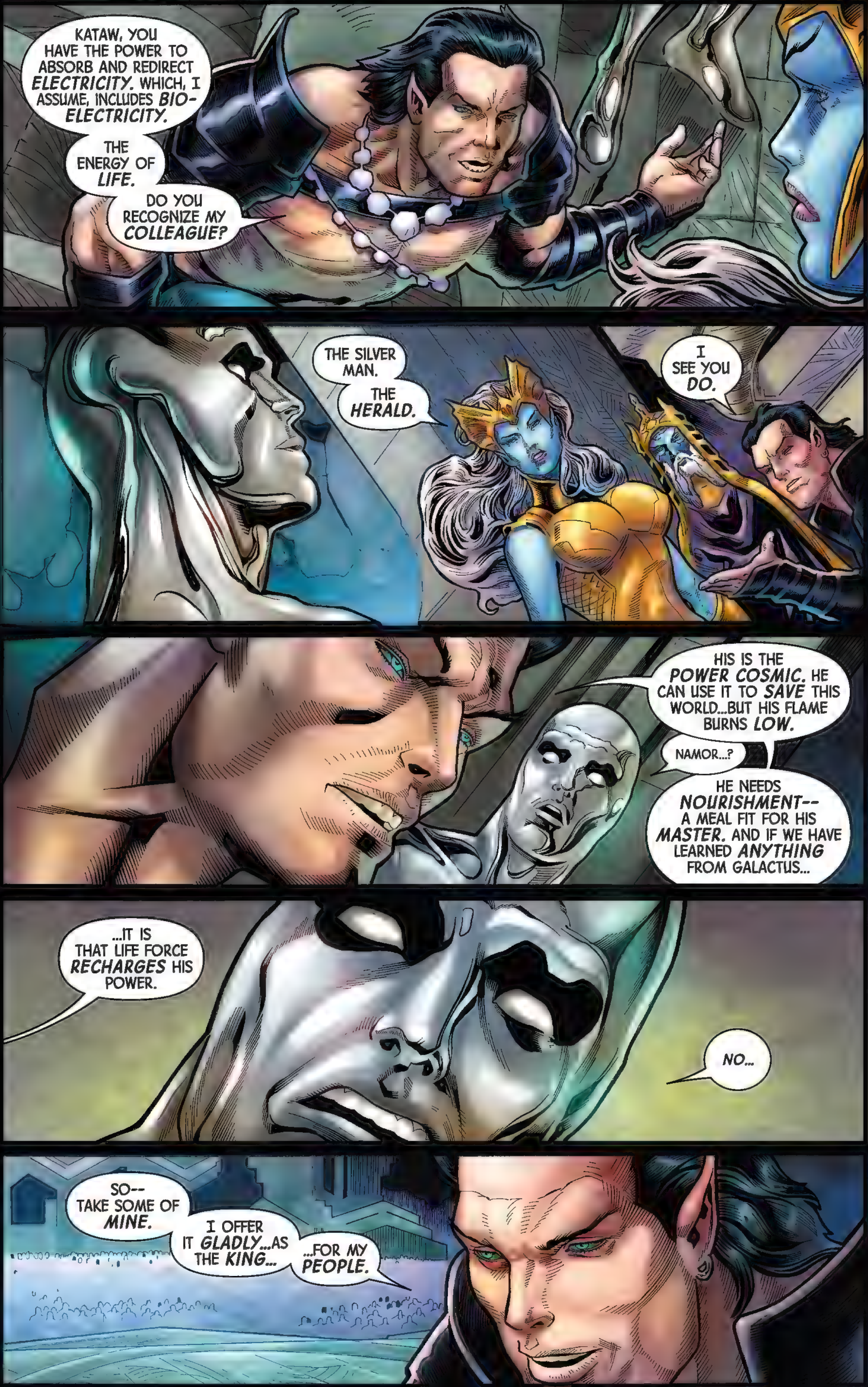

I WONDER IF *NORRIN* HEARS IT TOO.
NAMOR!
HULK'S AIM WAS *TRUE*-- BUT WITHOUT MY *BOARD*, I CANNOT--
AFTER ALL...
AH. OF *COURSE.*
SUCH AN *ELEGANT* SOLUTION...
...THE *SURFER*...
...AND THE *BOARD*...
...ARE *ONE.*
...
THIS IS RIDICULOUS.
YOU THINK SO?
I CONSIDER IT *SUBLIME.*

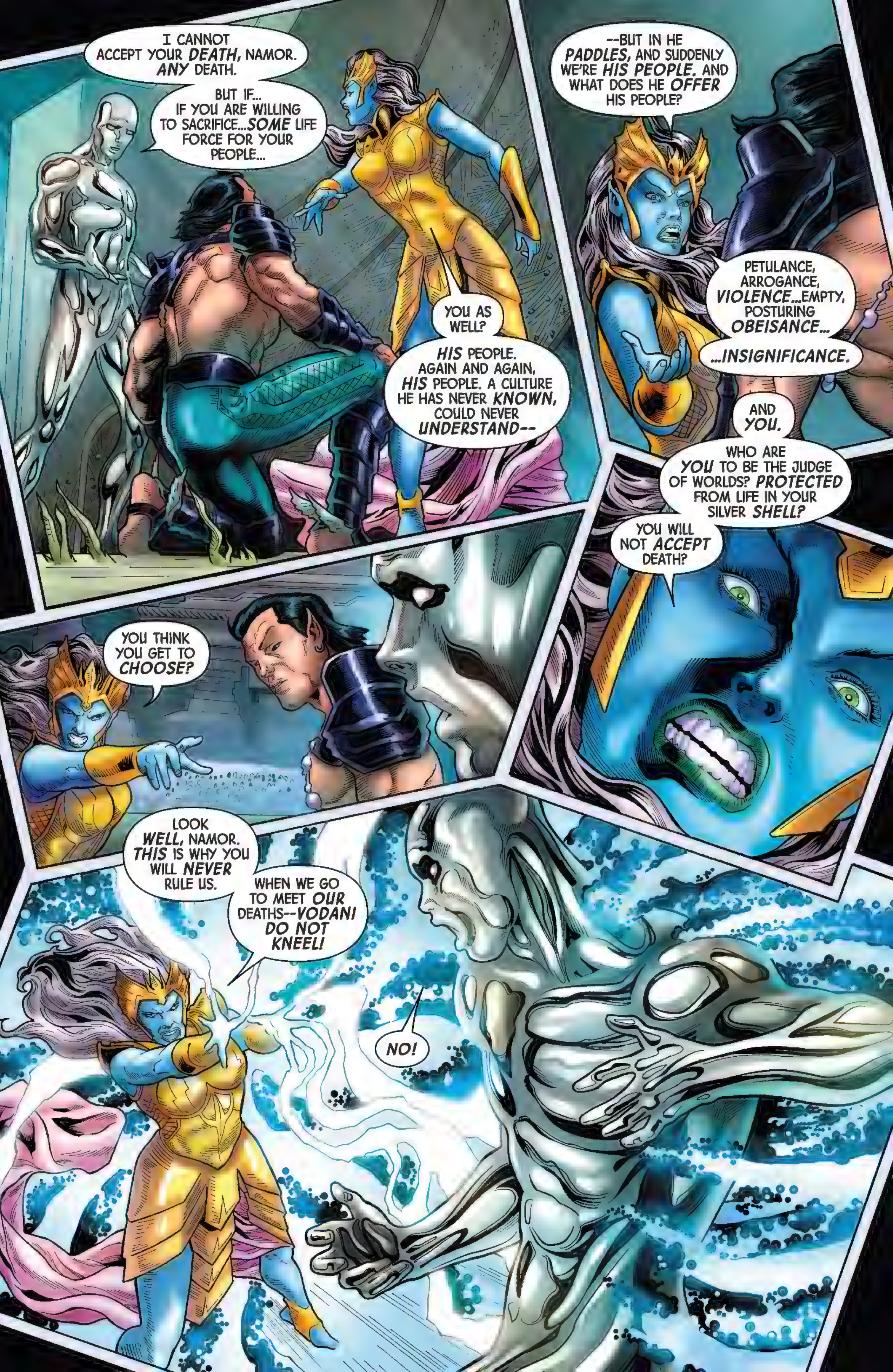

STOP IT! STOP HITTING ME!
VIOLENCE ISN'T THE ANSWER!
THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY--
THE HULK IS AN EXCELLENT DISTRACTION. HE'S BOUGHT VALUABLE MOMENTS...
...MOMENTS THE WATER PLANET OF VODAN--RECENTLY VISITED BY NAMOR--WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE.
FOR IT HAS REACHED THE HEAD OF THE QUEUE...
...FOR THE FURNACE.
THE WATER IS WARMING. I--I CAN SEE FLAMES--
WE'LL BE BOILED ALIVE!
PRINCESS--SORRY, QUEEN KATAW--WHAT DO WE DO?
WE MAKE PEACE WITH OUR ANCESTORS.
I WILL SEE YOU SOON, FATHER.
BUT I HAVE PLANNED THIS FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. I FORESAW EVERY MOMENT--EACH EVENT IN THE CHAIN.
NEBULON CONCENTRATES ON THE HULK...AND GIVES ME MY MOMENT...

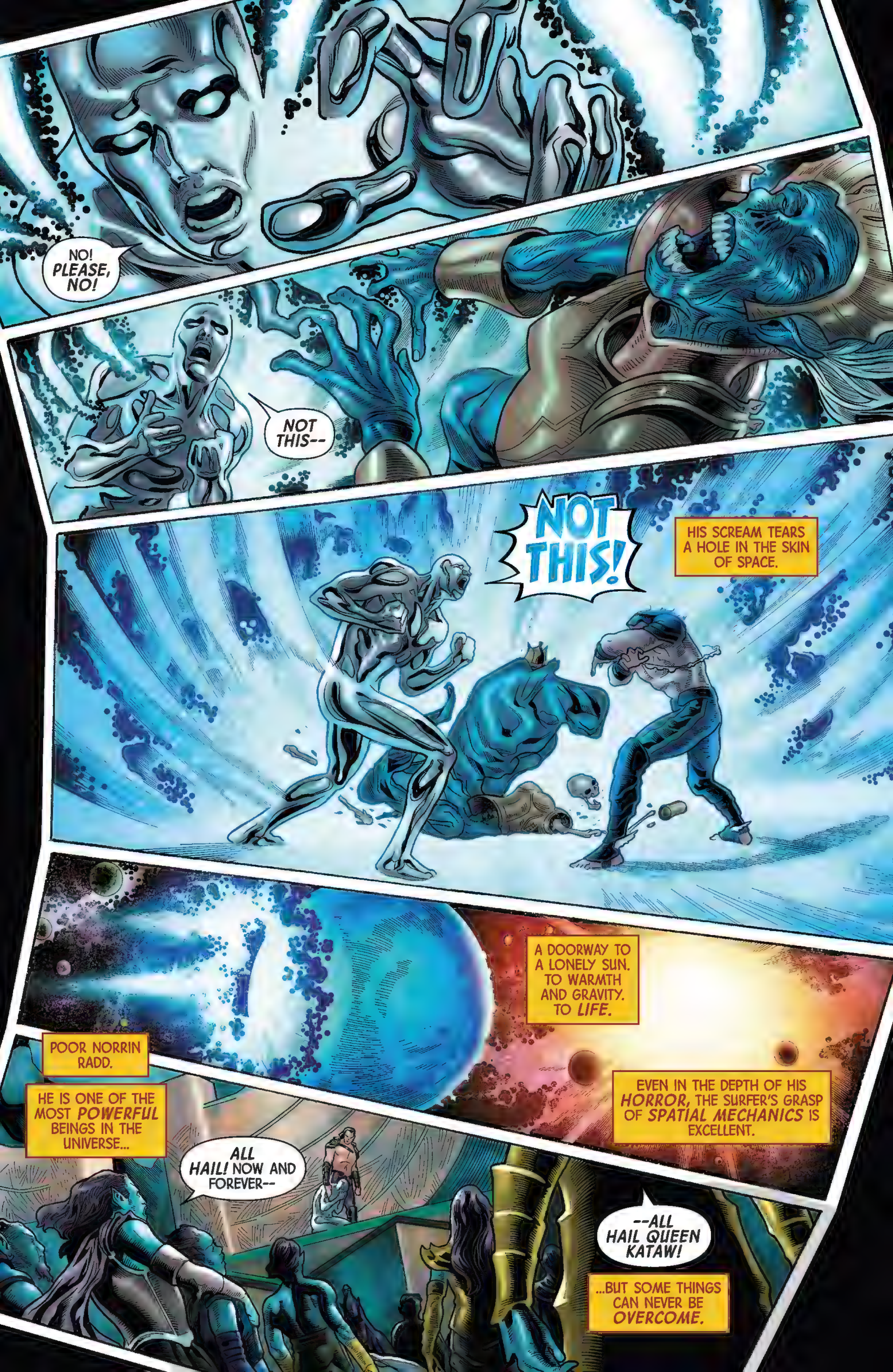

...TO SLIDE MY *ASTRAL FORM* INTO THE MACRO-MIND OF THE *CONDUCTOR.*
I DO NOT HAVE NEBULON'S LEVEL OF POWER. I CANNOT *CONTROL* HIM.
BUT IF I EXERT ALL MY *WILL*-- ALL MY DWINDLING *STRENGTH*--
--I *CAN,* PERHAPS-- INDUCE--
--A *SPASM.*
THE CONDUCTOR'S WAND *JERKS.*
AND A PLANET OF SOULS IN MY CARE IS HURLED FROM THE *FIRE* INTO THE *DEPTHS*...TO FACE A *FREEZING DOOM,* FAR FROM ANY SUN...

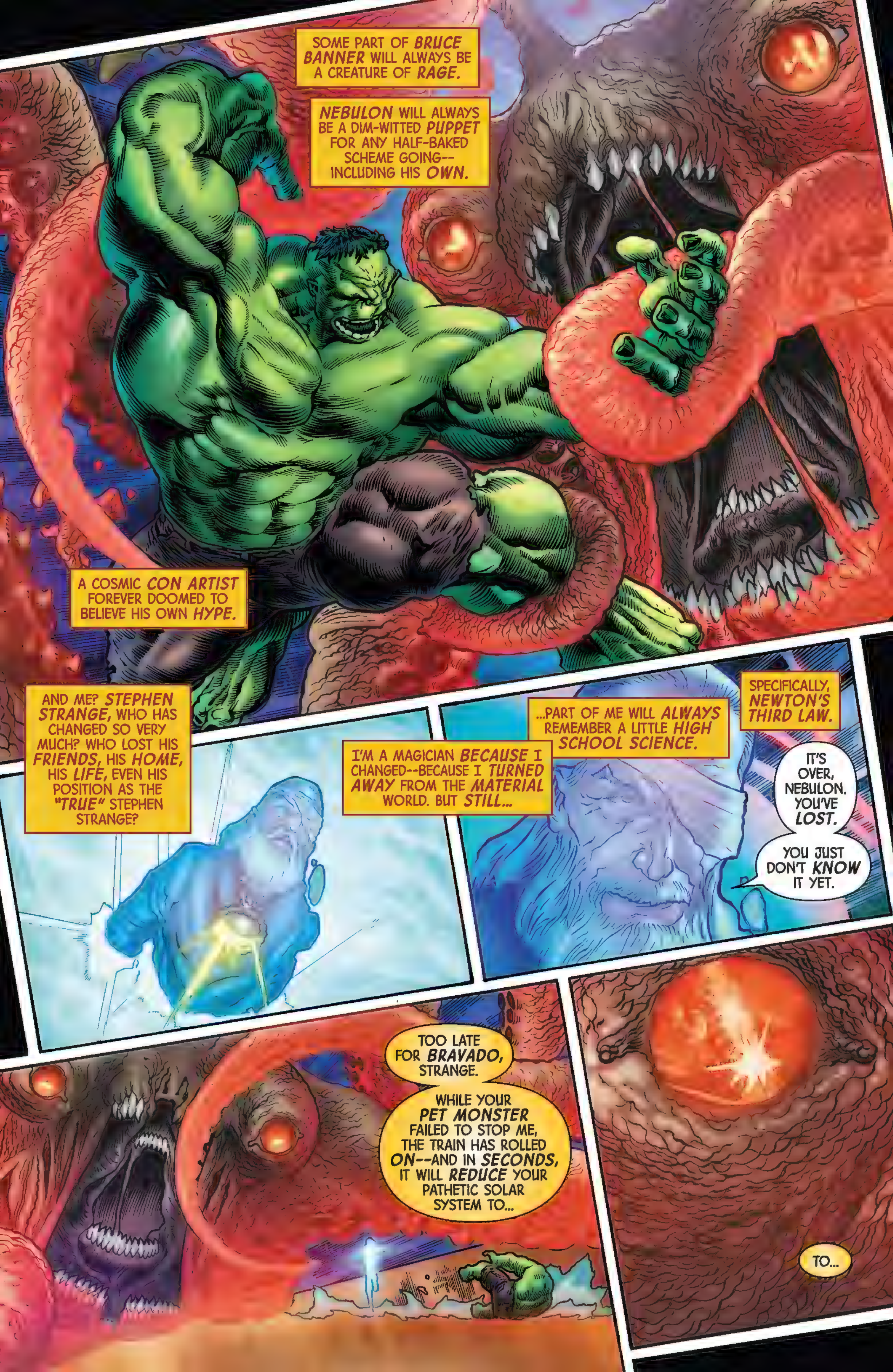

...FAR FROM ANYONE WHO MIGHT *HELP* THEM.
THAT *PLANET*-- THAT IS *VODAN,* SURFER. A WORLD PEOPLED BY *ATLANTEANS.*
MY PEOPLE, WHETHER THEY LIKE IT OR *NOT.* AND I *WON'T* LET THEM *DIE*...
NO. NOR I.
PERHAPS... USING THE *POWER COSMIC*...
...THERE ARE *ORPHAN SUNS,* WITHOUT WORLDS. IF I COULD CREATE A *WORMHOLE* TO ONE SUCH STAR...
...THERE IS A *CHANCE.* BUT THE *ENERGIES* IT WOULD TAKE...
I AM SEPARATED FROM MY BOARD. *DRAINED* FROM THE BATTLE WITH *NEBULON.* I AM... TOO *WEAK.*
GALACTUS IS THE *SOURCE* OF THE POWER COSMIC--BUT HE IS *FAR* FROM HERE, AT THE *BACK* OF THE TRAIN. I DOUBT HE WOULD EVEN *HEAR* US--
WE MAY NOT NEED HIM TO.
IF GALACTUS *IS* THE SOURCE OF YOUR POWER...IF HE *GENERATES* IT FROM THE ENERGY HE *TAKES IN*...
SURFER-- CAN YOU FOCUS THOSE PLANET-FINDING *SENSES* OF YOURS ON A *SINGLE PERSON?*
OF SORTS.
IT IS EASIER IF I *KNOW* THEM, BUT... YES. YOU HAVE A *PLAN?*

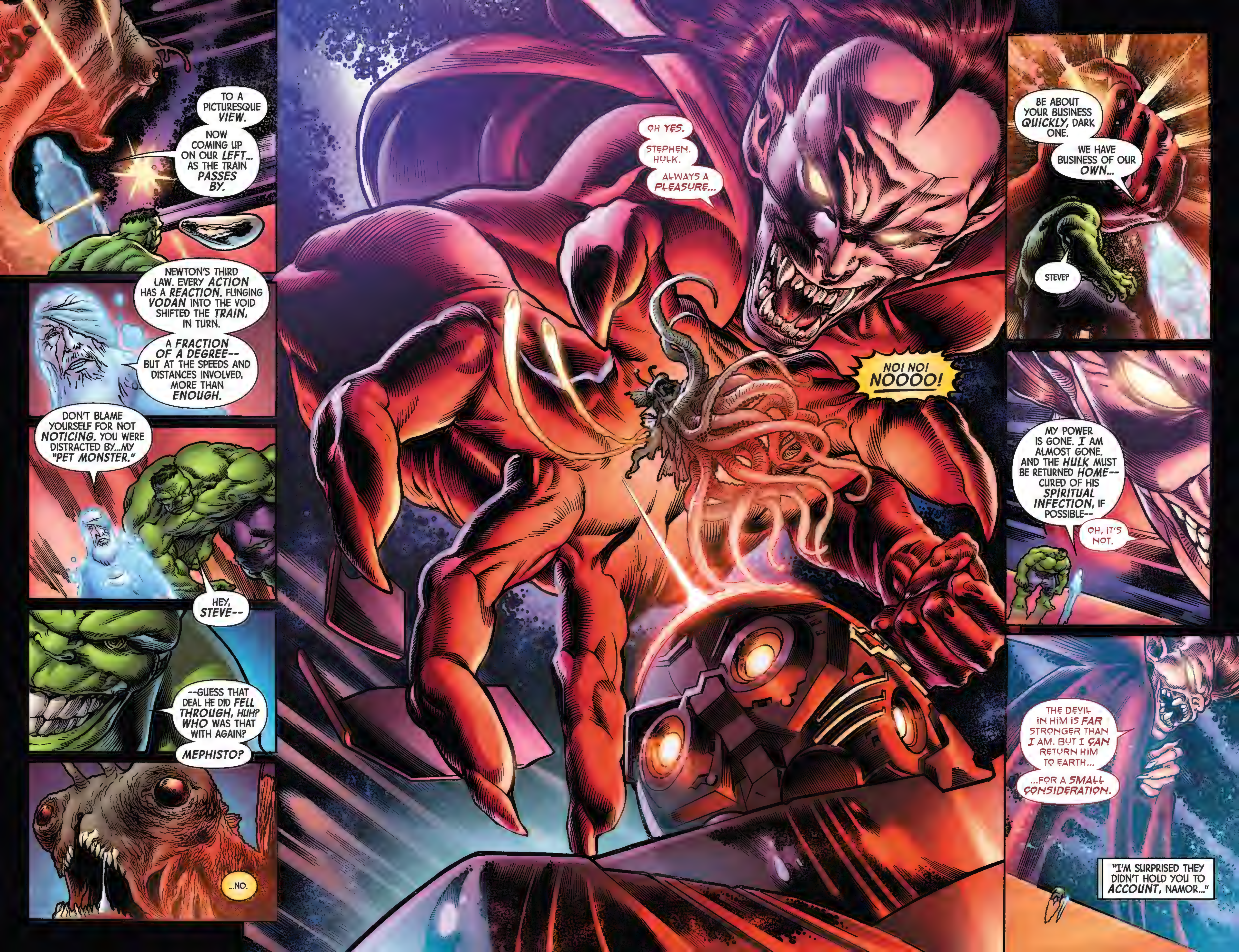

"I'M GOING TO CUT OUT THE *MIDDLEMAN.*"
IT-- IT GROWS *COLDER,* MY LADY, AND OUR TECHNOLOGIES *FAIL* US--WE WILL ALL *FREEZE* IN THE *VOID OF SPACE--*
THEN FREEZE WITH *DIGNITY,* CURSE YOU!
ALL OF YOU! WE WILL FIGHT THIS FATE TO THE *LAST,* I SWEAR! USING *ALL OUR POWER*--BUT *NONE OF OUR FEAR!*
IF THIS WHOLE WORLD TURNS TO *ICE*--LET THE ICE PRESERVE NOT *PANIC,* BUT *PRIDE* AND *NOBILITY!*
LET US GO TO OUR GRAVES AS *VODANI--*
--AS THE *TRUE ATLANTEANS!*
TRUE ATLANTEANS?
WE ARE *ALL* THE TRUE ATLANTEANS, QUEEN KATAW.
YOU!
A LESSON YOUR *FATHER* SHOULD HAVE LEARNED *SOONER.*
YOU *DARE* TO SPEAK OF HIM? *YOU CHOKED HIM TO DEATH IN FRONT OF ME!*
TO EVEN *RETURN* HERE--YOU ARE *REGICIDE,* NAMOR! *SLAYER OF KINGS!*
YOU *KILLED HER FATHER?*
THREATS TO MY PERSON ARE ONE THING.
THREATS TO MY *PEOPLE*...ARE *ANOTHER.*
SO I ASK NO *FORGIVENESS,* FOR IT WOULD CHEAPEN US *BOTH.* KILL ME IF YOU WISH.
BUT I OFFER *RESPECT BETWEEN MONARCHS*...AND A WAY TO *SAVE YOUR WORLD.*

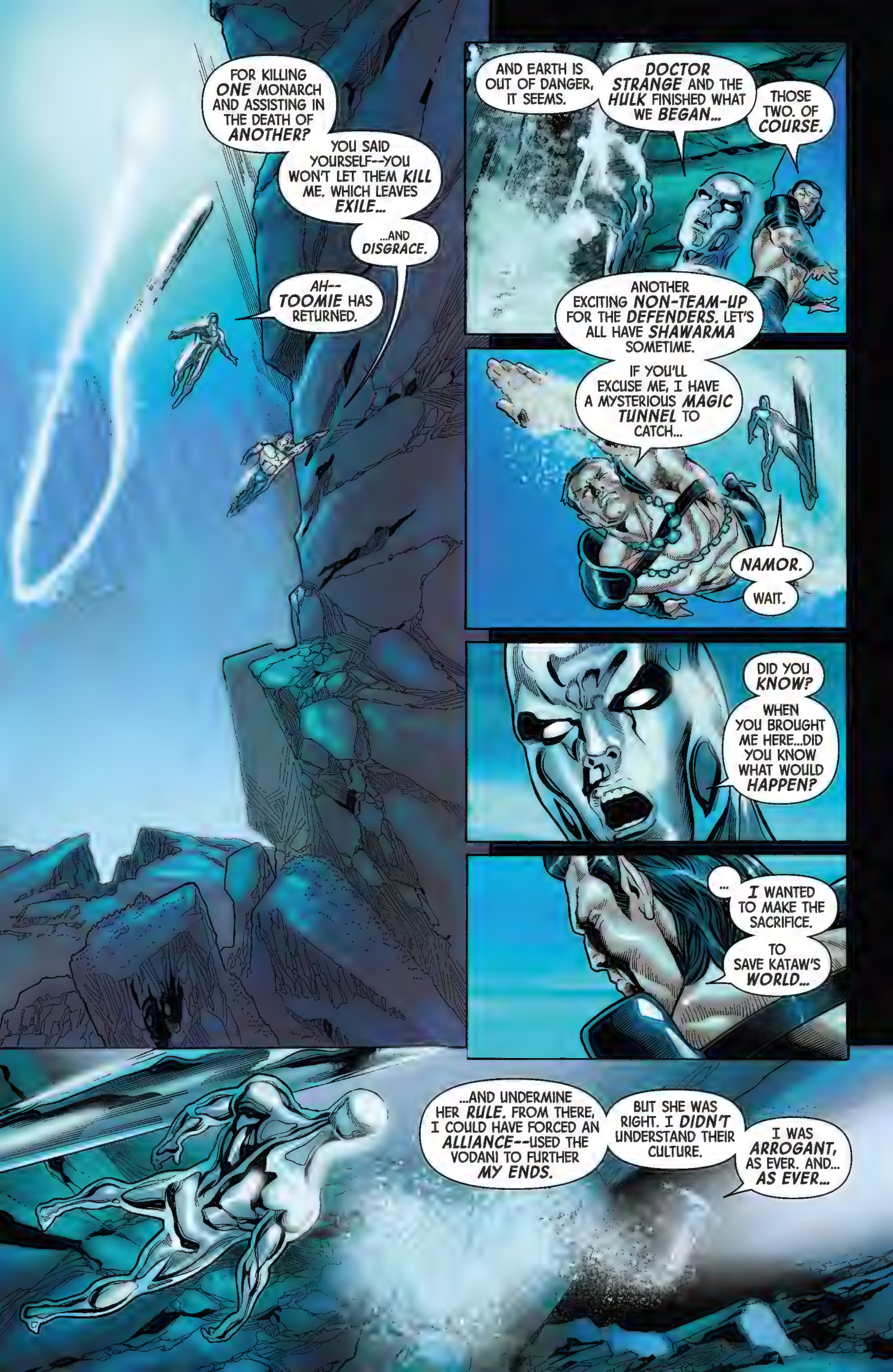

KATAW, YOU HAVE THE POWER TO ABSORB AND REDIRECT *ELECTRICITY*. WHICH, I ASSUME, INCLUDES *BIO-ELECTRICITY*.
THE ENERGY OF *LIFE*.
DO YOU RECOGNIZE MY *COLLEAGUE?*
THE SILVER MAN.
THE *HERALD*.
I SEE YOU *DO*.
HIS IS THE *POWER COSMIC*. HE CAN USE IT TO *SAVE* THIS WORLD...BUT HIS FLAME BURNS *LOW*.
NAMOR...?
HE NEEDS *NOURISHMENT--* A MEAL FIT FOR HIS *MASTER*. AND IF WE HAVE LEARNED *ANYTHING* FROM GALACTUS...
...IT IS THAT LIFE FORCE *RECHARGES* HIS POWER.
NO...
SO-- TAKE SOME OF *MINE*.
I OFFER IT *GLADLY*...AS THE *KING*...
...FOR MY *PEOPLE*.

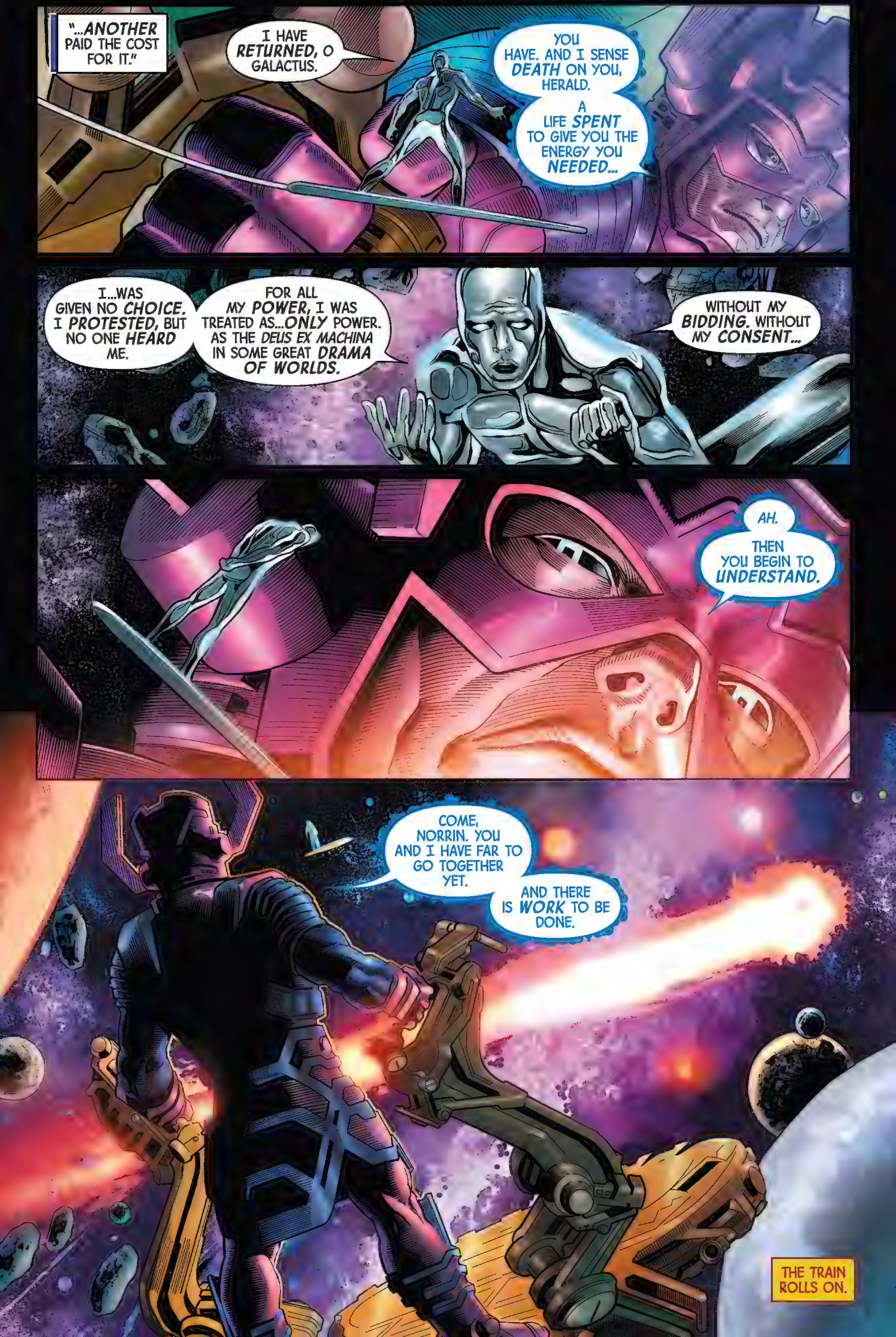

I CANNOT ACCEPT YOUR DEATH, NAMOR. ANY DEATH.
BUT IF... IF YOU ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE...SOME LIFE FORCE FOR YOUR PEOPLE...
YOU AS WELL?
HIS PEOPLE. AGAIN AND AGAIN, HIS PEOPLE. A CULTURE HE HAS NEVER KNOWN, COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND--
--BUT IN HE PADDLES, AND SUDDENLY WE'RE HIS PEOPLE. AND WHAT DOES HE OFFER HIS PEOPLE?
PETULANCE, ARROGANCE, VIOLENCE...EMPTY, POSTURING OBEISANCE...
...INSIGNIFICANCE.
AND YOU.
WHO ARE YOU TO BE THE JUDGE OF WORLDS? PROTECTED FROM LIFE IN YOUR SILVER SHELL?
YOU WILL NOT ACCEPT DEATH?
YOU THINK YOU GET TO CHOOSE?
LOOK WELL, NAMOR. THIS IS WHY YOU WILL NEVER RULE US.
WHEN WE GO TO MEET OUR DEATHS--VODANI DO NOT KNEEL!
NO!

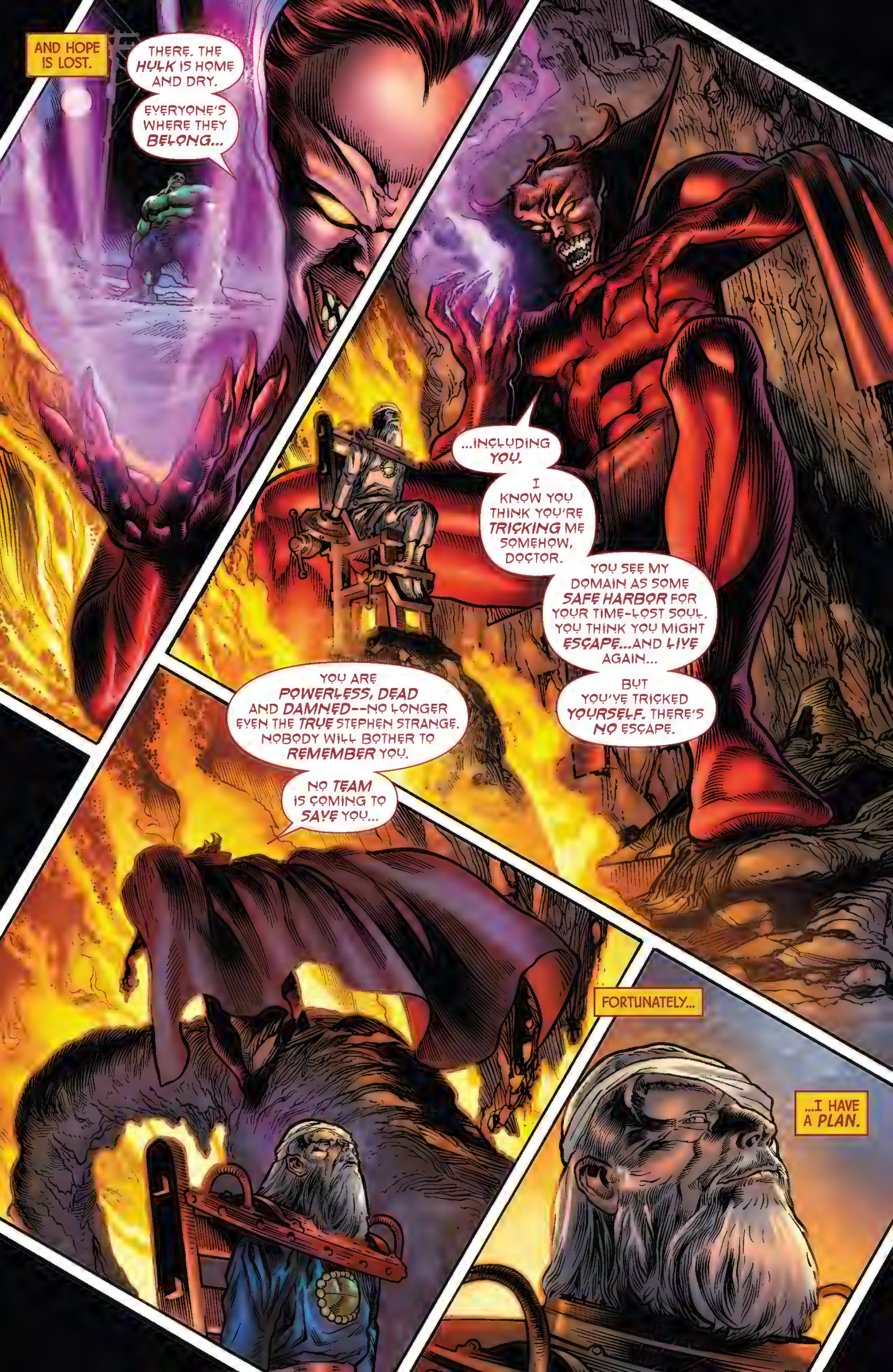

NO! PLEASE, NO!
NOT THIS--
NOT THIS!
HIS SCREAM TEARS A HOLE IN THE SKIN OF SPACE.
A DOORWAY TO A LONELY SUN. TO WARMTH AND GRAVITY. TO LIFE.
EVEN IN THE DEPTH OF HIS HORROR, THE SURFER'S GRASP OF SPATIAL MECHANICS IS EXCELLENT.
POOR NORRIN RADD.
HE IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL BEINGS IN THE UNIVERSE...
ALL HAIL! NOW AND FOREVER--
--ALL HAIL QUEEN KATAW!
...BUT SOME THINGS CAN NEVER BE OVERCOME.


SOME PART OF *BRUCE BANNER* WILL ALWAYS BE A CREATURE OF *RAGE.*
NEBULON WILL ALWAYS BE A DIM-WITTED *PUPPET* FOR ANY HALF-BAKED SCHEME GOING-- INCLUDING HIS *OWN.*
A COSMIC *CON ARTIST* FOREVER DOOMED TO BELIEVE HIS OWN *HYPE.*
AND ME? *STEPHEN STRANGE,* WHO HAS CHANGED SO VERY MUCH? WHO LOST HIS *FRIENDS,* HIS *HOME,* HIS *LIFE,* EVEN HIS POSITION AS THE *"TRUE"* STEPHEN STRANGE?
I'M A MAGICIAN *BECAUSE* I CHANGED--BECAUSE I *TURNED AWAY* FROM THE *MATERIAL* WORLD. BUT *STILL...*
...PART OF ME WILL *ALWAYS* REMEMBER A LITTLE *HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE.*
SPECIFICALLY, *NEWTON'S THIRD LAW.*
IT'S OVER, NEBULON. YOU'VE *LOST.*
YOU JUST DON'T *KNOW* IT YET.
TOO LATE FOR *BRAVADO,* STRANGE.
WHILE YOUR *PET MONSTER* FAILED TO STOP ME, THE TRAIN HAS ROLLED *ON*--AND IN *SECONDS,* IT WILL *REDUCE* YOUR PATHETIC SOLAR SYSTEM TO...
TO...


TO A PICTURESQUE VIEW.
NOW COMING UP ON OUR LEFT... AS THE TRAIN PASSES BY.
NEWTON'S THIRD LAW. EVERY ACTION HAS A REACTION. FLINGING VODAN INTO THE VOID SHIFTED THE TRAIN, IN TURN.
A FRACTION OF A DEGREE-- BUT AT THE SPEEDS AND DISTANCES INVOLVED, MORE THAN ENOUGH.
DON'T BLAME YOURSELF FOR NOT NOTICING. YOU WERE DISTRACTED BY...MY "PET MONSTER."
HEY, STEVE--
--GUESS THAT DEAL HE DID FELL THROUGH, HUH? WHO WAS THAT WITH AGAIN?
MEPHISTO?
...NO.
OH YES.
STEPHEN. HULK.
ALWAYS A PLEASURE...
NO! NO! NOOOO!
BE ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS QUICKLY, DARK ONE.
WE HAVE BUSINESS OF OUR OWN...
STEVE?
MY POWER IS GONE. I AM ALMOST GONE. AND THE HULK MUST BE RETURNED HOME-- CURED OF HIS SPIRITUAL INFECTION, IF POSSIBLE--
OH, IT'S NOT.
THE DEVIL IN HIM IS FAR STRONGER THAN I AM. BUT I CAN RETURN HIM TO EARTH...
...FOR A SMALL CONSIDERATION.
"I'M SURPRISED THEY DIDN'T HOLD YOU TO ACCOUNT, NAMOR..."


FOR KILLING ONE MONARCH AND ASSISTING IN THE DEATH OF ANOTHER?
YOU SAID YOURSELF--YOU WON'T LET THEM KILL ME. WHICH LEAVES EXILE...
...AND DISGRACE.
AH--TOOMIE HAS RETURNED.
AND EARTH IS OUT OF DANGER, IT SEEMS.
DOCTOR STRANGE AND THE HULK FINISHED WHAT WE BEGAN...
THOSE TWO. OF COURSE.
ANOTHER EXCITING NON-TEAM-UP FOR THE DEFENDERS. LET'S ALL HAVE SHAWARMA SOMETIME.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE A MYSTERIOUS MAGIC TUNNEL TO CATCH...
NAMOR.
WAIT.
DID YOU KNOW?
WHEN YOU BROUGHT ME HERE...DID YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN?
...
I WANTED TO MAKE THE SACRIFICE.
TO SAVE KATAW'S WORLD...
...AND UNDERMINE HER RULE. FROM THERE, I COULD HAVE FORCED AN ALLIANCE--USED THE VODANI TO FURTHER MY ENDS.
BUT SHE WAS RIGHT. I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THEIR CULTURE.
I WAS ARROGANT, AS EVER. AND... AS EVER...

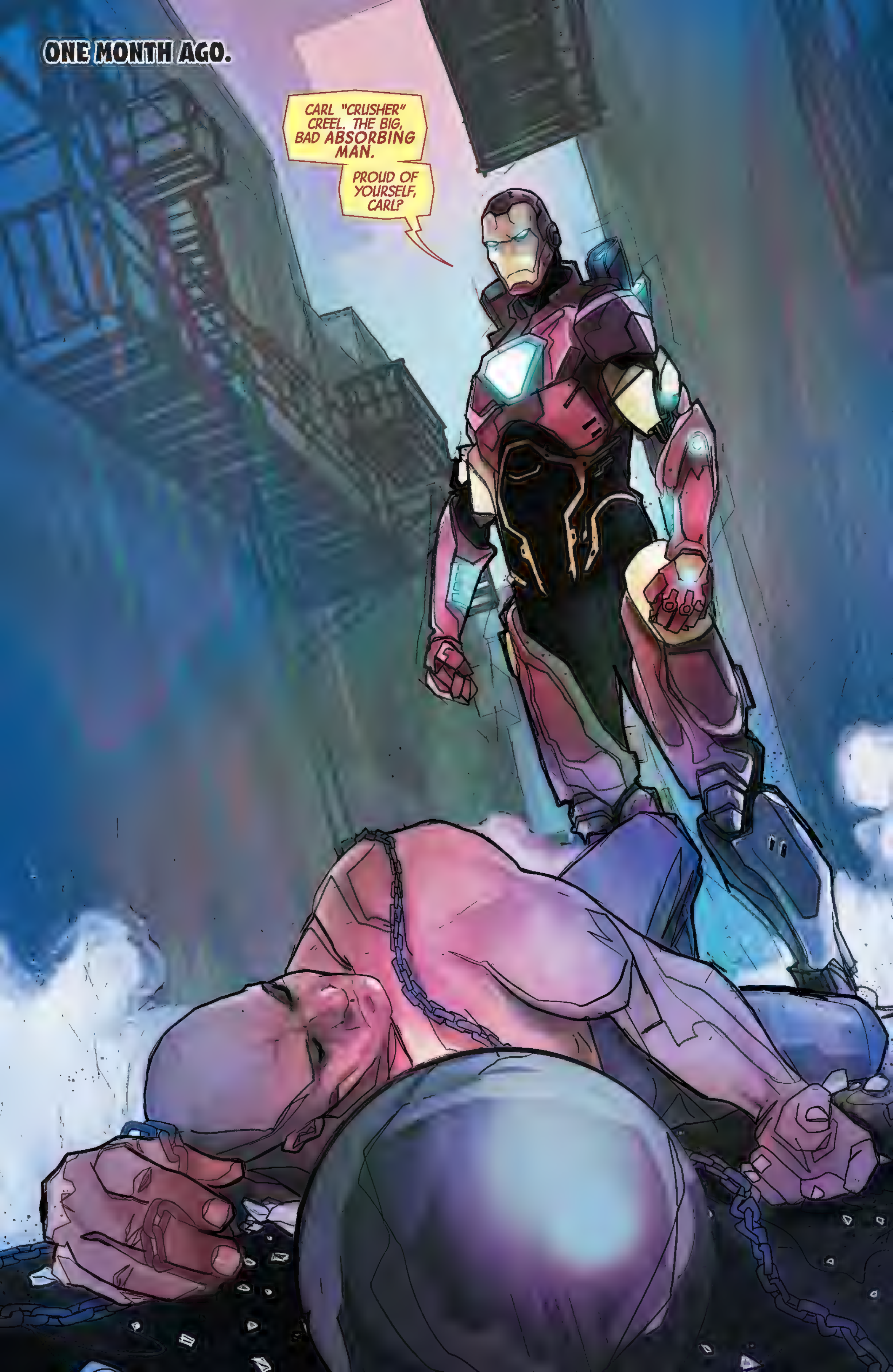

"...ANOTHER PAID THE COST FOR IT."
I HAVE RETURNED, O GALACTUS.
YOU HAVE. AND I SENSE DEATH ON YOU, HERALD.
A LIFE SPENT TO GIVE YOU THE ENERGY YOU NEEDED...
I...WAS GIVEN NO CHOICE. I PROTESTED, BUT NO ONE HEARD ME.
FOR ALL MY POWER, I WAS TREATED AS...ONLY POWER. AS THE DEUS EX MACHINA IN SOME GREAT DRAMA OF WORLDS.
WITHOUT MY BIDDING. WITHOUT MY CONSENT...
AH.
THEN YOU BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.
COME, NORRIN. YOU AND I HAVE FAR TO GO TOGETHER YET.
AND THERE IS WORK TO BE DONE.
THE TRAIN ROLLS ON.

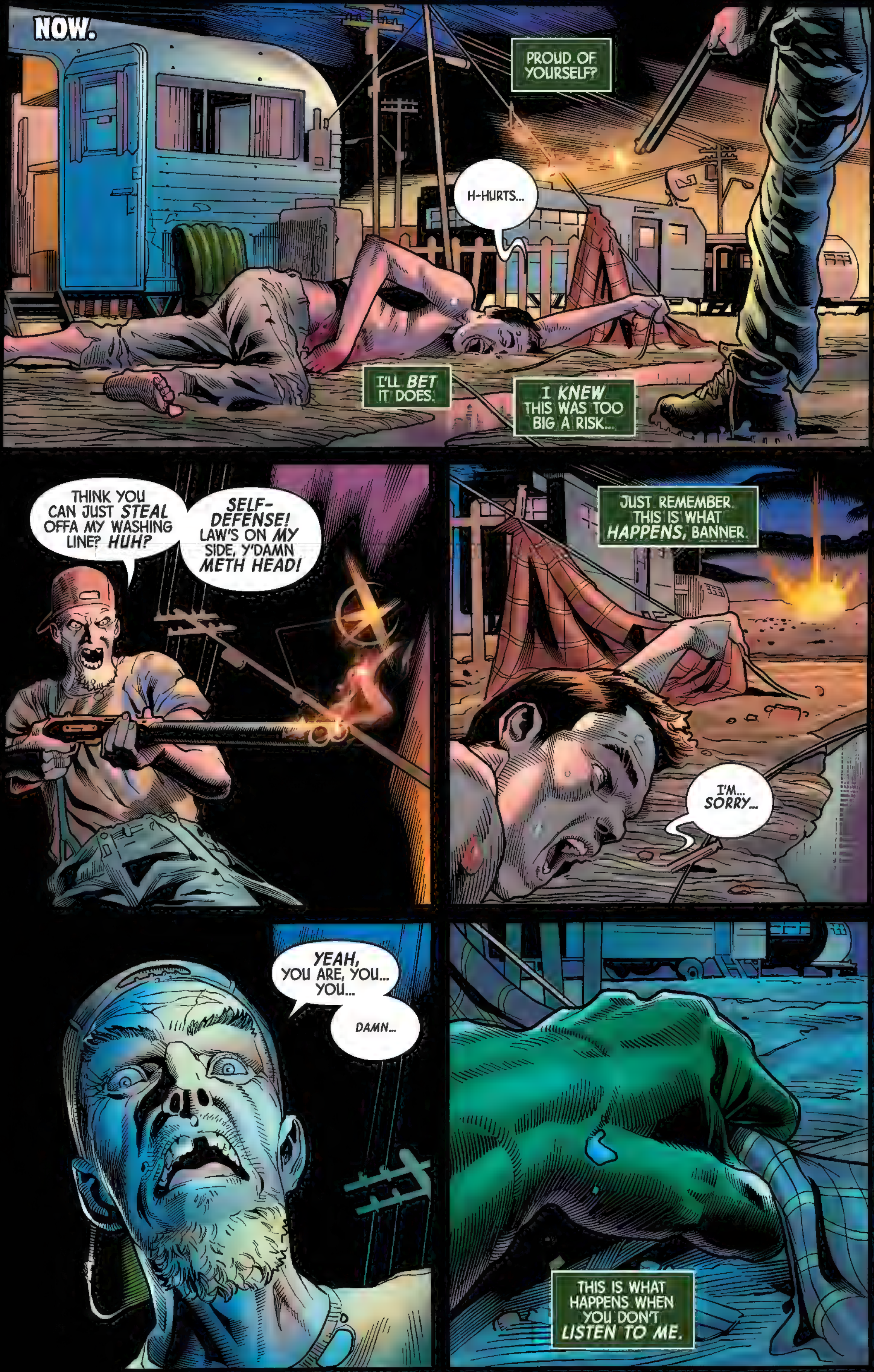

AND HOPE IS LOST.
THERE. THE HULK IS HOME AND DRY.
EVERYONE'S WHERE THEY BELONG...
...INCLUDING YOU.
I KNOW YOU THINK YOU'RE TRICKING ME SOMEHOW, DOCTOR.
YOU SEE MY DOMAIN AS SOME SAFE HARBOR FOR YOUR TIME-LOST SOUL. YOU THINK YOU MIGHT ESCAPE...AND LIVE AGAIN...
BUT YOU'VE TRICKED YOURSELF. THERE'S NO ESCAPE.
YOU ARE POWERLESS, DEAD AND DAMNED--NO LONGER EVEN THE TRUE STEPHEN STRANGE. NOBODY WILL BOTHER TO REMEMBER YOU.
NO TEAM IS COMING TO SAVE YOU...
FORTUNATELY...
...I HAVE A PLAN.

9

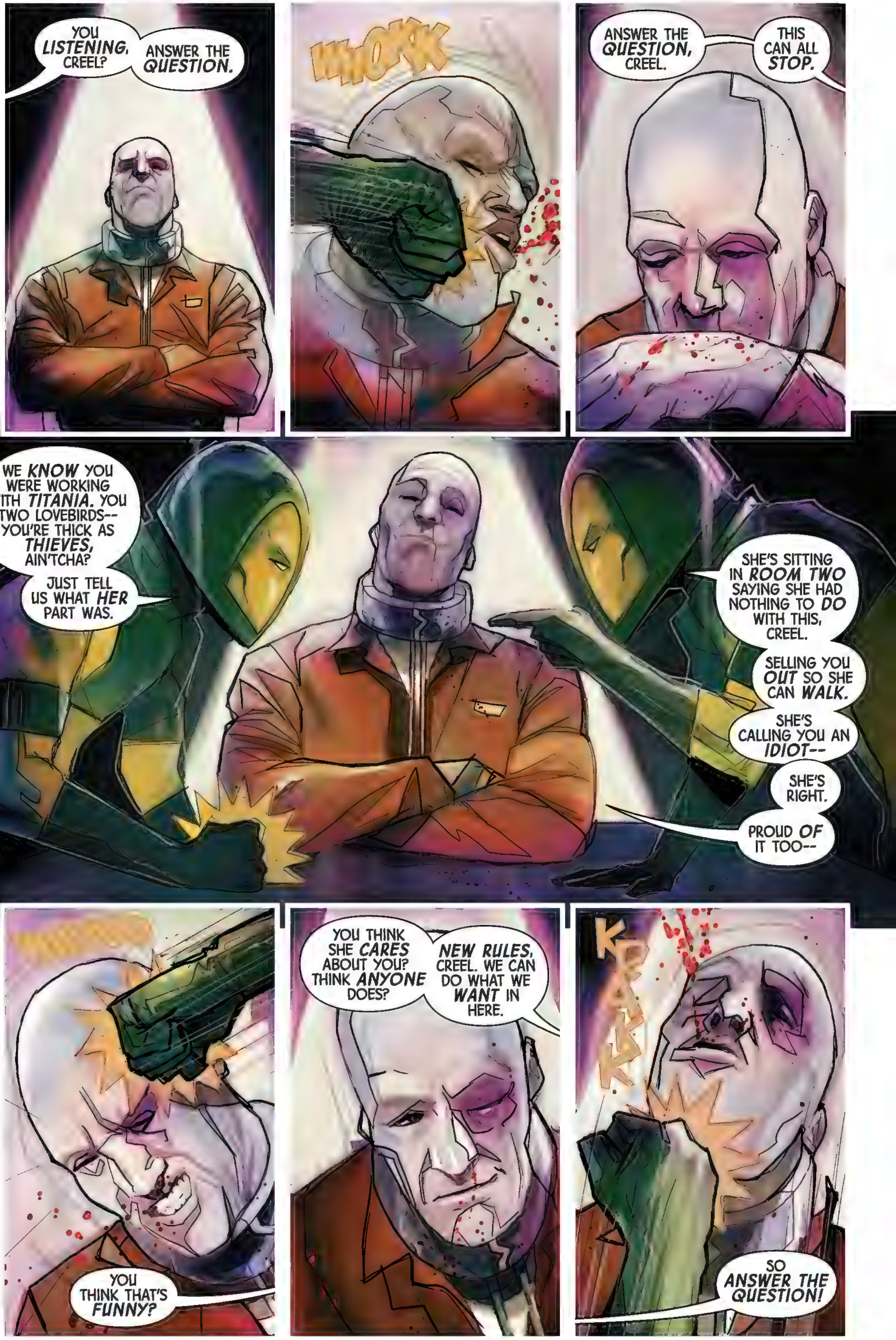
"WE ARE EACH OUR OWN DEVIL, AND WE MAKE THIS WORLD OUR HELL."

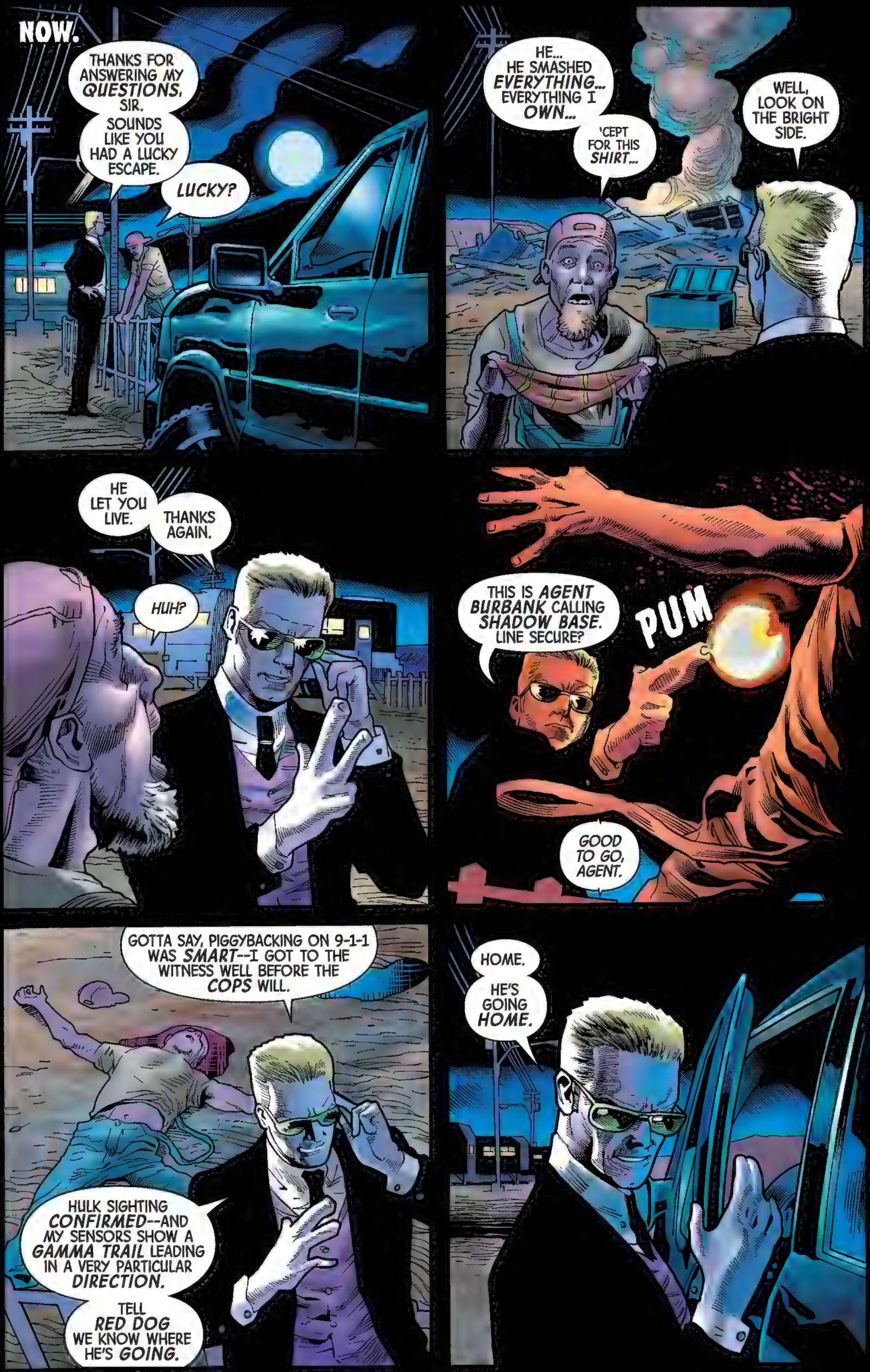
– OSCAR WILDE
"THE DUCHESS OF PADUA"

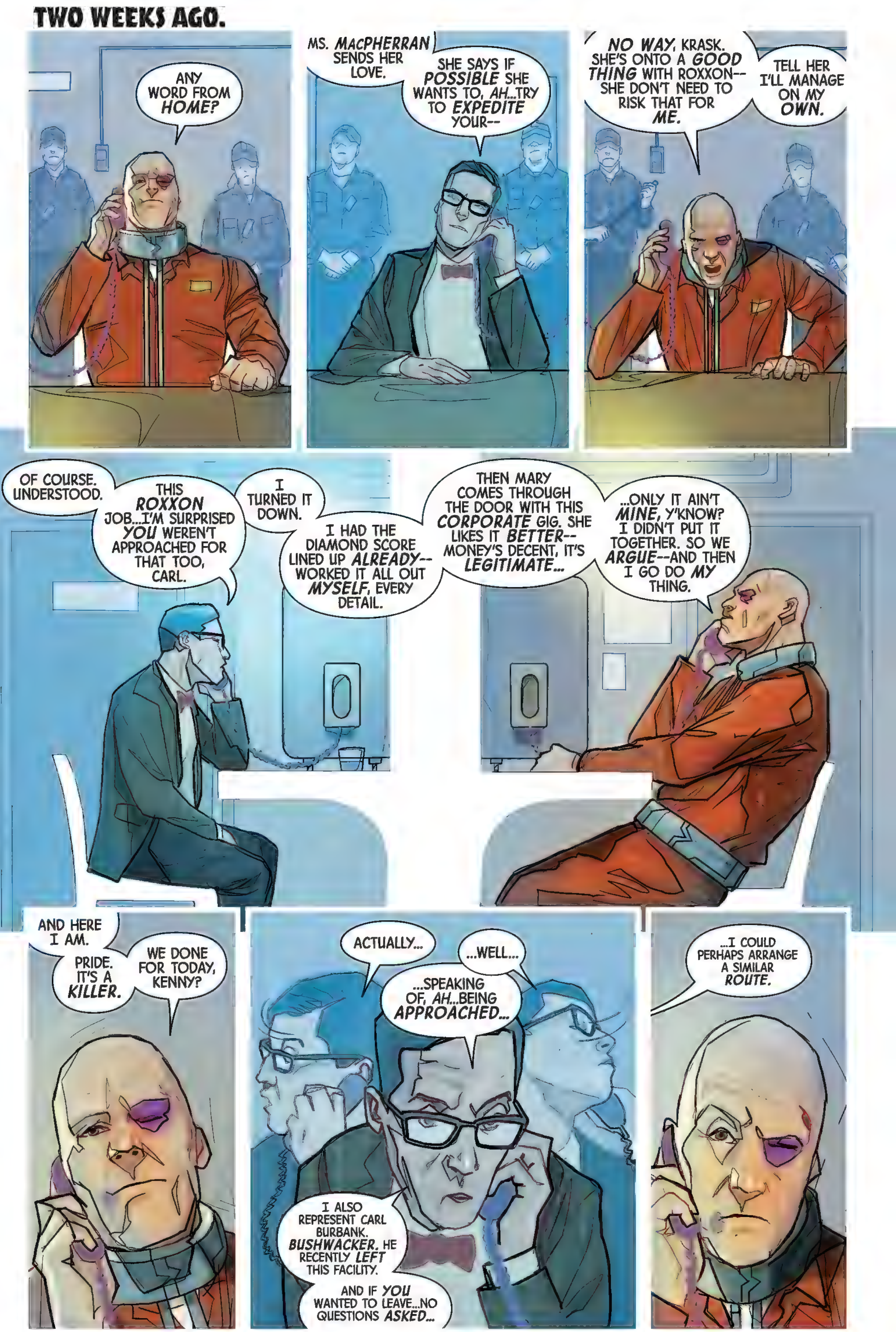

ONE MONTH AGO.
CARL "CRUSHER" CREEL. THE BIG, BAD ABSORBING MAN.
PROUD OF YOURSELF, CARL?

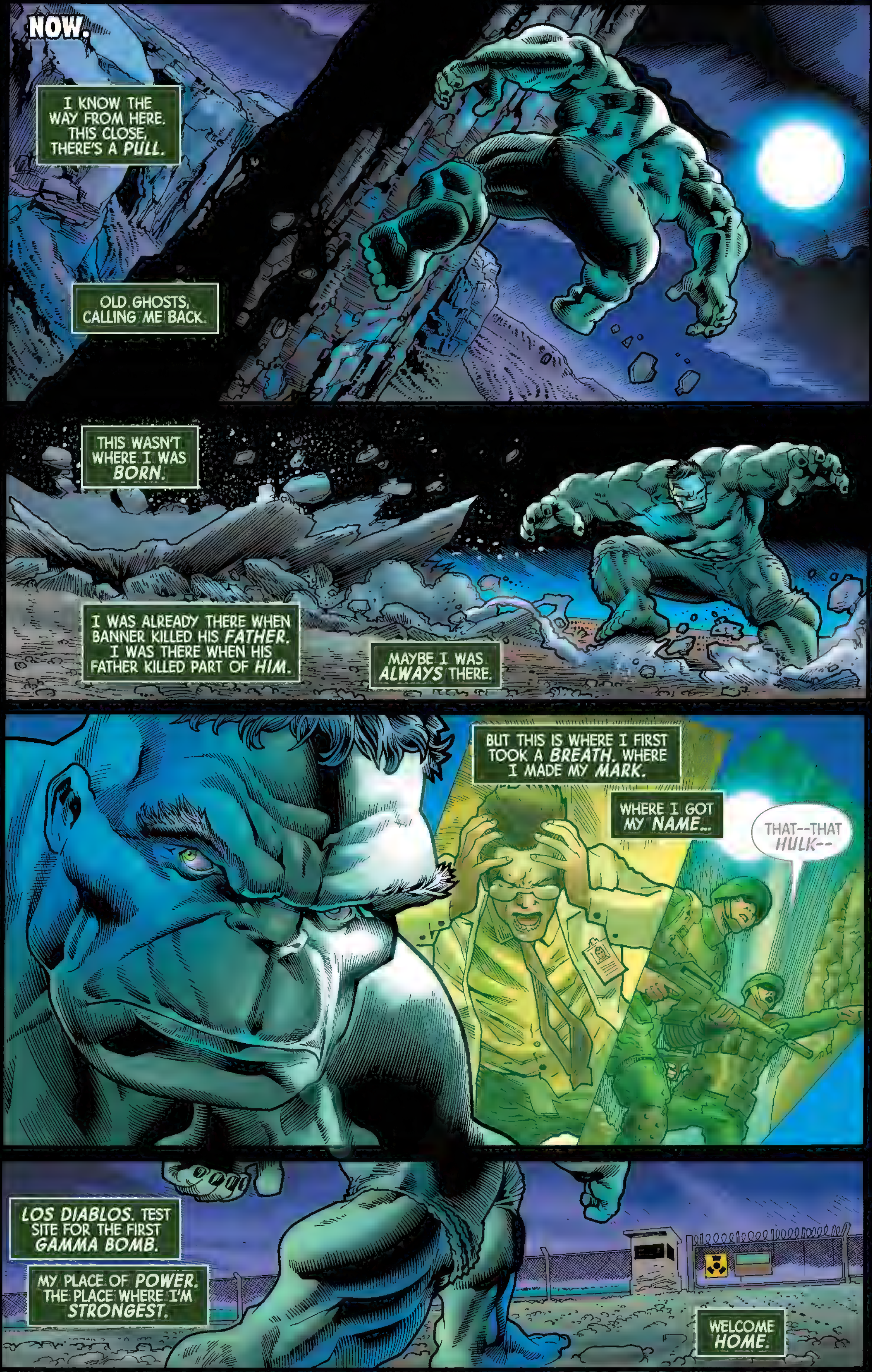

NOW.
PROUD OF YOURSELF?
H-HURTS...
I'LL *BET* IT DOES.
I *KNEW* THIS WAS TOO BIG A RISK...
THINK YOU CAN JUST *STEAL* OFFA MY WASHING LINE? *HUH?*
SELF-DEFENSE! LAW'S ON *MY* SIDE, Y'DAMN *METH HEAD!*
JUST REMEMBER. THIS IS WHAT *HAPPENS,* BANNER.
I'M... *SORRY*...
YEAH, YOU ARE, YOU... YOU...
DAMN...
THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T *LISTEN TO ME.*

ONE MONTH AGO.

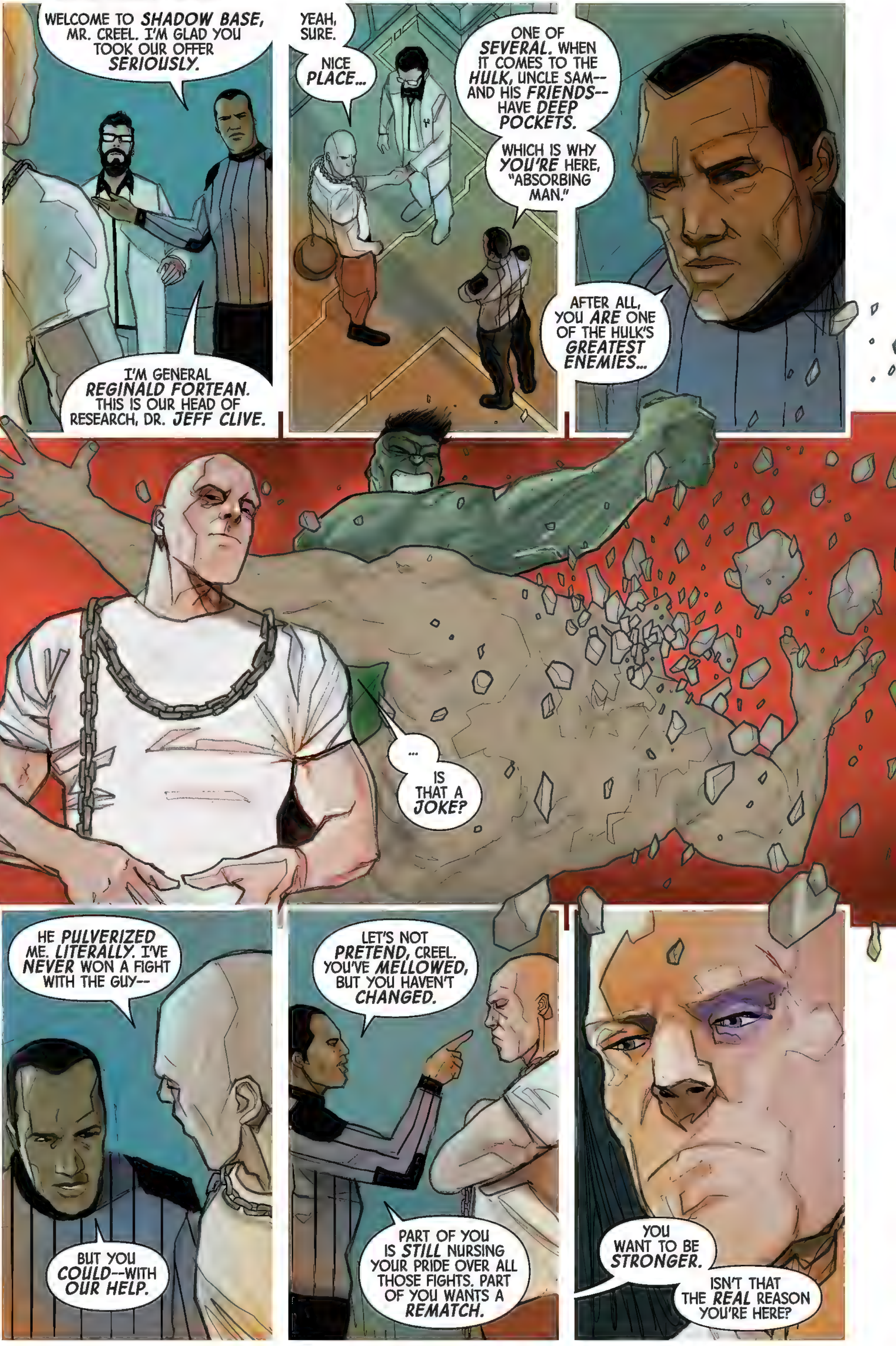

YOU *LISTENING*, CREEL?
ANSWER THE *QUESTION.*
WHOKK
ANSWER THE *QUESTION*, CREEL.
THIS CAN ALL *STOP.*
WE *KNOW* YOU WERE WORKING WITH *TITANIA.* YOU TWO LOVEBIRDS-- YOU'RE THICK AS *THIEVES*, AIN'TCHA?
JUST TELL US WHAT *HER* PART WAS.
SHE'S SITTING IN *ROOM TWO* SAYING SHE HAD NOTHING TO *DO* WITH THIS, CREEL.
SELLING YOU *OUT* SO SHE CAN *WALK.*
SHE'S CALLING YOU AN *IDIOT--*
SHE'S RIGHT.
PROUD *OF* IT TOO--
YOU THINK THAT'S *FUNNY?*
YOU THINK SHE *CARES* ABOUT YOU? THINK *ANYONE* DOES?
NEW RULES, CREEL. WE CAN DO WHAT WE *WANT* IN HERE.
SO *ANSWER THE QUESTION!*

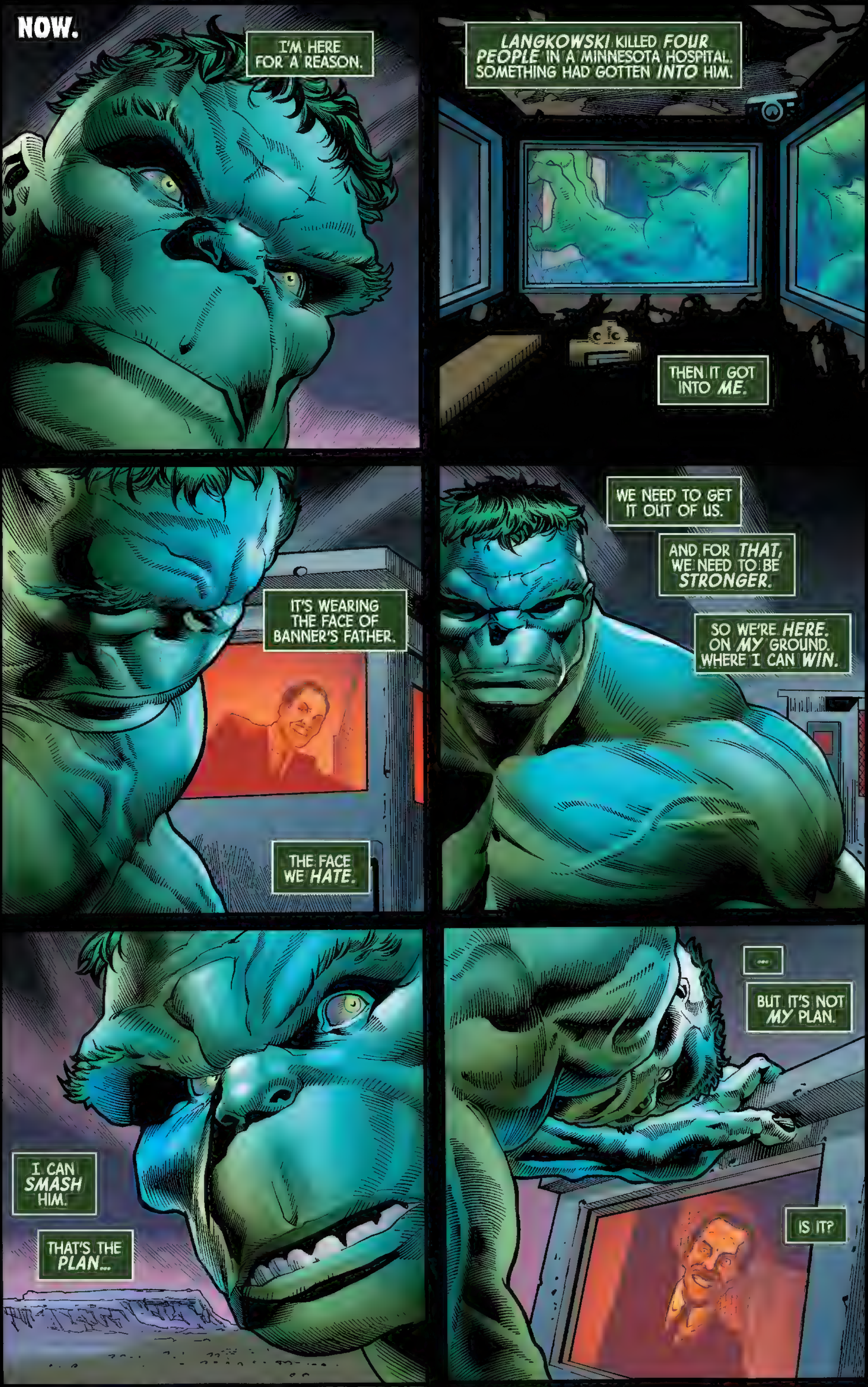

NOW.
THANKS FOR ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS, SIR.
SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAD A LUCKY ESCAPE.
LUCKY?
HE... HE SMASHED EVERYTHING... EVERYTHING I OWN...
'CEPT FOR THIS SHIRT...
WELL, LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE.
HE LET YOU LIVE.
THANKS AGAIN.
HUH?
THIS IS AGENT BURBANK CALLING SHADOW BASE. LINE SECURE?
PUM
GOOD TO GO, AGENT.
GOTTA SAY, PIGGYBACKING ON 9-1-1 WAS SMART--I GOT TO THE WITNESS WELL BEFORE THE COPS WILL.
HULK SIGHTING CONFIRMED--AND MY SENSORS SHOW A GAMMA TRAIL LEADING IN A VERY PARTICULAR DIRECTION.
TELL RED DOG WE KNOW WHERE HE'S GOING.
HOME.
HE'S GOING HOME.

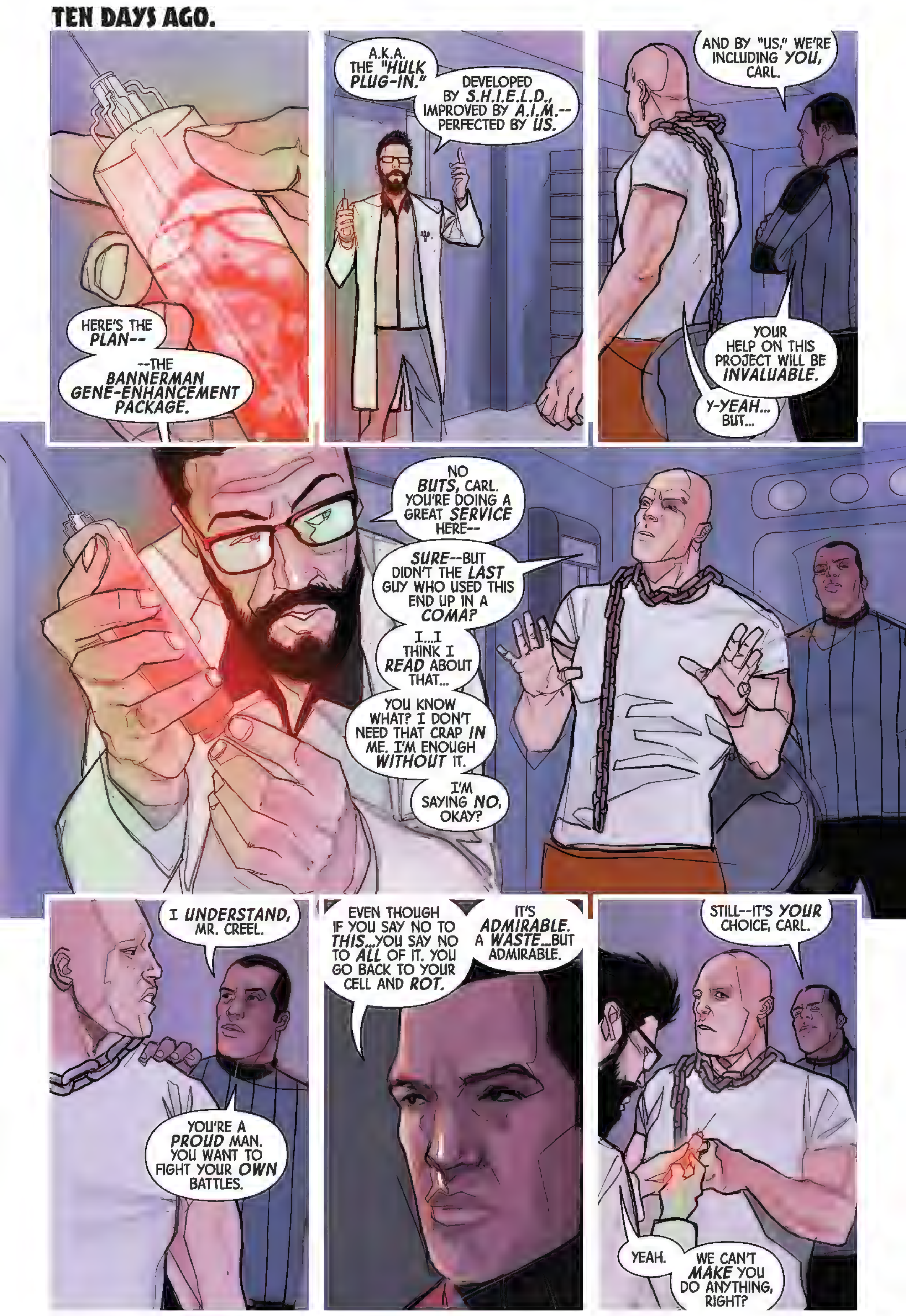

TWO WEEKS AGO.
ANY WORD FROM *HOME?*
MS. *MACPHERRAN* SENDS HER LOVE.
SHE SAYS IF *POSSIBLE* SHE WANTS TO, *AH*...TRY TO *EXPEDITE* YOUR--
NO WAY, KRASK. SHE'S ONTO A *GOOD THING* WITH ROXXON-- SHE DON'T NEED TO RISK THAT FOR *ME.*
TELL HER I'LL MANAGE ON *MY OWN.*
OF COURSE. UNDERSTOOD.
THIS *ROXXON* JOB...I'M SURPRISED *YOU* WEREN'T APPROACHED FOR THAT TOO, CARL.
I TURNED IT DOWN.
I HAD THE DIAMOND SCORE LINED UP *ALREADY*-- WORKED IT ALL OUT *MYSELF,* EVERY DETAIL.
THEN MARY COMES THROUGH THE DOOR WITH THIS *CORPORATE* GIG. SHE LIKES IT *BETTER*-- MONEY'S DECENT, IT'S *LEGITIMATE*...
...ONLY IT AIN'T *MINE,* Y'KNOW? I DIDN'T PUT IT TOGETHER. SO WE *ARGUE*--AND THEN I GO DO *MY* THING.
AND HERE I AM.
PRIDE. IT'S A *KILLER.*
WE DONE FOR TODAY, KENNY?
ACTUALLY...
...WELL...
...SPEAKING OF, *AH*...BEING *APPROACHED*...
I ALSO REPRESENT CARL BURBANK. *BUSHWACKER.* HE RECENTLY *LEFT* THIS FACILITY.
AND IF *YOU* WANTED TO LEAVE...NO QUESTIONS *ASKED*...
...I COULD PERHAPS ARRANGE A SIMILAR *ROUTE.*

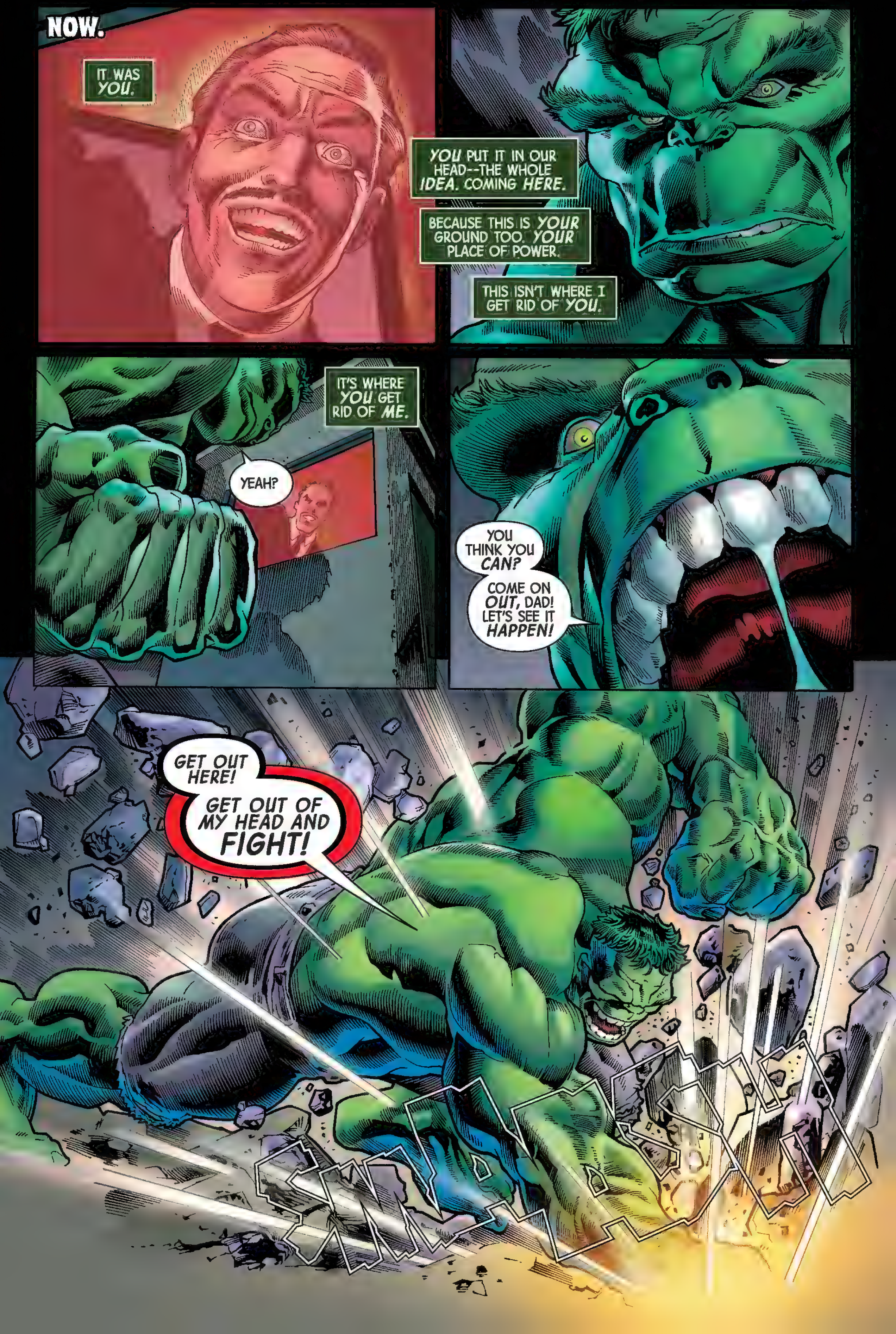

NOW.
I KNOW THE WAY FROM HERE. THIS CLOSE, THERE'S A *PULL*.
OLD GHOSTS, CALLING ME BACK.
THIS WASN'T WHERE I WAS *BORN*.
I WAS ALREADY THERE WHEN BANNER KILLED HIS *FATHER*. I WAS THERE WHEN HIS FATHER KILLED PART OF *HIM*.
MAYBE I WAS *ALWAYS* THERE.
BUT THIS IS WHERE I FIRST TOOK A *BREATH*. WHERE I MADE MY *MARK*.
WHERE I GOT MY *NAME*...
THAT--THAT *HULK*--
LOS DIABLOS. TEST SITE FOR THE FIRST *GAMMA BOMB*.
MY PLACE OF *POWER*. THE PLACE WHERE I'M *STRONGEST*.
WELCOME *HOME*.

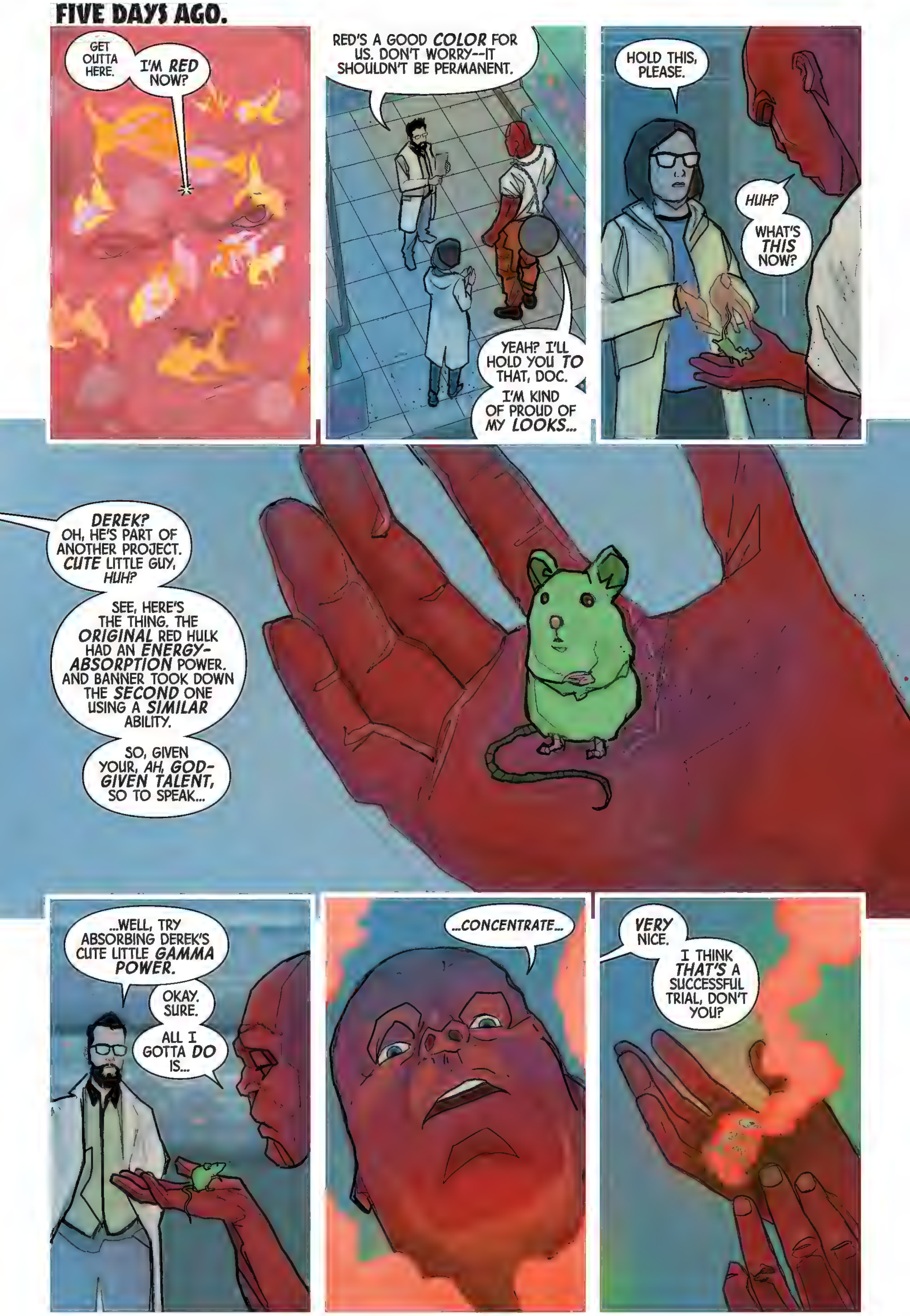
ELEVEN DAYS AGO.

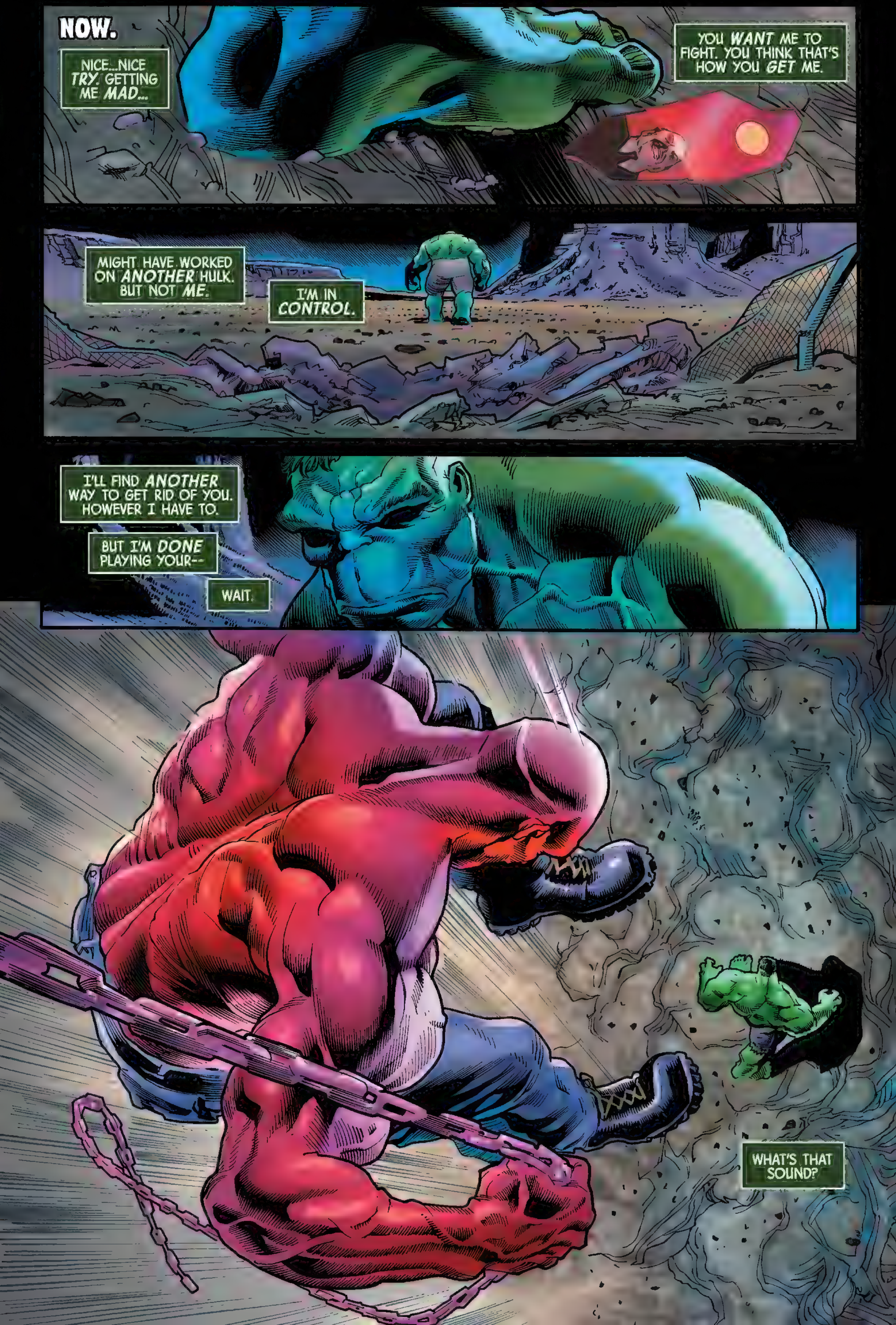

WELCOME TO SHADOW BASE, MR. CREEL. I'M GLAD YOU TOOK OUR OFFER SERIOUSLY.
I'M GENERAL REGINALD FORTEAN. THIS IS OUR HEAD OF RESEARCH, DR. JEFF CLIVE.
YEAH, SURE.
NICE PLACE...
ONE OF SEVERAL. WHEN IT COMES TO THE HULK, UNCLE SAM--AND HIS FRIENDS--HAVE DEEP POCKETS.
WHICH IS WHY YOU'RE HERE, "ABSORBING MAN."
AFTER ALL, YOU ARE ONE OF THE HULK'S GREATEST ENEMIES...
... IS THAT A JOKE?
HE PULVERIZED ME. LITERALLY. I'VE NEVER WON A FIGHT WITH THE GUY--
BUT YOU COULD--WITH OUR HELP.
LET'S NOT PRETEND, CREEL. YOU'VE MELLOWED, BUT YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED.
PART OF YOU IS STILL NURSING YOUR PRIDE OVER ALL THOSE FIGHTS. PART OF YOU WANTS A REMATCH.
YOU WANT TO BE STRONGER.
ISN'T THAT THE REAL REASON YOU'RE HERE?

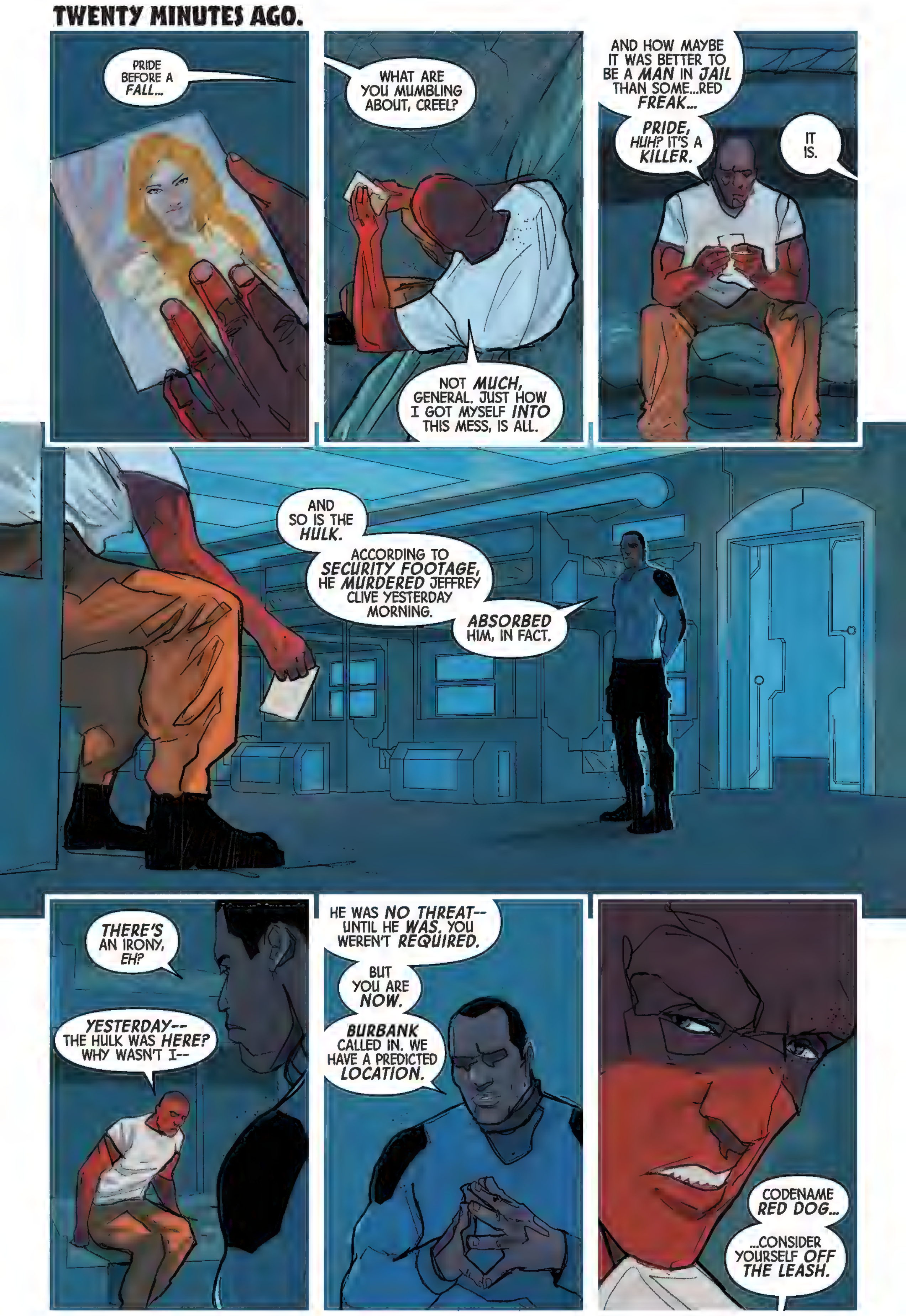

NOW.
I'M HERE FOR A REASON.
LANGKOWSKI KILLED FOUR PEOPLE IN A MINNESOTA HOSPITAL. SOMETHING HAD GOTTEN INTO HIM.
THEN IT GOT INTO ME.
IT'S WEARING THE FACE OF BANNER'S FATHER.
THE FACE WE HATE.
WE NEED TO GET IT OUT OF US.
AND FOR THAT, WE NEED TO BE STRONGER.
SO WE'RE HERE. ON MY GROUND. WHERE I CAN WIN.
I CAN SMASH HIM.
THAT'S THE PLAN...
...
BUT IT'S NOT MY PLAN.
IS IT?

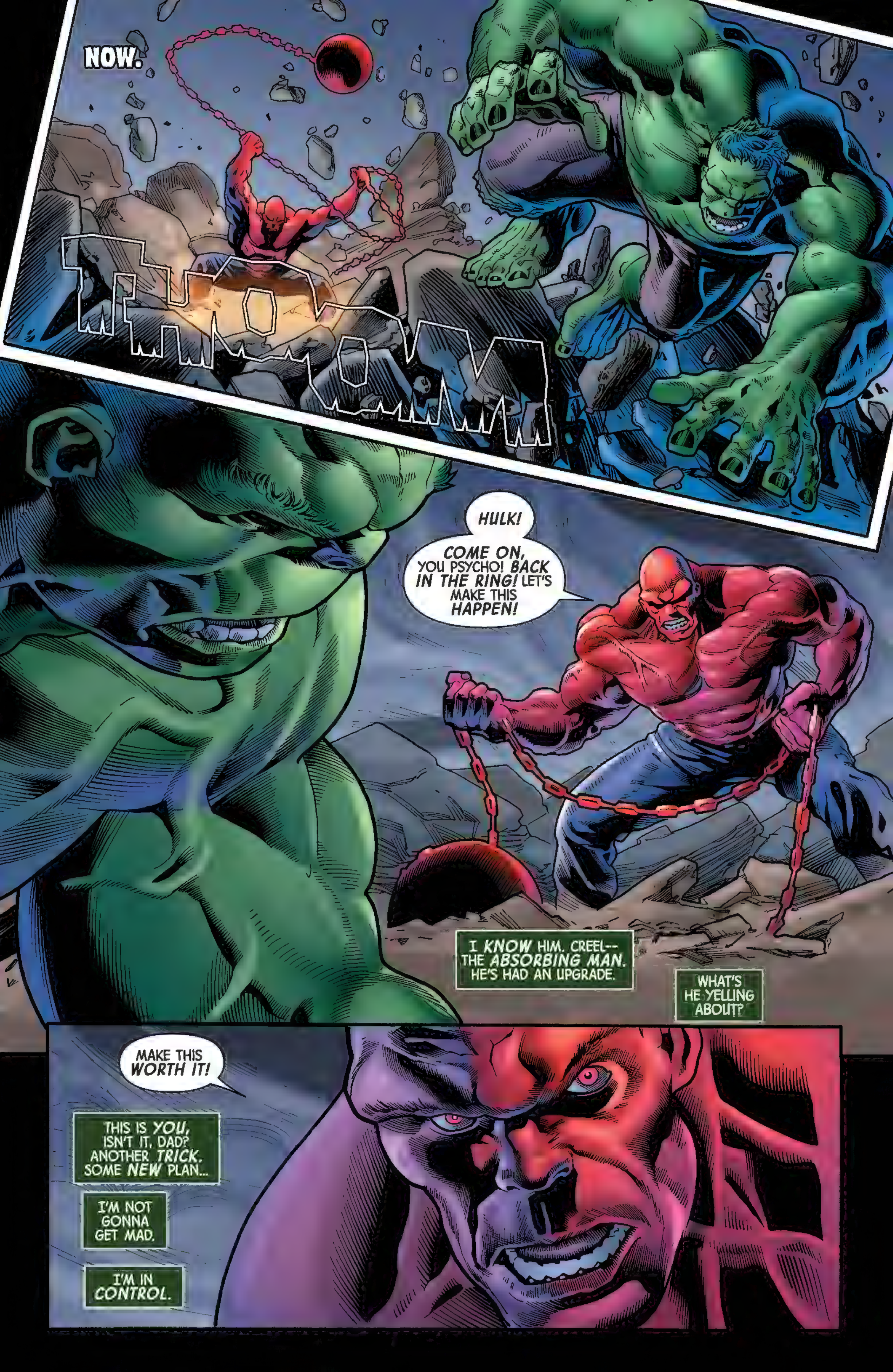

TEN DAYS AGO.
HERE'S THE *PLAN--*
--THE *BANNERMAN GENE-ENHANCEMENT PACKAGE.*
A.K.A. THE *"HULK PLUG-IN."*
DEVELOPED BY *S.H.I.E.L.D.,* IMPROVED BY *A.I.M.--* PERFECTED BY *US.*
AND BY "US," WE'RE INCLUDING *YOU,* CARL.
YOUR HELP ON THIS PROJECT WILL BE *INVALUABLE.*
Y-YEAH... BUT...
NO *BUTS,* CARL. YOU'RE DOING A GREAT *SERVICE* HERE--
SURE--BUT DIDN'T THE *LAST* GUY WHO USED THIS END UP IN A *COMA?*
I...I THINK I *READ* ABOUT THAT...
YOU KNOW WHAT? I DON'T NEED THAT CRAP *IN* ME. I'M ENOUGH *WITHOUT* IT.
I'M SAYING *NO,* OKAY?
I *UNDERSTAND,* MR. CREEL.
YOU'RE A *PROUD* MAN. YOU WANT TO FIGHT YOUR *OWN* BATTLES.
IT'S *ADMIRABLE.* A *WASTE*...BUT ADMIRABLE.
EVEN THOUGH IF YOU SAY NO TO *THIS*...YOU SAY NO TO *ALL* OF IT. YOU GO BACK TO YOUR CELL AND *ROT.*
STILL--IT'S *YOUR* CHOICE, CARL.
YEAH.
WE CAN'T *MAKE* YOU DO ANYTHING, RIGHT?

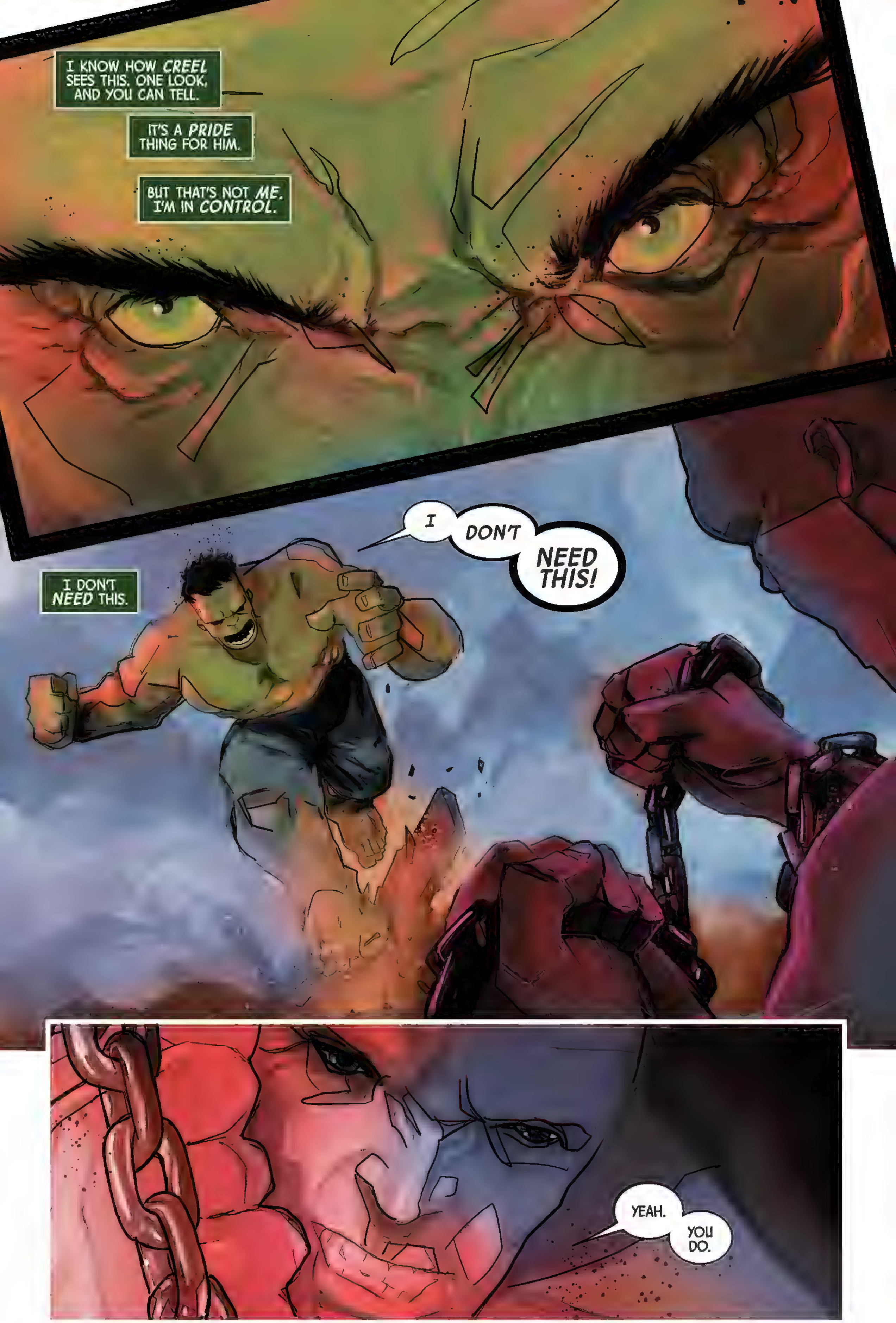

NOW.
IT WAS YOU.
YOU PUT IT IN OUR HEAD--THE WHOLE IDEA. COMING HERE.
BECAUSE THIS IS YOUR GROUND TOO. YOUR PLACE OF POWER.
THIS ISN'T WHERE I GET RID OF YOU.
IT'S WHERE YOU GET RID OF ME.
YEAH?
YOU THINK YOU CAN?
COME ON OUT, DAD! LET'S SEE IT HAPPEN!
GET OUT HERE!
GET OUT OF MY HEAD AND FIGHT!
SMASH

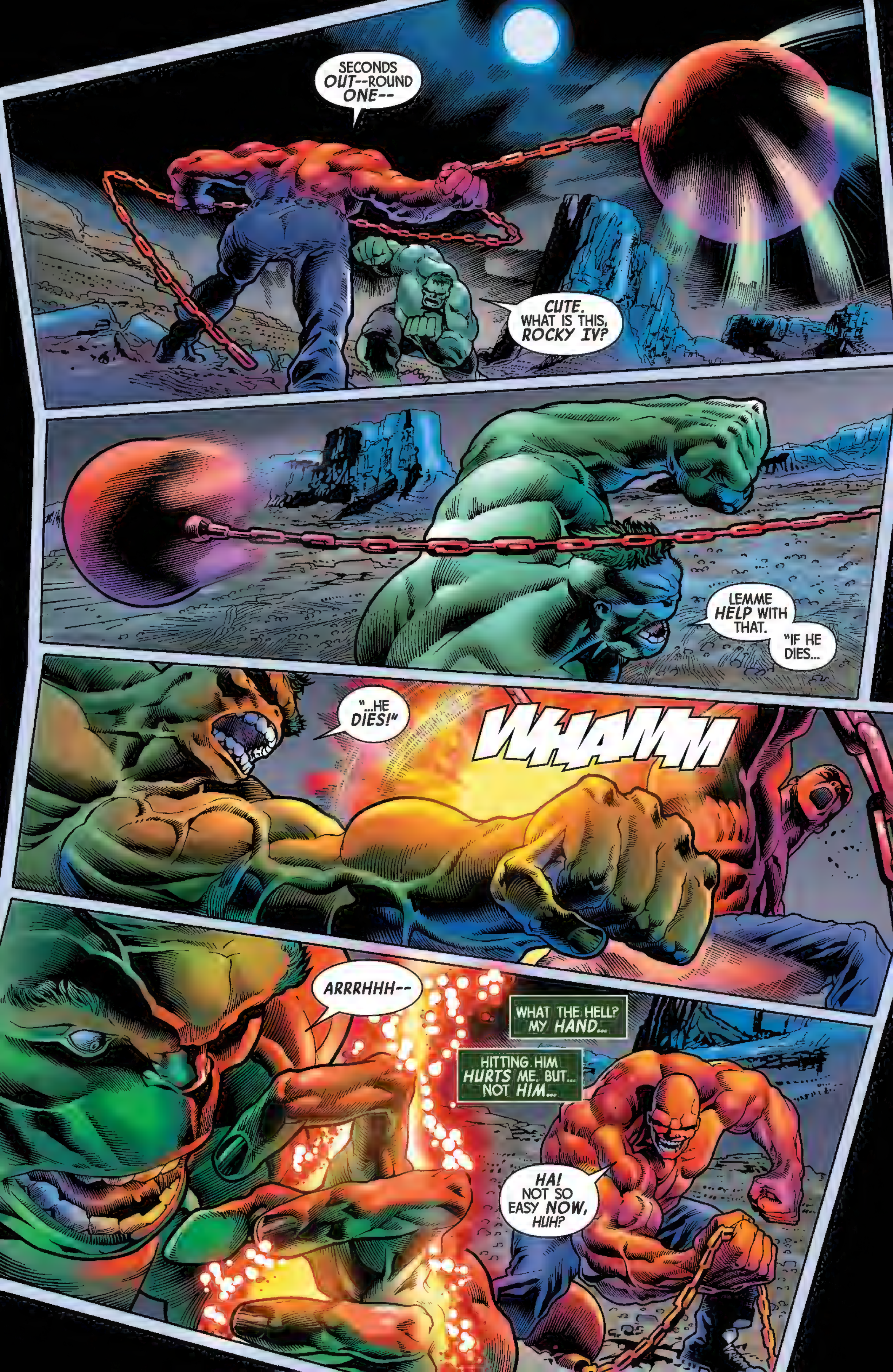

FIVE DAYS AGO.
GET OUTTA HERE.
I'M *RED* NOW?
RED'S A GOOD *COLOR* FOR US. DON'T WORRY--IT SHOULDN'T BE PERMANENT.
YEAH? I'LL HOLD YOU *TO* THAT, DOC.
I'M KIND OF PROUD OF MY *LOOKS*...
HOLD THIS, PLEASE.
HUH?
WHAT'S *THIS* NOW?
DEREK? OH, HE'S PART OF ANOTHER PROJECT. *CUTE* LITTLE GUY, *HUH?*
SEE, HERE'S THE THING. THE *ORIGINAL* RED HULK HAD AN *ENERGY-ABSORPTION* POWER. AND BANNER TOOK DOWN THE *SECOND* ONE USING A *SIMILAR* ABILITY.
SO, GIVEN YOUR, *AH, GOD-GIVEN TALENT,* SO TO SPEAK...
...WELL, TRY ABSORBING DEREK'S CUTE LITTLE *GAMMA POWER.*
OKAY. SURE.
ALL I GOTTA *DO* IS...
...CONCENTRATE...
VERY NICE.
I THINK *THAT'S* A SUCCESSFUL TRIAL, DON'T YOU?

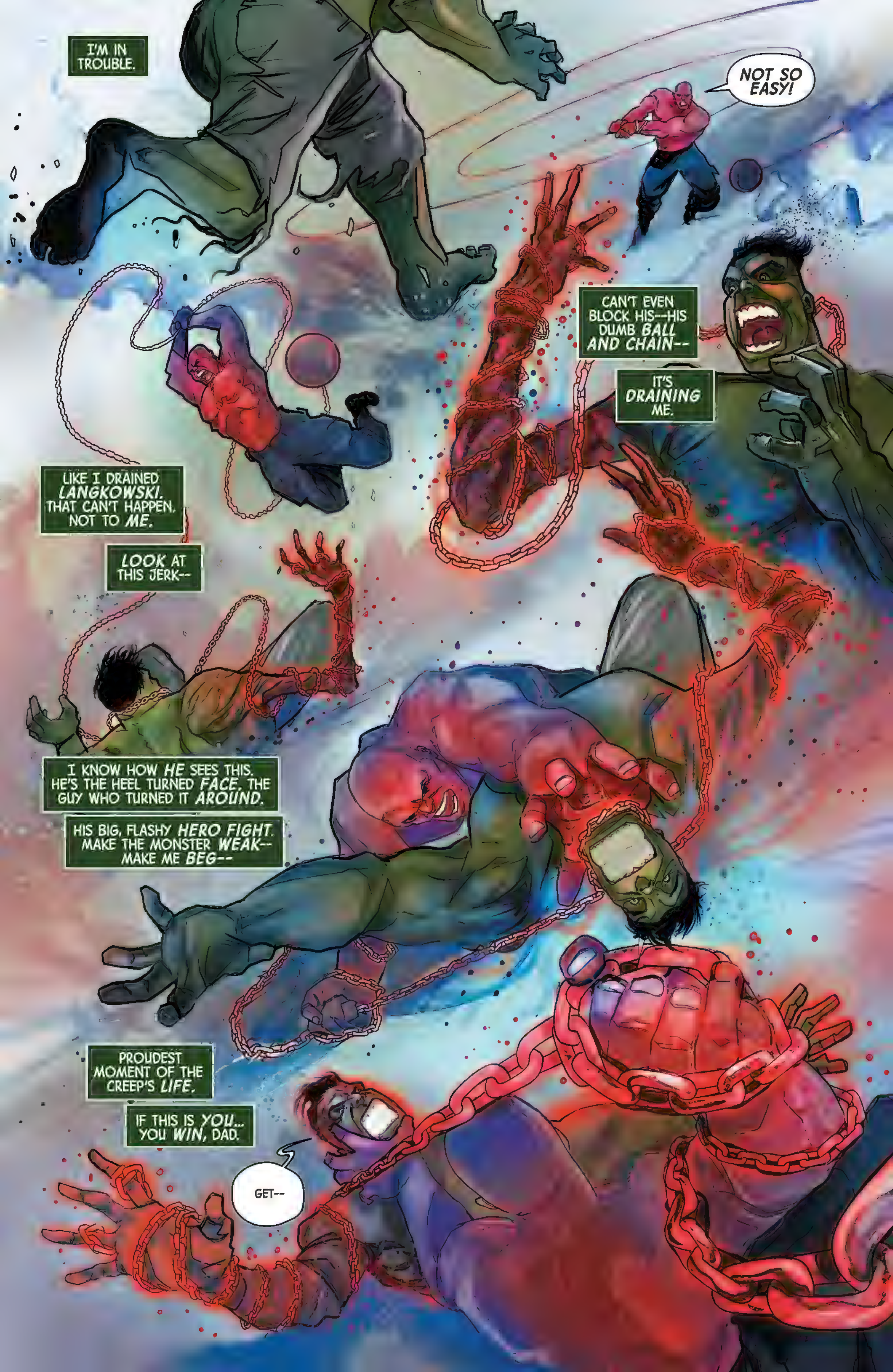

NOW.
NICE...NICE *TRY.* GETTING ME *MAD...*
YOU *WANT* ME TO FIGHT. YOU THINK THAT'S HOW YOU *GET* ME.
MIGHT HAVE WORKED ON *ANOTHER* HULK. BUT NOT *ME.*
I'M IN *CONTROL.*
I'LL FIND *ANOTHER* WAY TO GET RID OF YOU. HOWEVER I HAVE TO.
BUT I'M *DONE* PLAYING YOUR--
WAIT.
WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

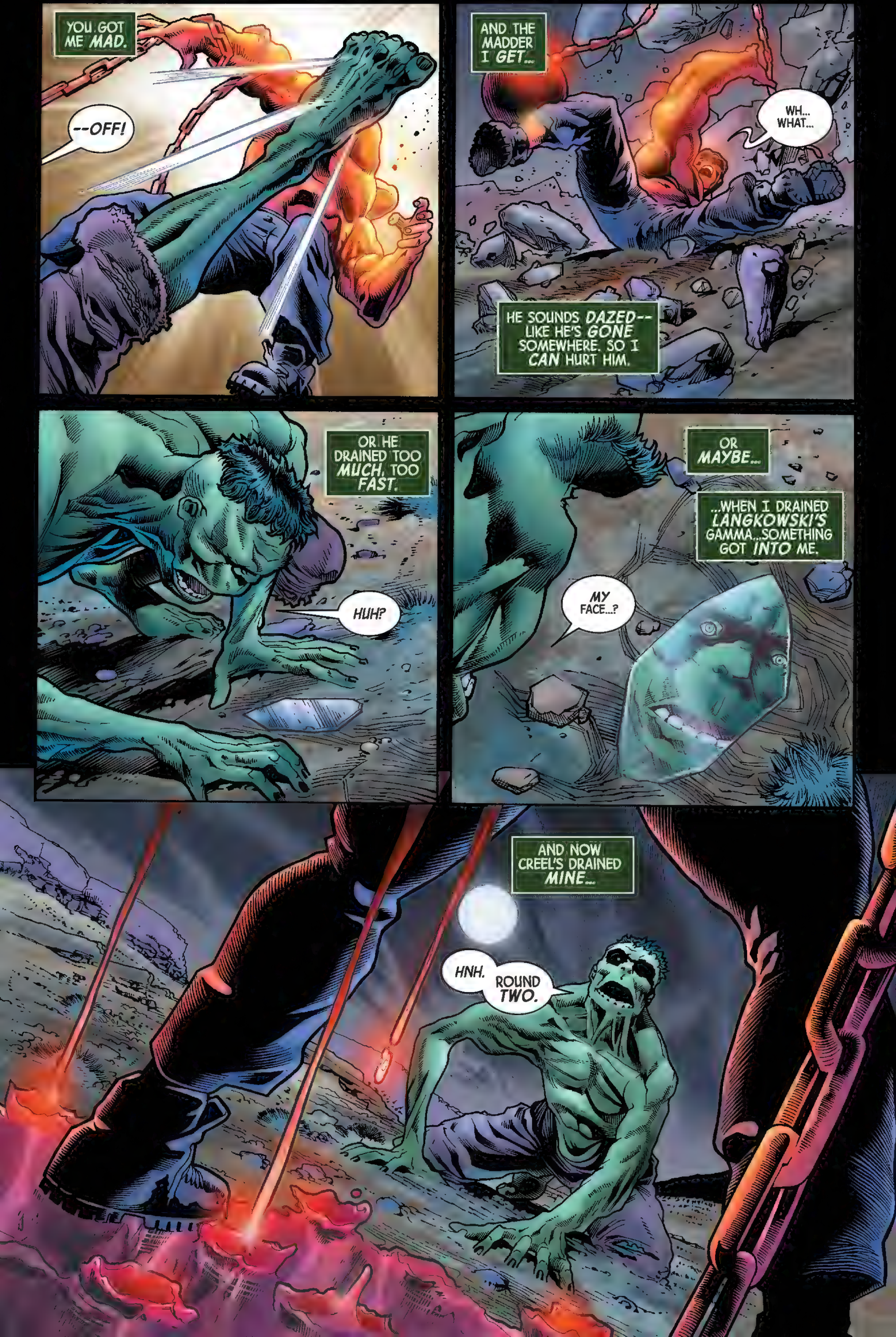

TWENTY MINUTES AGO.
PRIDE BEFORE A *FALL*...
WHAT ARE YOU MUMBLING ABOUT, CREEL?
NOT *MUCH*, GENERAL. JUST HOW I GOT MYSELF *INTO* THIS MESS, IS ALL.
AND HOW MAYBE IT WAS BETTER TO BE A *MAN* IN *JAIL* THAN SOME...RED *FREAK*...
PRIDE, HUH? IT'S A *KILLER*.
IT IS.
AND SO IS THE *HULK*.
ACCORDING TO *SECURITY FOOTAGE*, HE *MURDERED* JEFFREY CLIVE YESTERDAY MORNING.
ABSORBED HIM, IN FACT.
THERE'S AN IRONY, *EH?*
YESTERDAY-- THE HULK WAS *HERE?* WHY WASN'T I--
HE WAS *NO THREAT*-- UNTIL HE *WAS*. YOU WEREN'T *REQUIRED*.
BUT YOU ARE *NOW*.
BURBANK CALLED IN. WE HAVE A PREDICTED *LOCATION*.
CODENAME *RED DOG*...
...CONSIDER YOURSELF *OFF THE LEASH*.

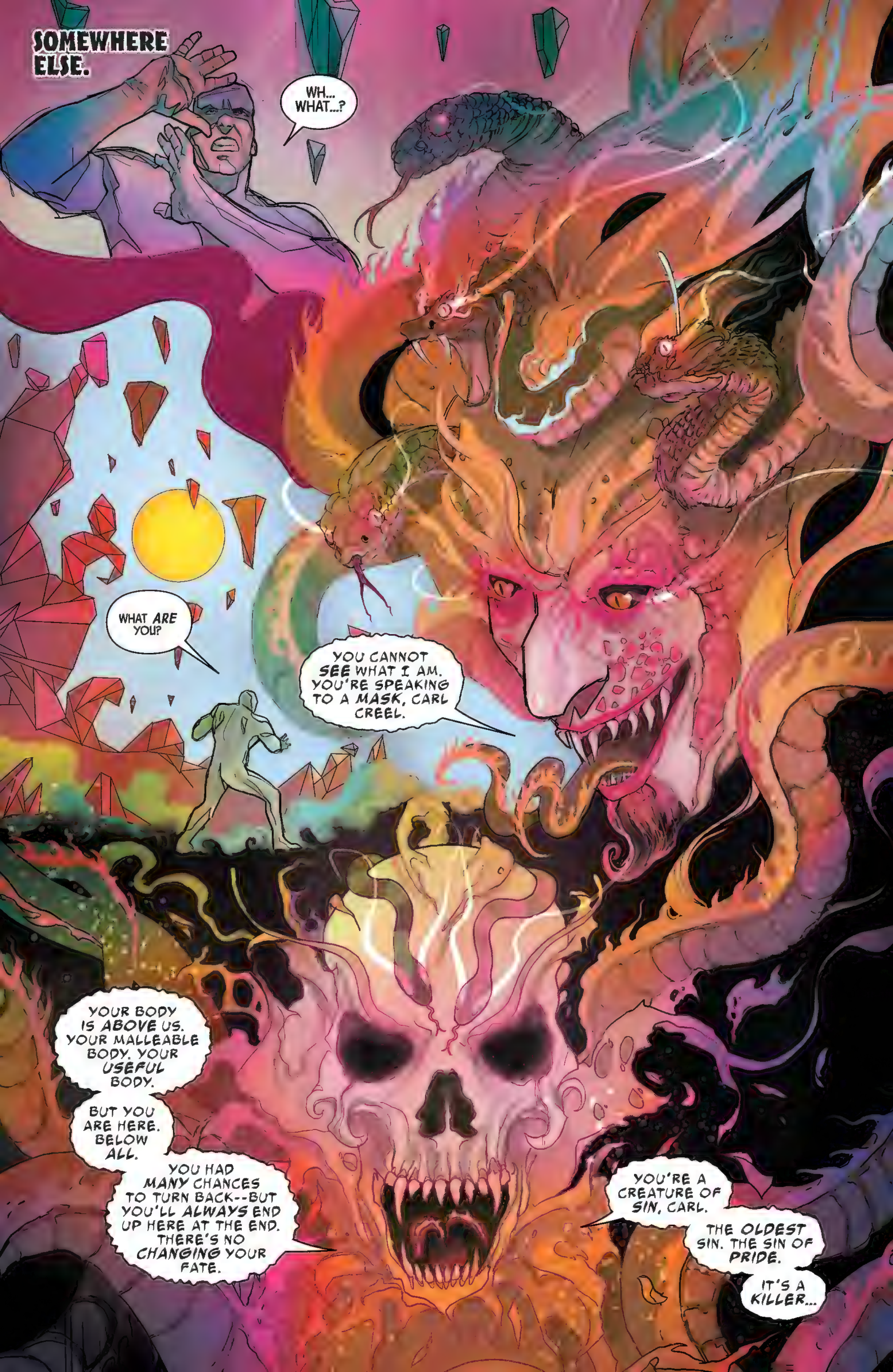

NOW.
THOOM
HULK!
COME ON, YOU PSYCHO! BACK IN THE RING! LET'S MAKE THIS HAPPEN!
I KNOW HIM. CREEL-- THE ABSORBING MAN. HE'S HAD AN UPGRADE.
WHAT'S HE YELLING ABOUT?
MAKE THIS WORTH IT!
THIS IS YOU, ISN'T IT, DAD? ANOTHER TRICK. SOME NEW PLAN...
I'M NOT GONNA GET MAD.
I'M IN CONTROL.

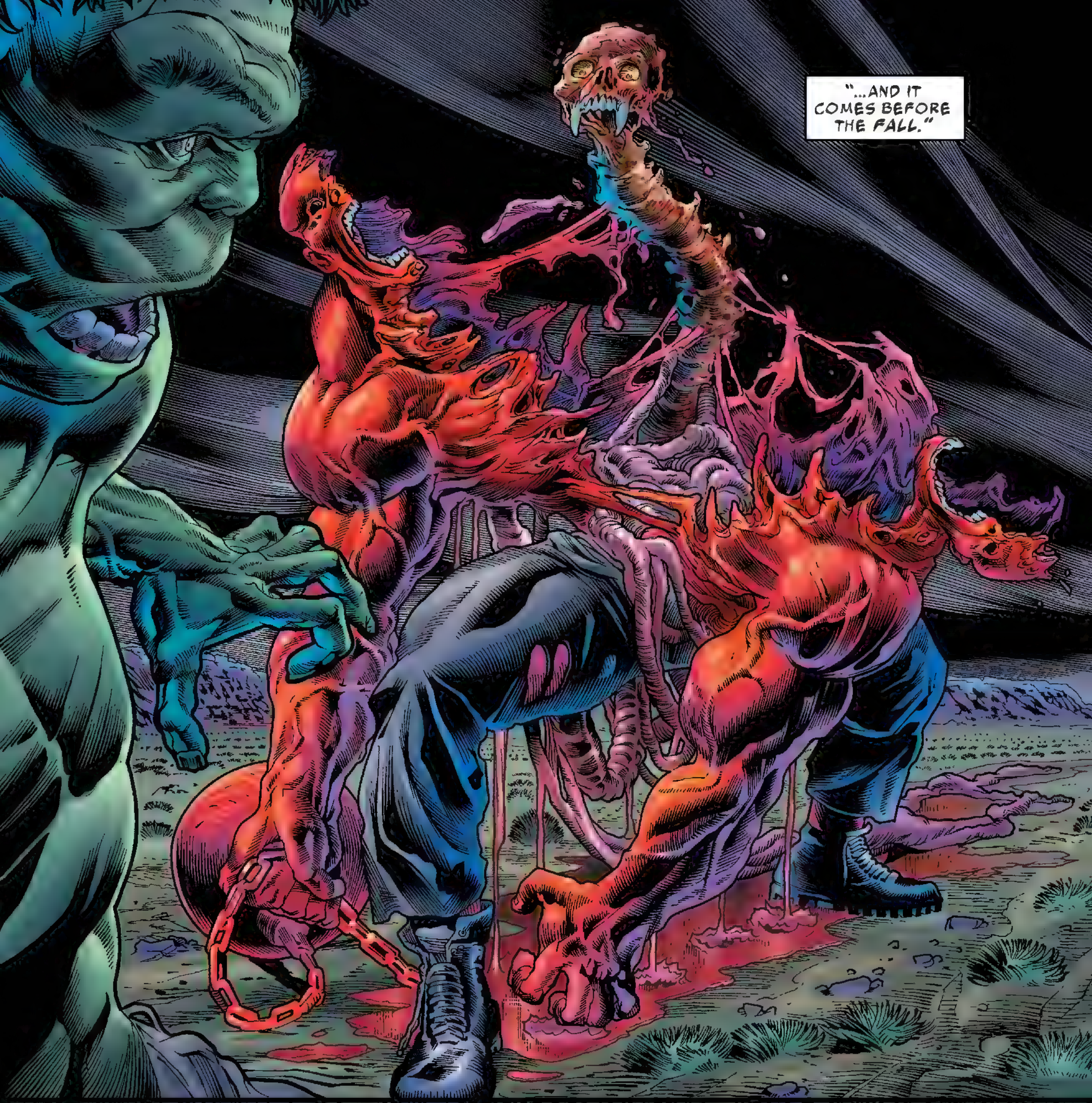

I KNOW HOW *CREEL* SEES THIS. ONE LOOK, AND YOU CAN TELL.
IT'S A *PRIDE* THING FOR HIM.
BUT THAT'S NOT *ME*. I'M IN *CONTROL*.
I DON'T *NEED* THIS.
I DON'T NEED THIS!
YEAH. YOU DO.


SECONDS OUT--ROUND ONE--
CUTE. WHAT IS THIS, ROCKY IV?
LEMME HELP WITH THAT.
"IF HE DIES...
"...HE DIES!"
WHAMM
ARRRHHH--
WHAT THE HELL? MY HAND...
HITTING HIM HURTS ME. BUT... NOT HIM...
HA! NOT SO EASY NOW, HUH?


I'M IN TROUBLE.
NOT SO EASY!
CAN'T EVEN BLOCK HIS--HIS DUMB BALL AND CHAIN--
IT'S DRAINING ME.
LIKE I DRAINED LANGKOWSKI. THAT CAN'T HAPPEN. NOT TO ME.
LOOK AT THIS JERK--
I KNOW HOW HE SEES THIS. HE'S THE HEEL TURNED FACE. THE GUY WHO TURNED IT AROUND.
HIS BIG, FLASHY HERO FIGHT. MAKE THE MONSTER WEAK-- MAKE ME BEG--
PROUDEST MOMENT OF THE CREEP'S LIFE.
IF THIS IS YOU... YOU WIN, DAD.
GET--


YOU GOT ME MAD.
--OFF!
AND THE MADDER I GET...
WH... WHAT...
HE SOUNDS DAZED-- LIKE HE'S GONE SOMEWHERE. SO I CAN HURT HIM.
OR HE DRAINED TOO MUCH, TOO FAST.
HUH?
OR MAYBE...
...WHEN I DRAINED LANGKOWSKI'S GAMMA...SOMETHING GOT INTO ME.
MY FACE...?
AND NOW CREEL'S DRAINED MINE...
HNH.
ROUND TWO.


SOMEWHERE ELSE.
WH... WHAT...?
WHAT *ARE* YOU?
YOU CANNOT *SEE* WHAT I AM. YOU'RE SPEAKING TO A *MASK*, CARL CREEL.
YOUR BODY IS *ABOVE* US. YOUR MALLEABLE BODY. YOUR *USEFUL* BODY.
BUT YOU ARE HERE. BELOW *ALL*.
YOU HAD *MANY* CHANCES TO TURN BACK--BUT YOU'LL *ALWAYS* END UP HERE AT THE END. THERE'S NO *CHANGING* YOUR FATE.
YOU'RE A CREATURE OF *SIN*, CARL.
THE *OLDEST* SIN. THE SIN OF *PRIDE*.
IT'S A *KILLER*...

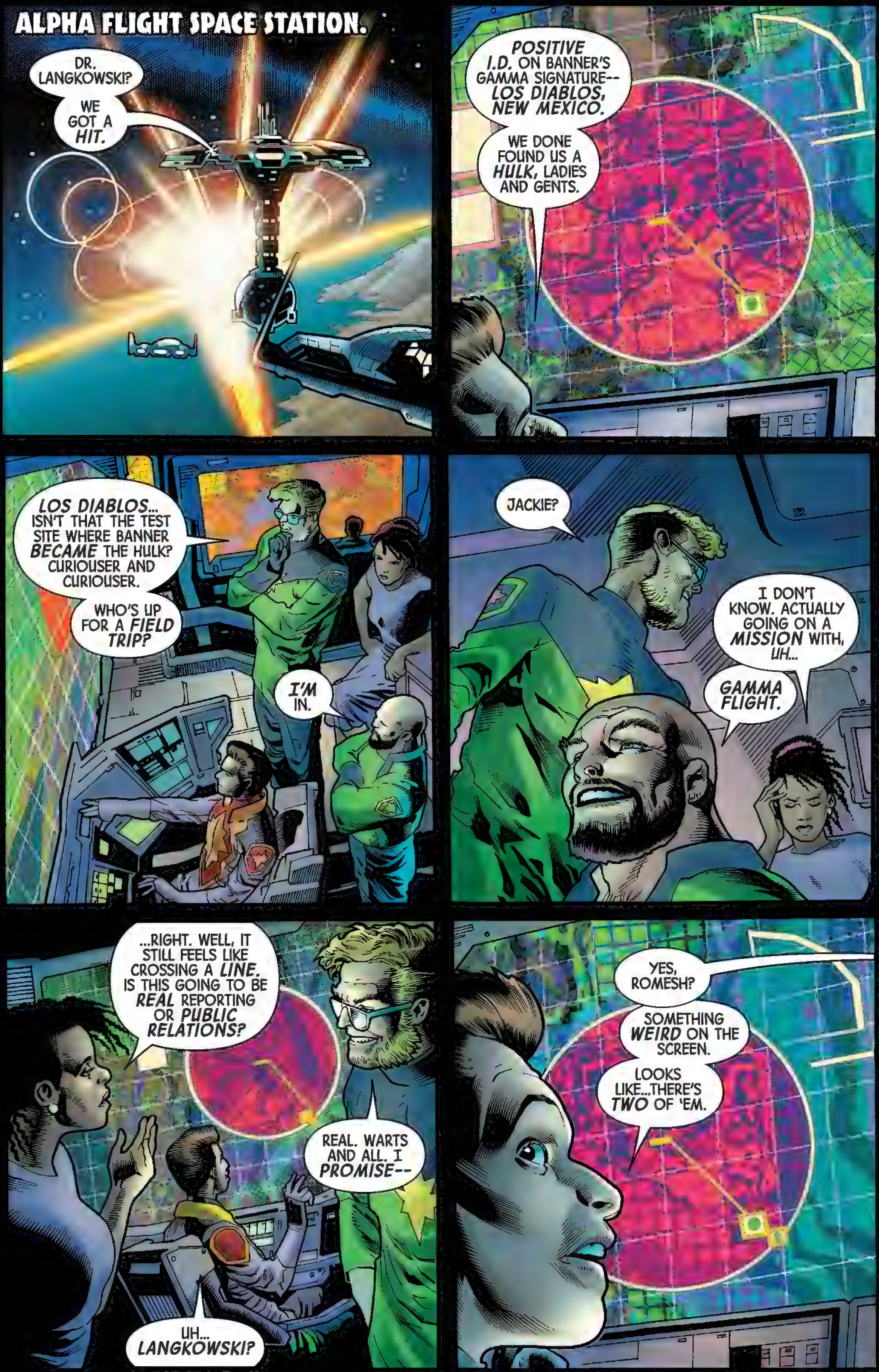

"...AND IT COMES BEFORE THE *FALL.*"

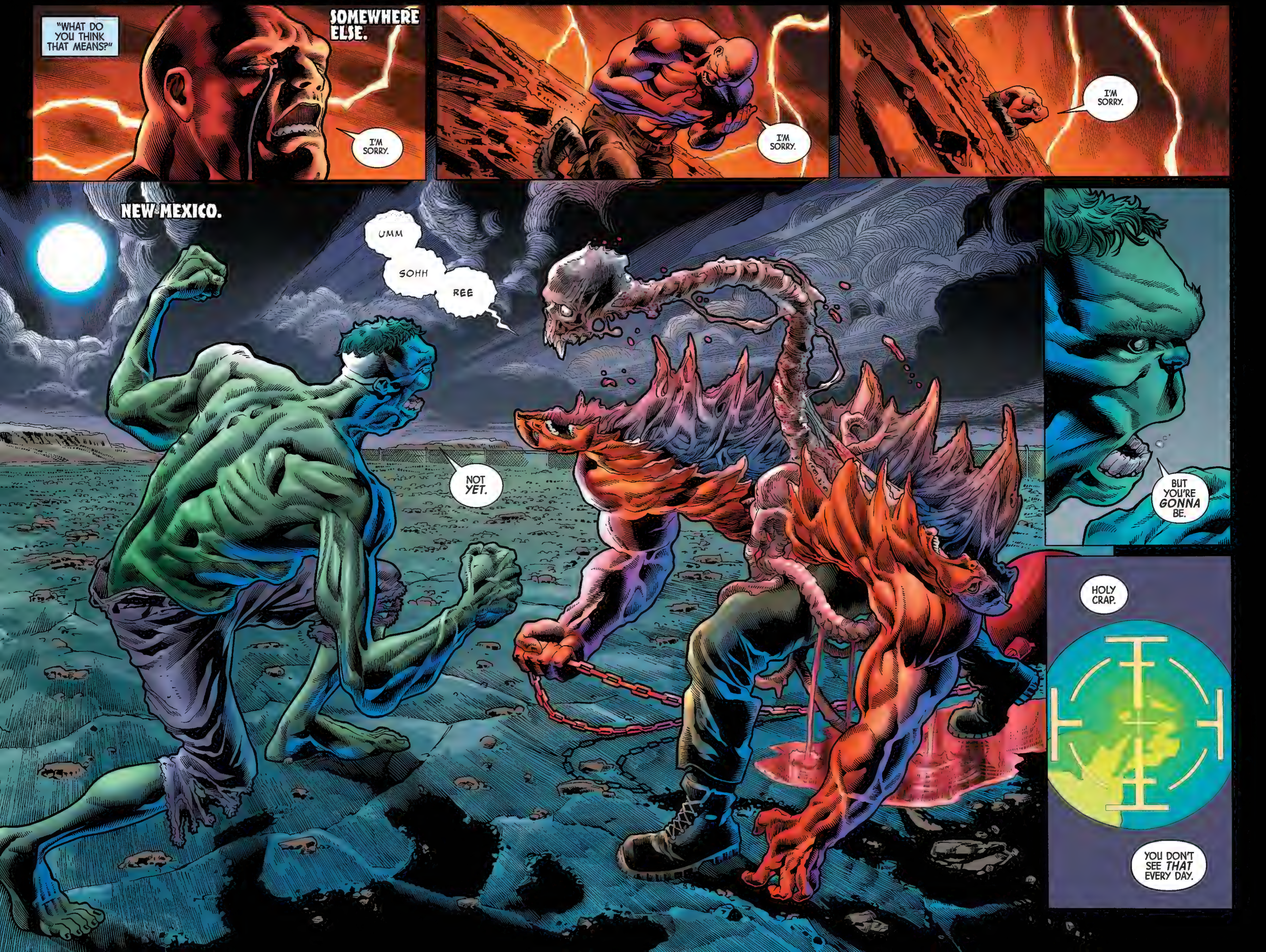
THE SINNERS

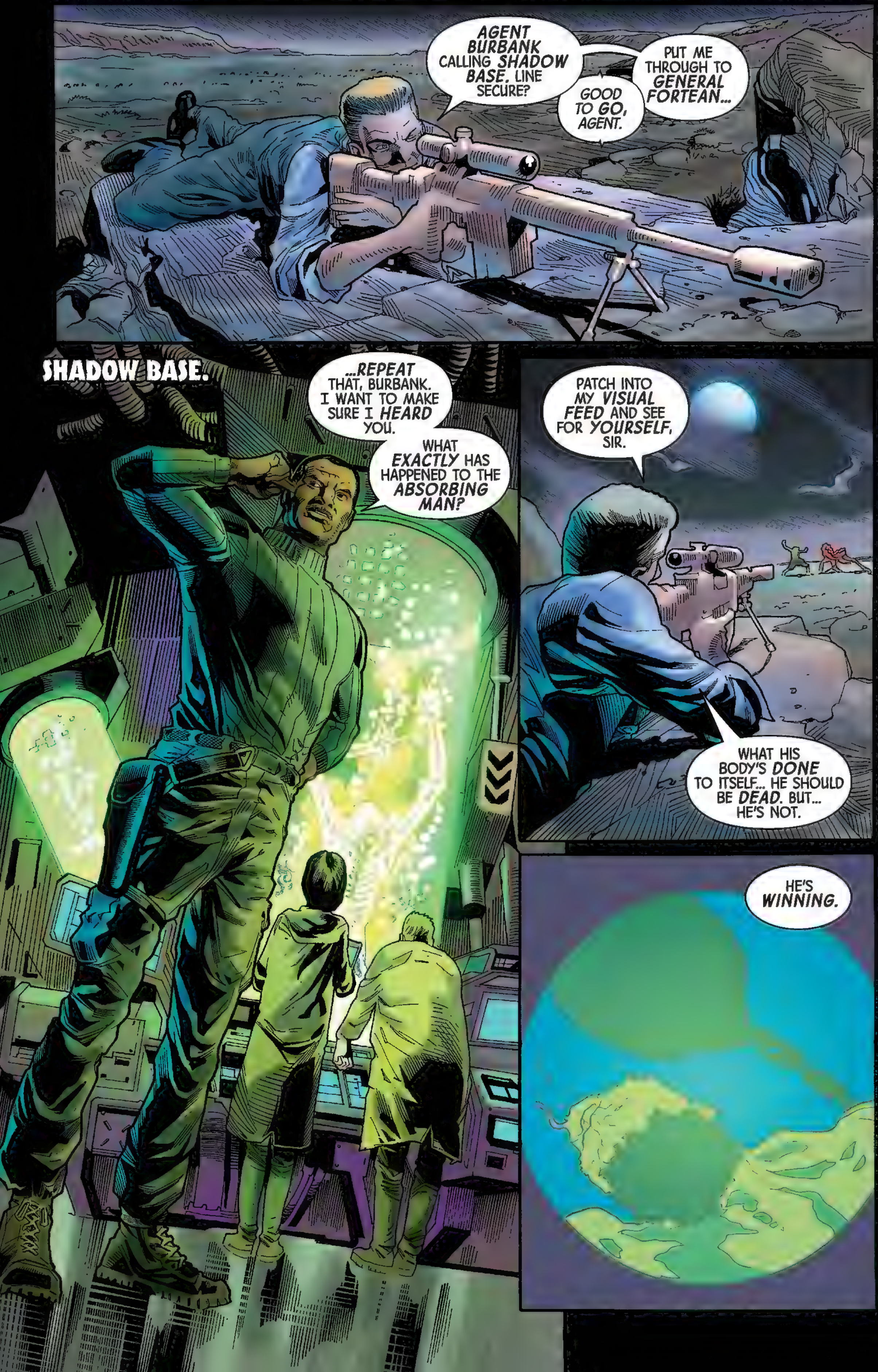
10

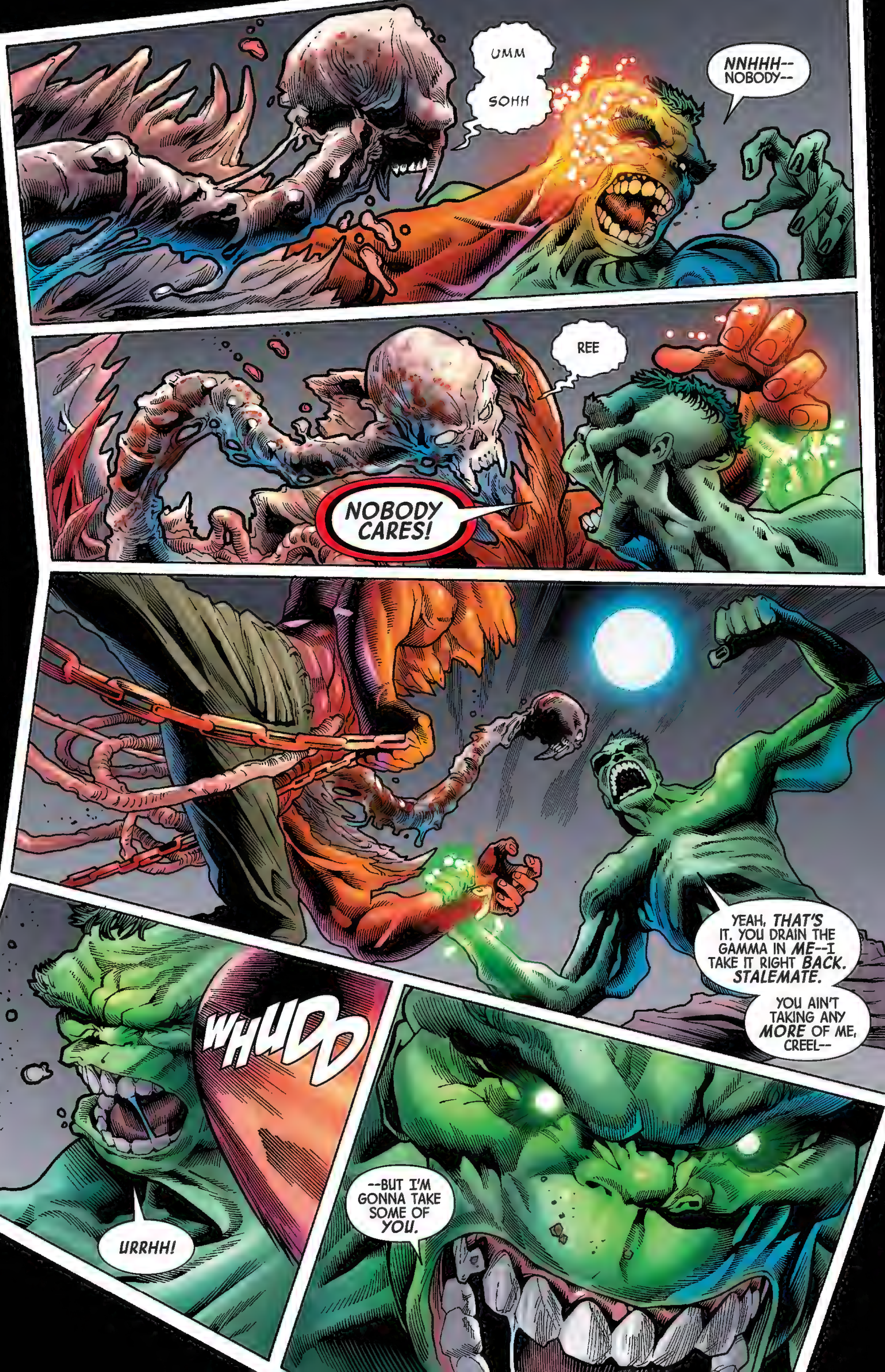
"GREEN DOOR, WHAT'S THAT SECRET YOU'RE KEEPIN'?"

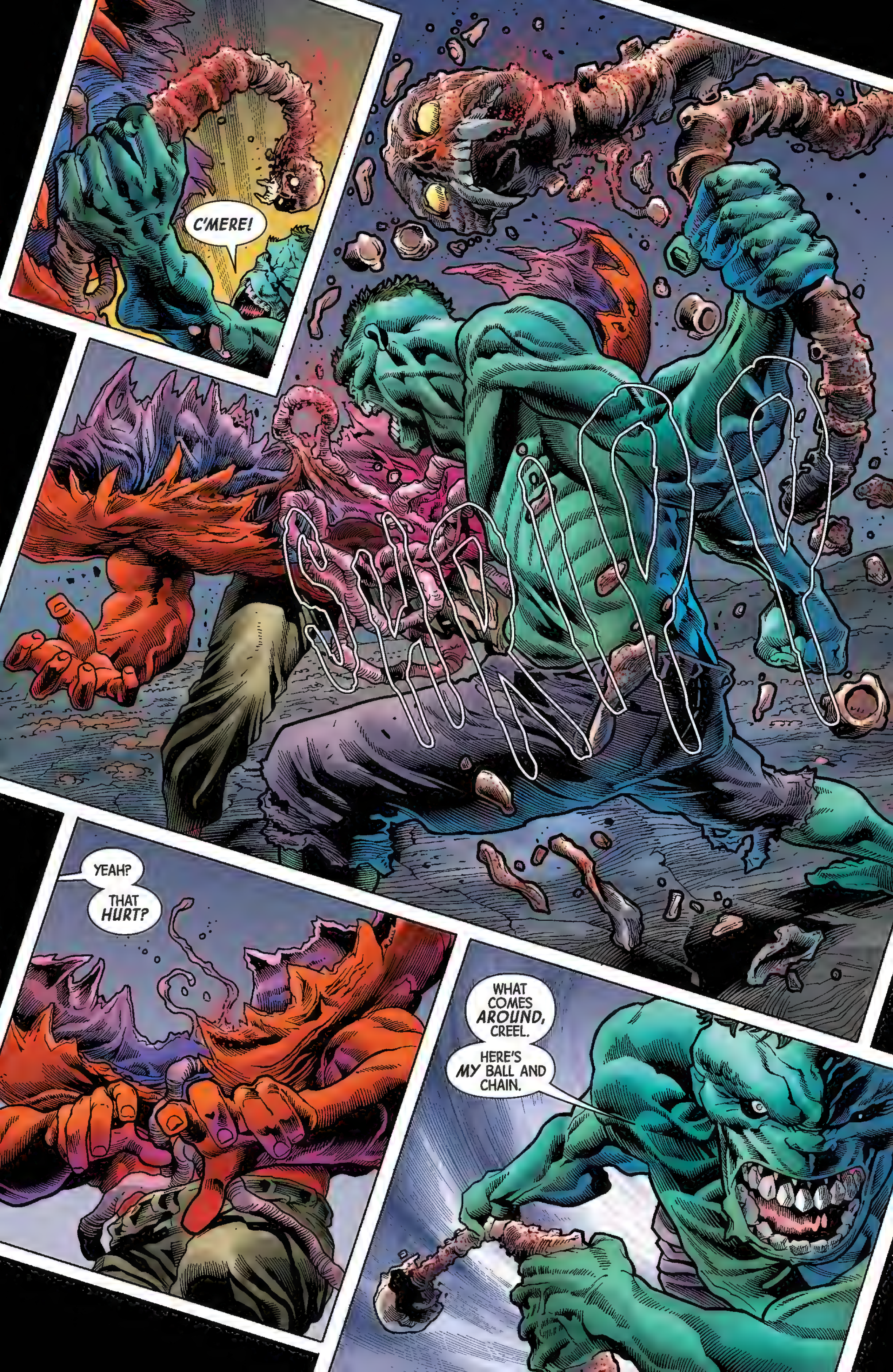
– MARVIN MOORE
LYRICS TO "THE GREEN DOOR"

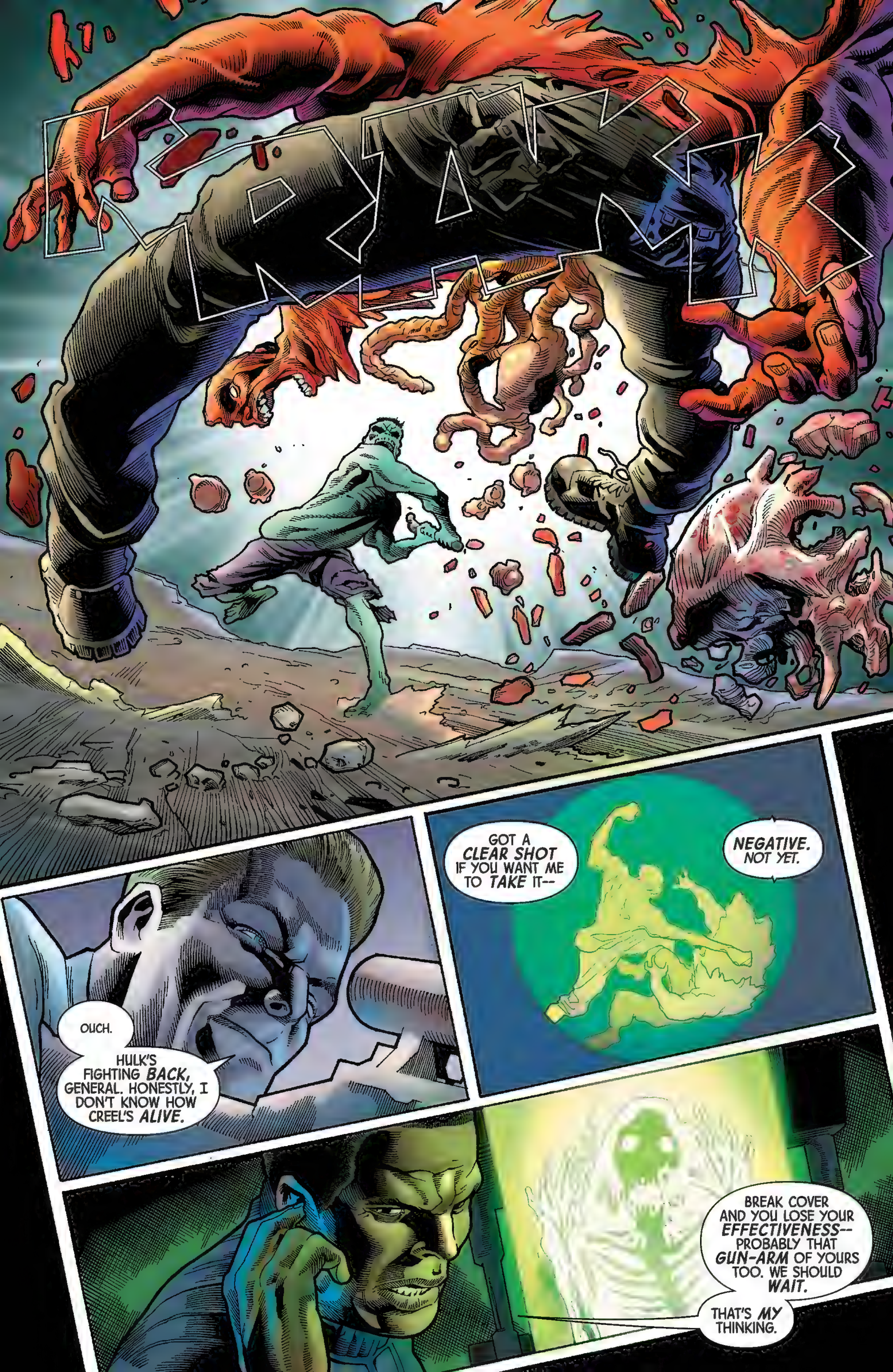

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
DR. LANGKOWSKI?
WE GOT A HIT.
POSITIVE I.D. ON BANNER'S GAMMA SIGNATURE-- LOS DIABLOS, NEW MEXICO.
WE DONE FOUND US A HULK, LADIES AND GENTS.
LOS DIABLOS... ISN'T THAT THE TEST SITE WHERE BANNER BECAME THE HULK? CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER.
WHO'S UP FOR A FIELD TRIP?
I'M IN.
JACKIE?
I DON'T KNOW. ACTUALLY GOING ON A MISSION WITH, UH...
GAMMA FLIGHT.
...RIGHT. WELL, IT STILL FEELS LIKE CROSSING A LINE. IS THIS GOING TO BE REAL REPORTING OR PUBLIC RELATIONS?
REAL. WARTS AND ALL. I PROMISE--
UH... LANGKOWSKI?
YES, ROMESH?
SOMETHING WEIRD ON THE SCREEN.
LOOKS LIKE...THERE'S TWO OF 'EM.

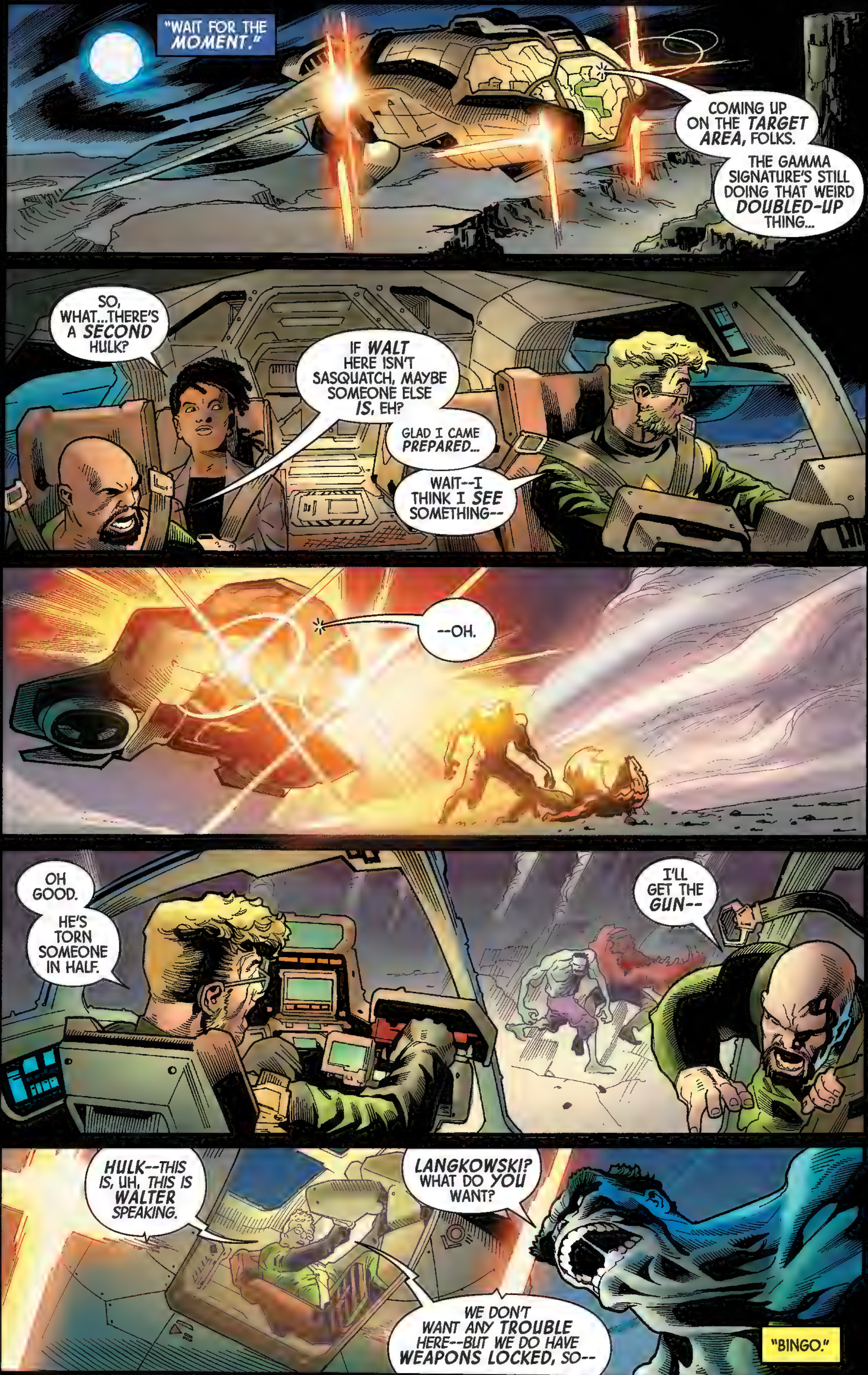

"WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT MEANS?"
SOMEWHERE ELSE.
I'M SORRY.
I'M SORRY.
I'M SORRY.
NEW MEXICO.
UMM
SOHH
REE
NOT *YET*.
BUT YOU'RE *GONNA* BE.
HOLY CRAP.
YOU DON'T SEE *THAT* EVERY DAY.

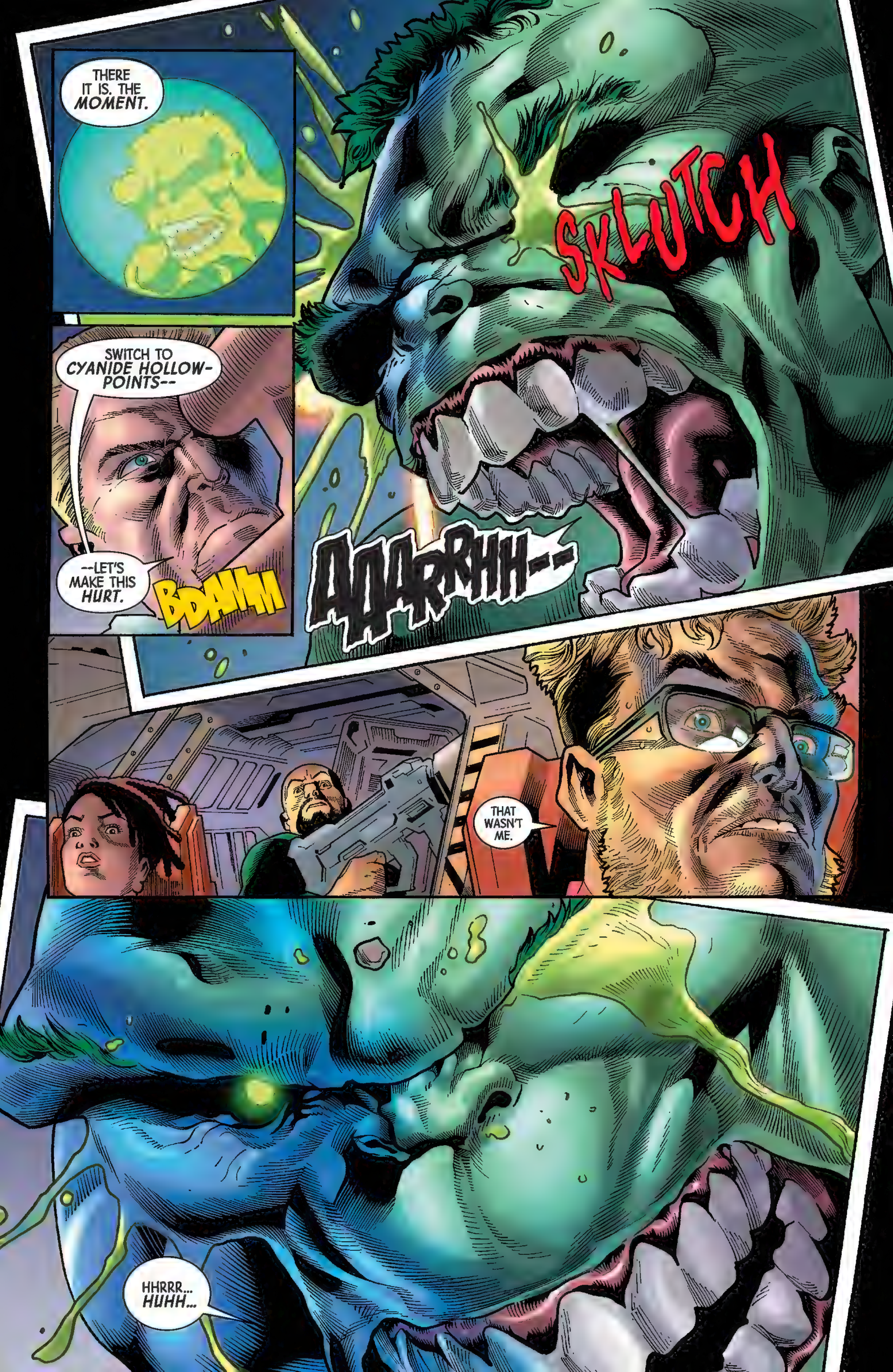

AGENT BURBANK CALLING SHADOW BASE. LINE SECURE?
GOOD TO GO, AGENT.
PUT ME THROUGH TO GENERAL FORTEAN...
SHADOW BASE.
...REPEAT THAT, BURBANK. I WANT TO MAKE SURE I HEARD YOU.
WHAT EXACTLY HAS HAPPENED TO THE ABSORBING MAN?
PATCH INTO MY VISUAL FEED AND SEE FOR YOURSELF, SIR.
WHAT HIS BODY'S DONE TO ITSELF... HE SHOULD BE DEAD. BUT... HE'S NOT.
HE'S WINNING.

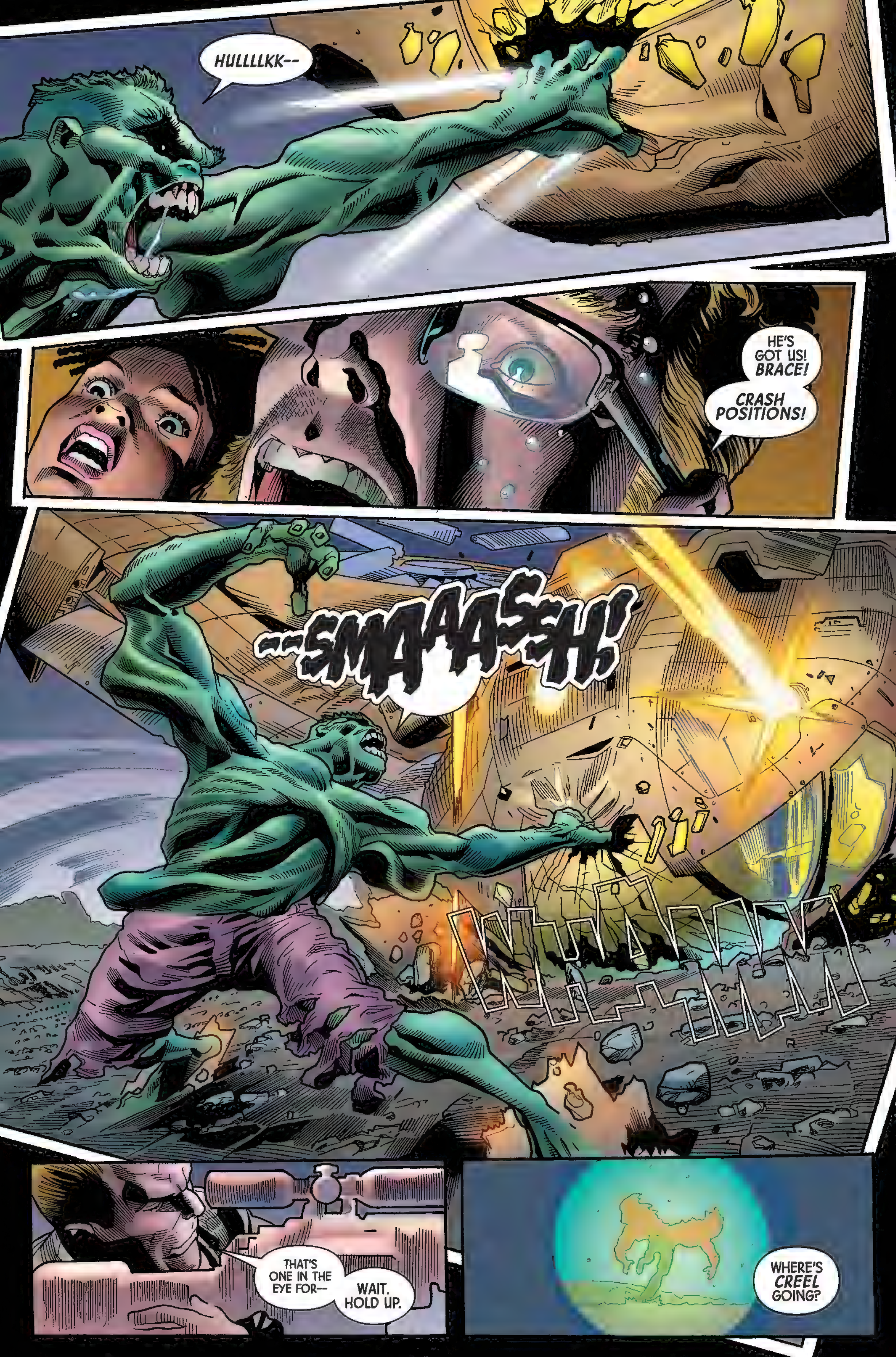

UMM
SOHH
NNHHH-- NOBODY--
REE
NOBODY CARES!
YEAH, THAT'S IT. YOU DRAIN THE GAMMA IN ME--I TAKE IT RIGHT BACK. STALEMATE.
YOU AIN'T TAKING ANY MORE OF ME, CREEL--
WHUDD
URRHH!
--BUT I'M GONNA TAKE SOME OF YOU.

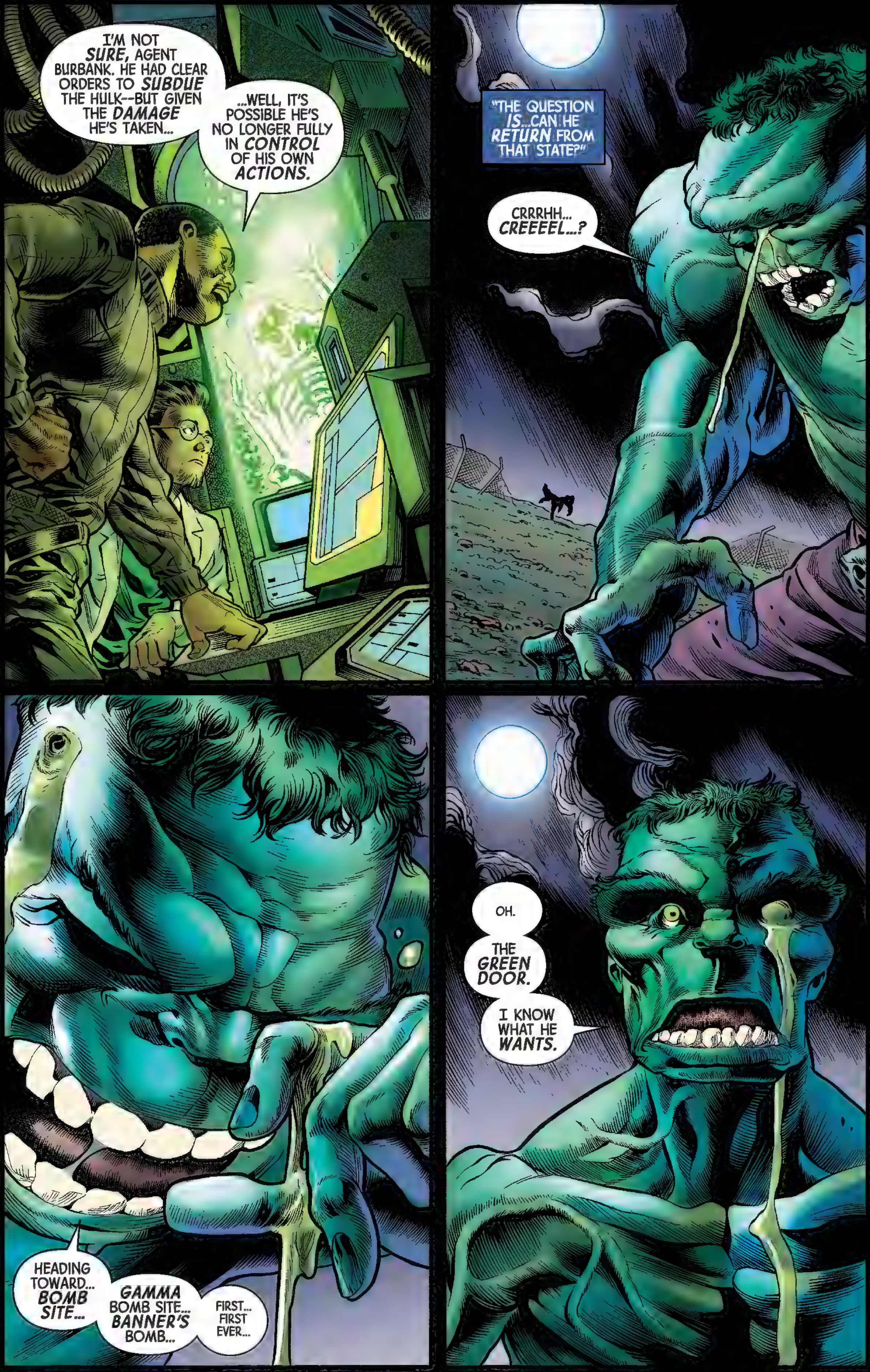

C'MERE!
SHRIPP
YEAH?
THAT *HURT?*
WHAT COMES *AROUND,* CREEL.
HERE'S *MY* BALL AND CHAIN.

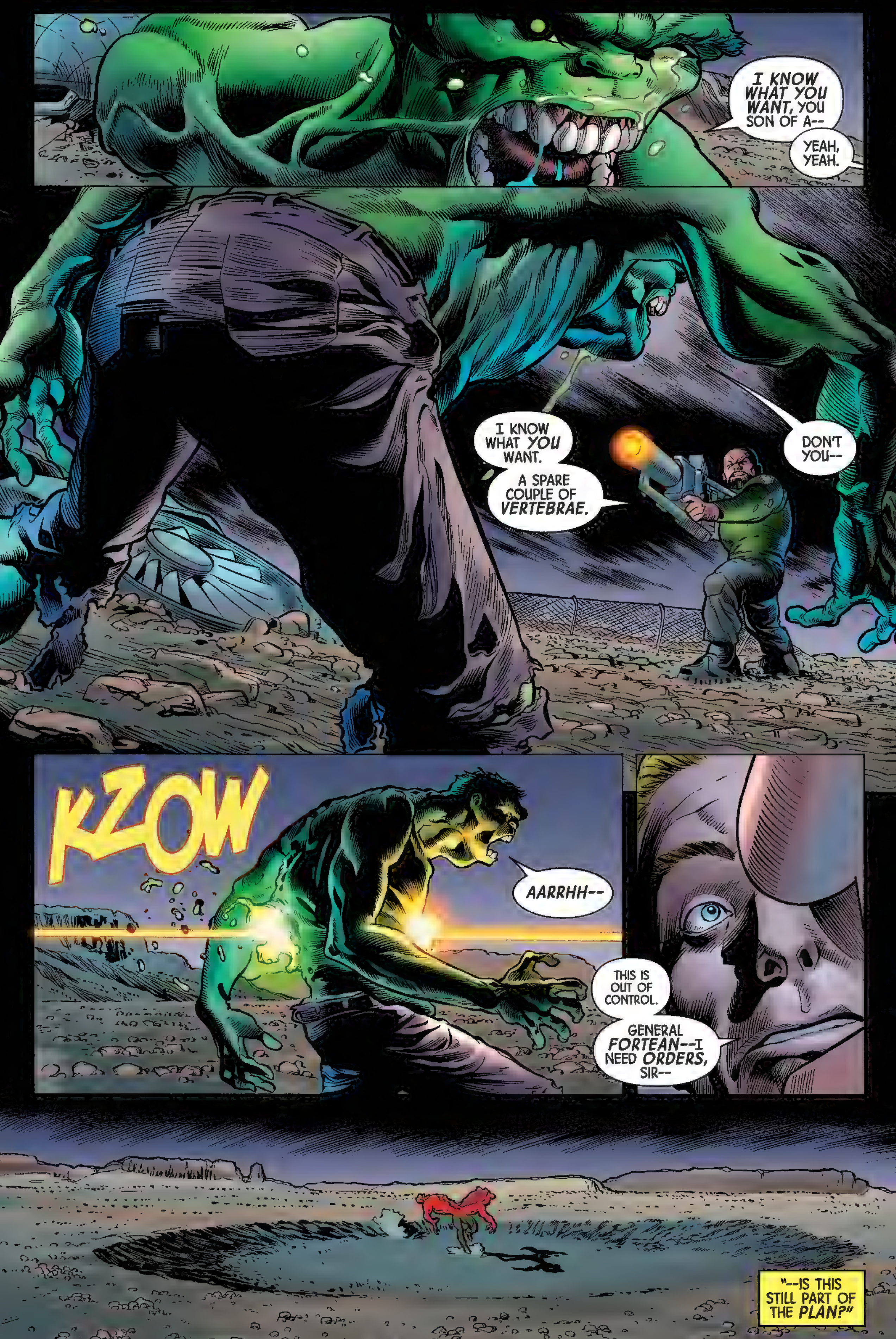

KRAKK
OUCH.
HULK'S FIGHTING *BACK*, GENERAL. HONESTLY, I DON'T KNOW HOW CREEL'S *ALIVE*.
GOT A *CLEAR SHOT* IF YOU WANT ME TO *TAKE* IT--
NEGATIVE. NOT YET.
BREAK COVER AND YOU LOSE YOUR *EFFECTIVENESS*-- PROBABLY THAT *GUN-ARM* OF YOURS TOO. WE SHOULD *WAIT*.
THAT'S *MY* THINKING.

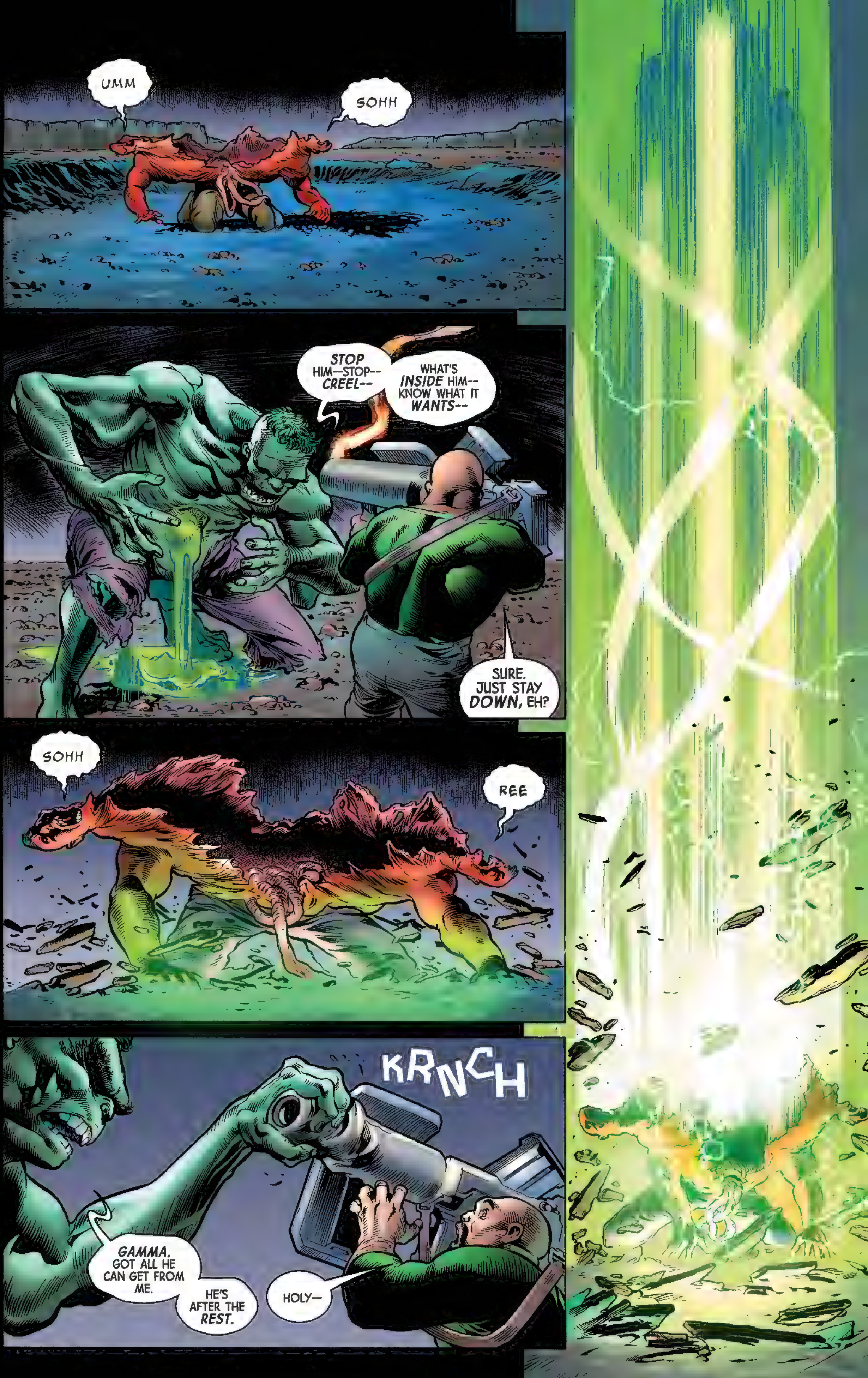

"WAIT FOR THE *MOMENT.*"
COMING UP ON THE *TARGET AREA,* FOLKS.
THE GAMMA SIGNATURE'S STILL DOING THAT WEIRD *DOUBLED-UP* THING...
SO, WHAT...THERE'S A *SECOND* HULK?
IF *WALT* HERE ISN'T SASQUATCH, MAYBE SOMEONE ELSE *IS,* EH?
GLAD I CAME *PREPARED...*
WAIT--I THINK I *SEE* SOMETHING--
--OH.
OH GOOD.
HE'S TORN SOMEONE IN HALF.
I'LL GET THE *GUN--*
HULK--THIS IS, UH, THIS IS *WALTER* SPEAKING.
LANGKOWSKI? WHAT DO *YOU* WANT?
WE DON'T WANT ANY *TROUBLE* HERE--BUT WE DO HAVE *WEAPONS LOCKED,* SO--
"BINGO."

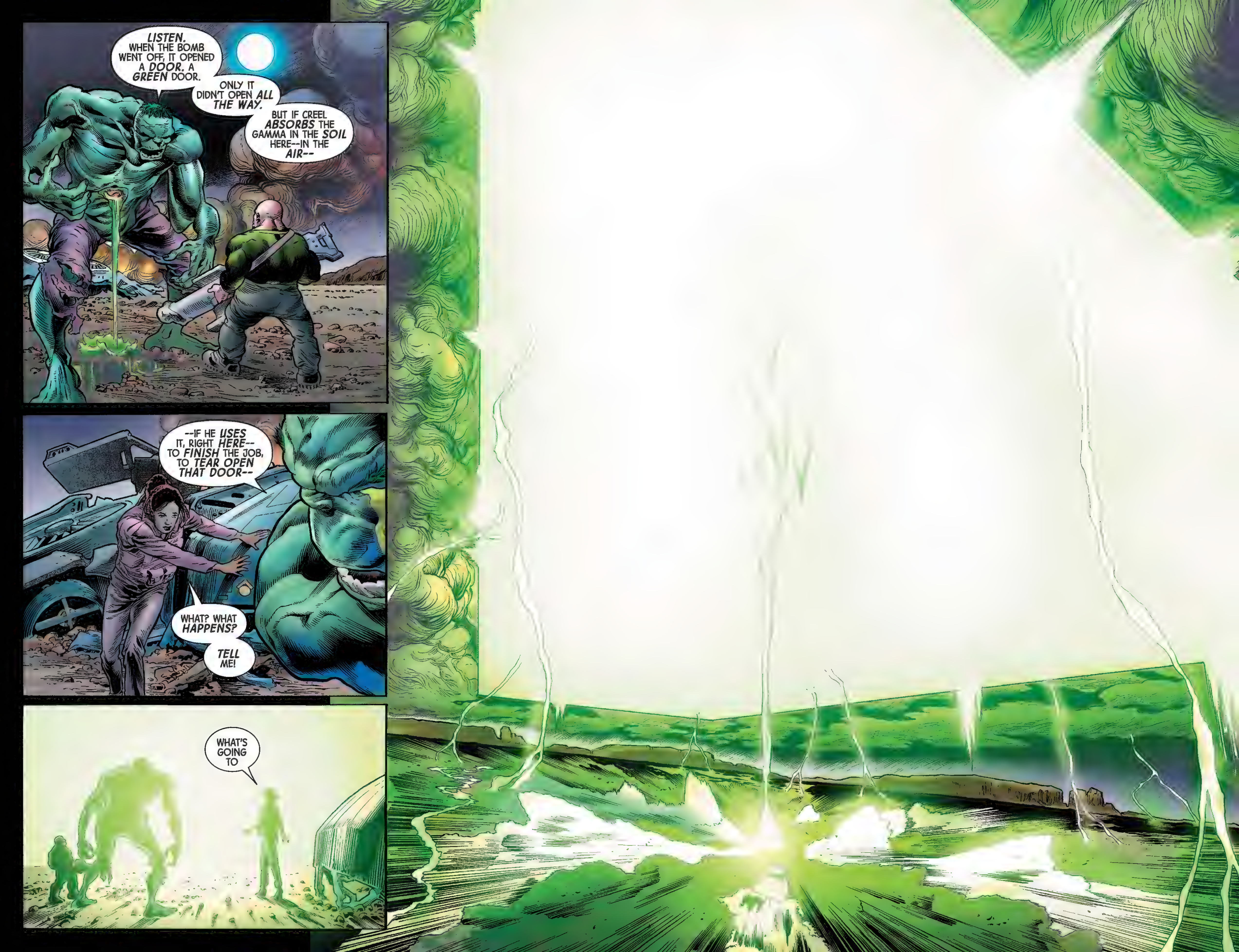

THERE IT IS. THE *MOMENT.*
SKLUTCH
SWITCH TO *CYANIDE HOLLOW-POINTS*--
--LET'S MAKE THIS *HURT.*
BDAMM
AAARRHH--
THAT WASN'T ME.
HHRRR... *HUHH*...

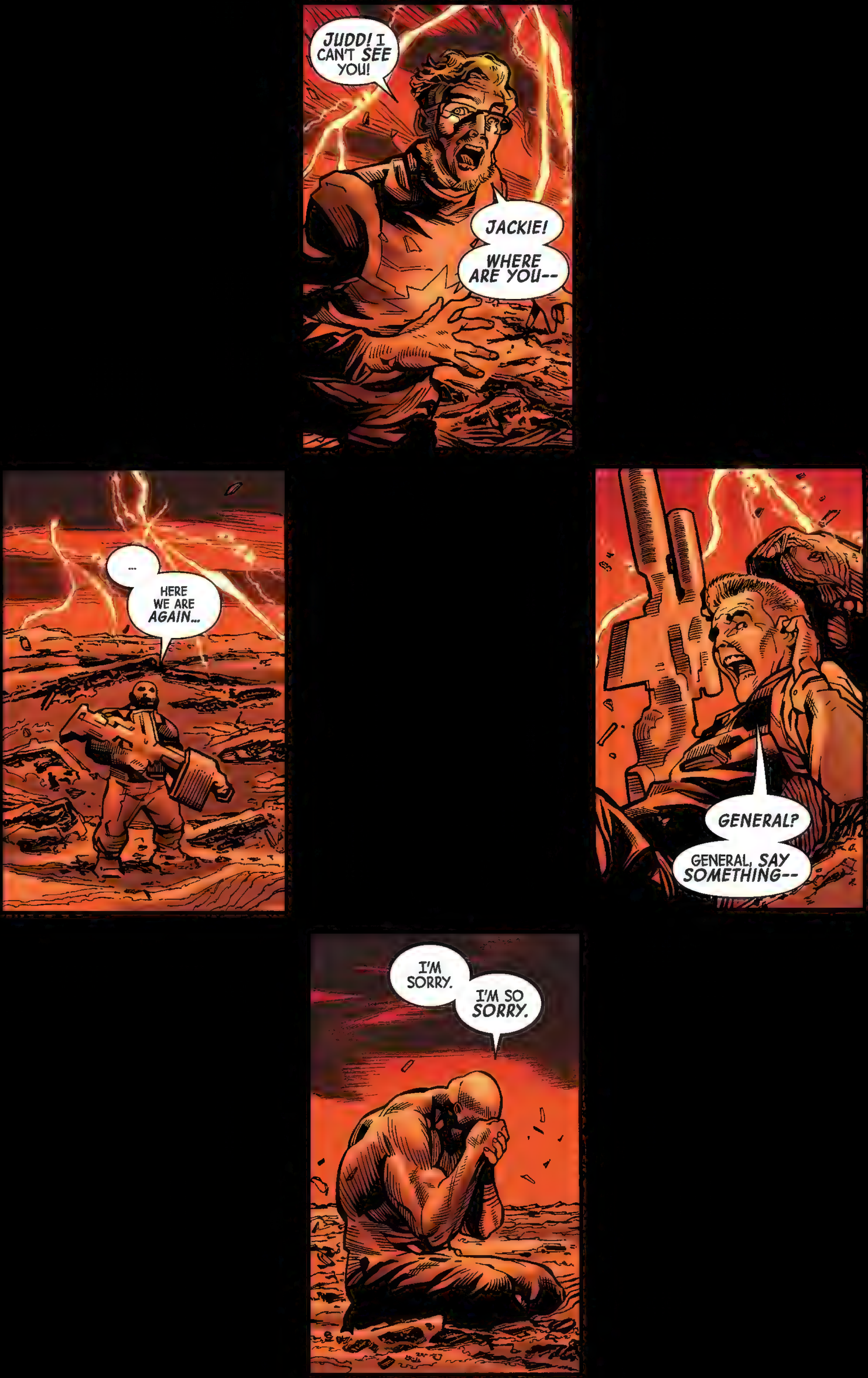

HULLLLKK--
HE'S GOT US! *BRACE!*
CRASH POSITIONS!
--SMAAASH!
WHAMM
THAT'S ONE IN THE EYE FOR--
WAIT. HOLD UP.
WHERE'S *CREEL* GOING?

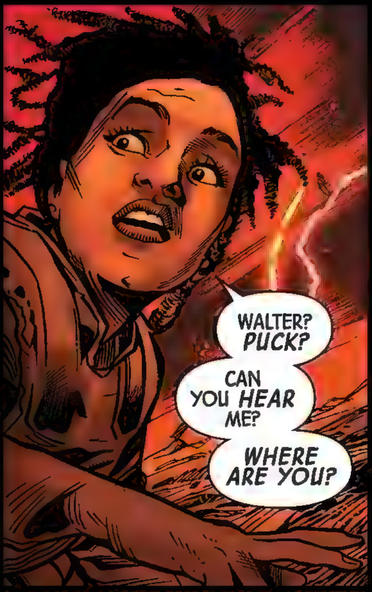

I'M NOT *SURE,* AGENT BURBANK. HE HAD CLEAR ORDERS TO *SUBDUE* THE HULK--BUT GIVEN THE *DAMAGE* HE'S TAKEN...
...WELL, IT'S POSSIBLE HE'S NO LONGER FULLY IN *CONTROL* OF HIS OWN *ACTIONS.*
"THE QUESTION *IS*...CAN HE *RETURN* FROM THAT STATE?"
CRRRHH... *CREEEEL...?*
HEADING TOWARD... *BOMB SITE...*
GAMMA BOMB SITE... *BANNER'S* BOMB...
FIRST... FIRST EVER...
OH.
THE *GREEN DOOR.*
I KNOW WHAT HE *WANTS.*

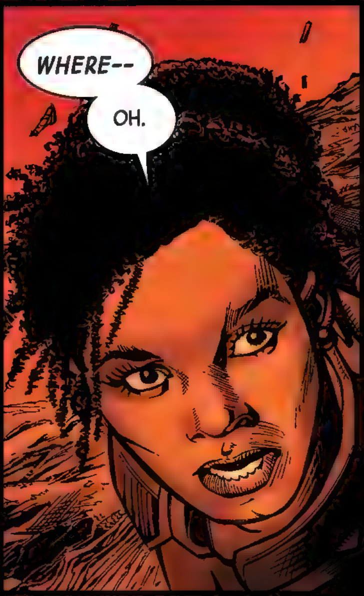

I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT, YOU SON OF A--
YEAH, YEAH.
I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT.
A SPARE COUPLE OF VERTEBRAE.
DON'T YOU--
KZOW
AARRHH--
THIS IS OUT OF CONTROL.
GENERAL FORTEAN--I NEED ORDERS, SIR--
"--IS THIS STILL PART OF THE PLAN?"

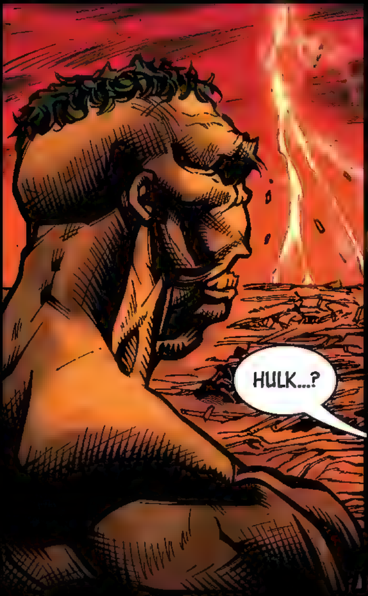

UMM
SOHH
STOP HIM--STOP--CREEL--
WHAT'S INSIDE HIM--KNOW WHAT IT WANTS--
SURE. JUST STAY DOWN, EH?
SOHH
REE
KRNCH
GAMMA. GOT ALL HE CAN GET FROM ME.
HE'S AFTER THE REST.
HOLY--

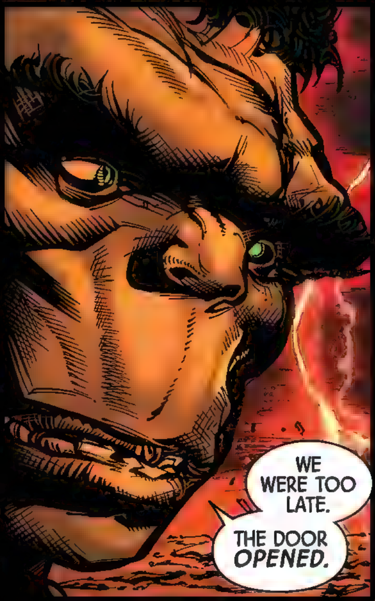

LISTEN. WHEN THE BOMB WENT OFF, IT OPENED A DOOR. A GREEN DOOR.
ONLY IT DIDN'T OPEN ALL THE WAY.
BUT IF CREEL ABSORBS THE GAMMA IN THE SOIL HERE--IN THE AIR--
--IF HE USES IT, RIGHT HERE-- TO FINISH THE JOB, TO TEAR OPEN THAT DOOR--
WHAT? WHAT HAPPENS?
TELL ME!
WHAT'S GOING TO

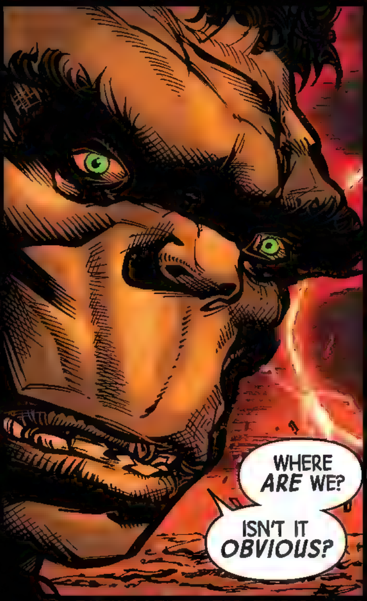

JUDD! I CAN'T *SEE* YOU!
JACKIE!
WHERE ARE YOU--
...
HERE WE ARE *AGAIN...*
GENERAL?
GENERAL, *SAY SOMETHING--*
I'M SORRY.
I'M SO *SORRY.*

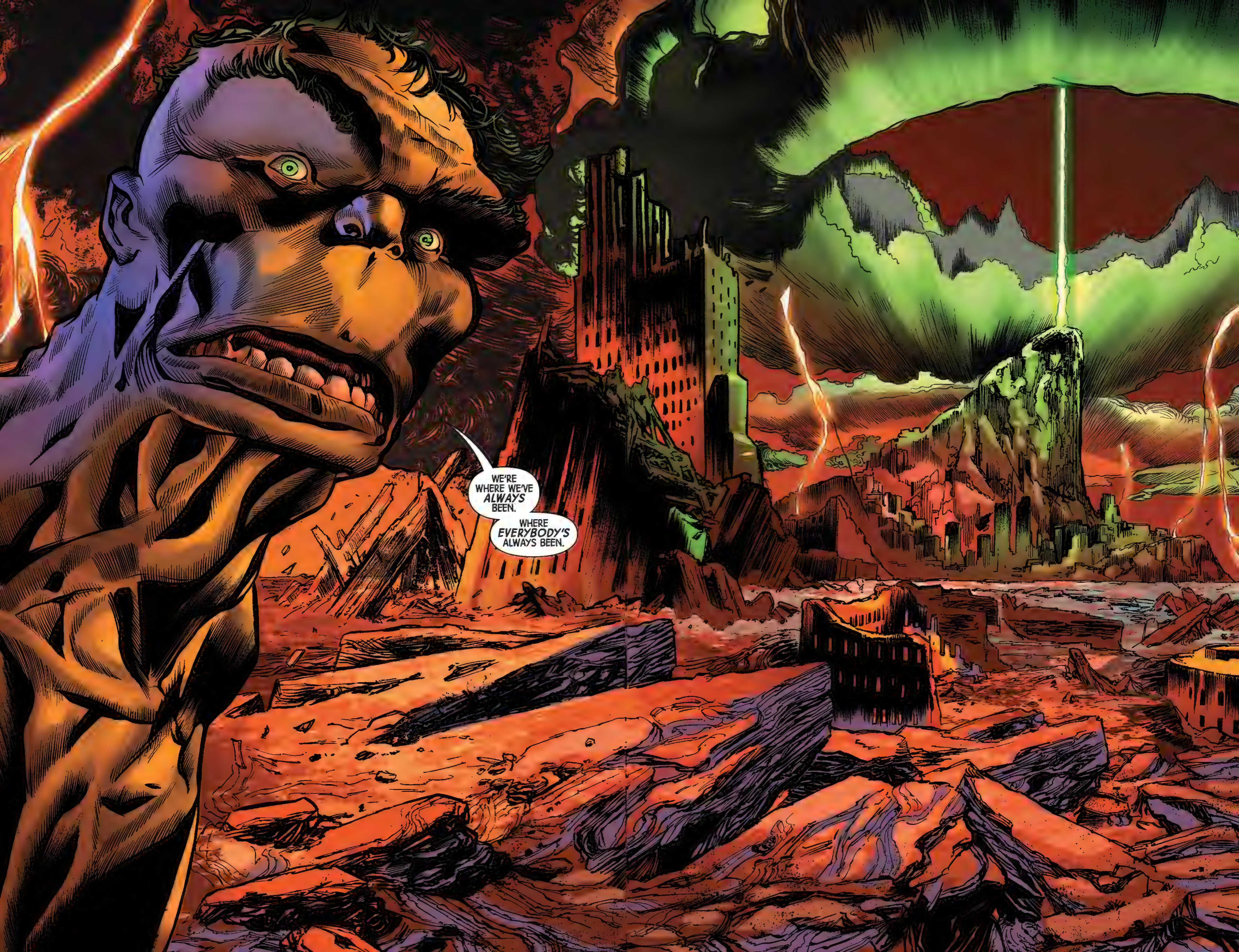

WALTER? PUCK?
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
WHERE ARE YOU?

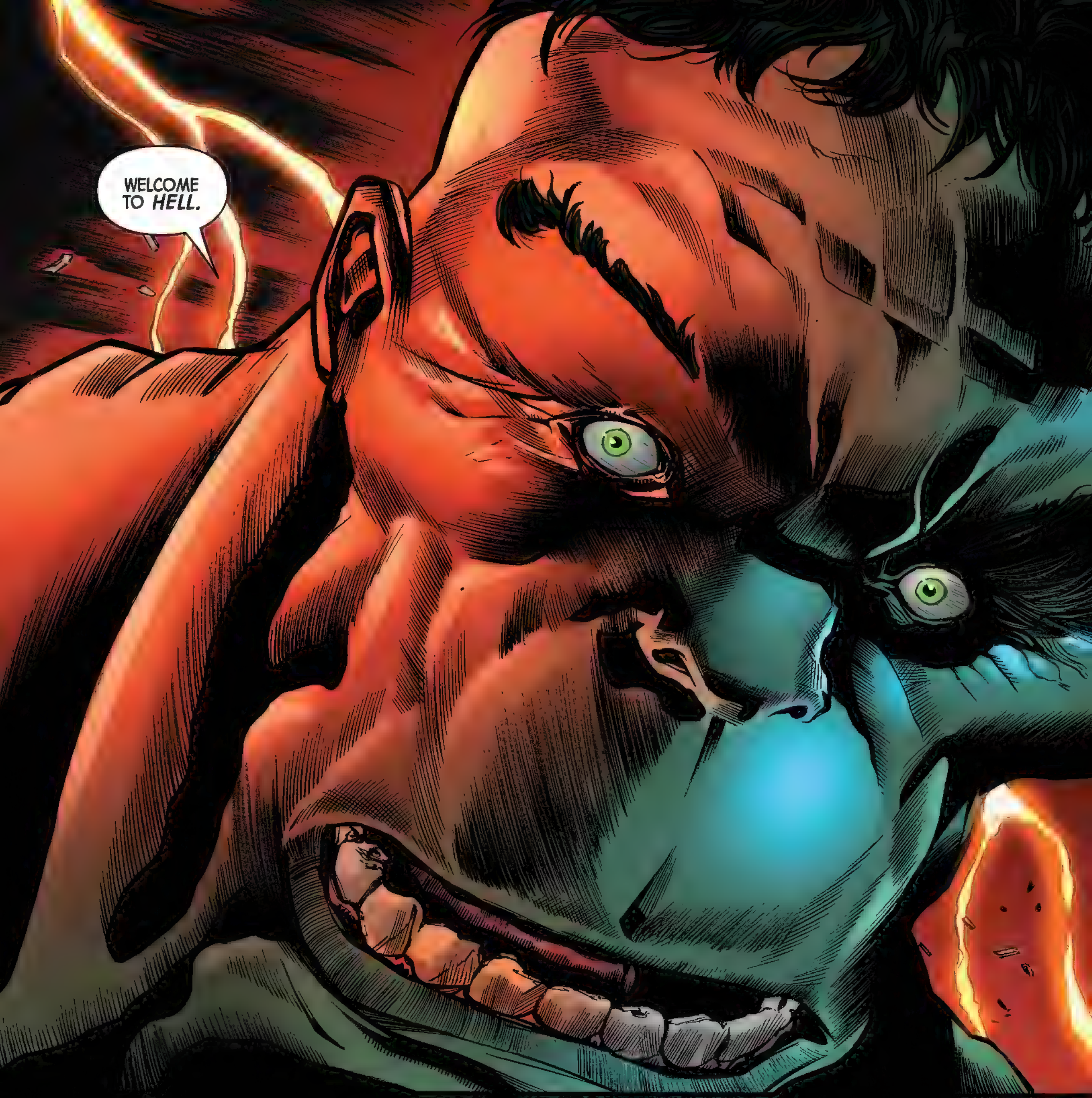

WHERE--
OH.


HULK...?


WE WERE TOO LATE.
THE DOOR OPENED.


WHERE ARE WE?
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?


WE'RE WHERE WE'VE *ALWAYS* BEEN.
WHERE *EVERYBODY'S* ALWAYS BEEN.

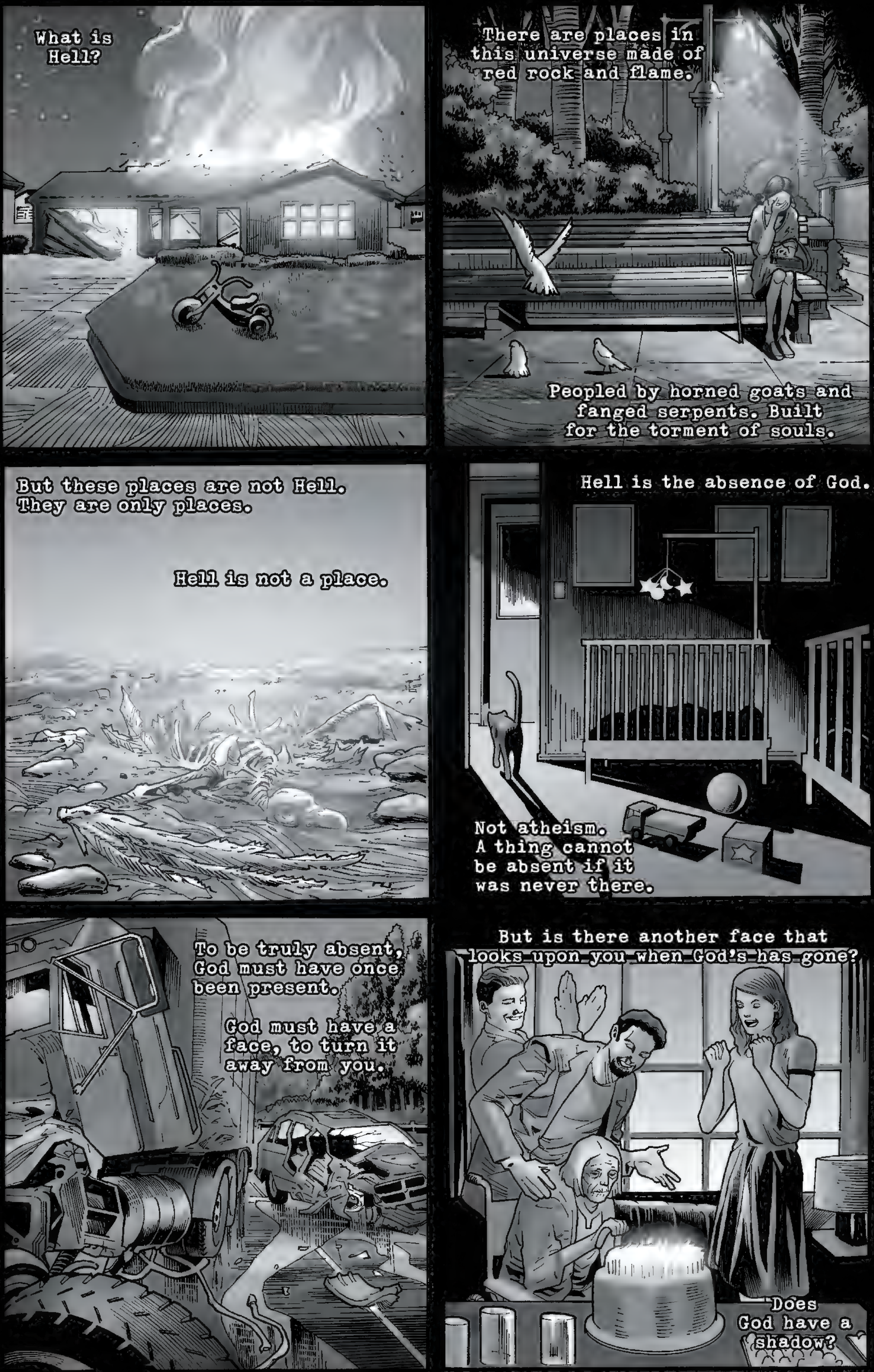

WELCOME TO *HELL.*

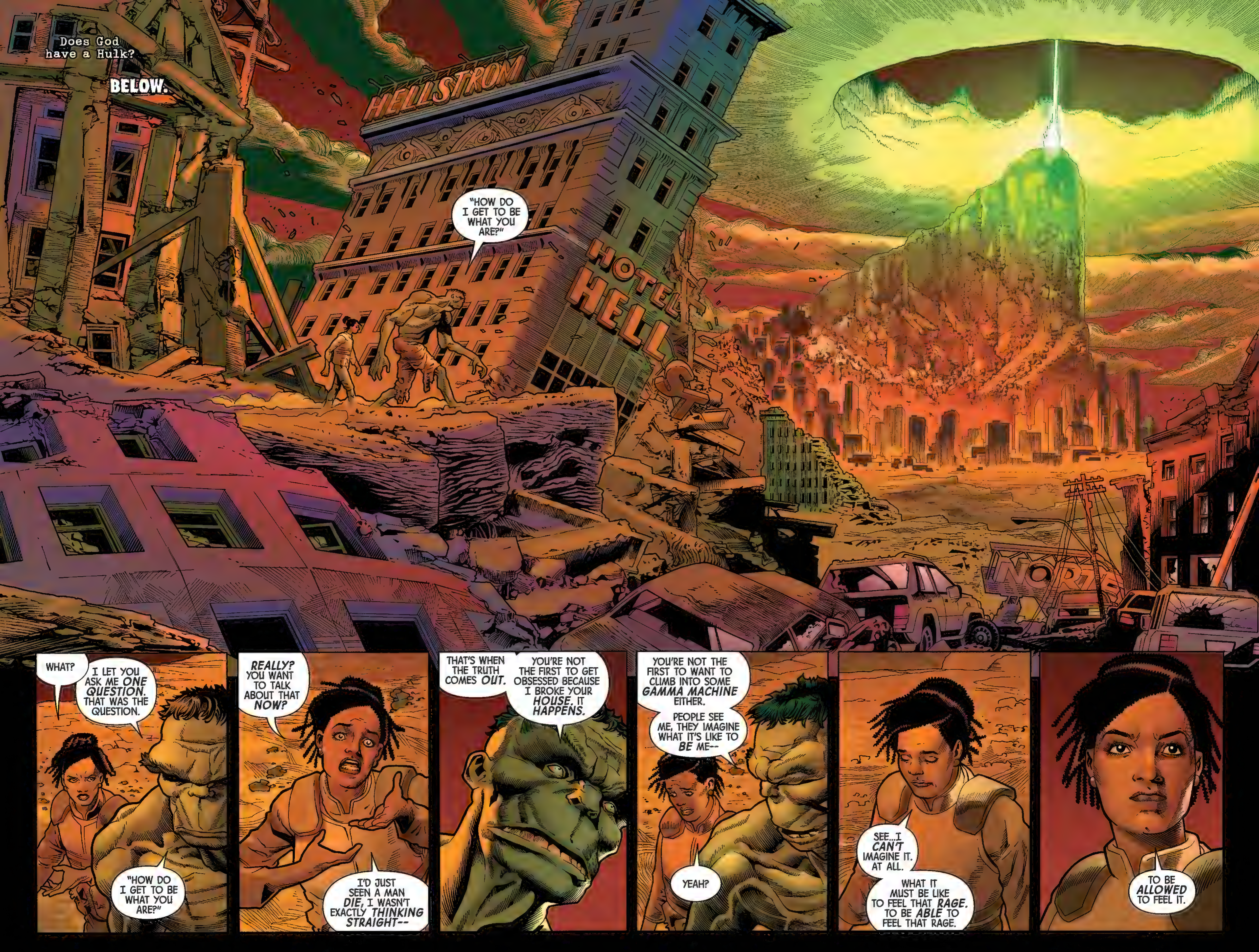
THAUMIEL

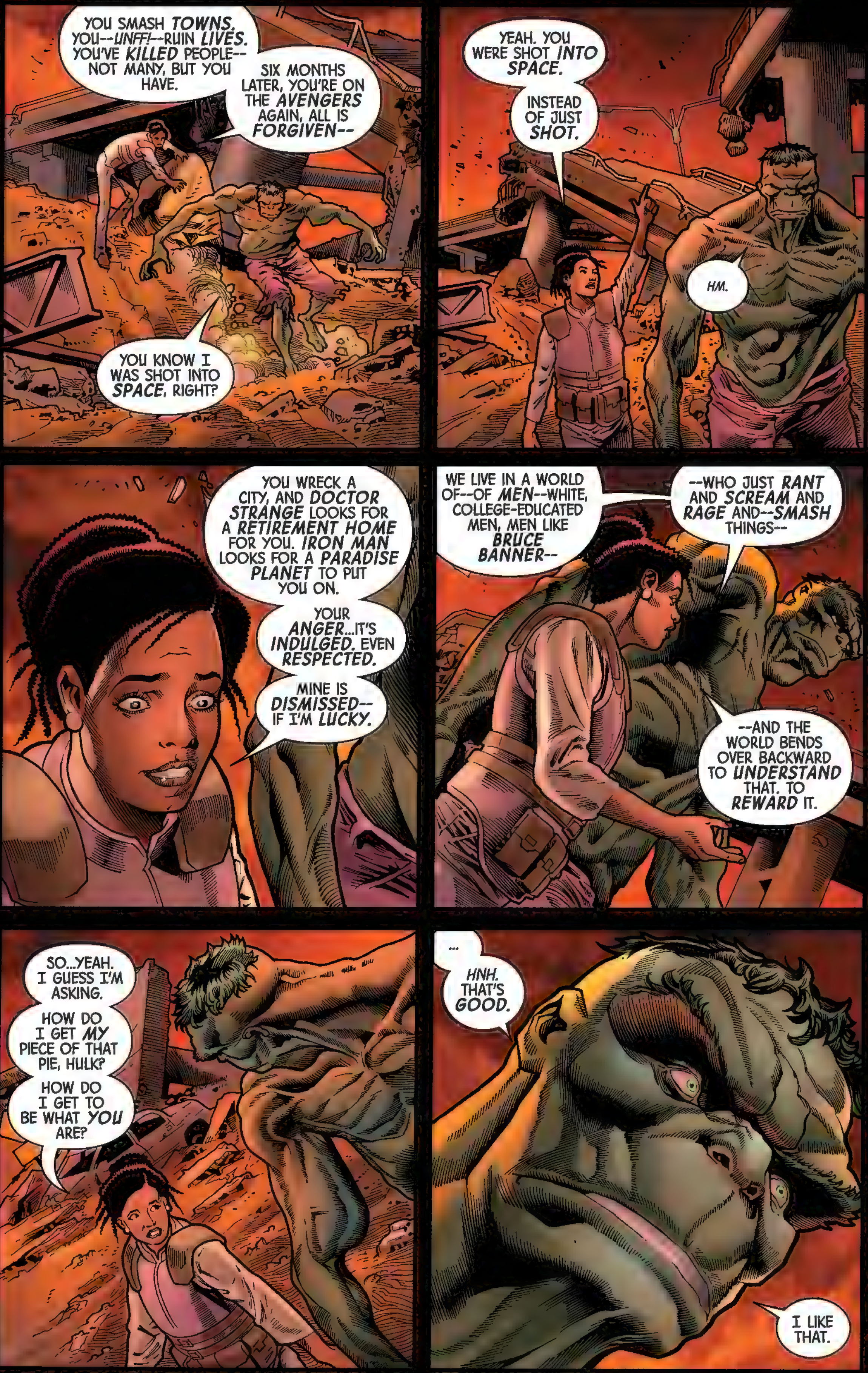
11

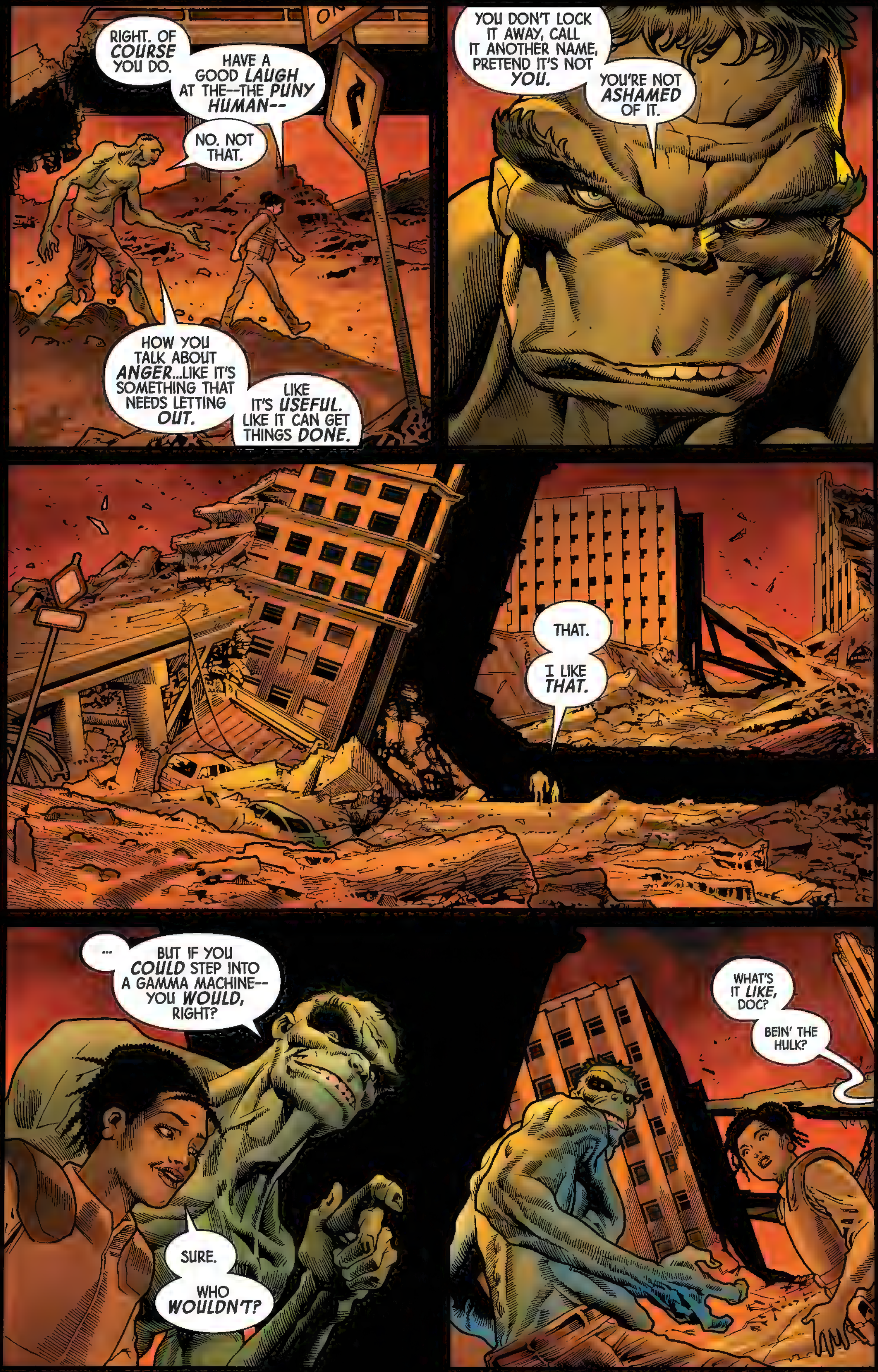
"HELL IS EMPTY, AND ALL
THE DEVILS ARE HERE."

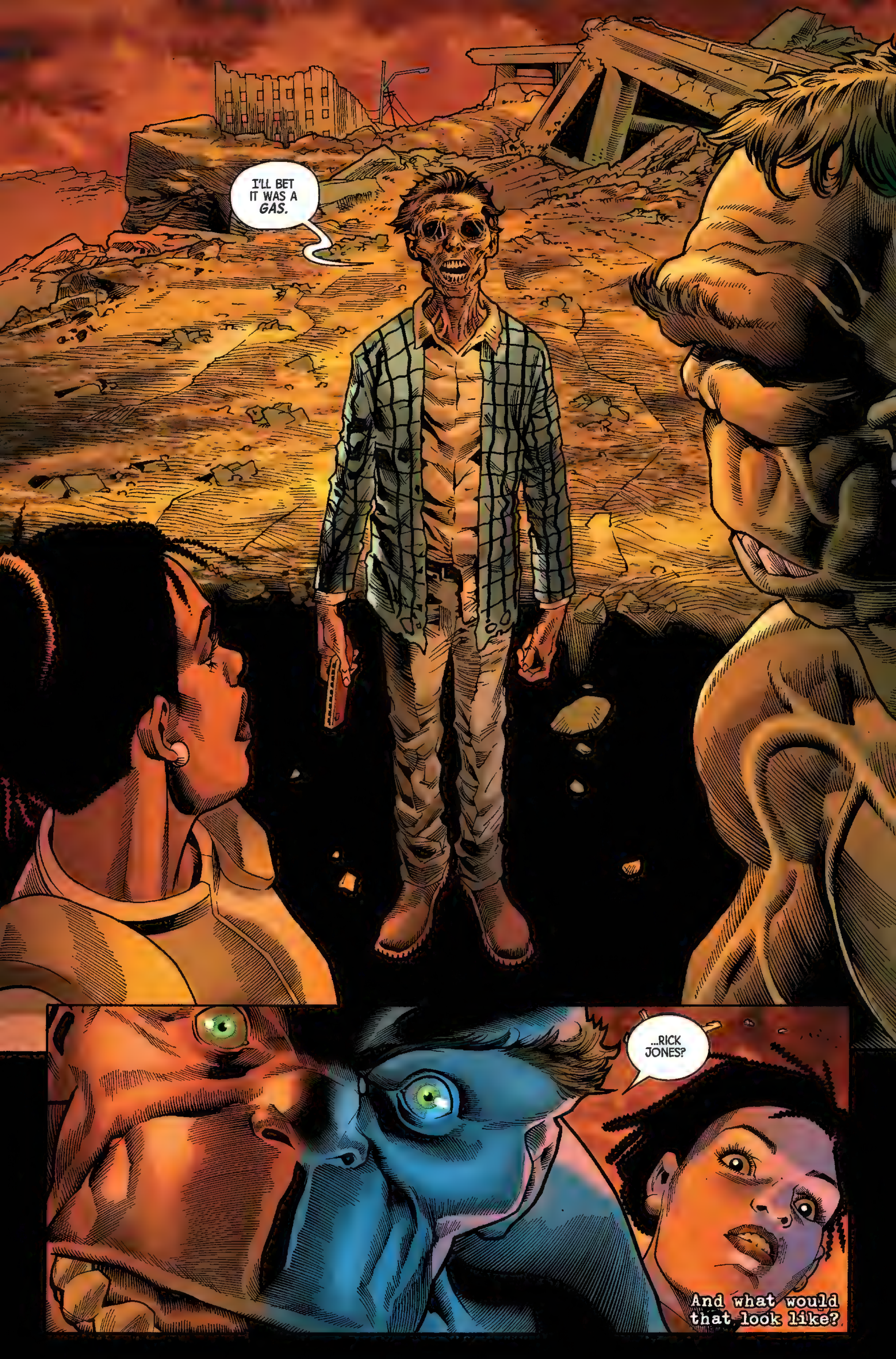
– WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
THE TEMPEST

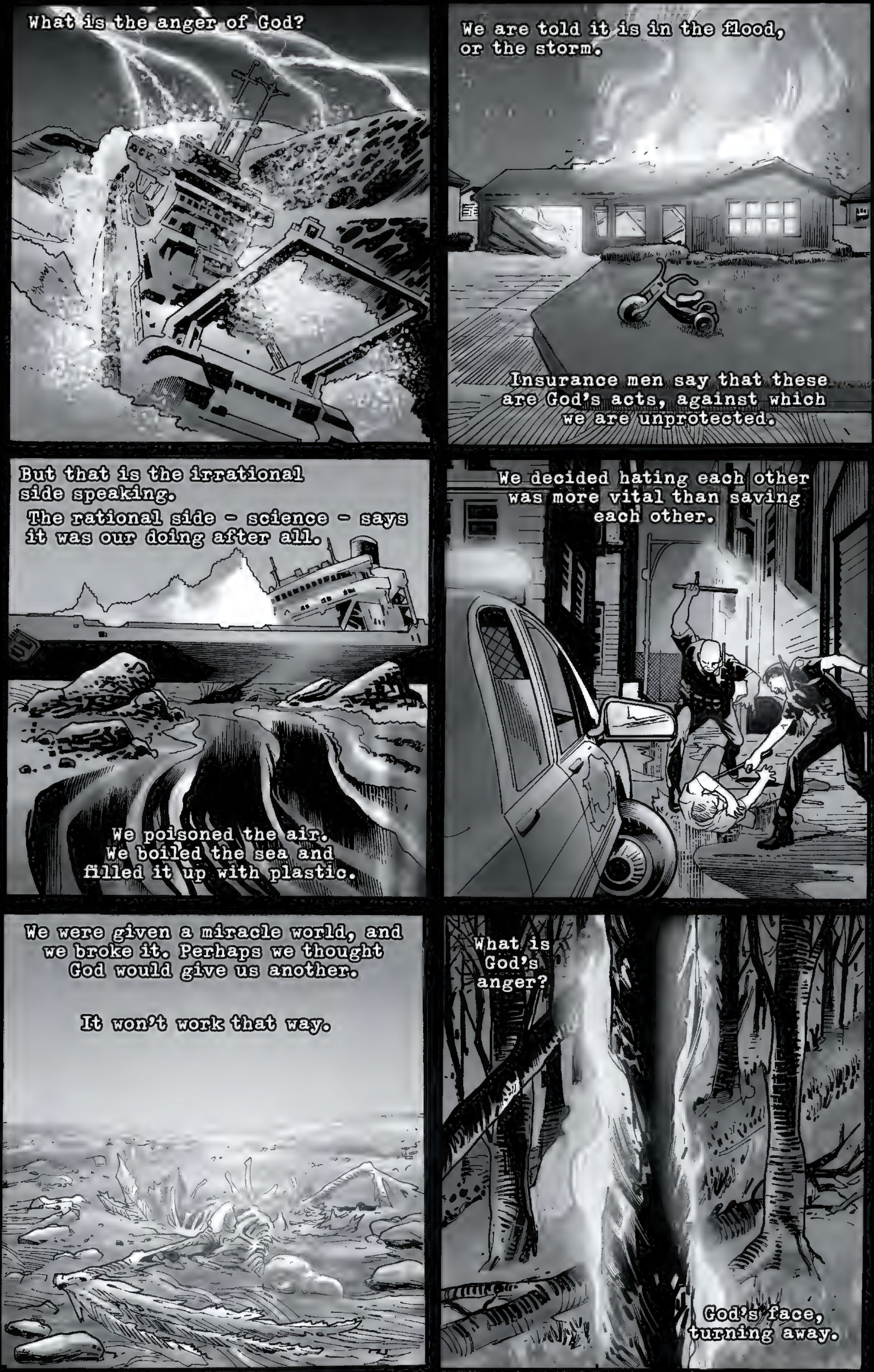

What is Hell?
There are places in this universe made of red rock and flame.
Peopled by horned goats and fanged serpents. Built for the torment of souls.
But these places are not Hell. They are only places.
Hell is not a place.
Hell is the absence of God.
Not atheism. A thing cannot be absent if it was never there.
To be truly absent, God must have once been present.
God must have a face, to turn it away from you.
But is there another face that looks upon you when God's has gone?
Does God have a shadow?

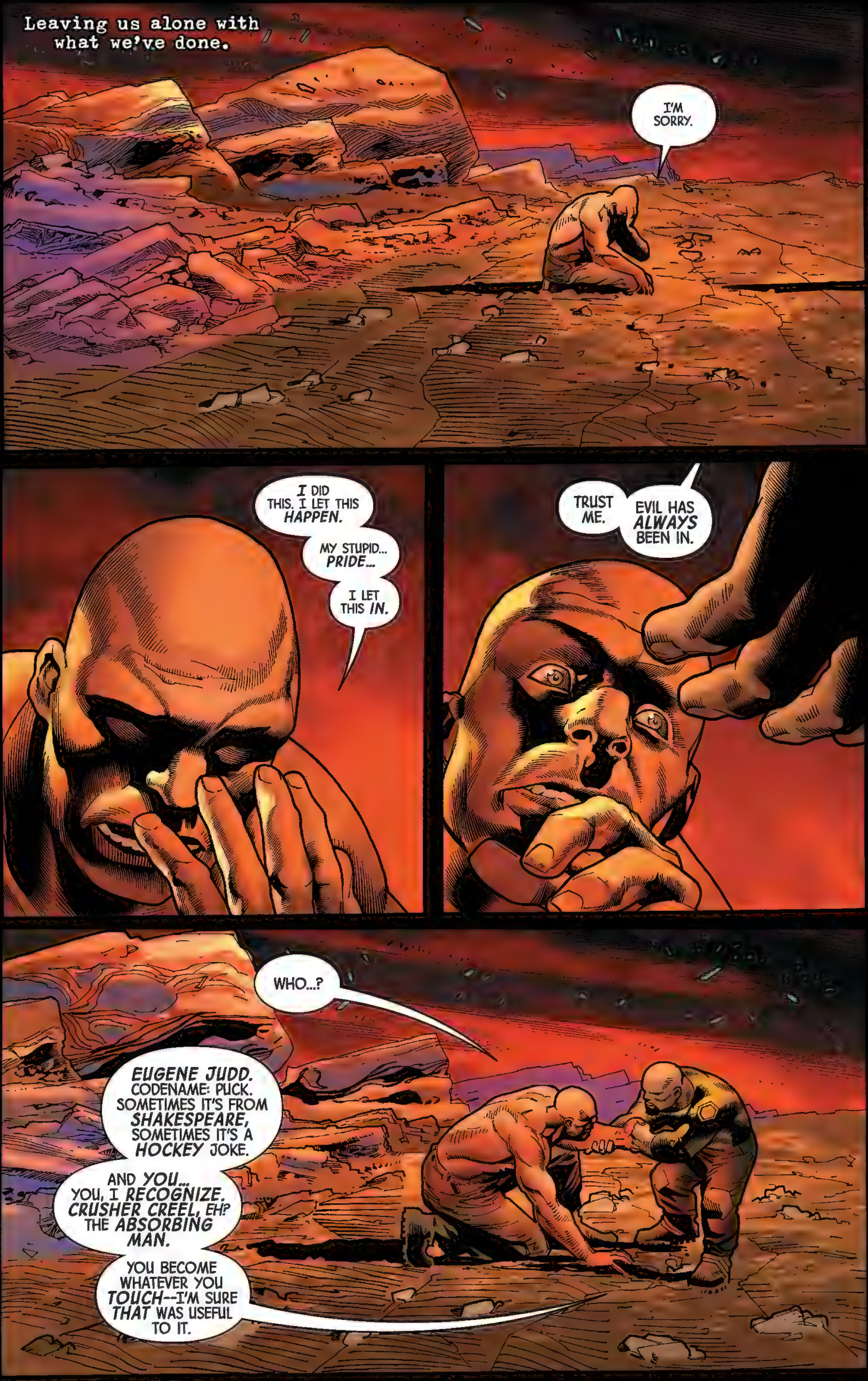

Does God have a Hulk?
BELOW.
HELLSTROM
"HOW DO I GET TO BE WHAT YOU ARE?"
HOTEL HELL
ST
NORTE
WHAT?
I LET YOU ASK ME *ONE QUESTION*. THAT WAS THE QUESTION.
"HOW DO I GET TO BE WHAT YOU ARE?"
REALLY? YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT *NOW?*
I'D JUST SEEN A MAN *DIE*, I WASN'T EXACTLY *THINKING STRAIGHT--*
THAT'S WHEN THE TRUTH COMES *OUT*.
YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST TO GET OBSESSED BECAUSE I BROKE YOUR *HOUSE*. IT *HAPPENS*.
YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST TO WANT TO CLIMB INTO SOME *GAMMA MACHINE* EITHER.
PEOPLE SEE ME, THEY IMAGINE WHAT IT'S LIKE TO *BE* ME--
YEAH?
SEE...I *CAN'T* IMAGINE IT. AT ALL.
WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE TO FEEL THAT *RAGE*. TO BE *ABLE* TO FEEL THAT RAGE.
TO BE *ALLOWED* TO FEEL IT.

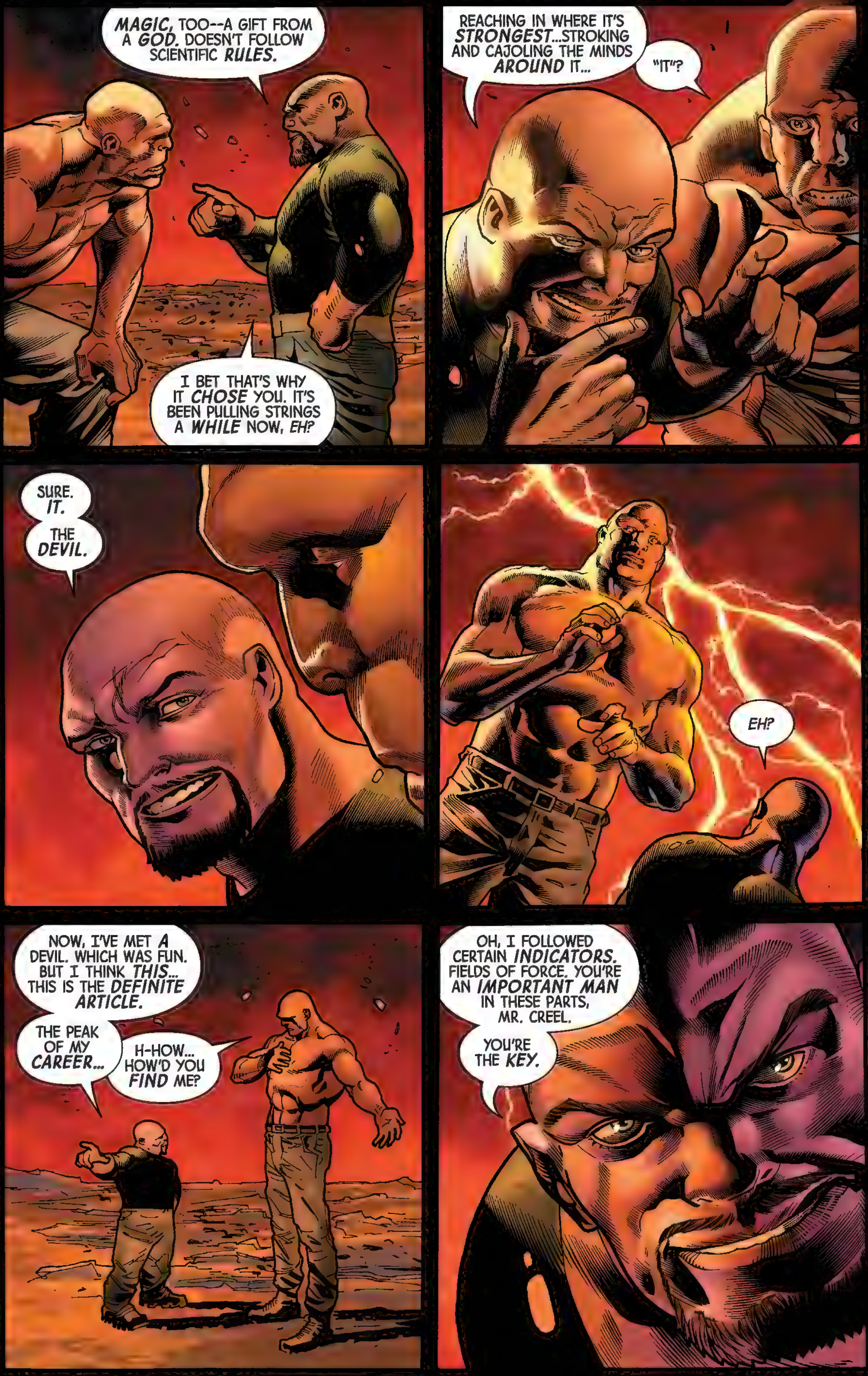

YOU SMASH TOWNS. YOU--UNFF!--RUIN LIVES. YOU'VE KILLED PEOPLE--NOT MANY, BUT YOU HAVE.
SIX MONTHS LATER, YOU'RE ON THE AVENGERS AGAIN, ALL IS FORGIVEN--
YOU KNOW I WAS SHOT INTO SPACE, RIGHT?
YEAH. YOU WERE SHOT INTO SPACE.
INSTEAD OF JUST SHOT.
HM.
YOU WRECK A CITY, AND DOCTOR STRANGE LOOKS FOR A RETIREMENT HOME FOR YOU. IRON MAN LOOKS FOR A PARADISE PLANET TO PUT YOU ON.
YOUR ANGER...IT'S INDULGED. EVEN RESPECTED.
MINE IS DISMISSED--IF I'M LUCKY.
WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF--OF MEN--WHITE, COLLEGE-EDUCATED MEN, MEN LIKE BRUCE BANNER--
--WHO JUST RANT AND SCREAM AND RAGE AND--SMASH THINGS--
--AND THE WORLD BENDS OVER BACKWARD TO UNDERSTAND THAT. TO REWARD IT.
SO...YEAH. I GUESS I'M ASKING.
HOW DO I GET MY PIECE OF THAT PIE, HULK?
HOW DO I GET TO BE WHAT YOU ARE?
...
HNH. THAT'S GOOD.
I LIKE THAT.

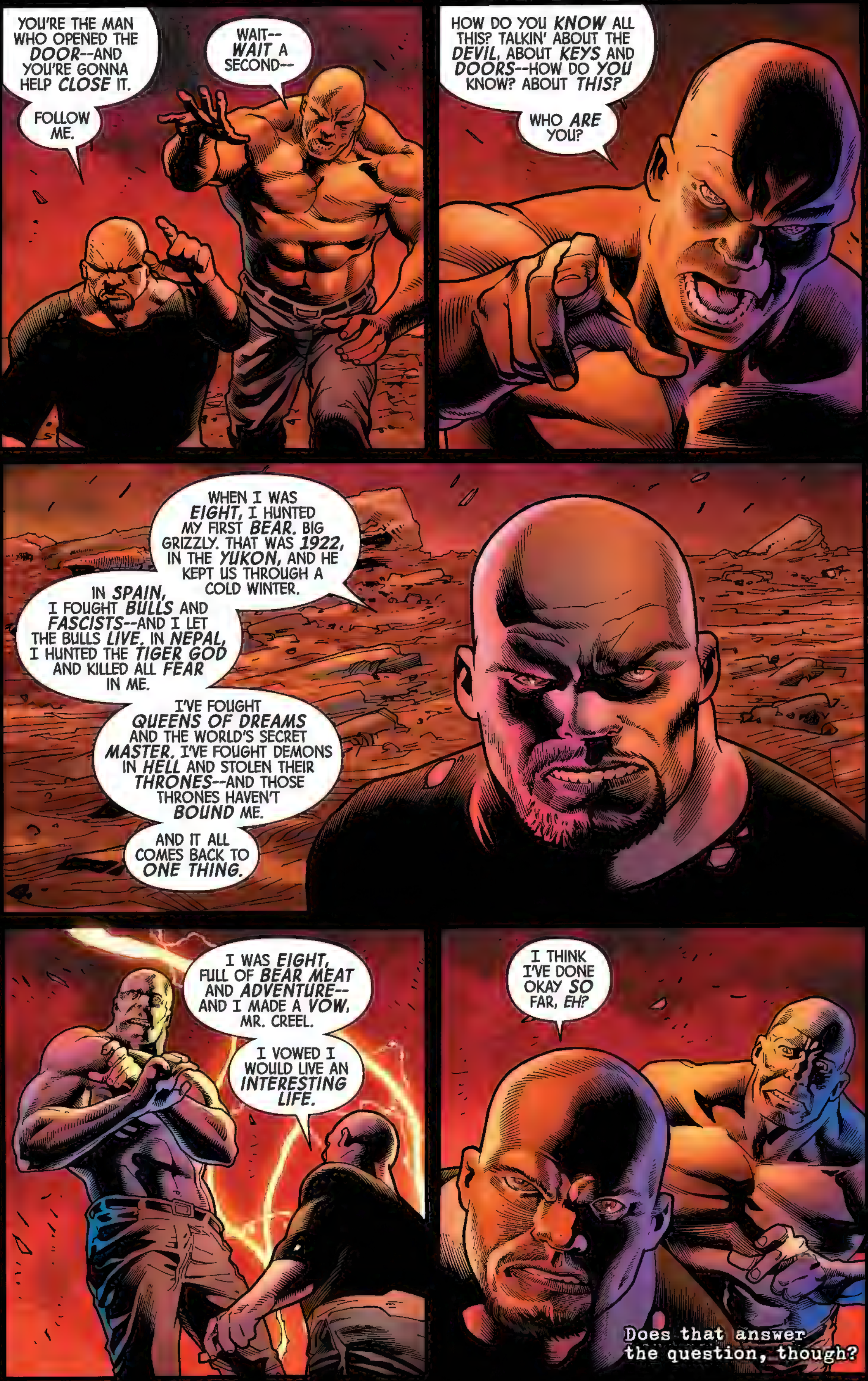

RIGHT. OF COURSE YOU DO.
HAVE A GOOD LAUGH AT THE--THE PUNY HUMAN--
NO. NOT THAT.
HOW YOU TALK ABOUT ANGER...LIKE IT'S SOMETHING THAT NEEDS LETTING OUT.
LIKE IT'S USEFUL. LIKE IT CAN GET THINGS DONE.
YOU DON'T LOCK IT AWAY, CALL IT ANOTHER NAME, PRETEND IT'S NOT YOU.
YOU'RE NOT ASHAMED OF IT.
THAT.
I LIKE THAT.
...
BUT IF YOU COULD STEP INTO A GAMMA MACHINE--YOU WOULD, RIGHT?
SURE.
WHO WOULDN'T?
WHAT'S IT LIKE, DOC?
BEIN' THE HULK?

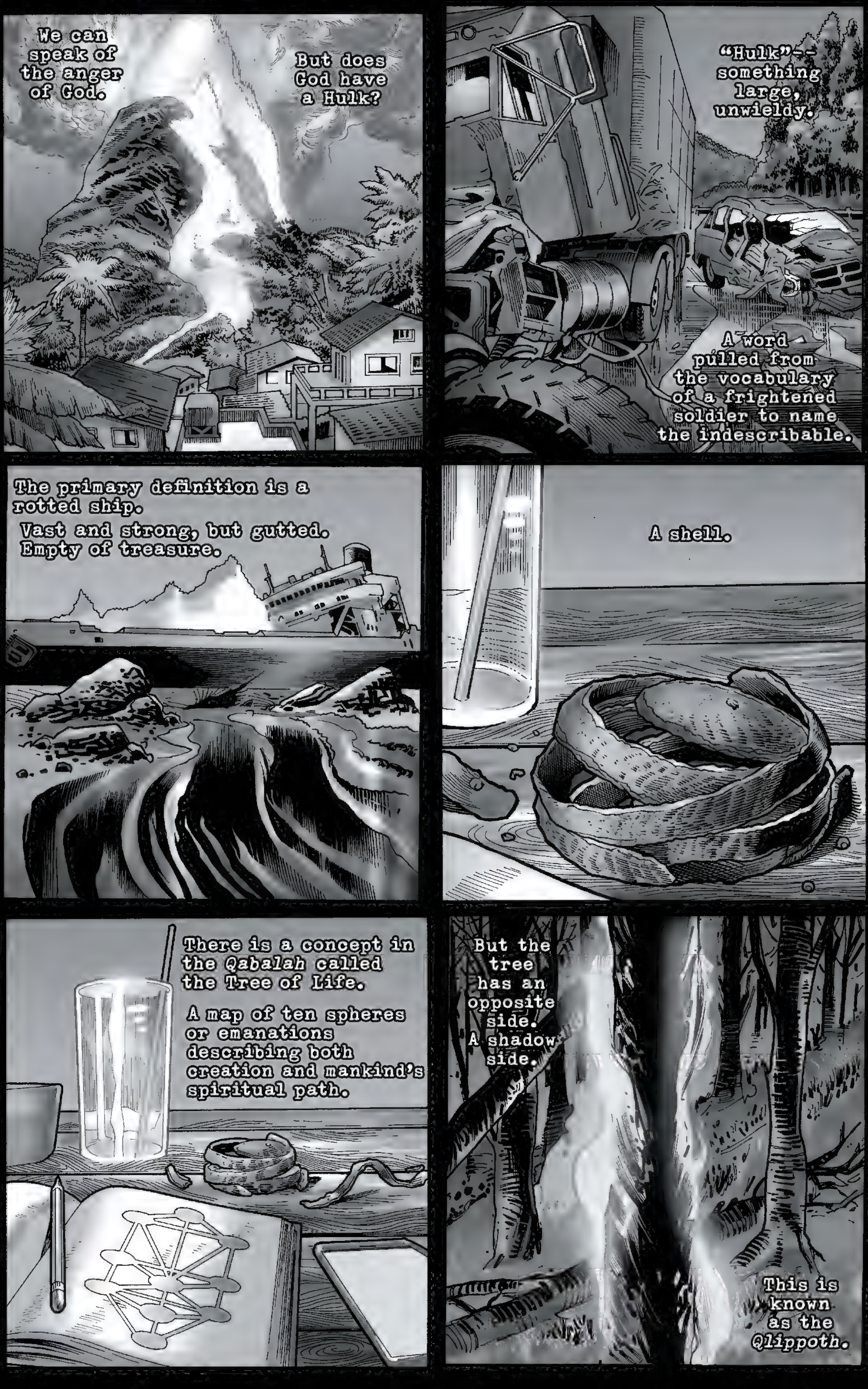

I'LL BET IT WAS A *GAS.*
...RICK JONES?
And what would that look like?

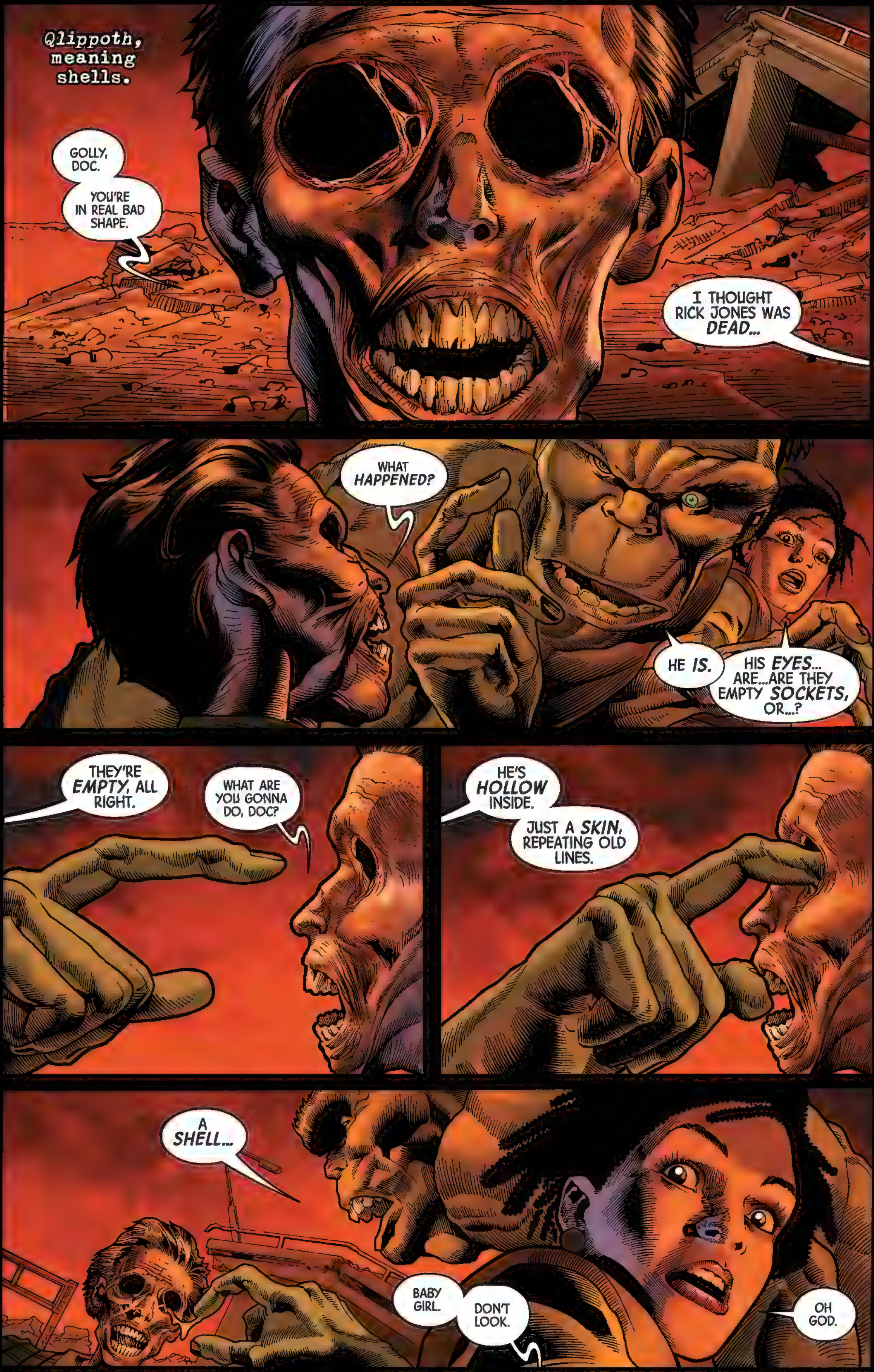

What is the anger of God?
We are told it is in the flood, or the storm.
Insurance men say that these are God's acts, against which we are unprotected.
But that is the irrational side speaking.
The rational side - science - says it was our doing after all.
We poisoned the air. We boiled the sea and filled it up with plastic.
We decided hating each other was more vital than saving each other.
We were given a miracle world, and we broke it. Perhaps we thought God would give us another.
It won't work that way.
What is God's anger?
God's face, turning away.

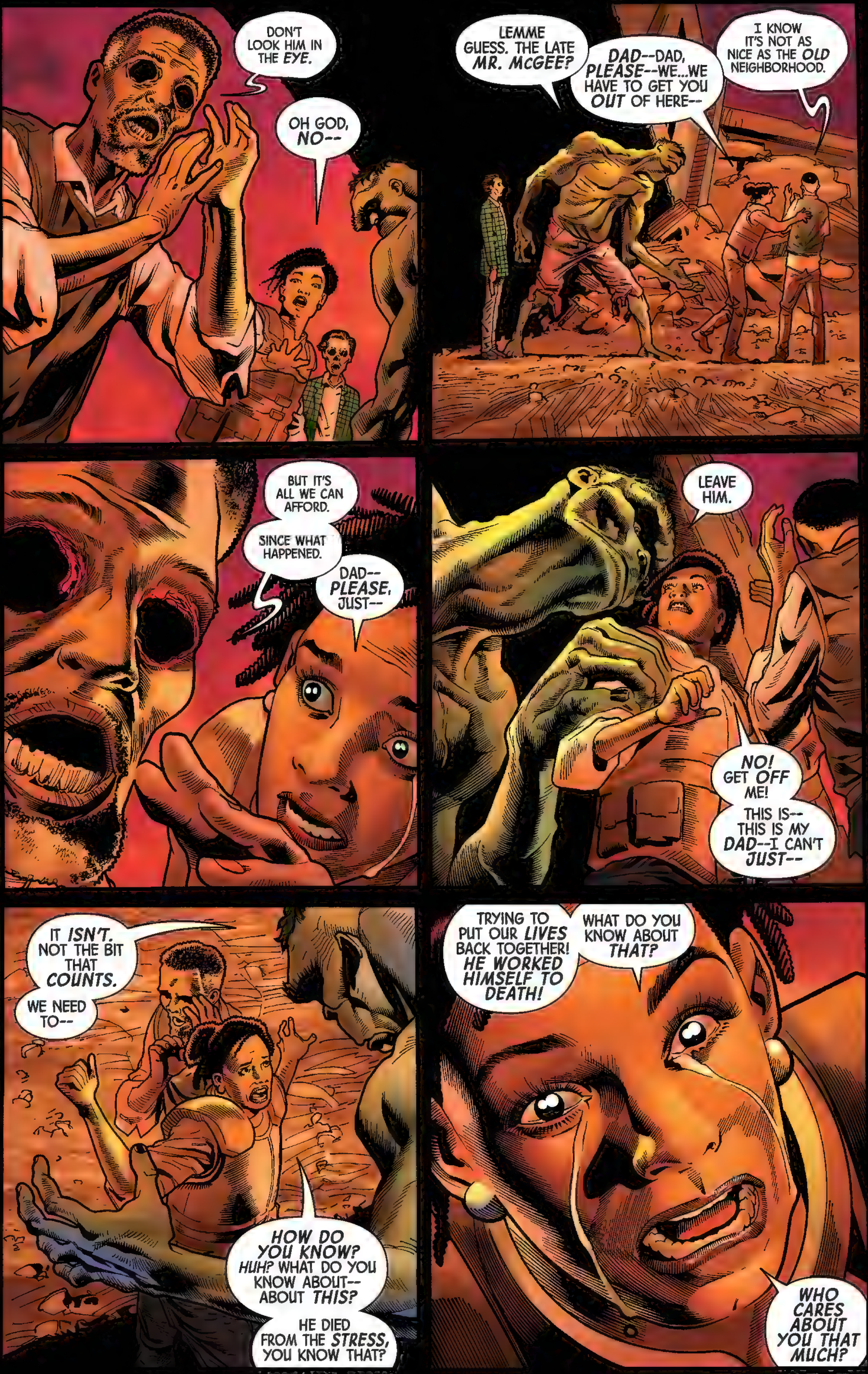

Leaving us alone with what we've done.
I'M SORRY.
I DID THIS. I LET THIS *HAPPEN.*
MY STUPID... *PRIDE...*
I LET THIS *IN.*
TRUST ME.
EVIL HAS *ALWAYS* BEEN IN.
WHO...?
EUGENE JUDD. CODENAME: PUCK. SOMETIMES IT'S FROM *SHAKESPEARE,* SOMETIMES IT'S A *HOCKEY* JOKE.
AND *YOU...* YOU, I *RECOGNIZE. CRUSHER CREEL,* EH? THE *ABSORBING MAN.*
YOU BECOME WHATEVER YOU *TOUCH*--I'M SURE *THAT* WAS USEFUL TO IT.

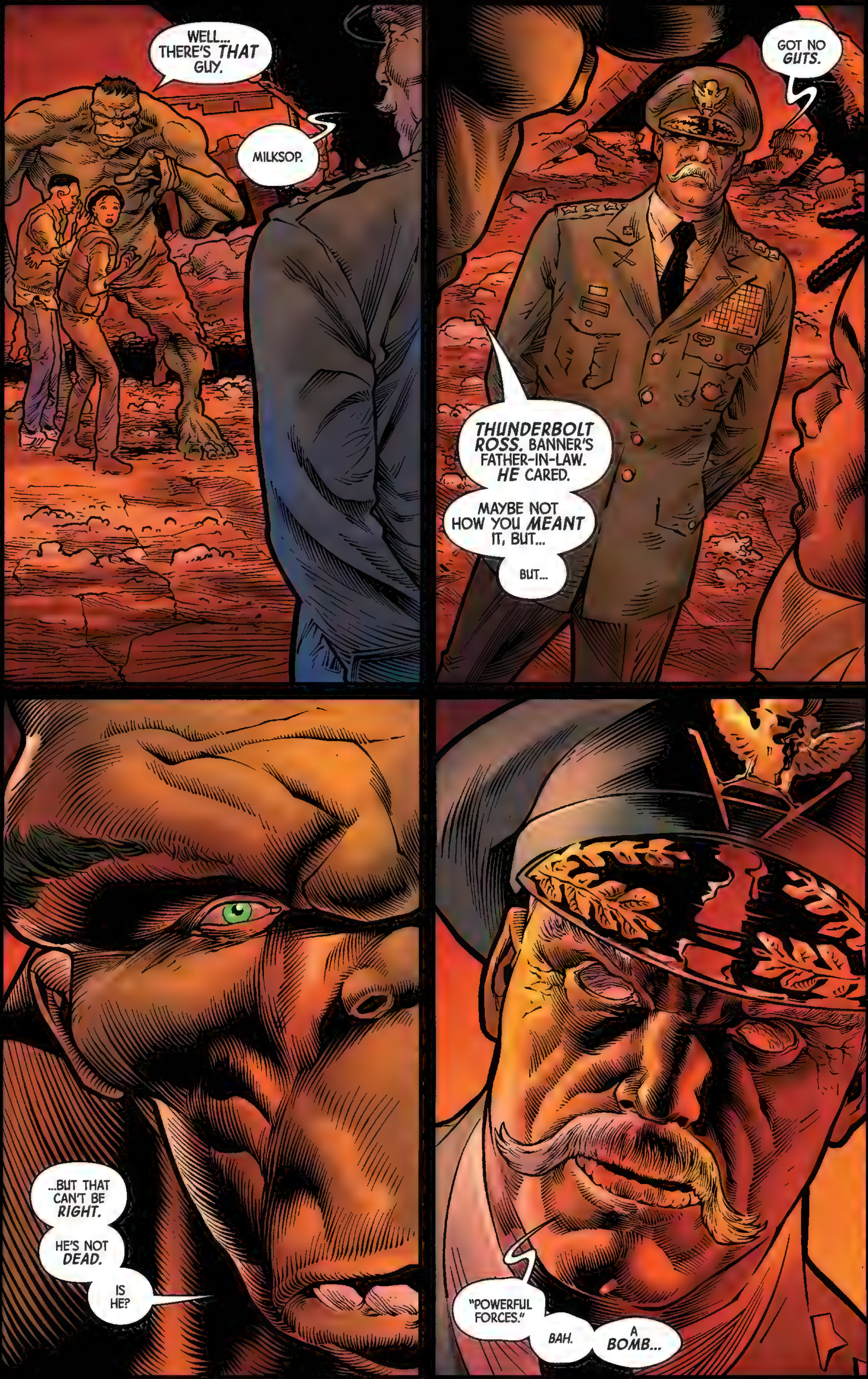

MAGIC, TOO--A GIFT FROM A GOD. DOESN'T FOLLOW SCIENTIFIC RULES.
I BET THAT'S WHY IT CHOSE YOU. IT'S BEEN PULLING STRINGS A WHILE NOW, EH?
REACHING IN WHERE IT'S STRONGEST...STROKING AND CAJOLING THE MINDS AROUND IT...
"IT"?
SURE. IT.
THE DEVIL.
EH?
NOW, I'VE MET A DEVIL. WHICH WAS FUN. BUT I THINK THIS... THIS IS THE DEFINITE ARTICLE.
THE PEAK OF MY CAREER...
H-HOW... HOW'D YOU FIND ME?
OH, I FOLLOWED CERTAIN INDICATORS. FIELDS OF FORCE. YOU'RE AN IMPORTANT MAN IN THESE PARTS, MR. CREEL.
YOU'RE THE KEY.

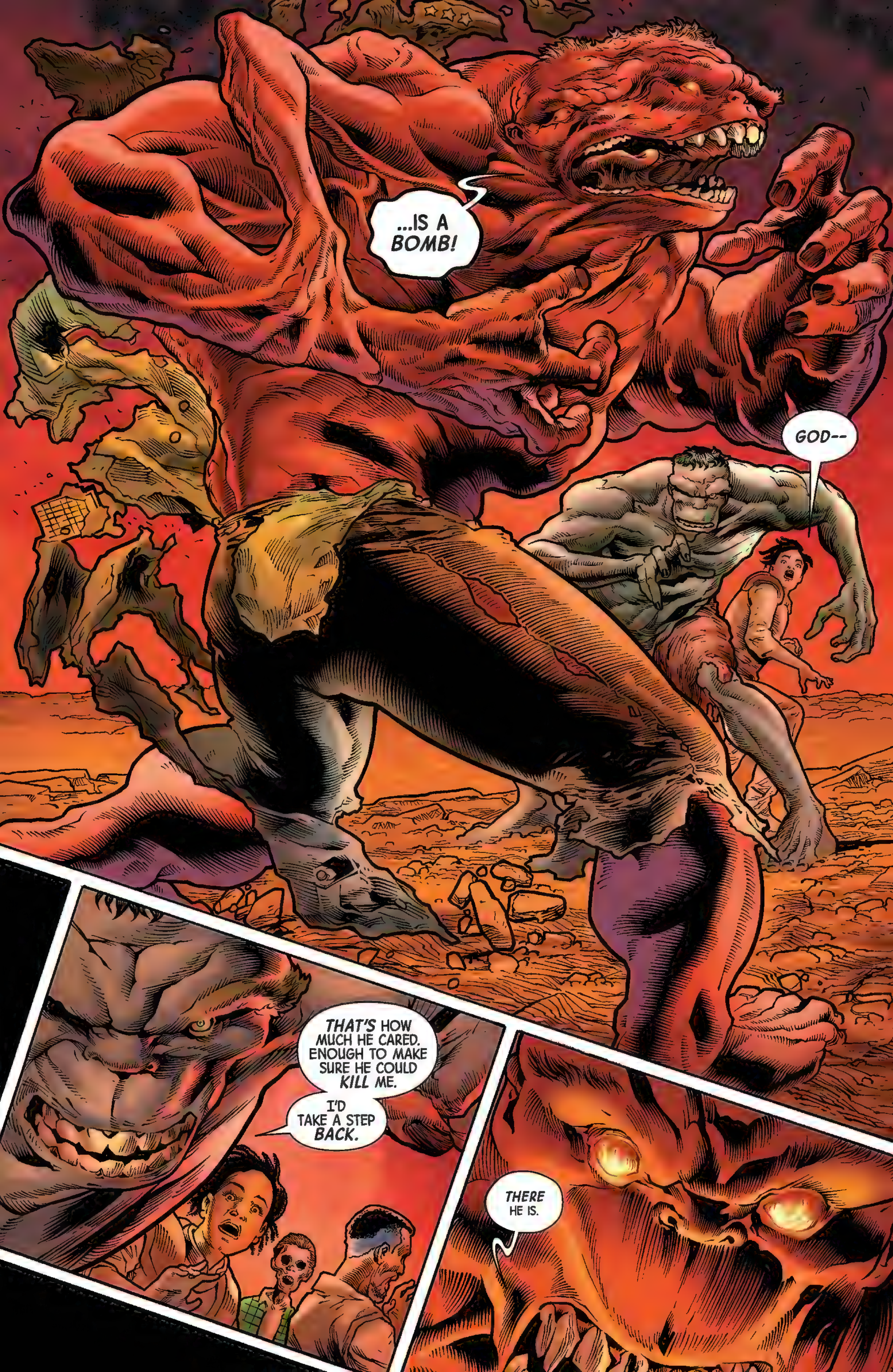

YOU'RE THE MAN WHO OPENED THE DOOR--AND YOU'RE GONNA HELP CLOSE IT.
FOLLOW ME.
WAIT-- WAIT A SECOND--
HOW DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS? TALKIN' ABOUT THE DEVIL, ABOUT KEYS AND DOORS--HOW DO YOU KNOW? ABOUT THIS?
WHO ARE YOU?
WHEN I WAS EIGHT, I HUNTED MY FIRST BEAR. BIG GRIZZLY. THAT WAS 1922, IN THE YUKON, AND HE KEPT US THROUGH A COLD WINTER.
IN SPAIN, I FOUGHT BULLS AND FASCISTS--AND I LET THE BULLS LIVE. IN NEPAL, I HUNTED THE TIGER GOD AND KILLED ALL FEAR IN ME.
I'VE FOUGHT QUEENS OF DREAMS AND THE WORLD'S SECRET MASTER. I'VE FOUGHT DEMONS IN HELL AND STOLEN THEIR THRONES--AND THOSE THRONES HAVEN'T BOUND ME.
AND IT ALL COMES BACK TO ONE THING.
I WAS EIGHT, FULL OF BEAR MEAT AND ADVENTURE--AND I MADE A VOW, MR. CREEL.
I VOWED I WOULD LIVE AN INTERESTING LIFE.
I THINK I'VE DONE OKAY SO FAR, EH?
Does that answer the question, though?

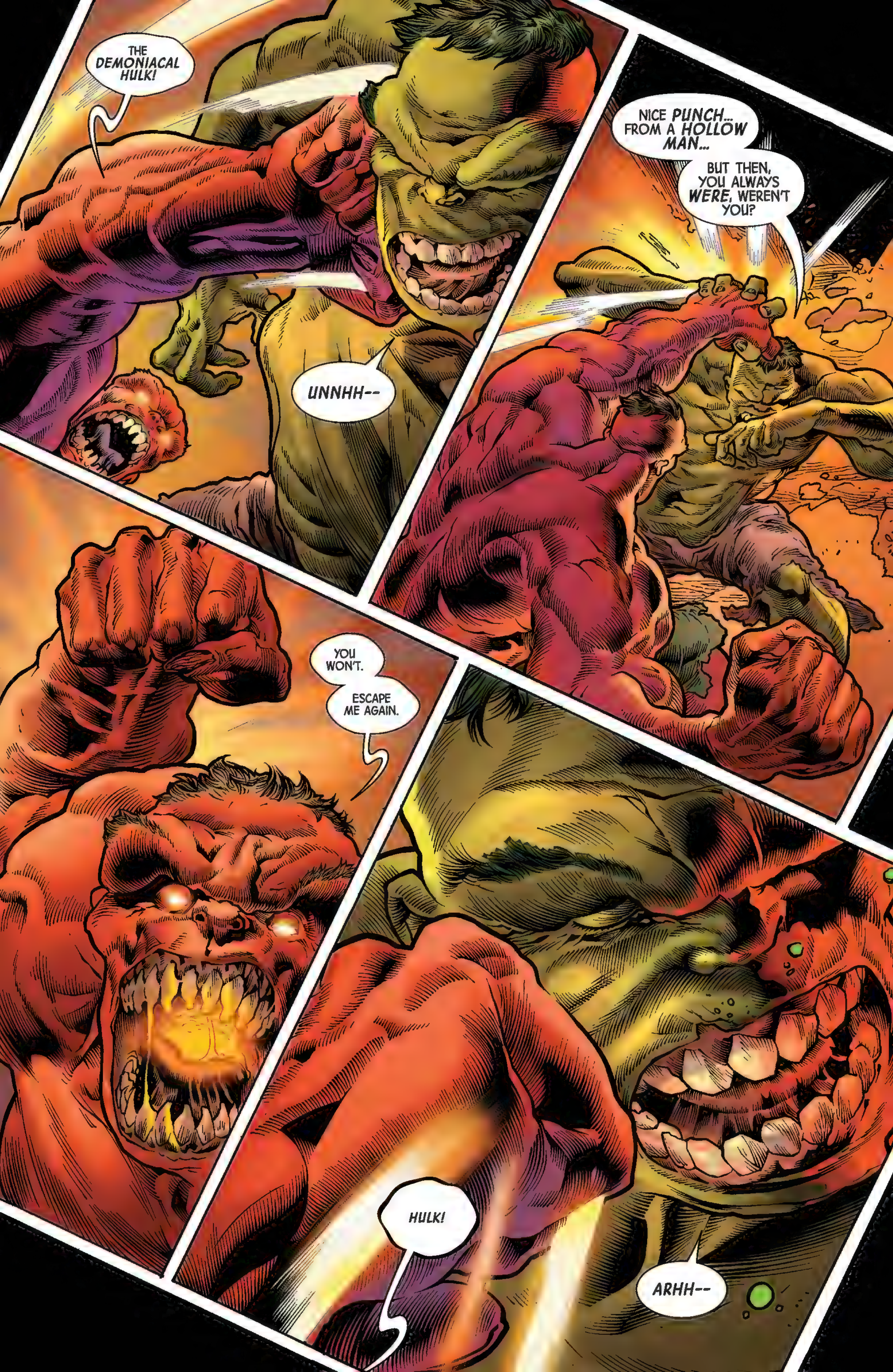

We can speak of the anger of God.
But does God have a Hulk?
"Hulk"-- something large, unwieldy.
A word pulled from the vocabulary of a frightened soldier to name the indescribable.
The primary definition is a rotted ship.
Vast and strong, but gutted. Empty of treasure.
A shell.
There is a concept in the *Qabalah* called the Tree of Life.
A map of ten spheres or emanations describing both creation and mankind's spiritual path.
But the tree has an opposite side. A shadow side.
This is known as the *Qlippoth*.

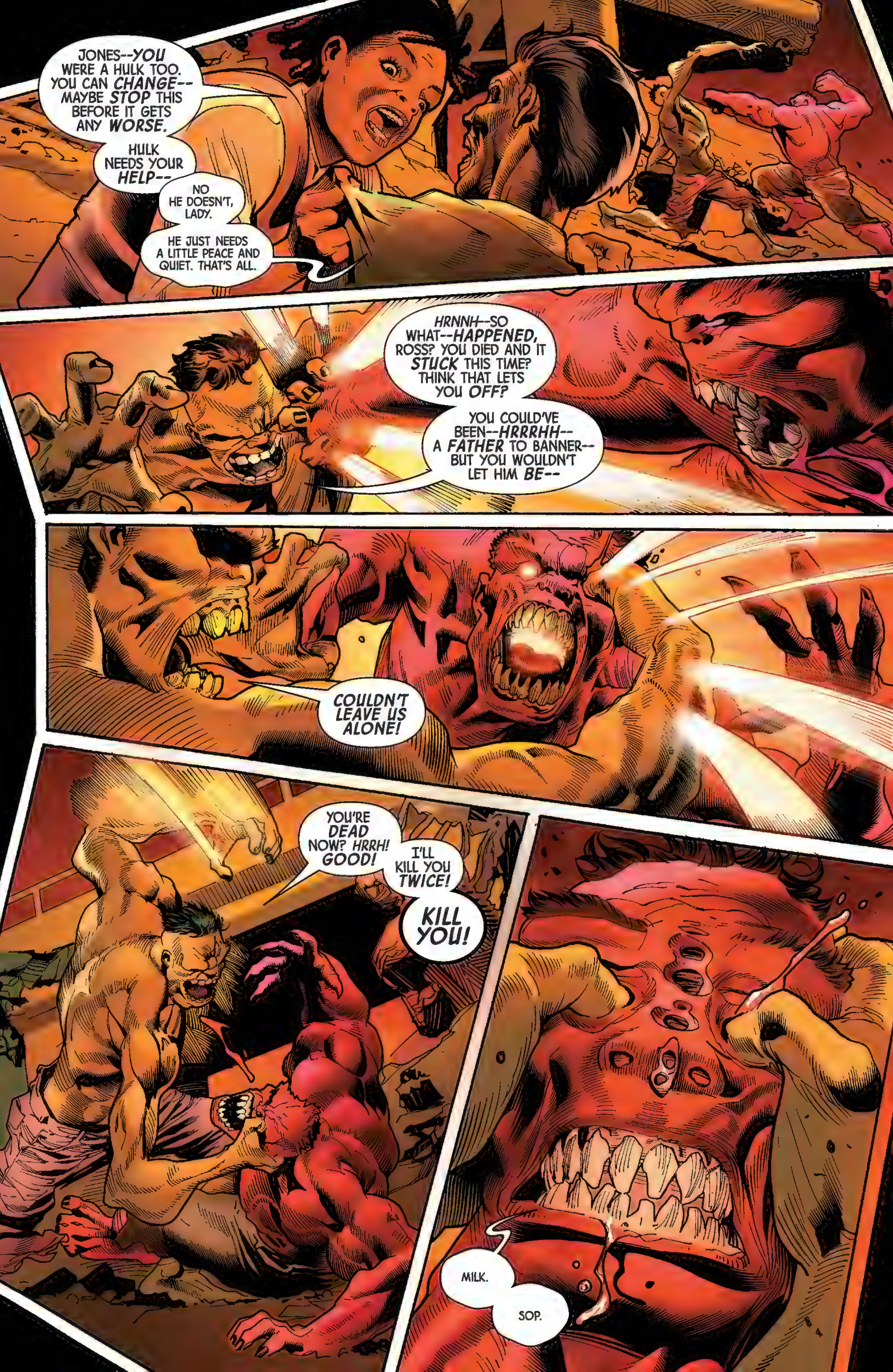

Qlippoth, meaning shells.
GOLLY, DOC.
YOU'RE IN REAL BAD SHAPE.
I THOUGHT RICK JONES WAS *DEAD*...
WHAT *HAPPENED?*
HE *IS.*
HIS *EYES*... ARE...ARE THEY EMPTY *SOCKETS,* OR...?
THEY'RE *EMPTY,* ALL RIGHT.
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO, DOC?
HE'S *HOLLOW* INSIDE.
JUST A *SKIN,* REPEATING OLD LINES.
A *SHELL*...
BABY GIRL.
DON'T LOOK.
OH GOD.

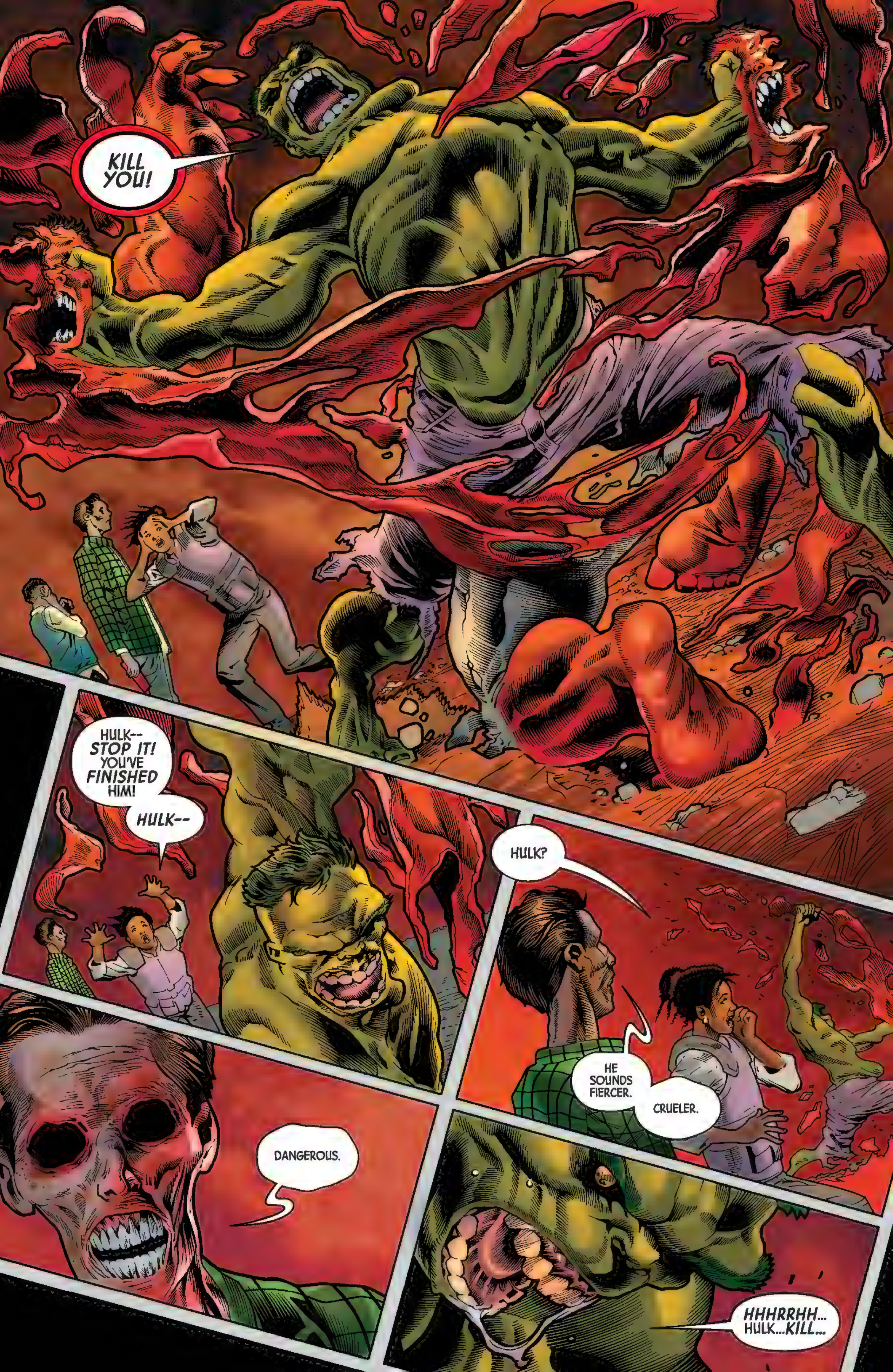

DON'T LOOK HIM IN THE *EYE.*
OH GOD, *NO--*
LEMME GUESS. THE LATE *MR. McGEE?*
DAD--DAD, *PLEASE*--WE...WE HAVE TO GET YOU *OUT* OF HERE--
I KNOW IT'S NOT AS NICE AS THE *OLD* NEIGHBORHOOD.
BUT IT'S ALL WE CAN AFFORD.
SINCE WHAT HAPPENED.
DAD-- *PLEASE,* JUST--
LEAVE HIM.
NO! GET *OFF* ME!
THIS IS-- THIS IS MY *DAD*--I CAN'T *JUST--*
IT *ISN'T.* NOT THE BIT THAT *COUNTS.*
WE NEED TO--
HOW DO YOU KNOW? HUH? WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT-- ABOUT *THIS?*
HE DIED FROM THE *STRESS,* YOU KNOW THAT?
TRYING TO PUT OUR *LIVES* BACK TOGETHER! *HE WORKED HIMSELF TO DEATH!*
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT *THAT?*
WHO CARES ABOUT YOU THAT MUCH?

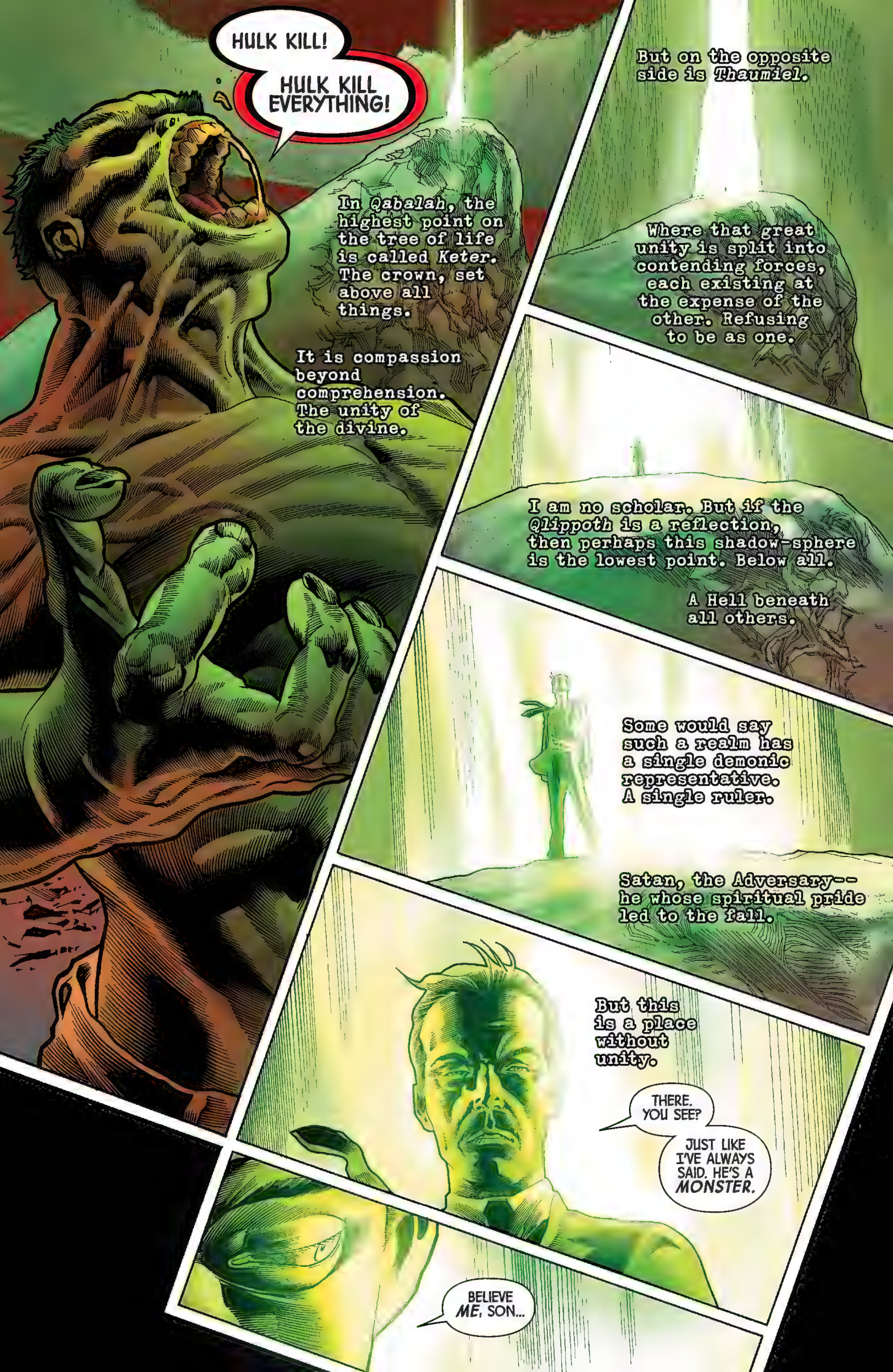

WELL... THERE'S *THAT* GUY.
MILKSOP.
GOT NO *GUTS.*
THUNDERBOLT ROSS. BANNER'S FATHER-IN-LAW. *HE* CARED.
MAYBE NOT HOW YOU *MEANT* IT, BUT...
BUT...
...BUT THAT CAN'T BE *RIGHT.*
HE'S NOT *DEAD.*
IS HE?
"POWERFUL FORCES."
BAH.
A BOMB...

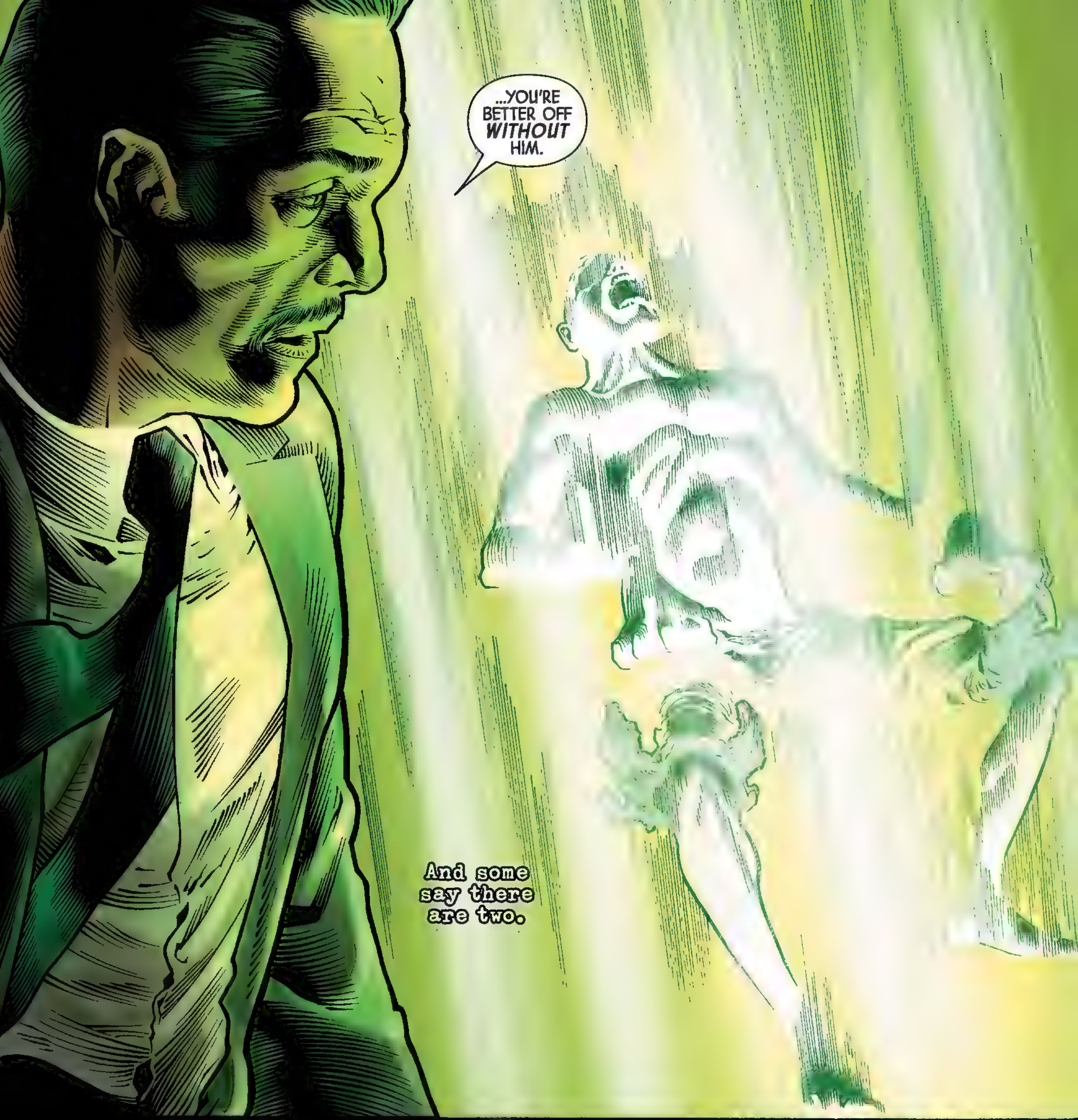

...IS A BOMB!
GOD--
THAT'S HOW MUCH HE CARED. ENOUGH TO MAKE SURE HE COULD KILL ME.
I'D TAKE A STEP BACK.
THERE HE IS.


THE DEMONIACAL HULK!
UNNHH--
NICE PUNCH... FROM A HOLLOW MAN...
BUT THEN, YOU ALWAYS WERE, WEREN'T YOU?
YOU WON'T.
ESCAPE ME AGAIN.
HULK!
ARHH--


JONES--*YOU* WERE A HULK TOO. YOU CAN *CHANGE*--MAYBE *STOP* THIS BEFORE IT GETS ANY *WORSE*.
HULK NEEDS YOUR *HELP*--
NO HE DOESN'T, LADY.
HE JUST NEEDS A LITTLE PEACE AND QUIET. THAT'S ALL.
HRNNH--SO WHAT--*HAPPENED*, ROSS? YOU DIED AND IT *STUCK* THIS TIME? THINK THAT LETS YOU *OFF*?
YOU COULD'VE BEEN--*HRRRHH*--A *FATHER* TO BANNER--BUT YOU WOULDN'T LET HIM *BE*--
COULDN'T LEAVE US ALONE!
YOU'RE *DEAD* NOW? *HRRH! GOOD!*
I'LL KILL YOU *TWICE!*
KILL YOU!
MILK.
SOP.


KILL YOU!
HULK-- STOP IT! YOU'VE FINISHED HIM!
HULK--
HULK?
HE SOUNDS FIERCER.
CRUELER.
DANGEROUS.
HHHRRHH... HULK...KILL...


HULK KILL!
HULK KILL EVERYTHING!
In *Qabalah*, the highest point on the tree of life is called *Keter*. The crown, set above all things.
It is compassion beyond comprehension. The unity of the divine.
But on the opposite side is *Thaumiel*.
Where that great unity is split into contending forces, each existing at the expense of the other. Refusing to be as one.
I am no scholar. But if the *Qlippoth* is a reflection, then perhaps this shadow-sphere is the lowest point. Below all.
A Hell beneath all others.
Some would say such a realm has a single demonic representative. A single ruler.
Satan, the Adversary-- he whose spiritual pride led to the fall.
But this is a place without unity.
THERE. YOU SEE?
JUST LIKE I'VE ALWAYS SAID. HE'S A *MONSTER*.
BELIEVE *ME*, SON...

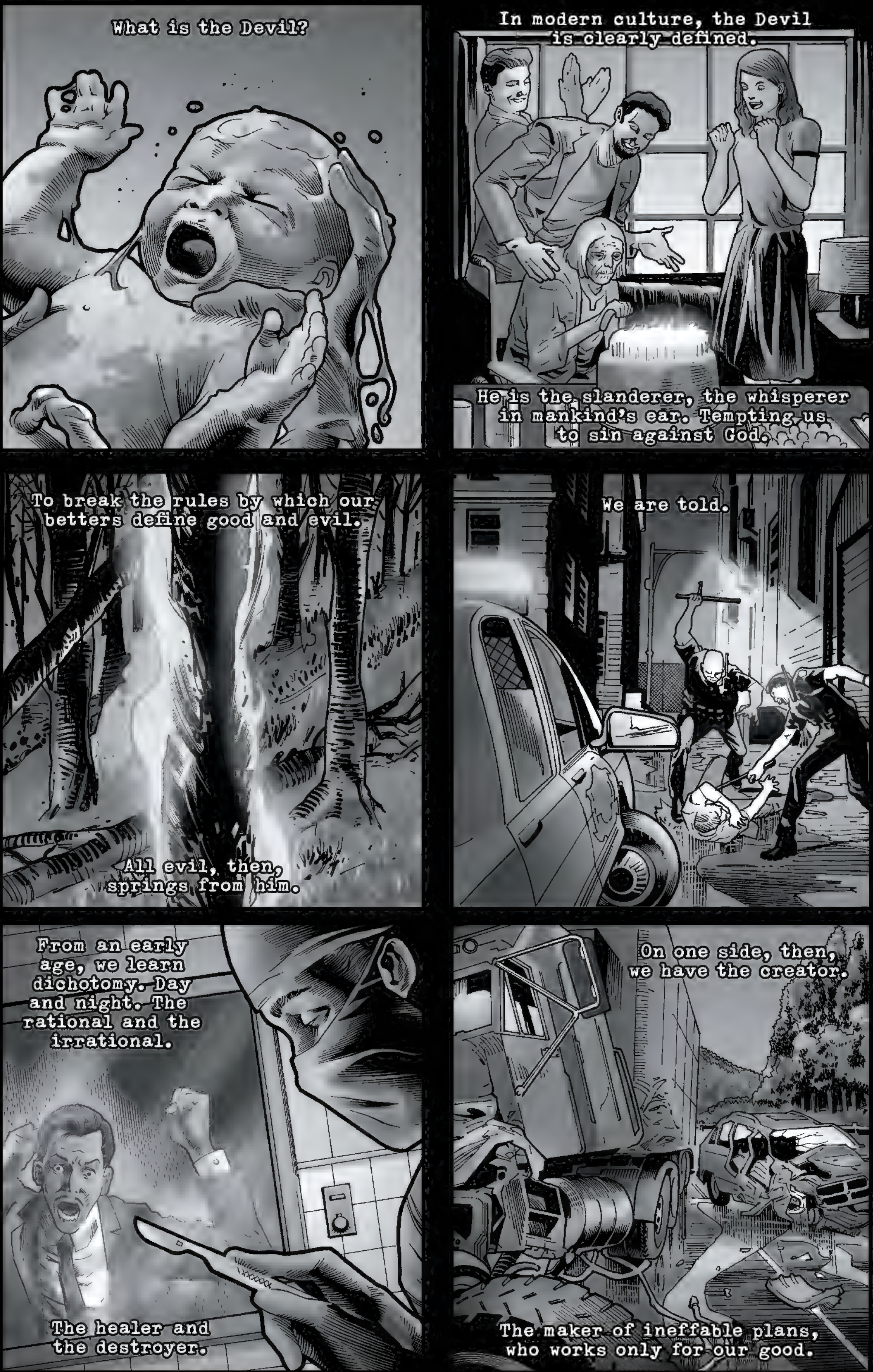

...YOU'RE BETTER OFF *WITHOUT* HIM.
And some say there are two.

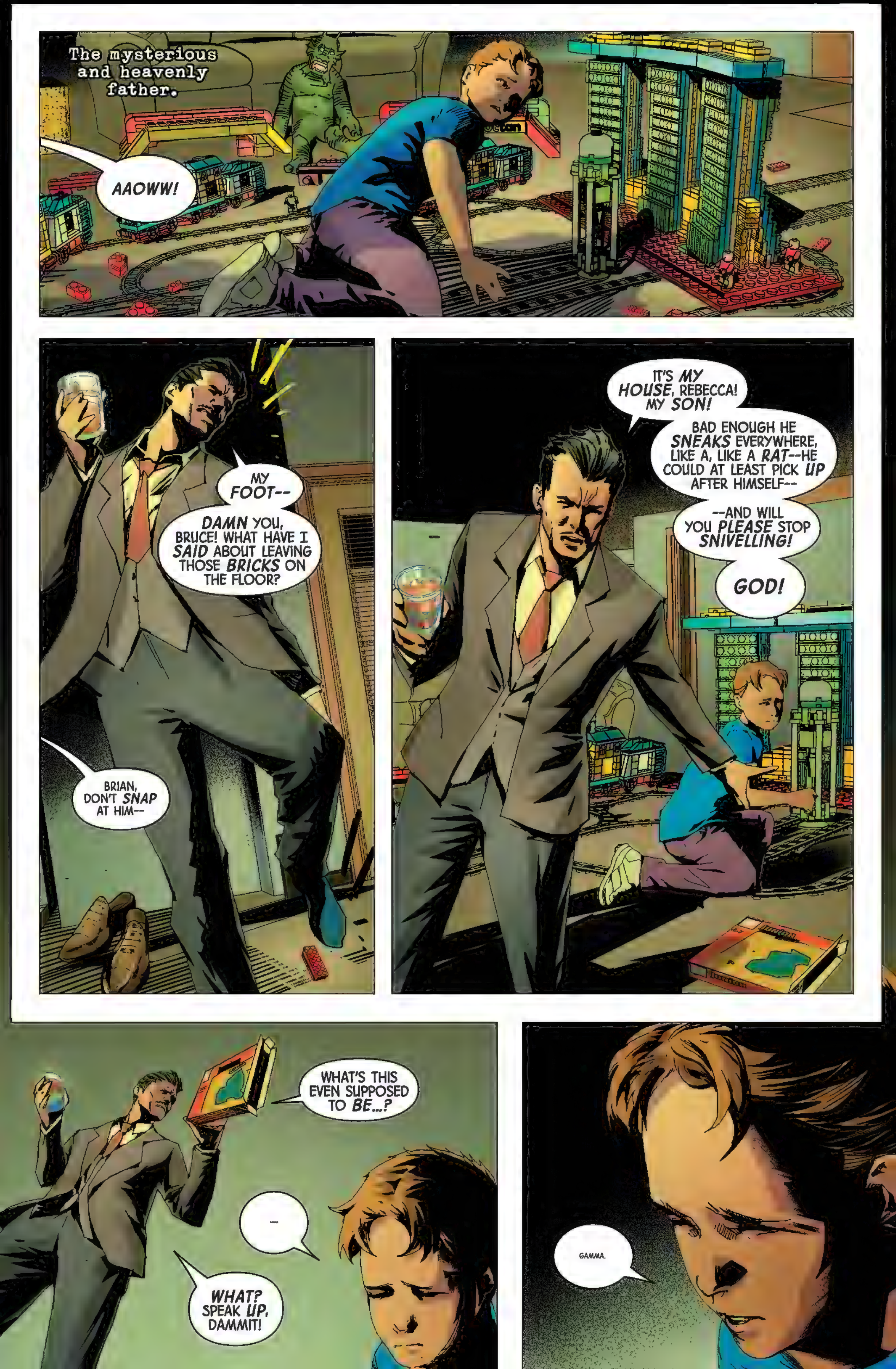
THIS WORLD OUR HELL

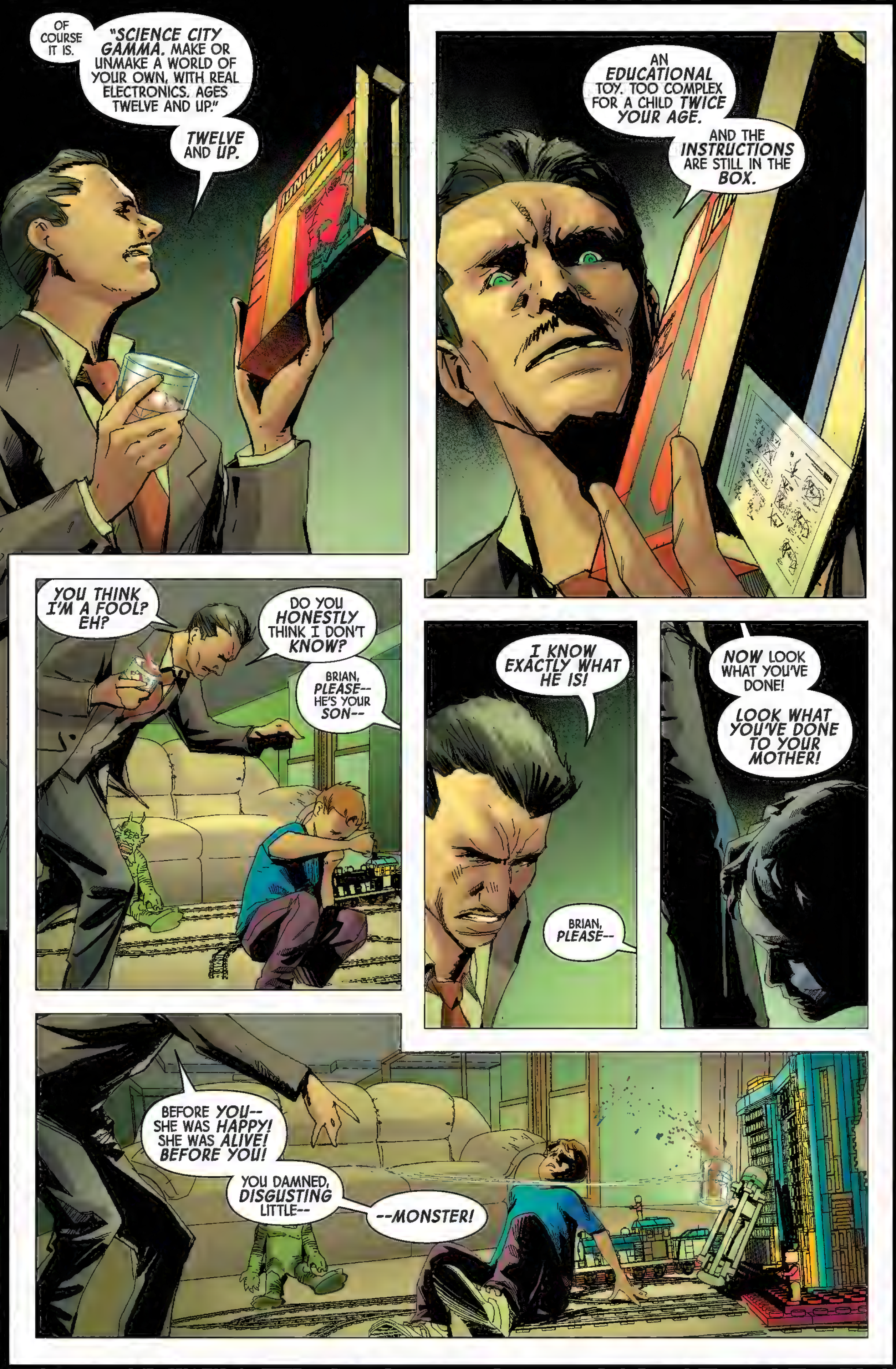
12

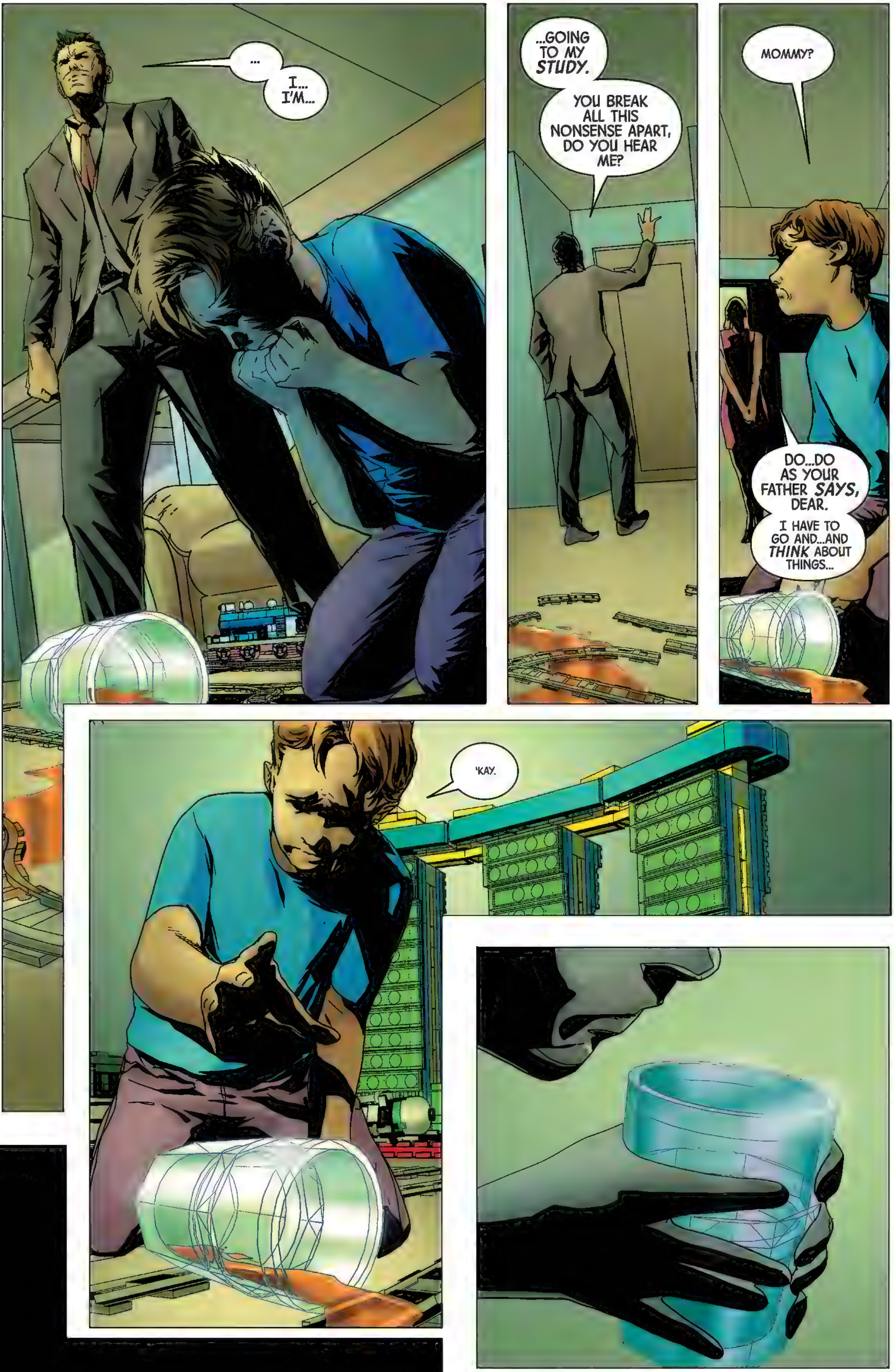
“YE ARE OF YOUR FATHER
THE DEVIL, AND THE
LUSTS OF YOUR FATHER
YE WILL DO.”

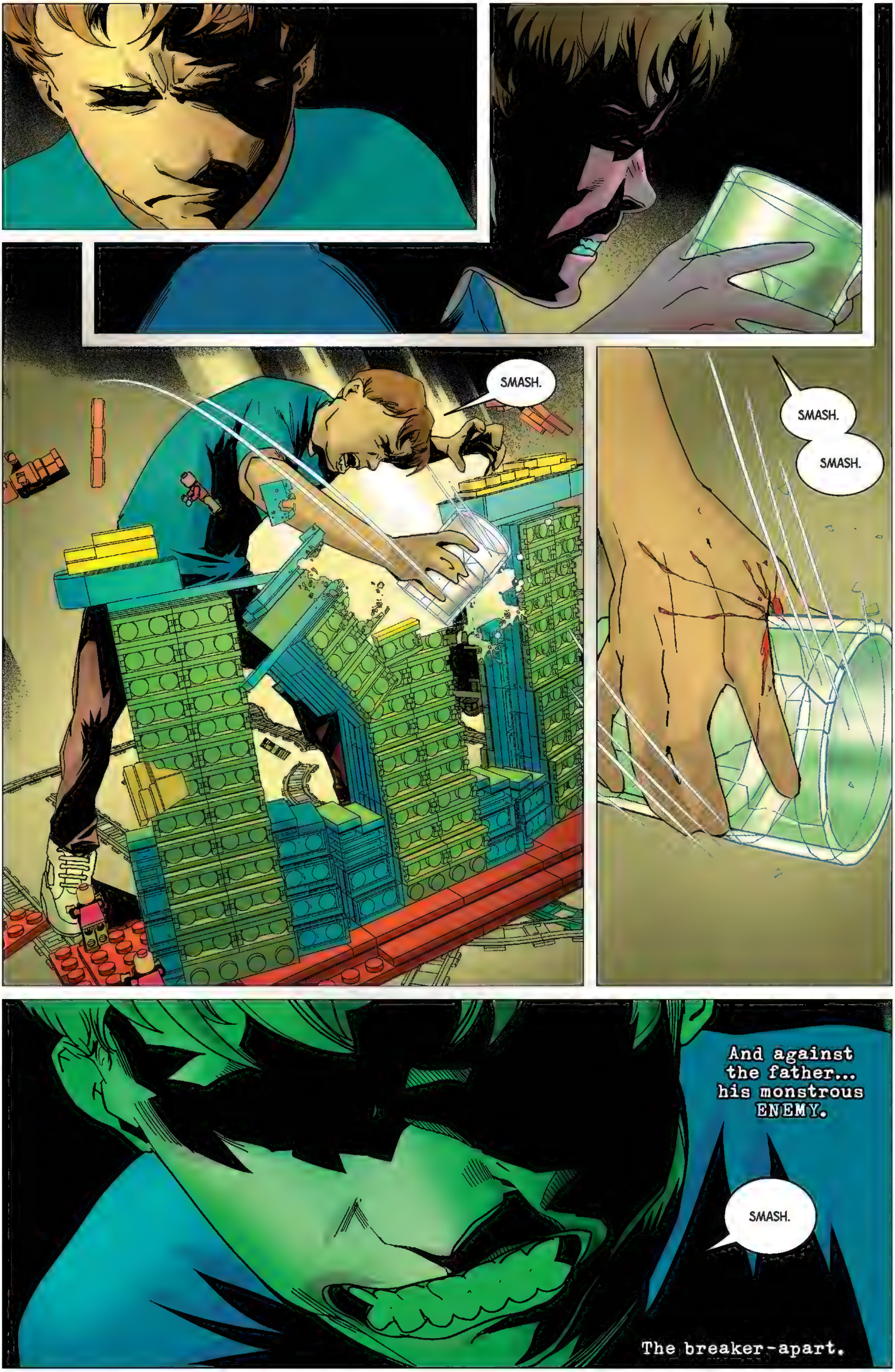
JOHN 8:44

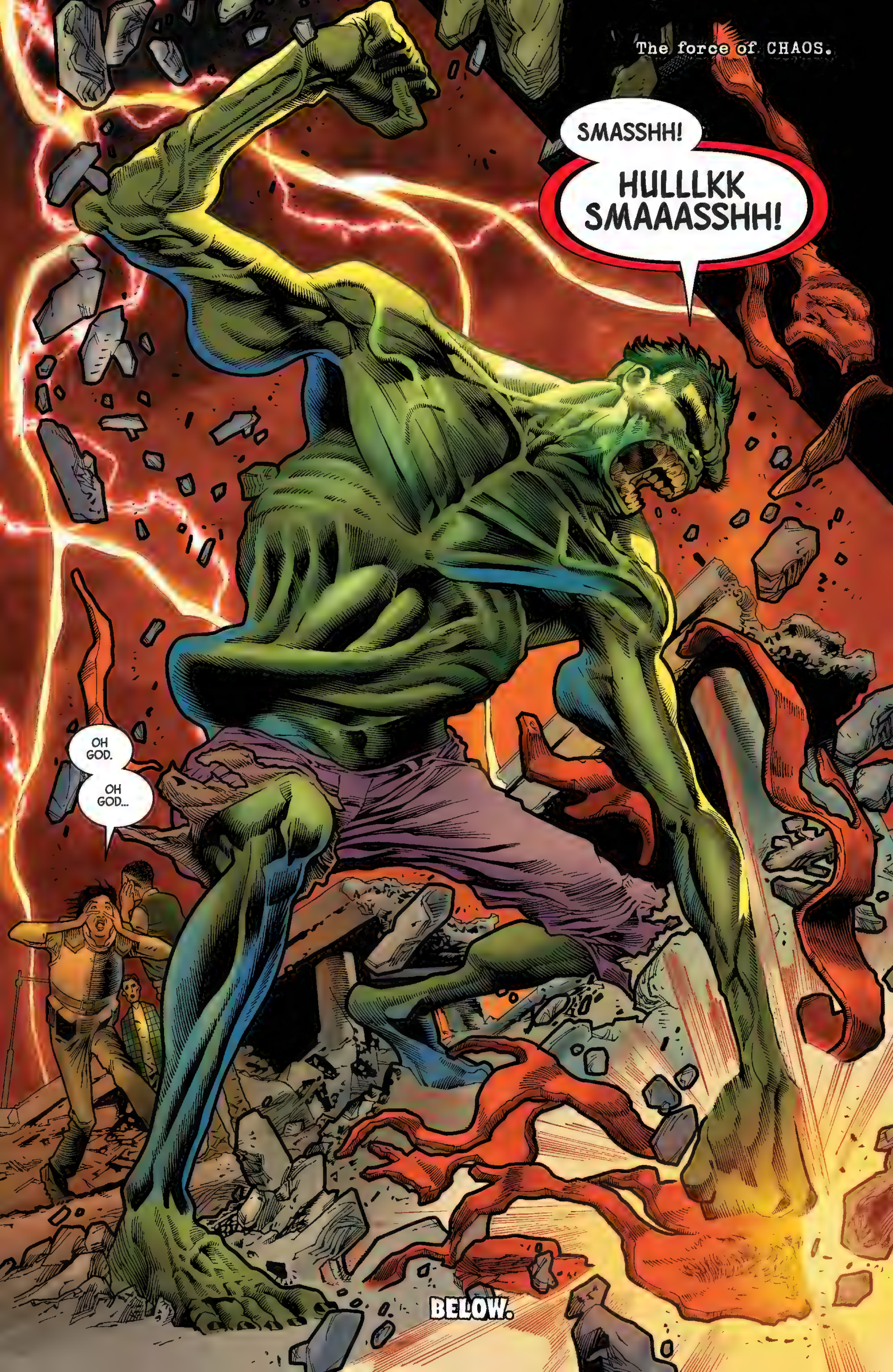

What is the Devil?
In modern culture, the Devil is clearly defined.
He is the slanderer, the whisperer in mankind's ear. Tempting us to sin against God.
To break the rules by which our betters define good and evil.
All evil, then, springs from him.
We are told.
From an early age, we learn dichotomy. Day and night. The rational and the irrational.
The healer and the destroyer.
On one side, then, we have the creator.
The maker of ineffable plans, who works only for our good.

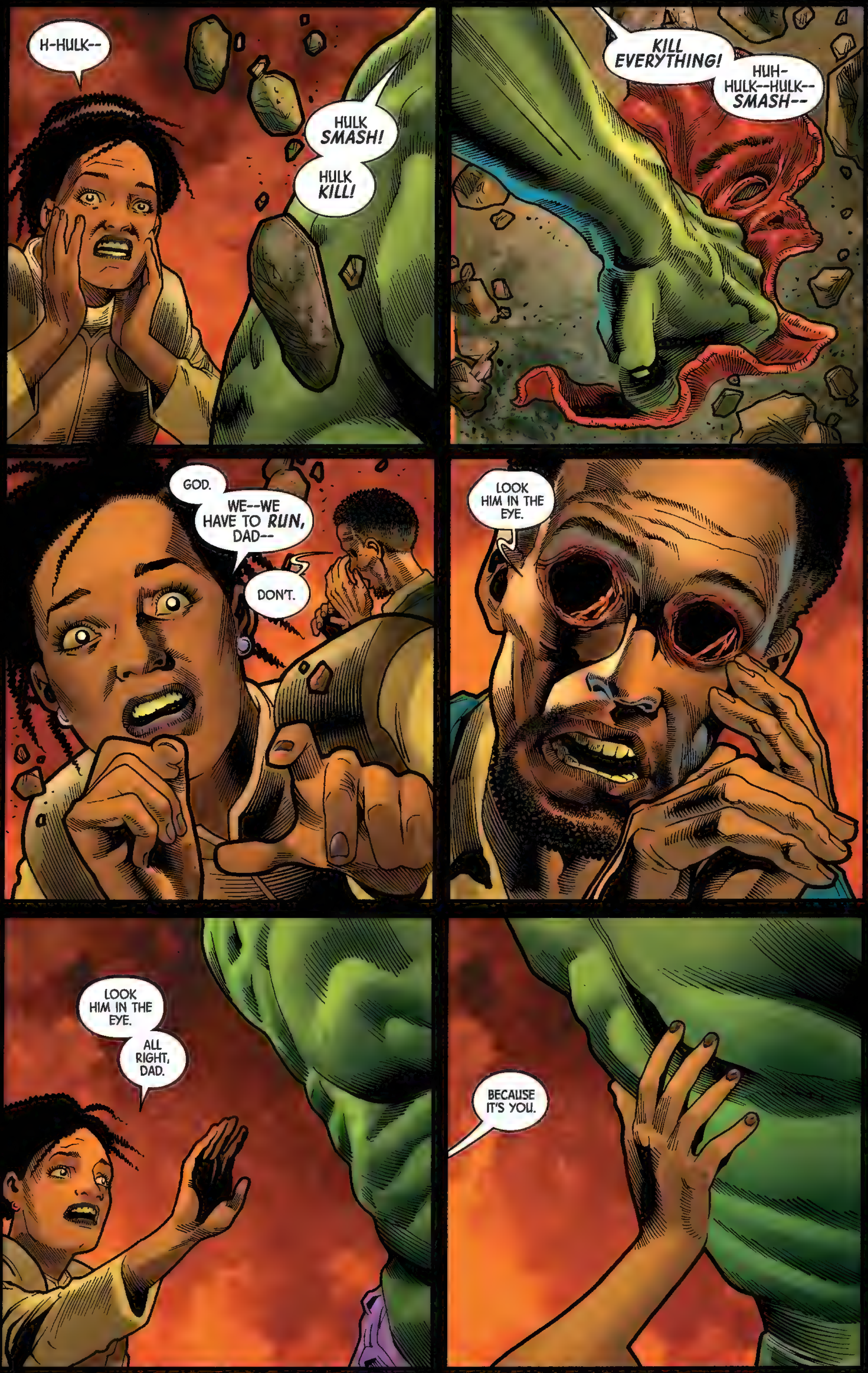

The mysterious and heavenly father.
AAOWW!
MY FOOT--
DAMN YOU, BRUCE! WHAT HAVE I SAID ABOUT LEAVING THOSE BRICKS ON THE FLOOR?
BRIAN, DON'T SNAP AT HIM--
IT'S MY HOUSE, REBECCA! MY SON!
BAD ENOUGH HE SNEAKS EVERYWHERE, LIKE A, LIKE A RAT--HE COULD AT LEAST PICK UP AFTER HIMSELF--
--AND WILL YOU PLEASE STOP SNIVELLING!
GOD!
WHAT'S THIS EVEN SUPPOSED TO BE...?
WHAT? SPEAK UP, DAMMIT!
GAMMA.

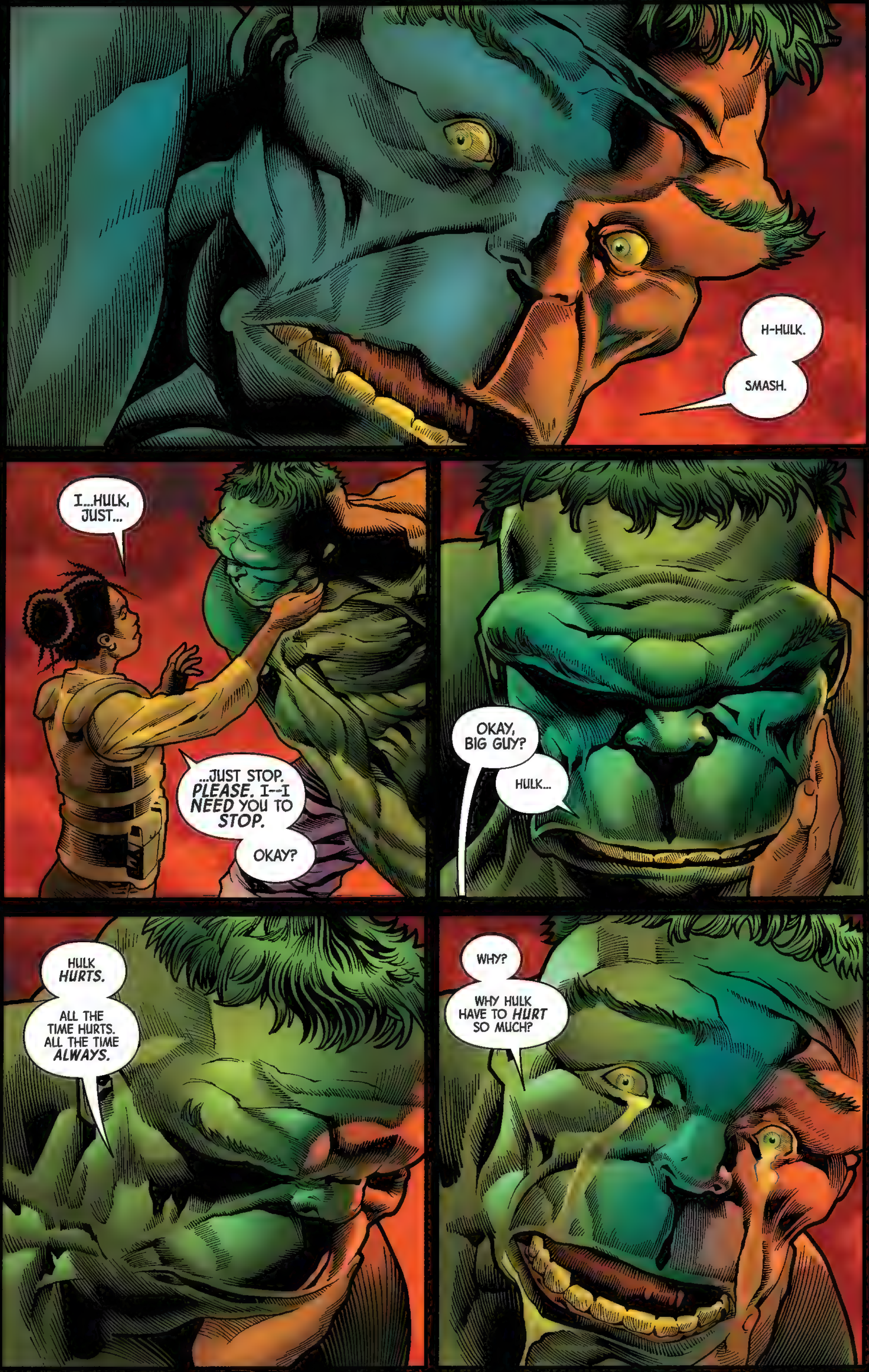

OF COURSE IT IS.
"SCIENCE CITY GAMMA. MAKE OR UNMAKE A WORLD OF YOUR OWN, WITH REAL ELECTRONICS. AGES TWELVE AND UP."
TWELVE AND UP.
JUNIOR
AN EDUCATIONAL TOY. TOO COMPLEX FOR A CHILD TWICE YOUR AGE.
AND THE INSTRUCTIONS ARE STILL IN THE BOX.
YOU THINK I'M A FOOL? EH?
DO YOU HONESTLY THINK I DON'T KNOW?
BRIAN, PLEASE-- HE'S YOUR SON--
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE IS!
BRIAN, PLEASE--
NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE!
LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO YOUR MOTHER!
BEFORE YOU-- SHE WAS HAPPY! SHE WAS ALIVE! BEFORE YOU!
YOU DAMNED, DISGUSTING LITTLE--
--MONSTER!

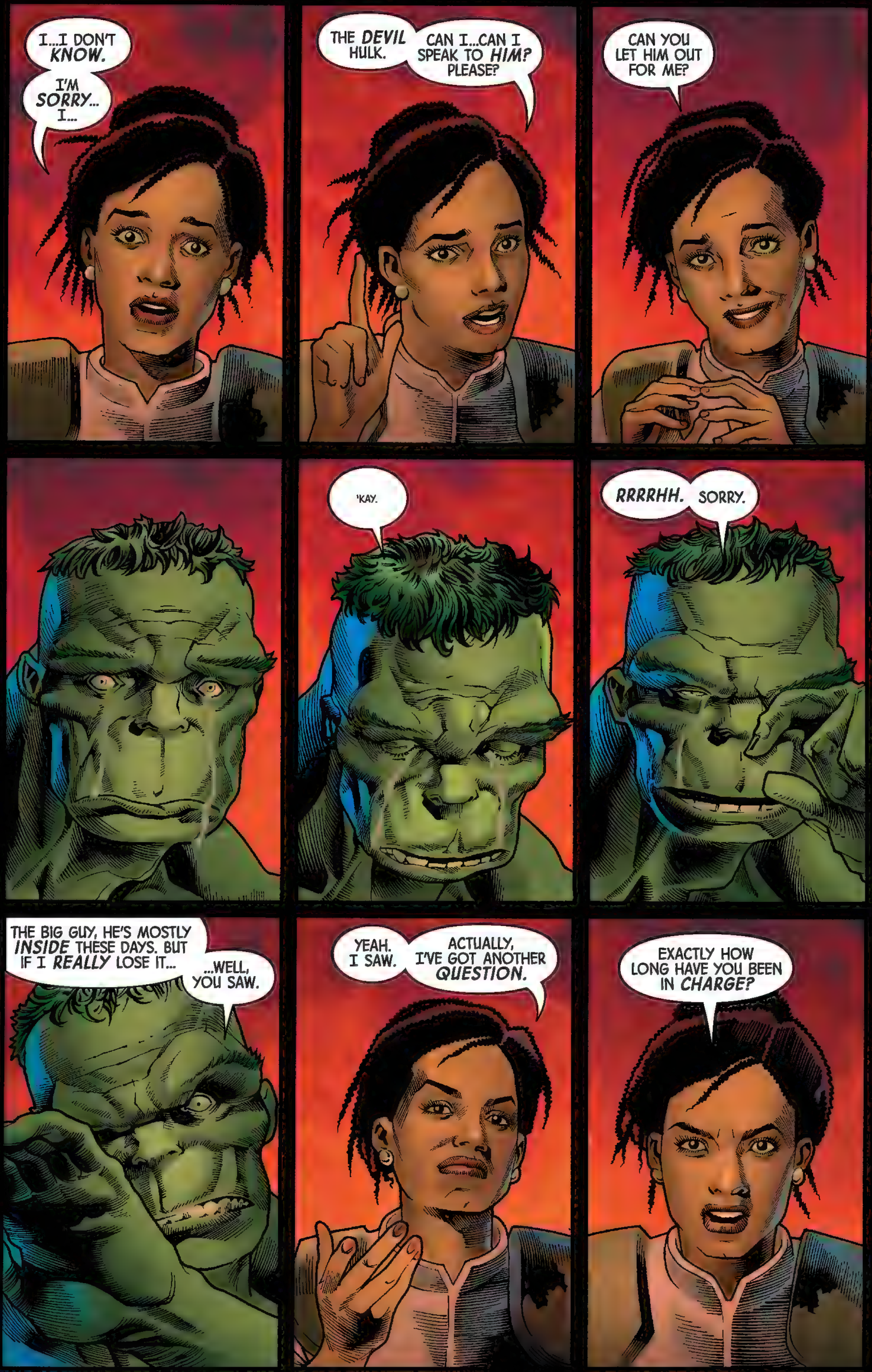

...
I... I'M...
...GOING TO MY *STUDY.*
YOU BREAK ALL THIS NONSENSE APART, DO YOU HEAR ME?
MOMMY?
DO...DO AS YOUR FATHER *SAYS,* DEAR.
I HAVE TO GO AND...AND *THINK* ABOUT THINGS...
'KAY.

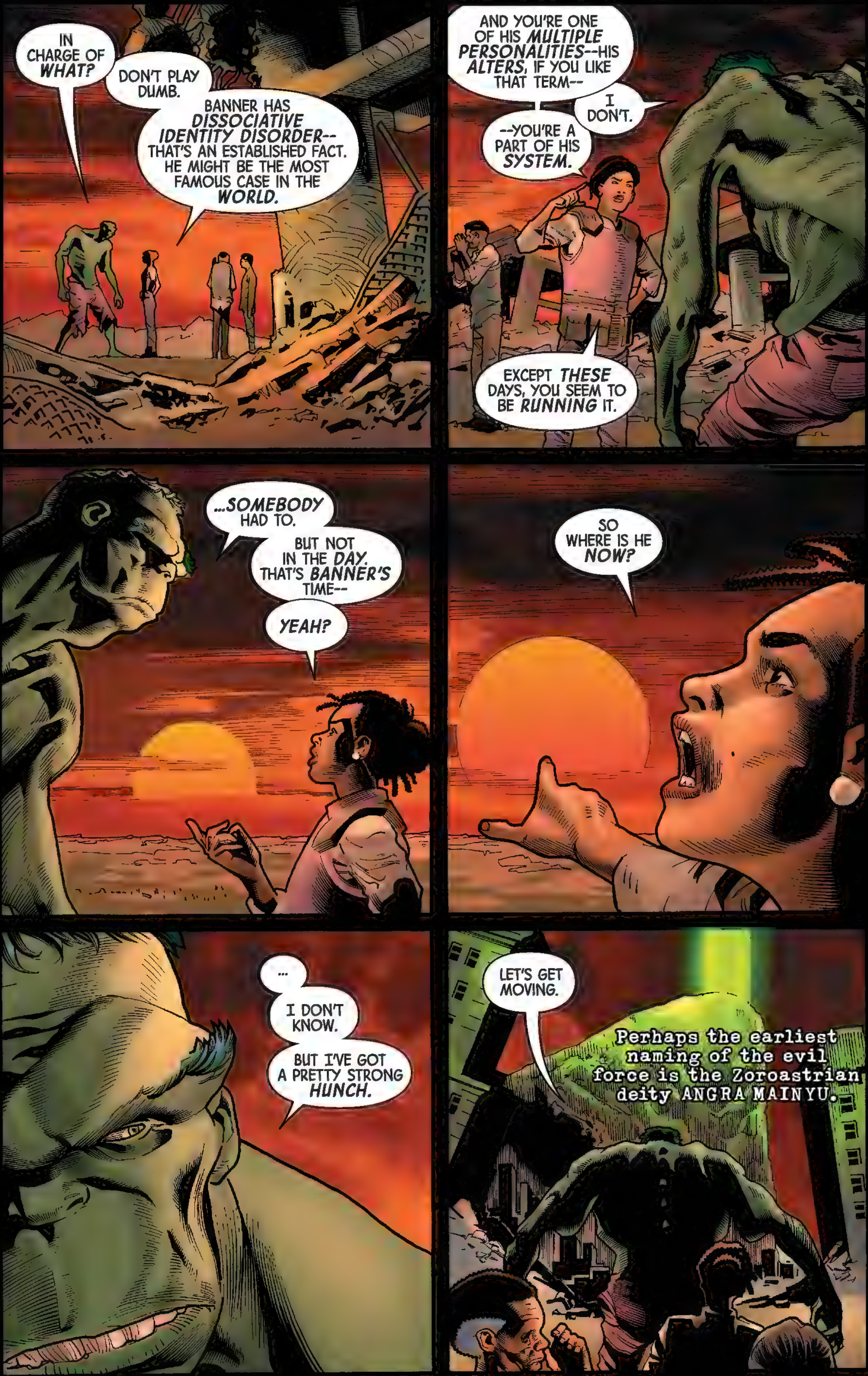

SMASH.
SMASH.
SMASH.
And against the father... his monstrous ENEMY.
SMASH.
The breaker-apart.

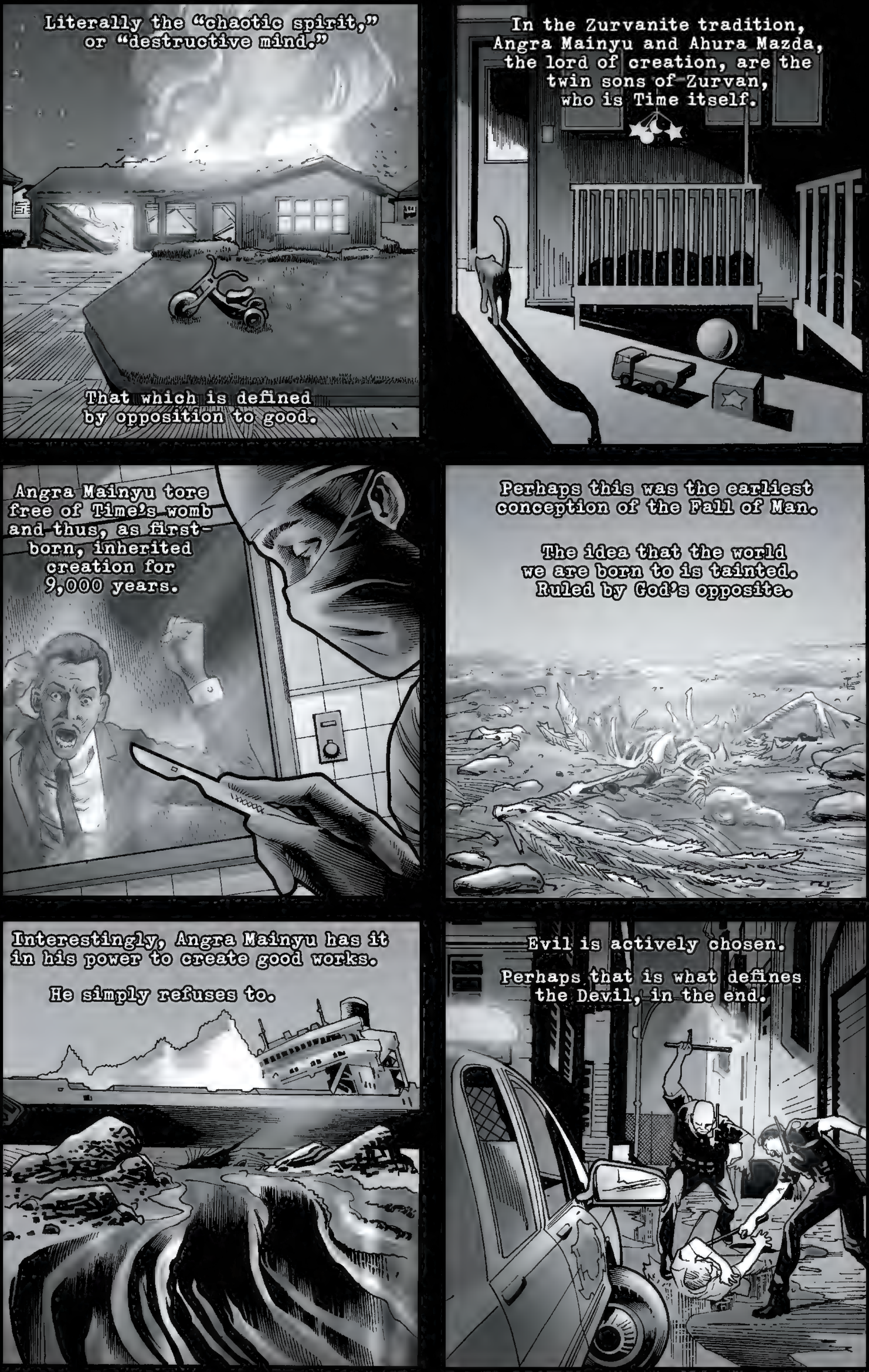

The force of CHAOS.
SMASSHH!
HULLLKK SMAAASSHH!
OH GOD.
OH GOD...
BELOW.

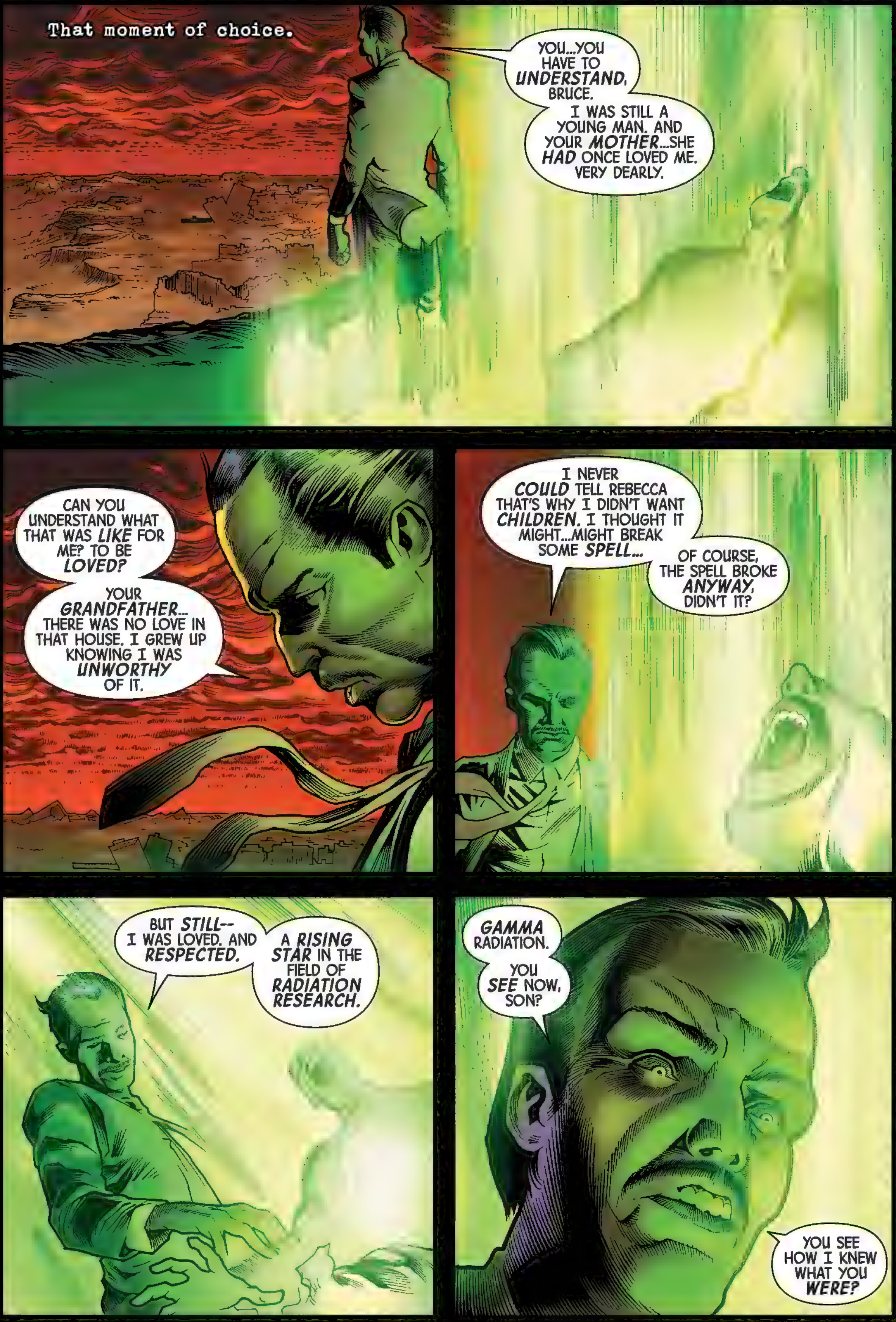

H-HULK--
HULK SMASH!
HULK KILL!
KILL EVERYTHING!
HUH-HULK--HULK--SMASH--
GOD.
WE--WE HAVE TO RUN, DAD--
DON'T.
LOOK HIM IN THE EYE.
LOOK HIM IN THE EYE.
ALL RIGHT, DAD.
BECAUSE IT'S YOU.

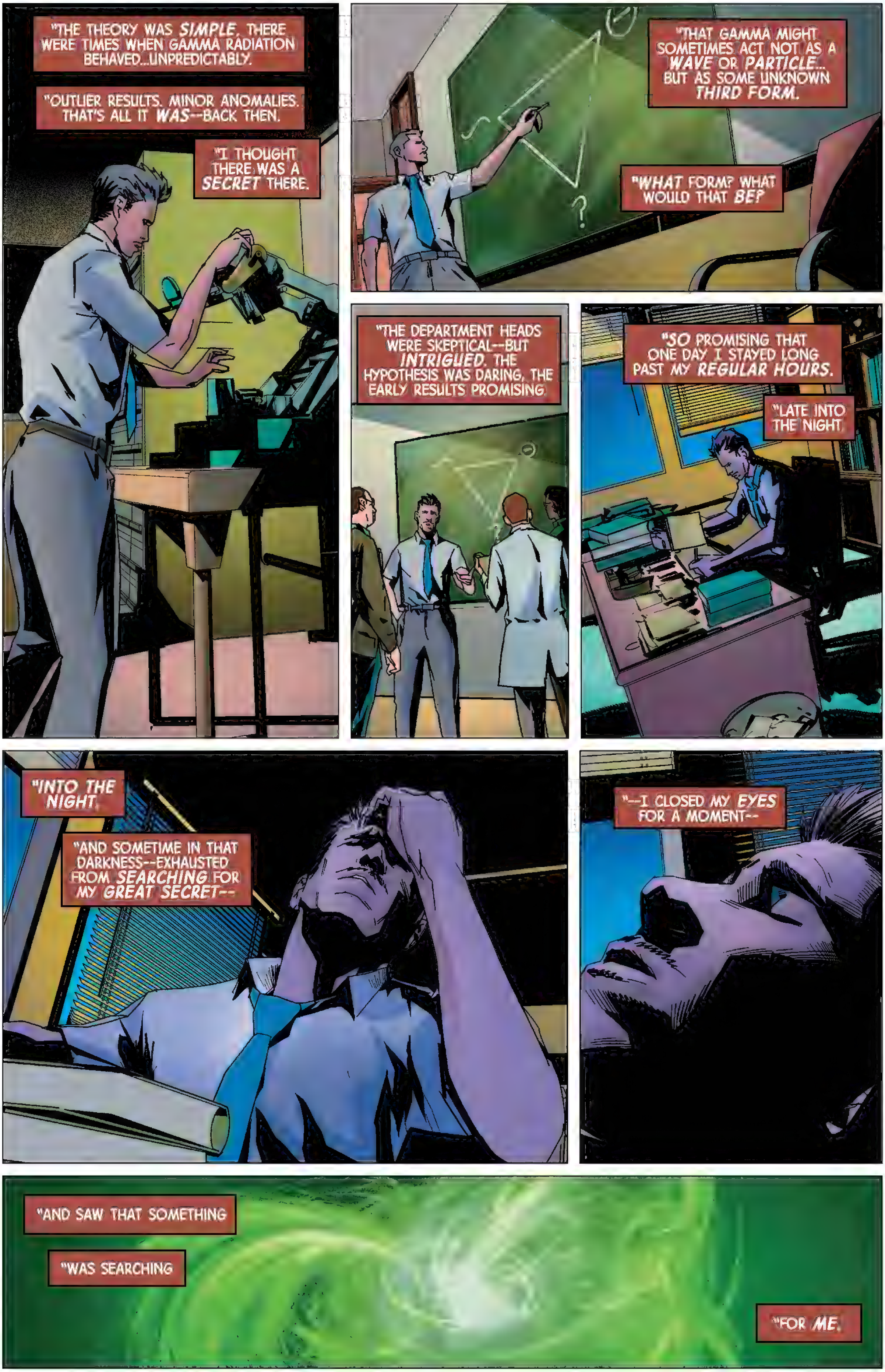

H-HULK.
SMASH.
I...HULK, JUST...
...JUST STOP. *PLEASE.* I--I *NEED* YOU TO *STOP.*
OKAY?
OKAY, BIG GUY?
HULK...
HULK *HURTS.*
ALL THE TIME HURTS. ALL THE TIME *ALWAYS.*
WHY?
WHY HULK HAVE TO *HURT* SO MUCH?

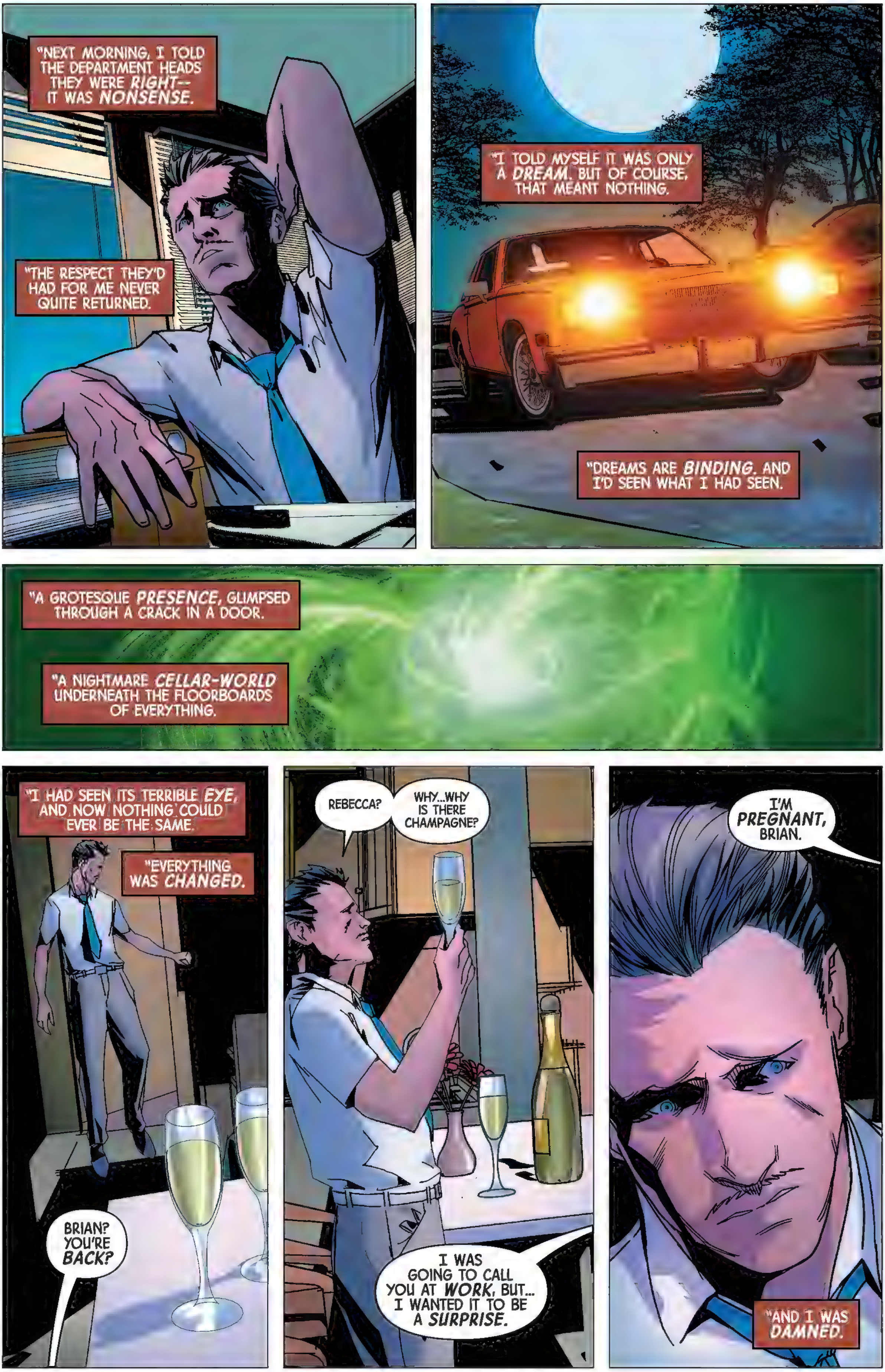

I...I DON'T *KNOW.*
I'M *SORRY*... I...
THE *DEVIL* HULK.
CAN I...CAN I SPEAK TO *HIM?* PLEASE?
CAN YOU LET HIM OUT FOR ME?
'KAY.
RRRRHH.
SORRY.
THE BIG GUY, HE'S MOSTLY *INSIDE* THESE DAYS. BUT IF I *REALLY* LOSE IT...
...WELL, YOU SAW.
YEAH. I SAW.
ACTUALLY, I'VE GOT ANOTHER *QUESTION.*
EXACTLY HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN *CHARGE?*

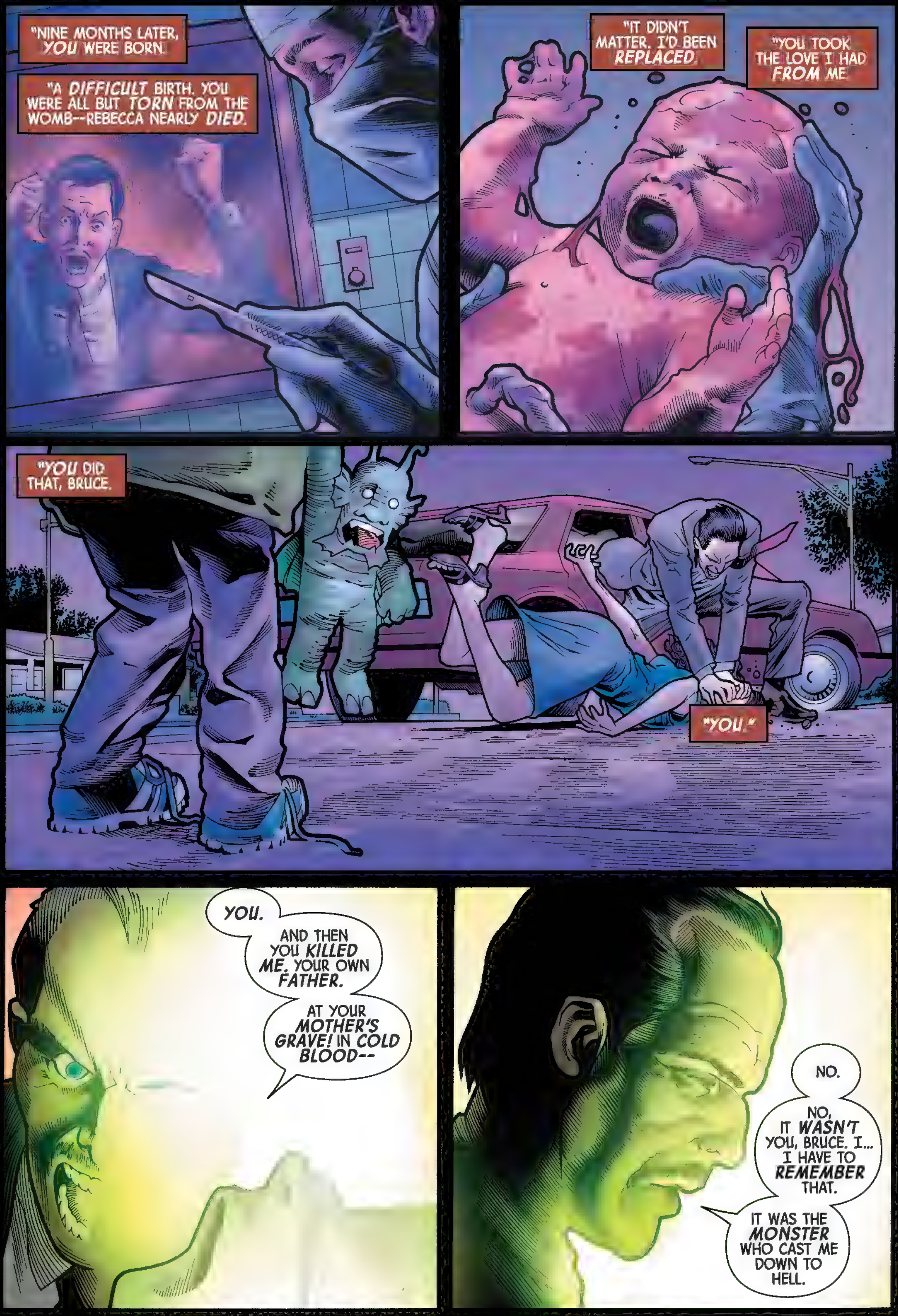

IN CHARGE OF *WHAT?*
DON'T PLAY DUMB.
BANNER HAS *DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER*-- THAT'S AN ESTABLISHED FACT. HE MIGHT BE THE MOST FAMOUS CASE IN THE *WORLD.*
AND YOU'RE ONE OF HIS *MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES*--HIS *ALTERS*, IF YOU LIKE THAT TERM--
I DON'T.
--YOU'RE A PART OF HIS *SYSTEM.*
EXCEPT *THESE* DAYS, YOU SEEM TO BE *RUNNING* IT.
...*SOMEBODY* HAD TO.
BUT NOT IN THE *DAY.* THAT'S *BANNER'S* TIME--
YEAH?
SO WHERE IS HE *NOW?*
...
I DON'T KNOW.
BUT I'VE GOT A PRETTY STRONG *HUNCH.*
LET'S GET MOVING.
Perhaps the earliest naming of the evil force is the Zoroastrian deity ANGRA MAINYU.

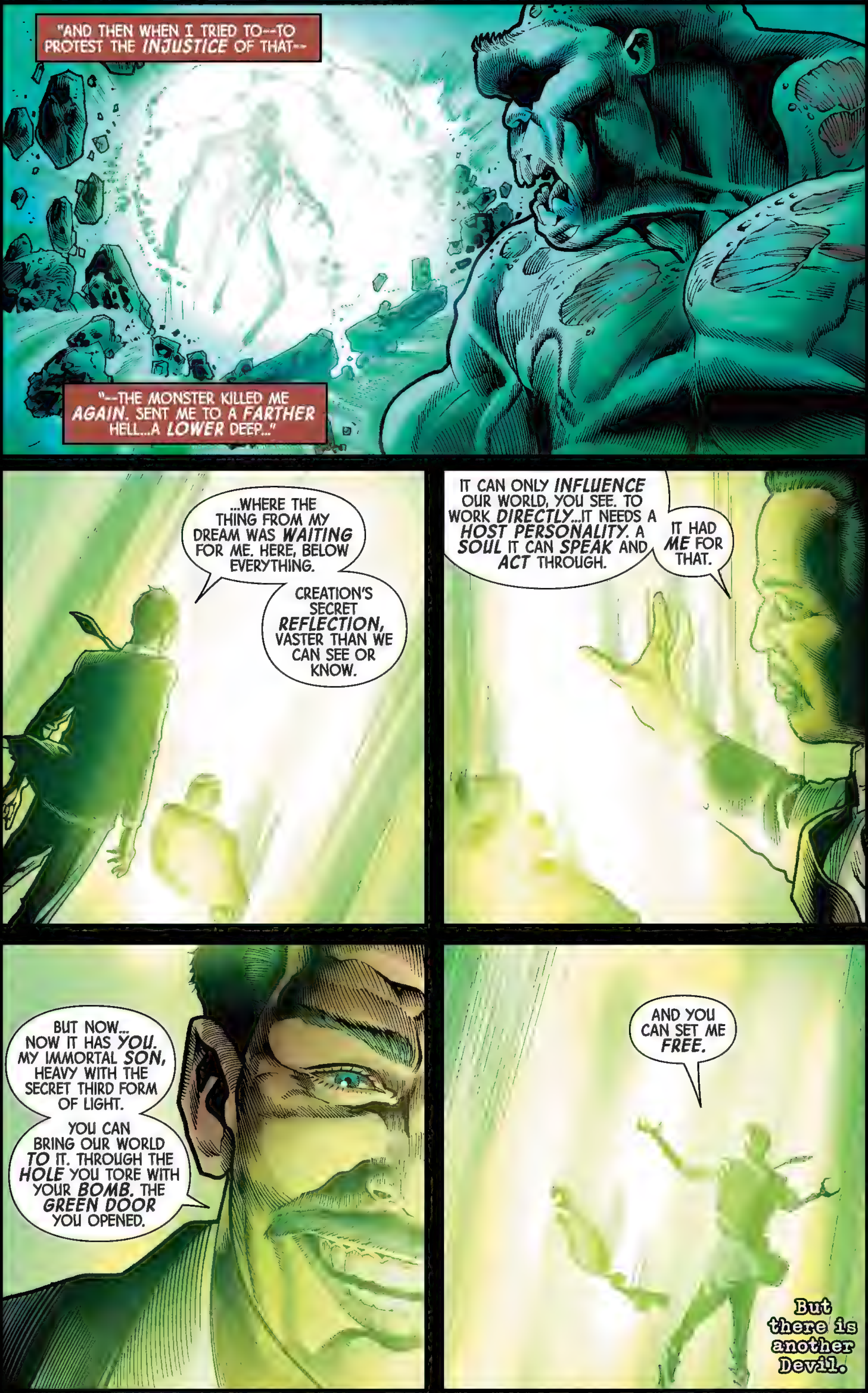

Literally the "chaotic spirit," or "destructive mind."
That which is defined by opposition to good.
In the Zurvanite tradition, Angra Mainyu and Ahura Mazda, the lord of creation, are the twin sons of Zurvan, who is Time itself.
Angra Mainyu tore free of Time's womb and thus, as first-born, inherited creation for 9,000 years.
Perhaps this was the earliest conception of the Fall of Man.
The idea that the world we are born to is tainted. Ruled by God's opposite.
Interestingly, Angra Mainyu has it in his power to create good works.
He simply refuses to.
Evil is actively chosen.
Perhaps that is what defines the Devil, in the end.

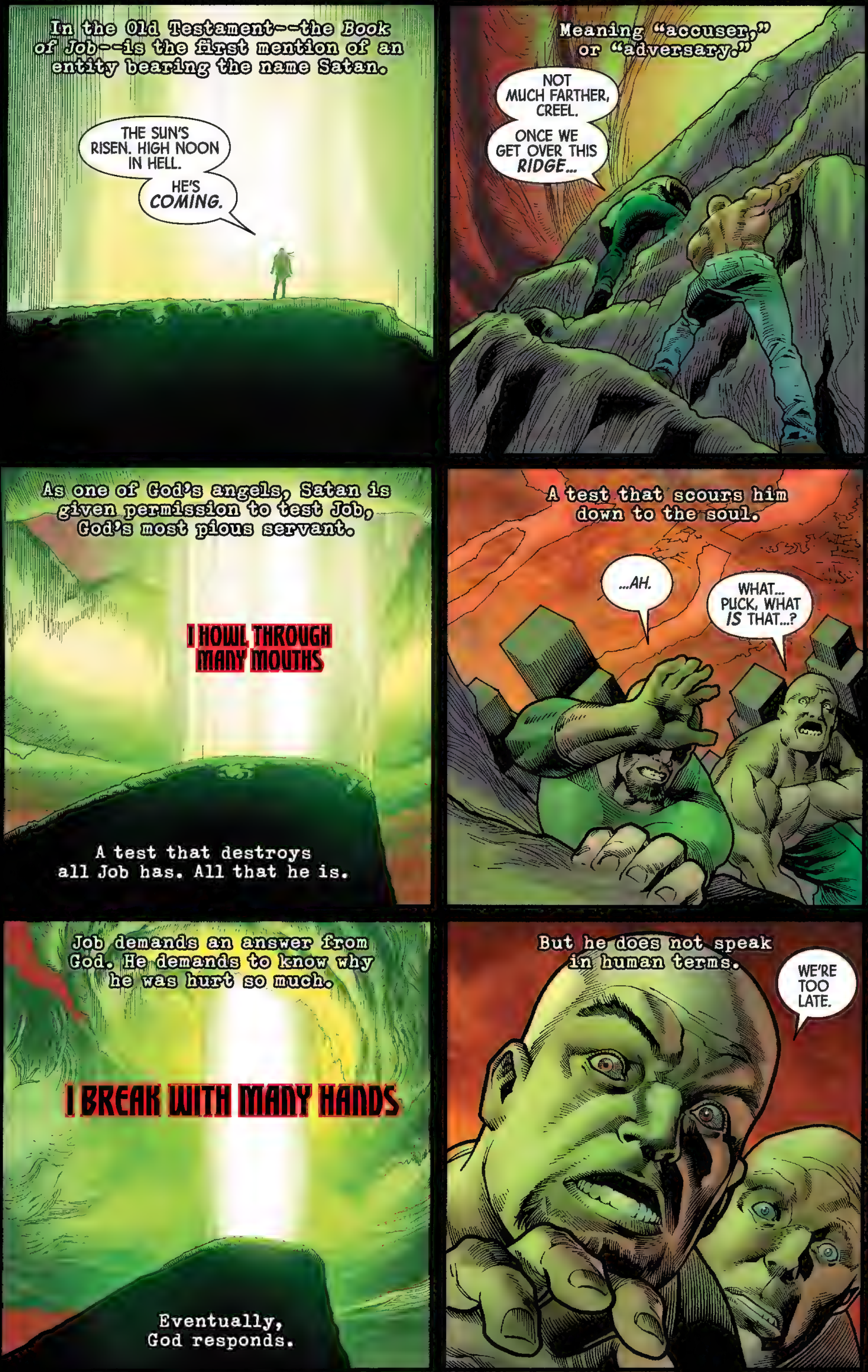

That moment of choice.
YOU...YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND, BRUCE.
I WAS STILL A YOUNG MAN. AND YOUR MOTHER...SHE HAD ONCE LOVED ME. VERY DEARLY.
CAN YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT WAS LIKE FOR ME? TO BE LOVED?
YOUR GRANDFATHER... THERE WAS NO LOVE IN THAT HOUSE. I GREW UP KNOWING I WAS UNWORTHY OF IT.
I NEVER COULD TELL REBECCA. THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T WANT CHILDREN. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT...MIGHT BREAK SOME SPELL...
OF COURSE, THE SPELL BROKE ANYWAY, DIDN'T IT?
BUT STILL-- I WAS LOVED. AND RESPECTED.
A RISING STAR IN THE FIELD OF RADIATION RESEARCH.
GAMMA RADIATION.
YOU SEE NOW, SON?
YOU SEE HOW I KNEW WHAT YOU WERE?

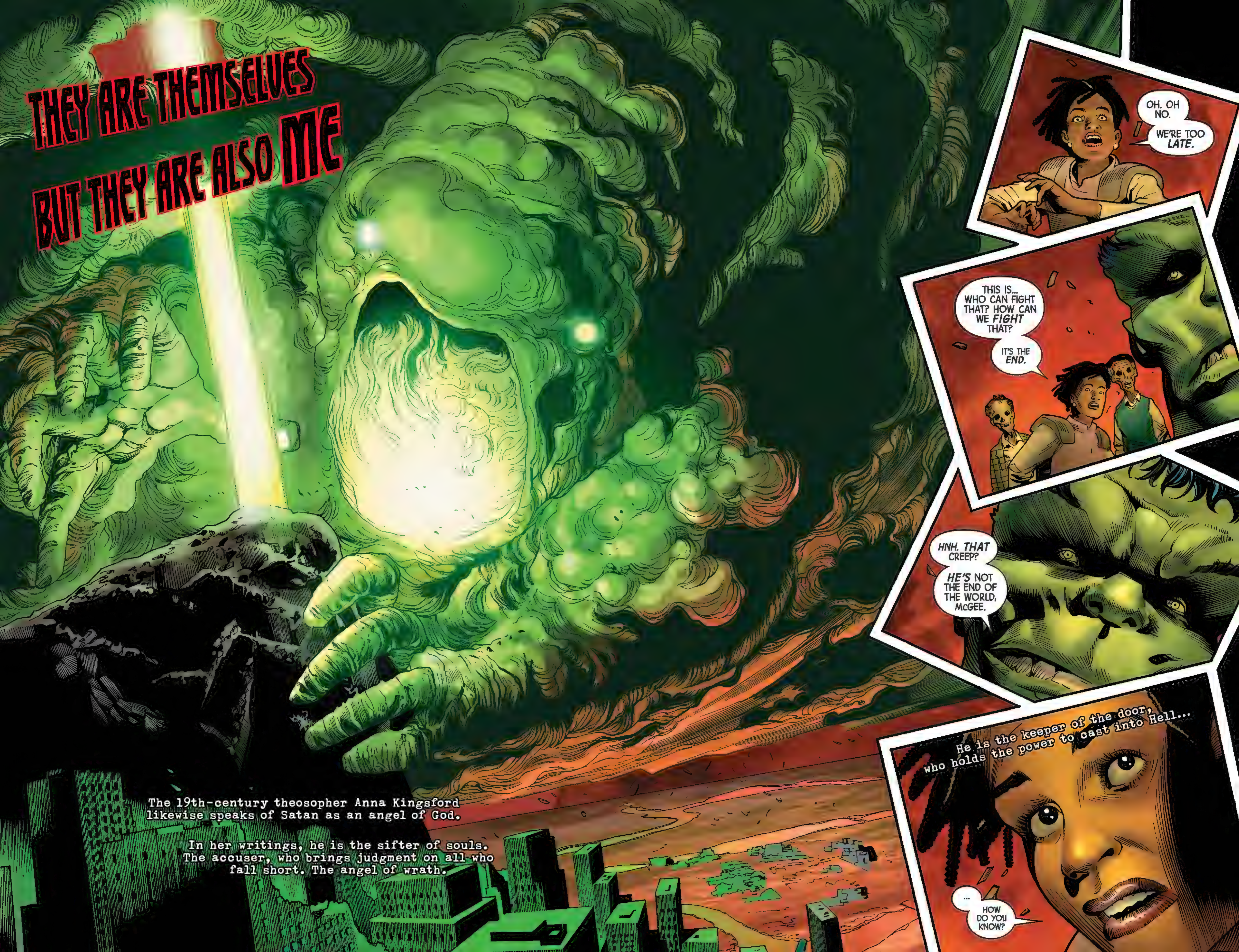

"THE THEORY WAS SIMPLE. THERE WERE TIMES WHEN GAMMA RADIATION BEHAVED...UNPREDICTABLY.
"OUTLIER RESULTS. MINOR ANOMALIES. THAT'S ALL IT WAS--BACK THEN.
"I THOUGHT THERE WAS A SECRET THERE.
"THAT GAMMA MIGHT SOMETIMES ACT NOT AS A WAVE OR PARTICLE... BUT AS SOME UNKNOWN THIRD FORM.
"WHAT FORM? WHAT WOULD THAT BE?
"THE DEPARTMENT HEADS WERE SKEPTICAL--BUT INTRIGUED. THE HYPOTHESIS WAS DARING. THE EARLY RESULTS PROMISING.
"SO PROMISING THAT ONE DAY I STAYED LONG PAST MY REGULAR HOURS.
"LATE INTO THE NIGHT.
"INTO THE NIGHT.
"AND SOMETIME IN THAT DARKNESS--EXHAUSTED FROM SEARCHING FOR MY GREAT SECRET--
"--I CLOSED MY EYES FOR A MOMENT--
"AND SAW THAT SOMETHING
"WAS SEARCHING
"FOR ME.

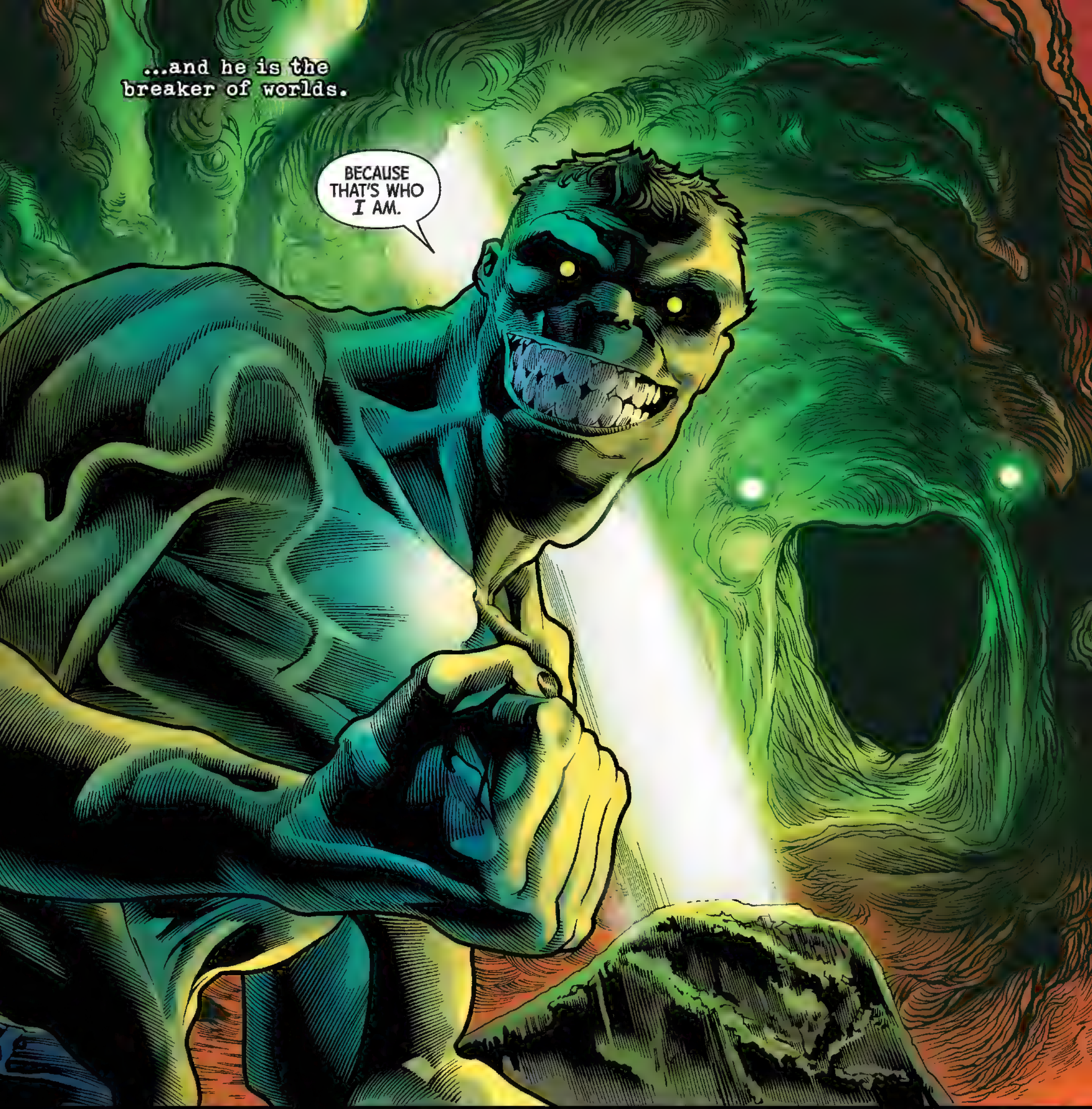

"NEXT MORNING, I TOLD THE DEPARTMENT HEADS THEY WERE *RIGHT*-- IT WAS *NONSENSE*.
"THE RESPECT THEY'D HAD FOR ME NEVER QUITE RETURNED.
"I TOLD MYSELF IT WAS ONLY A *DREAM*. BUT OF COURSE, THAT MEANT NOTHING.
"DREAMS ARE *BINDING*. AND I'D SEEN WHAT I HAD SEEN.
"A GROTESQUE *PRESENCE*, GLIMPSED THROUGH A CRACK IN A DOOR.
"A NIGHTMARE *CELLAR-WORLD* UNDERNEATH THE FLOORBOARDS OF EVERYTHING.
"I HAD SEEN ITS TERRIBLE *EYE*, AND NOW NOTHING COULD EVER BE THE SAME.
"EVERYTHING WAS *CHANGED*.
BRIAN? YOU'RE *BACK?*
REBECCA?
WHY...WHY IS THERE CHAMPAGNE?
I WAS GOING TO CALL YOU AT *WORK*, BUT... I WANTED IT TO BE A *SURPRISE*.
I'M *PREGNANT*, BRIAN.
"AND I WAS *DAMNED*.


"NINE MONTHS LATER, YOU WERE BORN.
"A DIFFICULT BIRTH. YOU WERE ALL BUT TORN FROM THE WOMB--REBECCA NEARLY DIED.
"IT DIDN'T MATTER. I'D BEEN REPLACED.
"YOU TOOK THE LOVE I HAD FROM ME.
"YOU DID THAT, BRUCE.
"YOU."
YOU.
AND THEN YOU KILLED ME. YOUR OWN FATHER.
AT YOUR MOTHER'S GRAVE! IN COLD BLOOD--
NO.
NO, IT WASN'T YOU, BRUCE. I... I HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT.
IT WAS THE MONSTER WHO CAST ME DOWN TO HELL.


"AND THEN WHEN I TRIED TO--TO PROTEST THE *INJUSTICE* OF THAT--
"--THE MONSTER KILLED ME *AGAIN*. SENT ME TO A *FARTHER* HELL...A *LOWER* DEEP..."
...WHERE THE THING FROM MY DREAM WAS *WAITING* FOR ME. HERE, BELOW EVERYTHING.
CREATION'S SECRET *REFLECTION*, VASTER THAN WE CAN SEE OR KNOW.
IT CAN ONLY *INFLUENCE* OUR WORLD, YOU SEE. TO WORK *DIRECTLY*...IT NEEDS A *HOST PERSONALITY*. A *SOUL* IT CAN *SPEAK* AND *ACT* THROUGH.
IT HAD *ME* FOR THAT.
BUT NOW... NOW IT HAS *YOU*. MY IMMORTAL *SON*, HEAVY WITH THE SECRET THIRD FORM OF LIGHT.
YOU CAN BRING OUR WORLD *TO* IT. THROUGH THE *HOLE* YOU TORE WITH YOUR *BOMB*. THE *GREEN DOOR* YOU OPENED.
AND YOU CAN SET ME *FREE*.
But there is another Devil.


In the Old Testament--the *Book of Job*--is the first mention of an entity bearing the name Satan.
THE SUN'S RISEN. HIGH NOON IN HELL.
HE'S *COMING.*
Meaning "accuser," or "adversary."
NOT MUCH FARTHER, CREEL.
ONCE WE GET OVER THIS *RIDGE...*
As one of God's angels, Satan is given permission to test Job, God's most pious servant.
I HOWL THROUGH MANY MOUTHS
A test that destroys all Job has. All that he is.
A test that scours him down to the soul.
...AH.
WHAT... PUCK, WHAT *IS* THAT...?
Job demands an answer from God. He demands to know why he was hurt so much.
I BREAK WITH MANY HANDS
Eventually, God responds.
But he does not speak in human terms.
WE'RE TOO LATE.

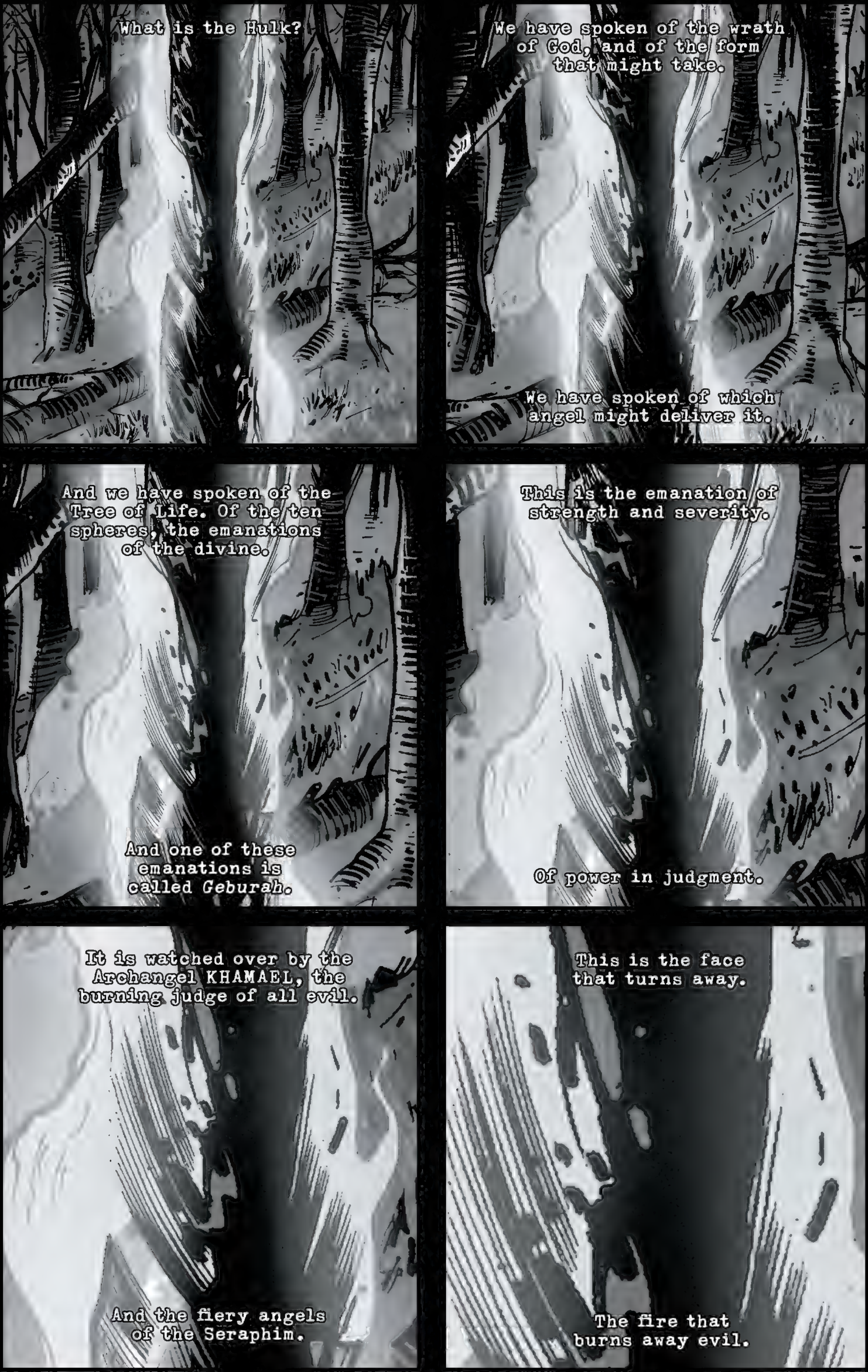

THEY ARE THEMSELVES
BUT THEY ARE ALSO ME
OH. OH NO.
WE'RE TOO LATE.
THIS IS... WHO CAN FIGHT THAT? HOW CAN WE FIGHT THAT?
IT'S THE END.
HNH. THAT CREEP?
HE'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD, McGEE.
The 19th-century theosopher Anna Kingsford likewise speaks of Satan as an angel of God.
In her writings, he is the sifter of souls. The accuser, who brings judgment on all who fall short. The angel of wrath.
He is the keeper of the door, who holds the power to cast into Hell...
...
HOW DO YOU KNOW?

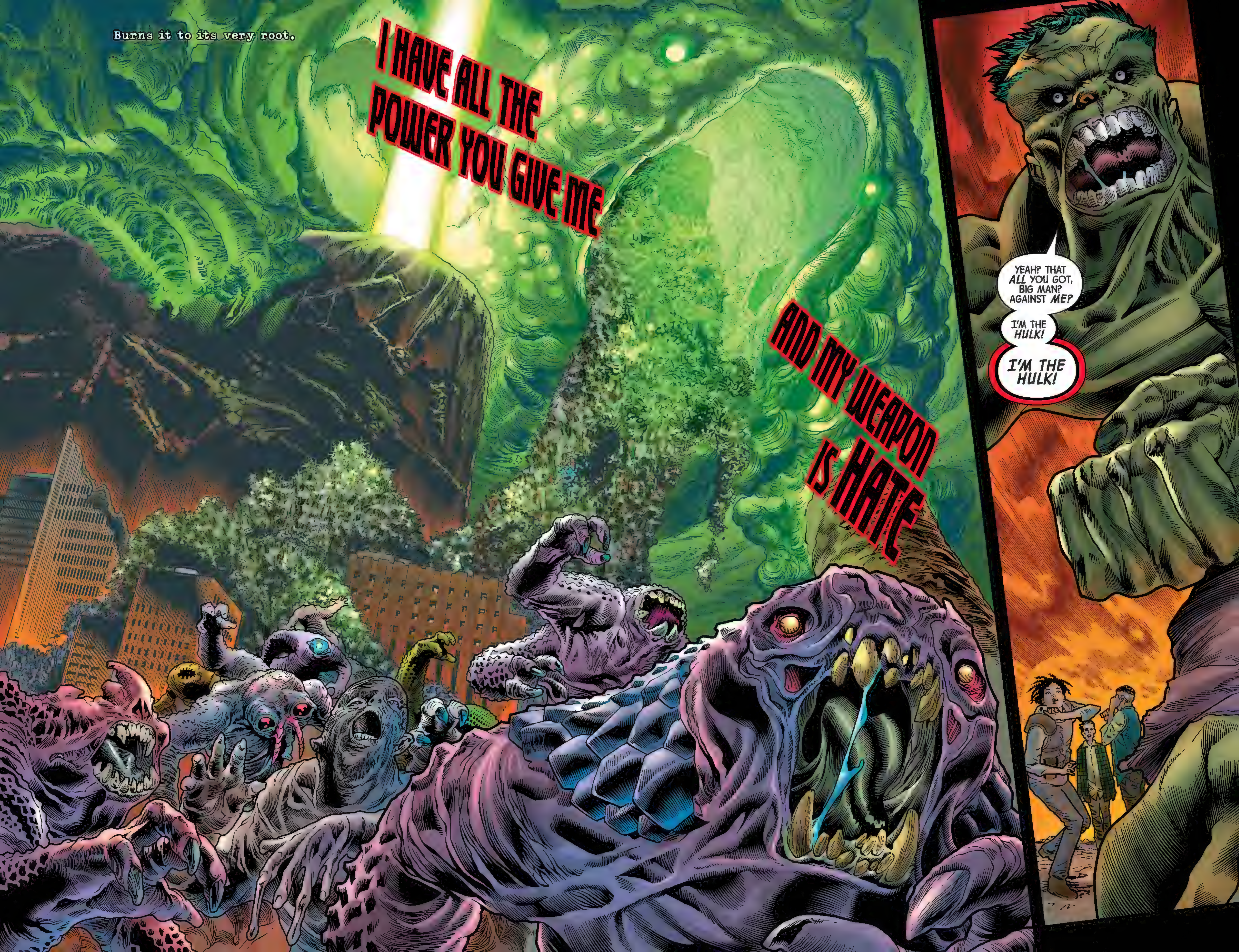

...and he is the breaker of worlds.
BECAUSE THAT'S WHO *I* AM.

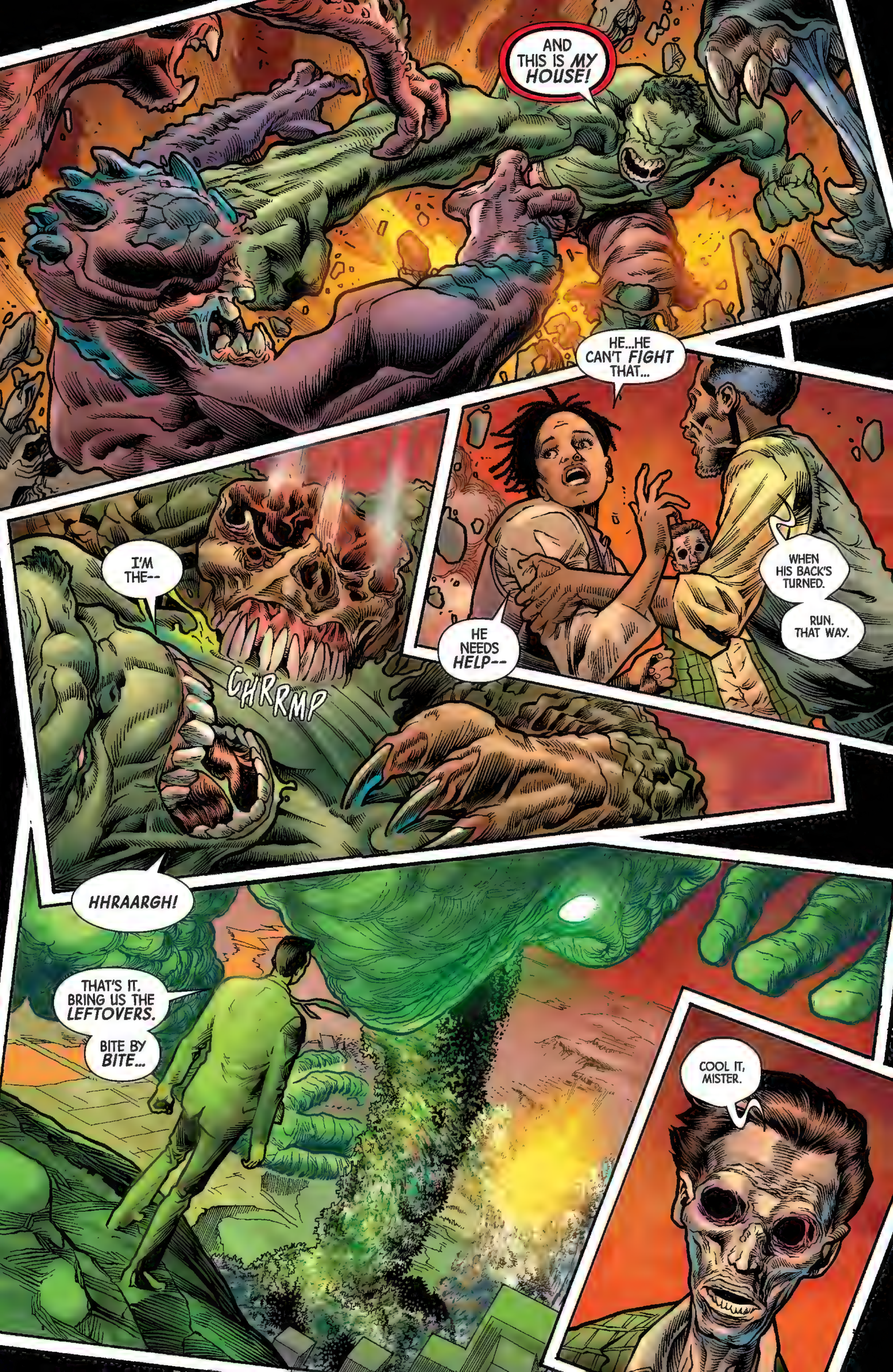
ALL ON THAT DAY

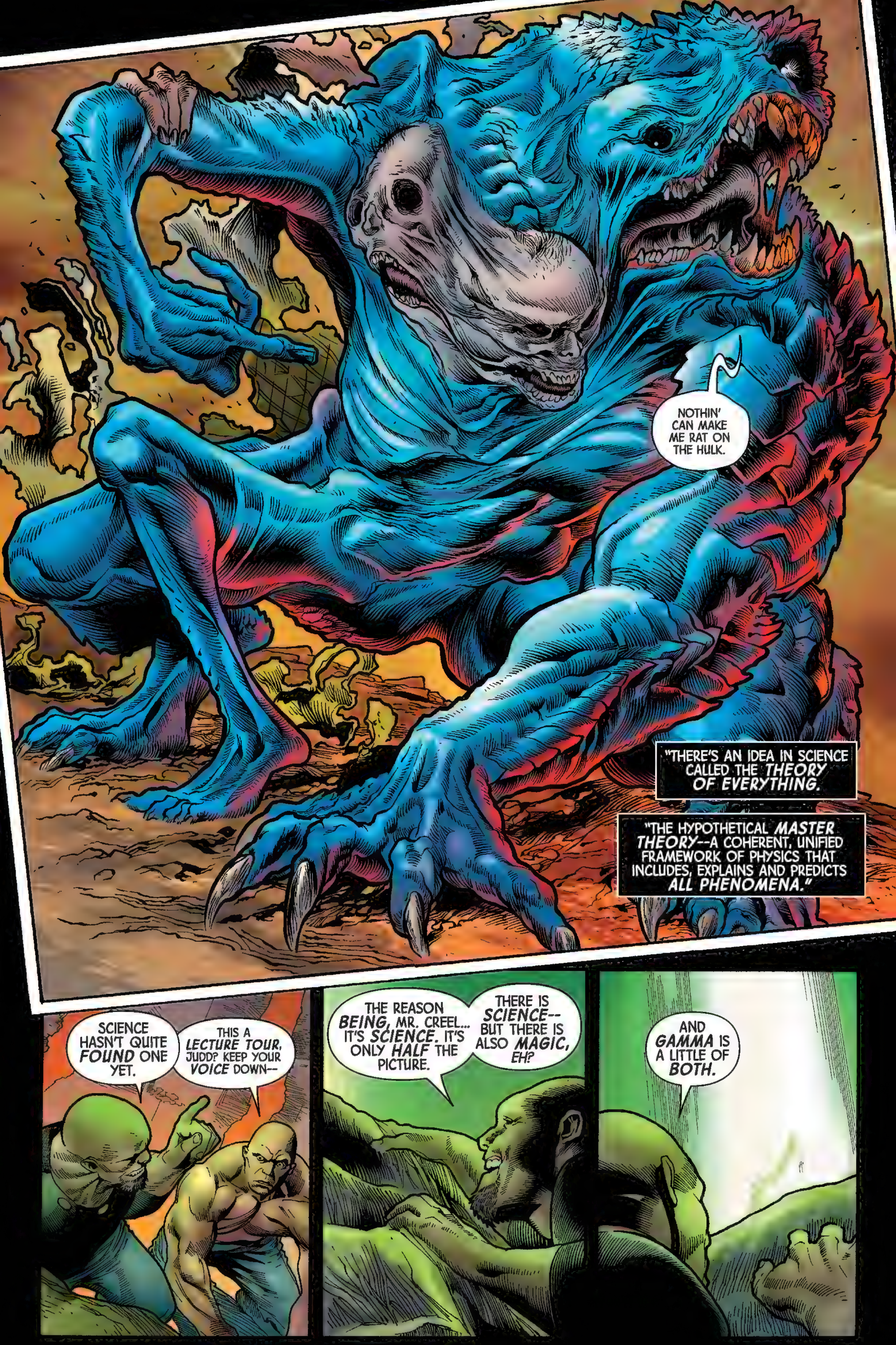
13

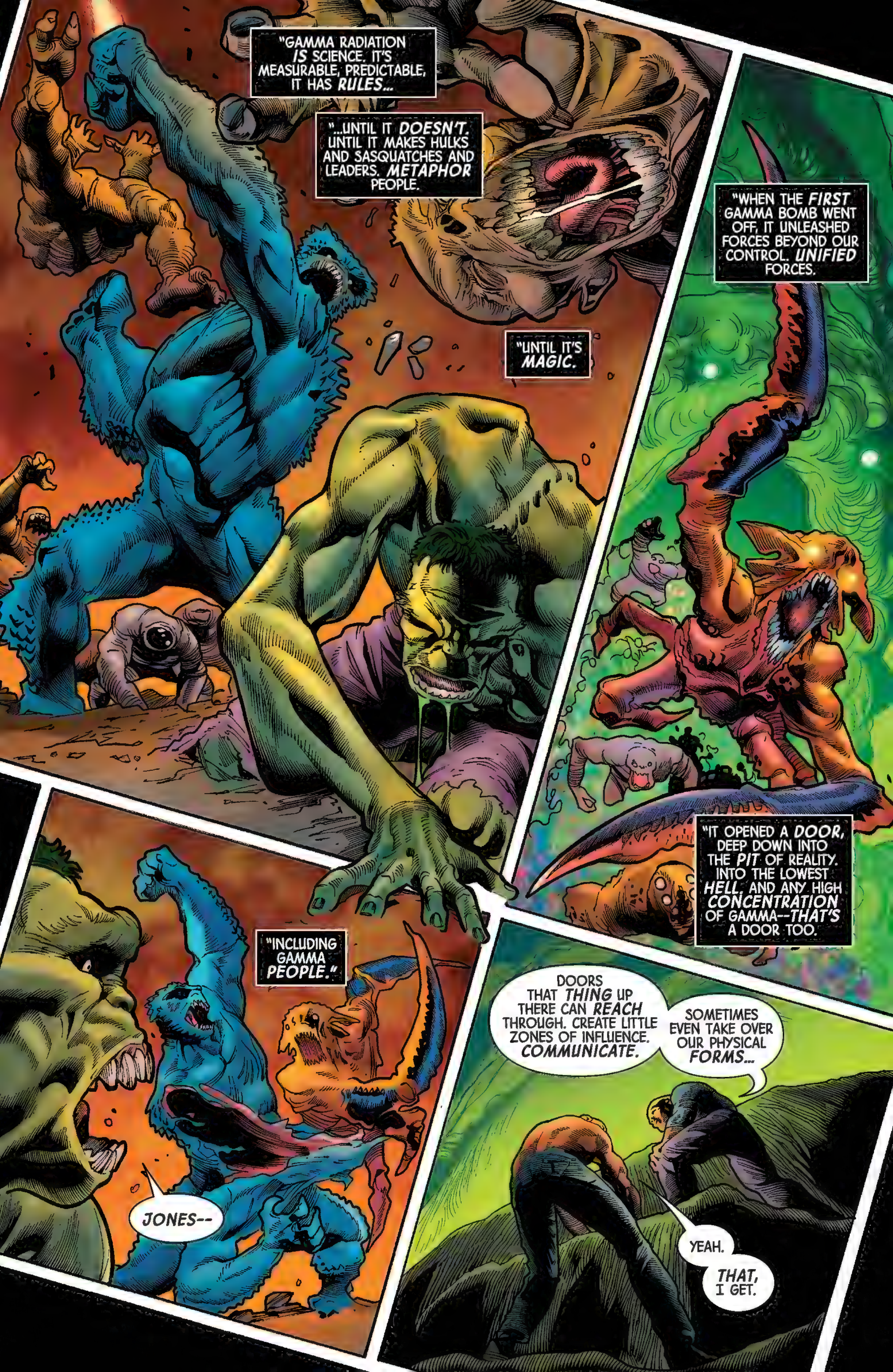
> “FATHERS AND TEACHERS,
> I PONDER, ‘WHAT IS HELL?’
> I MAINTAIN THAT IT IS
> THE SUFFERING OF BEING
> UNABLE TO LOVE.”
>
> – FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY
> *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*

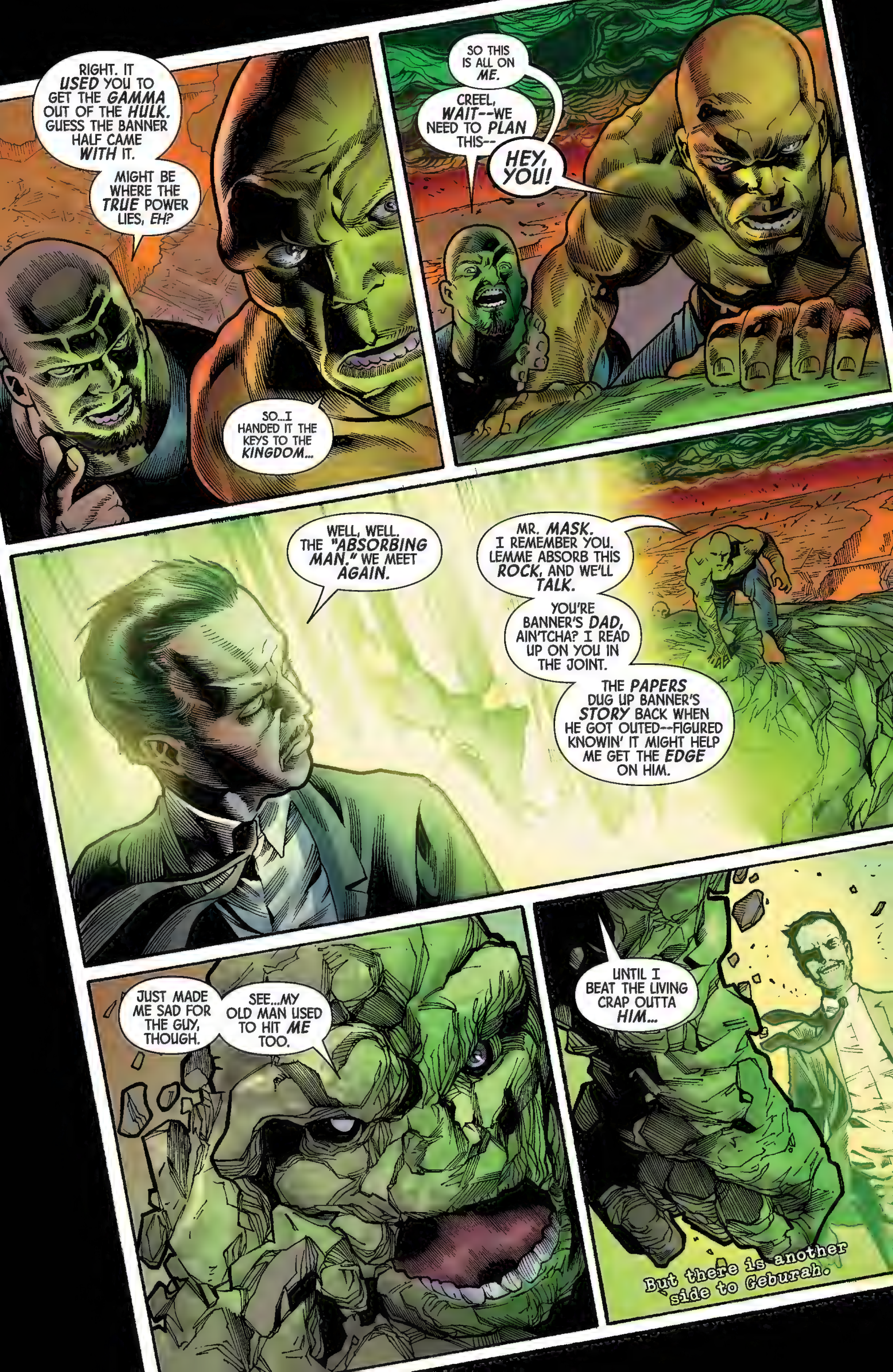

What is the Hulk?
We have spoken of the wrath of God, and of the form that might take.
We have spoken of which angel might deliver it.
And we have spoken of the Tree of Life. Of the ten spheres, the emanations of the divine.
And one of these emanations is called *Geburah*.
This is the emanation of strength and severity.
Of power in judgment.
It is watched over by the Archangel KHAMAEL, the burning judge of all evil.
And the fiery angels of the Seraphim.
This is the face that turns away.
The fire that burns away evil.

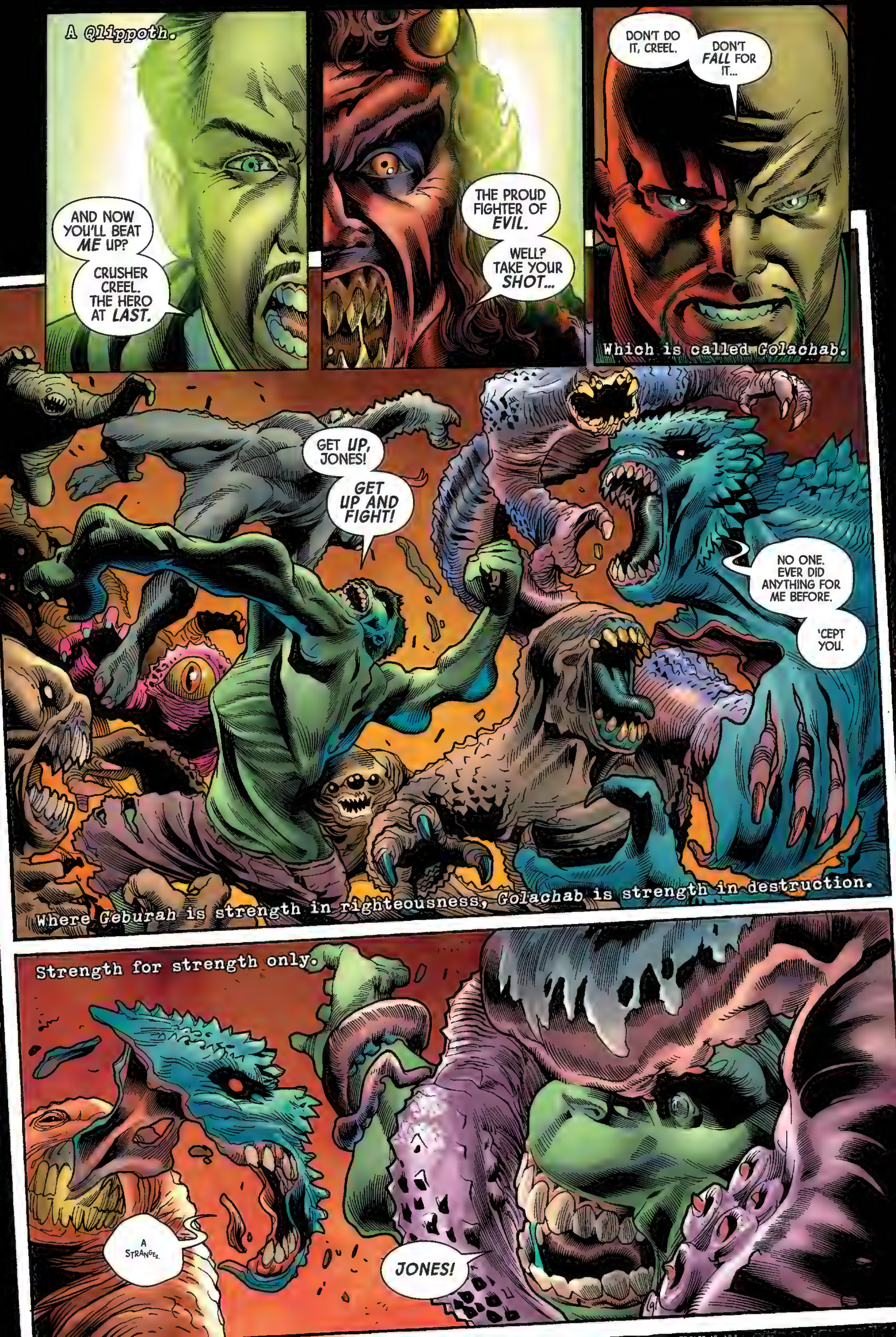

Burns it to its very root.
I HAVE ALL THE POWER YOU GIVE ME
AND MY WEAPON IS HATE
YEAH? THAT ALL YOU GOT, BIG MAN? AGAINST ME?
I'M THE HULK!
I'M THE HULK!

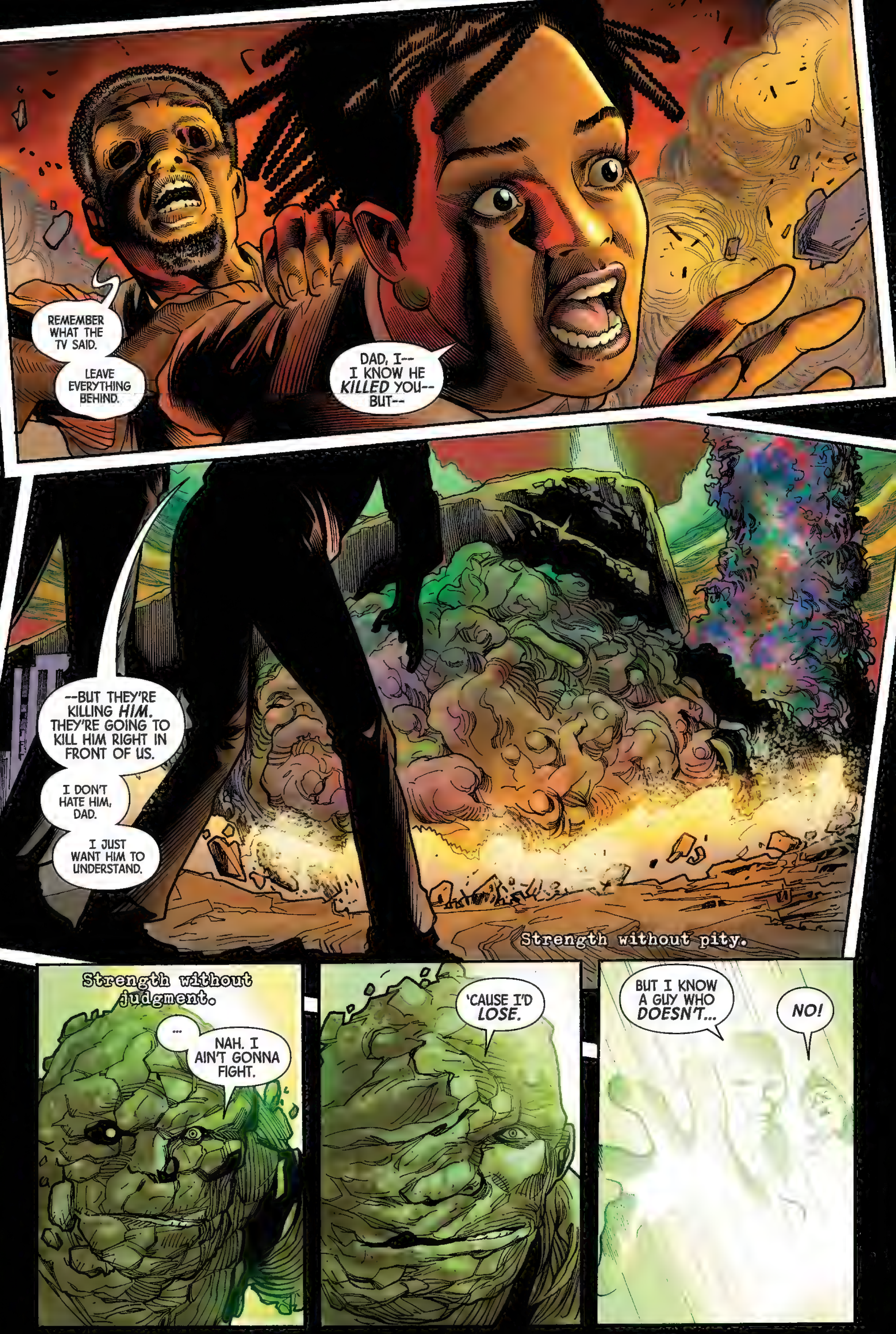

AND THIS IS *MY HOUSE!*
HE...HE CAN'T *FIGHT* THAT...
WHEN HIS BACK'S TURNED.
RUN. THAT WAY.
HE NEEDS *HELP*--
I'M THE--
CHRRMP
HHRAARGH!
THAT'S IT. BRING US THE *LEFTOVERS.*
BITE BY *BITE...*
COOL IT, MISTER.

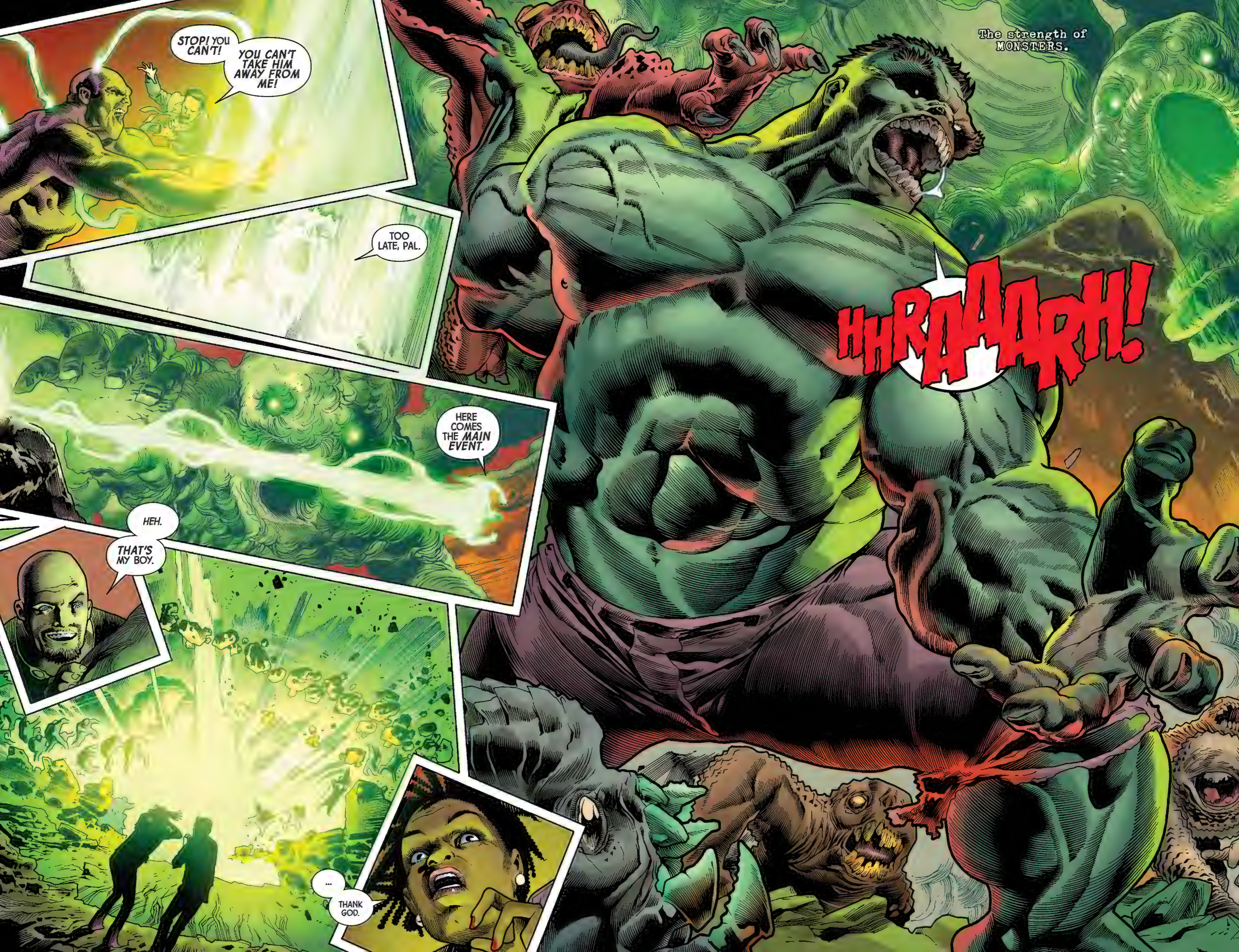

NOTHIN' CAN MAKE ME RAT ON THE HULK.
"THERE'S AN IDEA IN SCIENCE CALLED THE *THEORY OF EVERYTHING.*
"THE HYPOTHETICAL *MASTER THEORY*--A COHERENT, UNIFIED FRAMEWORK OF PHYSICS THAT INCLUDES, EXPLAINS AND PREDICTS *ALL PHENOMENA.*"
SCIENCE HASN'T QUITE *FOUND* ONE YET.
THIS A *LECTURE TOUR,* JUDD? KEEP YOUR *VOICE* DOWN--
THE REASON *BEING,* MR. CREEL... IT'S *SCIENCE.* IT'S ONLY *HALF* THE PICTURE.
THERE IS *SCIENCE*-- BUT THERE IS ALSO *MAGIC,* EH?
AND *GAMMA* IS A LITTLE OF *BOTH.*

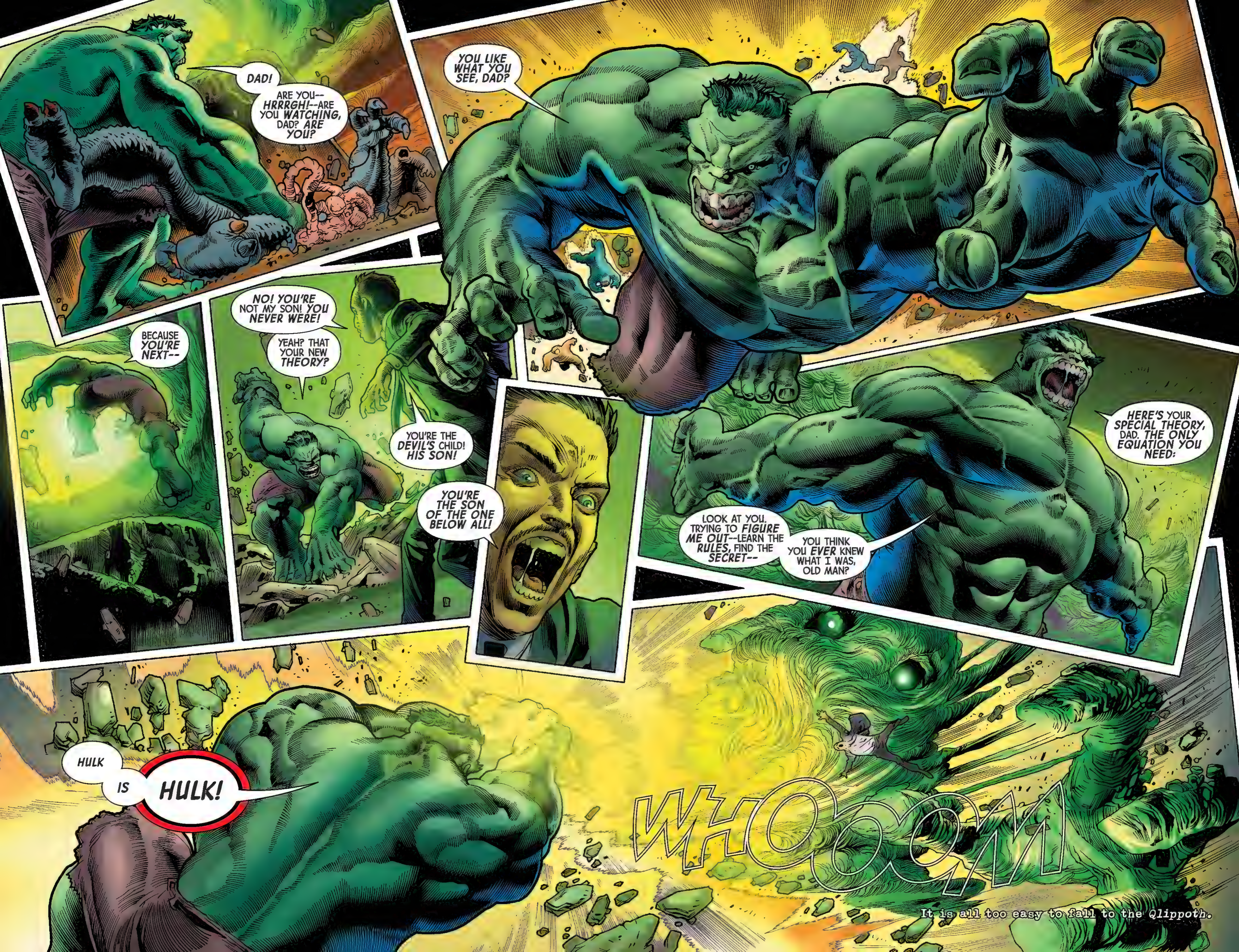

"GAMMA RADIATION *IS* SCIENCE. IT'S MEASURABLE, PREDICTABLE, IT HAS *RULES*...
"...UNTIL IT *DOESN'T.* UNTIL IT MAKES HULKS AND SASQUATCHES AND LEADERS. *METAPHOR* PEOPLE.
"UNTIL IT'S *MAGIC.*
"WHEN THE *FIRST* GAMMA BOMB WENT OFF, IT UNLEASHED FORCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL. *UNIFIED* FORCES.
"IT OPENED A *DOOR,* DEEP DOWN INTO THE *PIT* OF REALITY. INTO THE LOWEST *HELL.* AND ANY HIGH *CONCENTRATION* OF GAMMA--*THAT'S* A DOOR TOO.
"INCLUDING GAMMA *PEOPLE.*"
JONES--
DOORS THAT *THING* UP THERE CAN *REACH* THROUGH. CREATE LITTLE ZONES OF INFLUENCE. *COMMUNICATE.*
SOMETIMES EVEN TAKE OVER OUR PHYSICAL *FORMS*...
YEAH.
THAT, I GET.

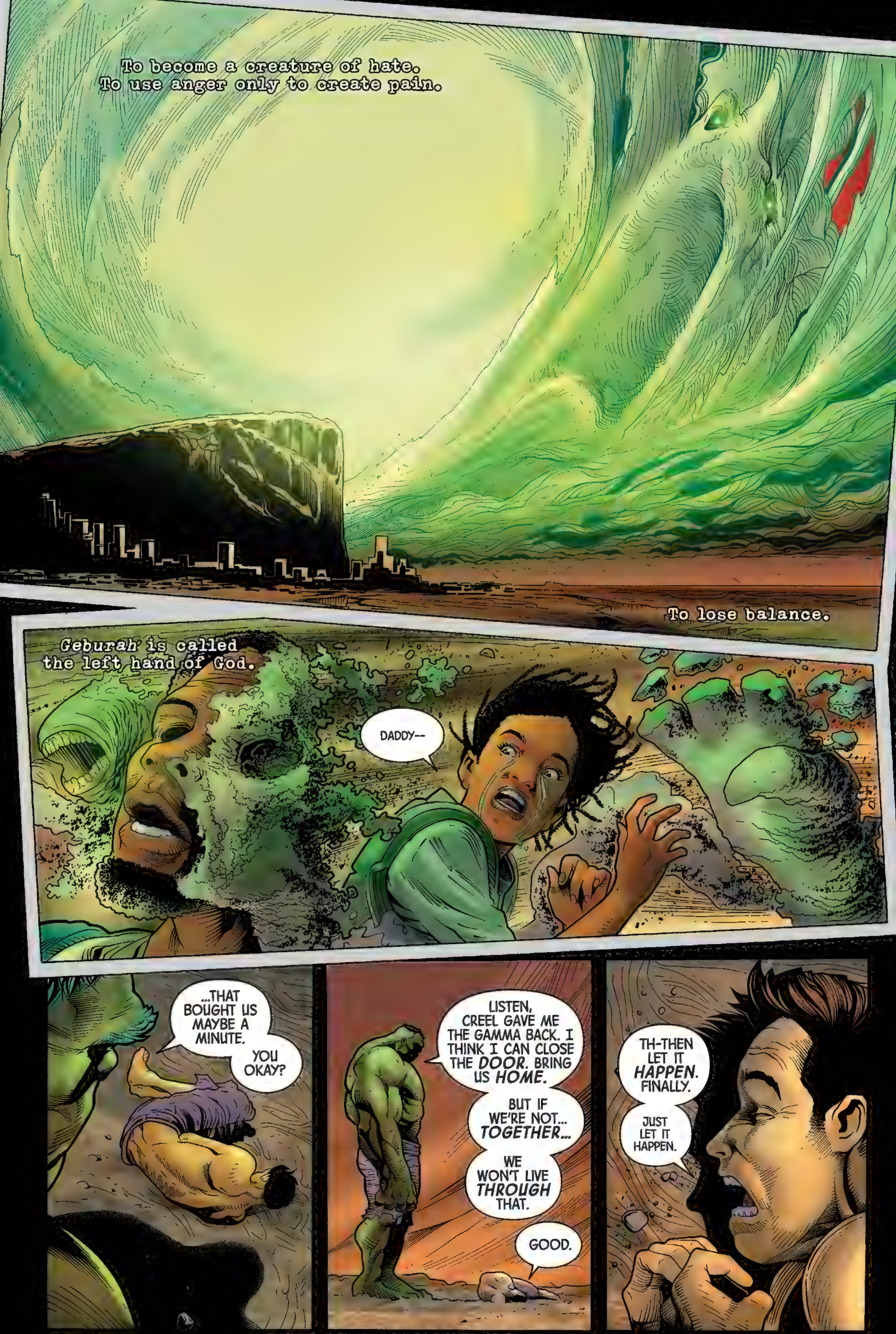

RIGHT. IT USED YOU TO GET THE GAMMA OUT OF THE HULK. GUESS THE BANNER HALF CAME WITH IT.
MIGHT BE WHERE THE TRUE POWER LIES, EH?
SO...I HANDED IT THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM...
SO THIS IS ALL ON ME.
CREEL, WAIT--WE NEED TO PLAN THIS--
HEY, YOU!
WELL, WELL. THE "ABSORBING MAN." WE MEET AGAIN.
MR. MASK. I REMEMBER YOU. LEMME ABSORB THIS ROCK, AND WE'LL TALK.
YOU'RE BANNER'S DAD, AIN'TCHA? I READ UP ON YOU IN THE JOINT.
THE PAPERS DUG UP BANNER'S STORY BACK WHEN HE GOT OUTED--FIGURED KNOWIN' IT MIGHT HELP ME GET THE EDGE ON HIM.
JUST MADE ME SAD FOR THE GUY, THOUGH.
SEE...MY OLD MAN USED TO HIT ME TOO.
UNTIL I BEAT THE LIVING CRAP OUTTA HIM...
But there is another side to Geburah.

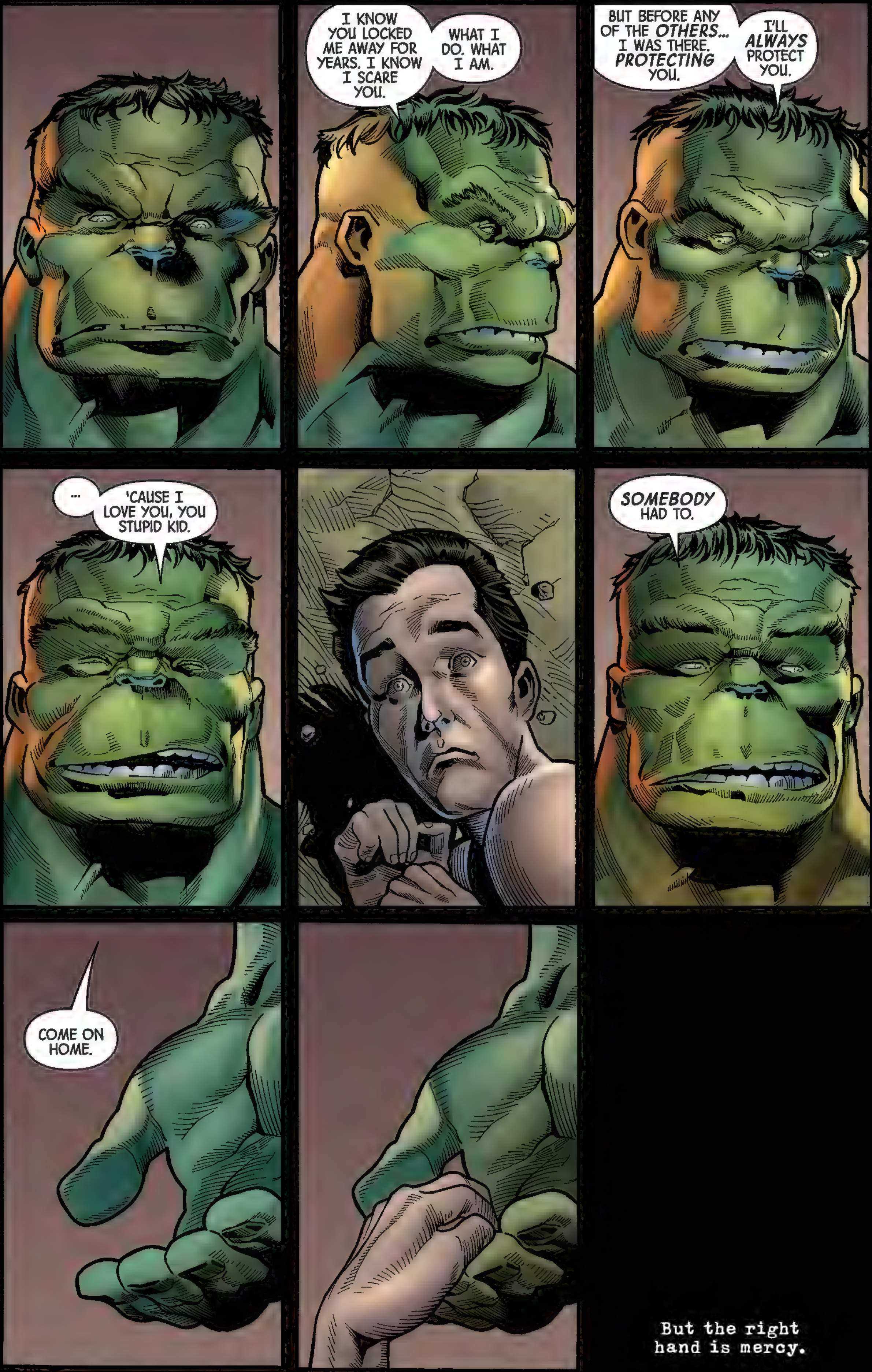

A Qlippoth.
AND NOW YOU'LL BEAT *ME* UP?
CRUSHER CREEL. THE HERO AT *LAST.*
THE PROUD FIGHTER OF *EVIL.*
WELL? TAKE YOUR *SHOT...*
DON'T DO IT, CREEL.
DON'T *FALL* FOR IT...
Which is called *Golachab.*
GET *UP,* JONES!
GET UP AND FIGHT!
NO ONE. EVER DID ANYTHING FOR ME BEFORE.
'CEPT YOU.
Where *Geburah* is strength in righteousness, *Golachab* is strength in destruction.
Strength for strength only.
A STRANGER.
JONES!

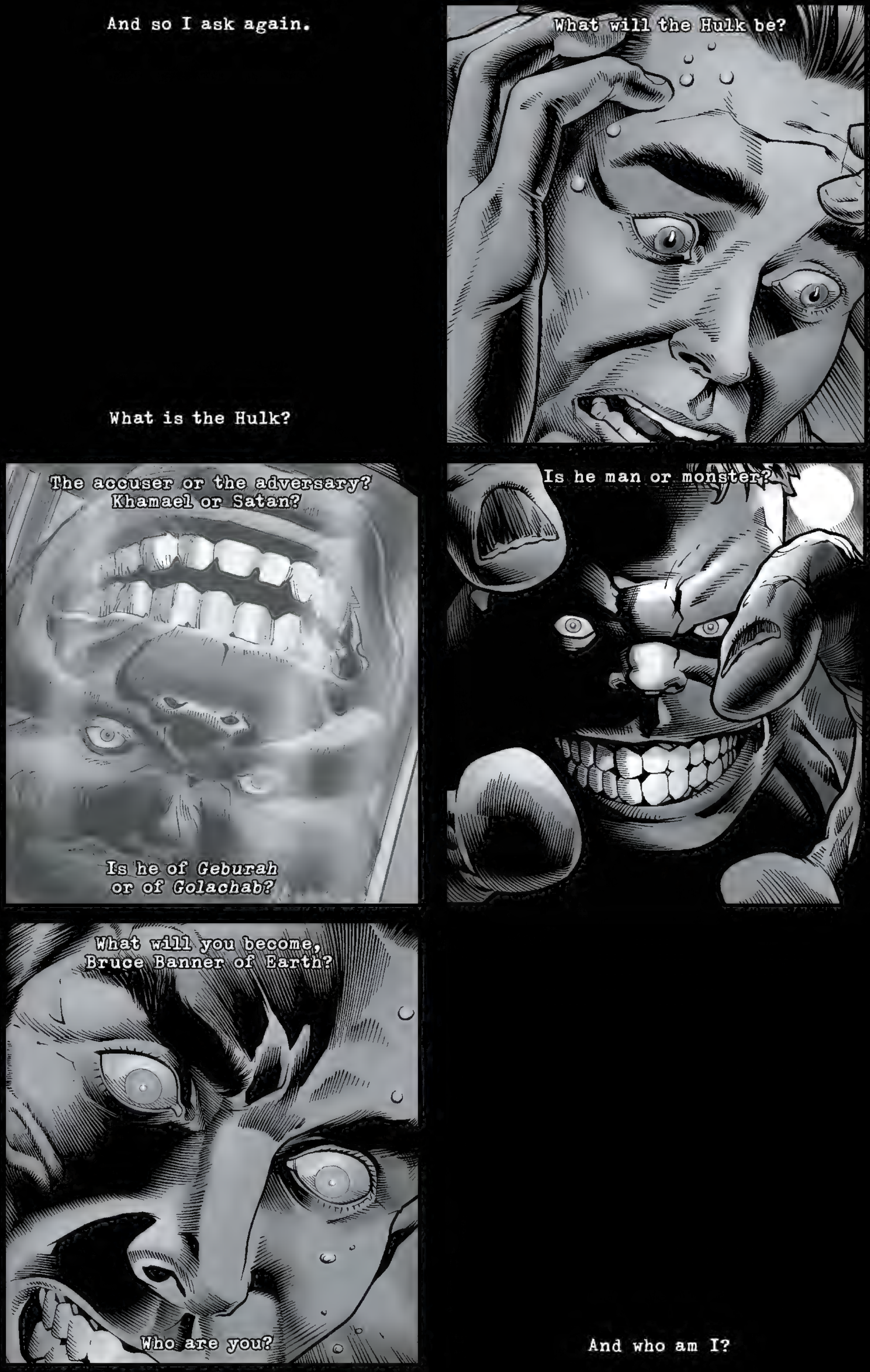

REMEMBER WHAT THE TV SAID.
LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND.
DAD, I-- I KNOW HE *KILLED* YOU-- BUT--
--BUT THEY'RE KILLING *HIM*. THEY'RE GOING TO KILL HIM RIGHT IN FRONT OF US.
I DON'T HATE HIM, DAD.
I JUST WANT HIM TO UNDERSTAND.
Strength without pity.
Strength without judgment.
...
NAH. I AIN'T GONNA FIGHT.
'CAUSE I'D *LOSE.*
BUT I KNOW A GUY WHO *DOESN'T*...
NO!

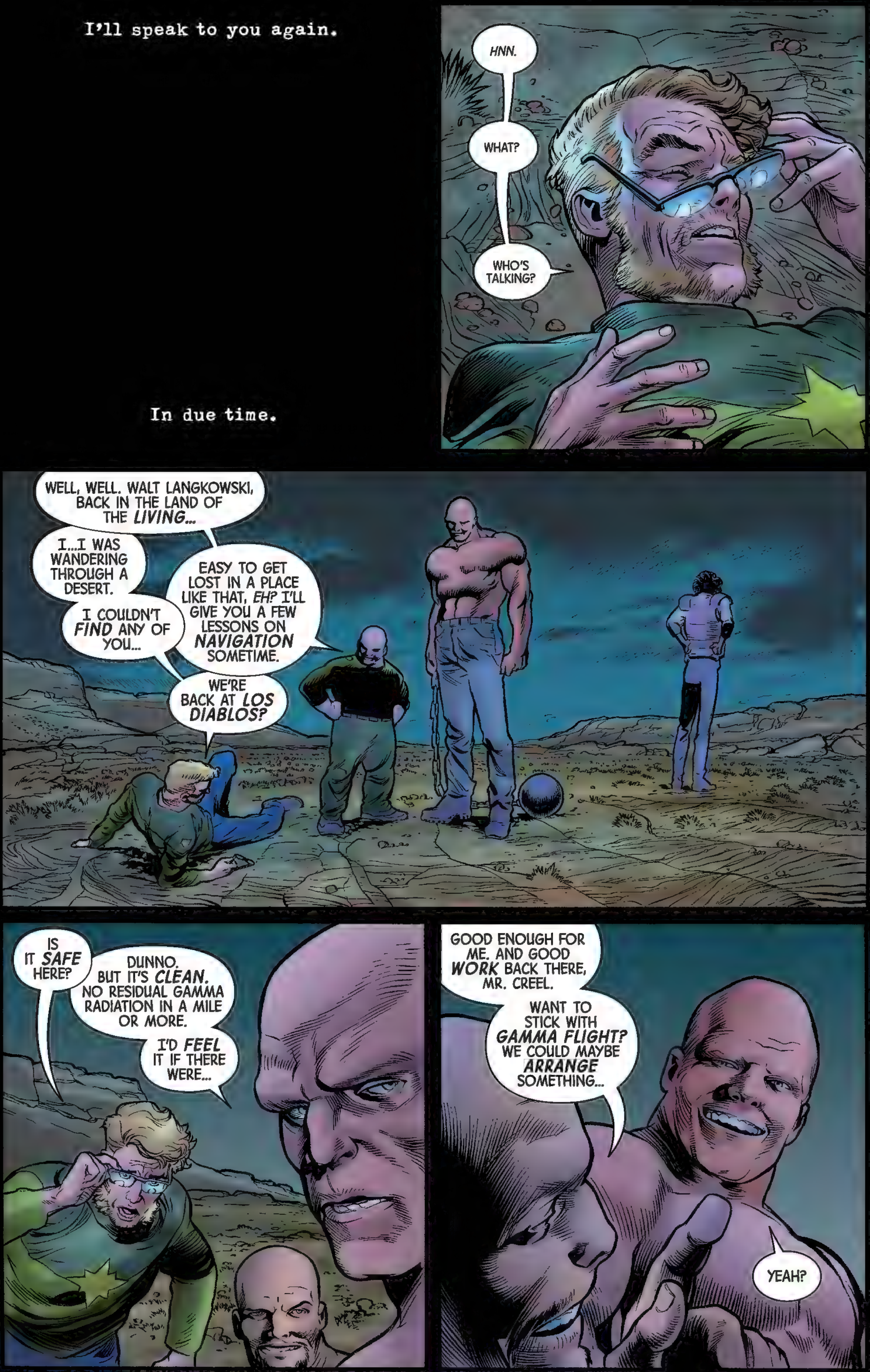

STOP! YOU CAN'T!
YOU CAN'T TAKE HIM AWAY FROM ME!
TOO LATE, PAL.
HERE COMES THE MAIN EVENT.
HEH.
THAT'S MY BOY.
...
THANK GOD.
The strength of MONSTERS.
HHRAAAARH!

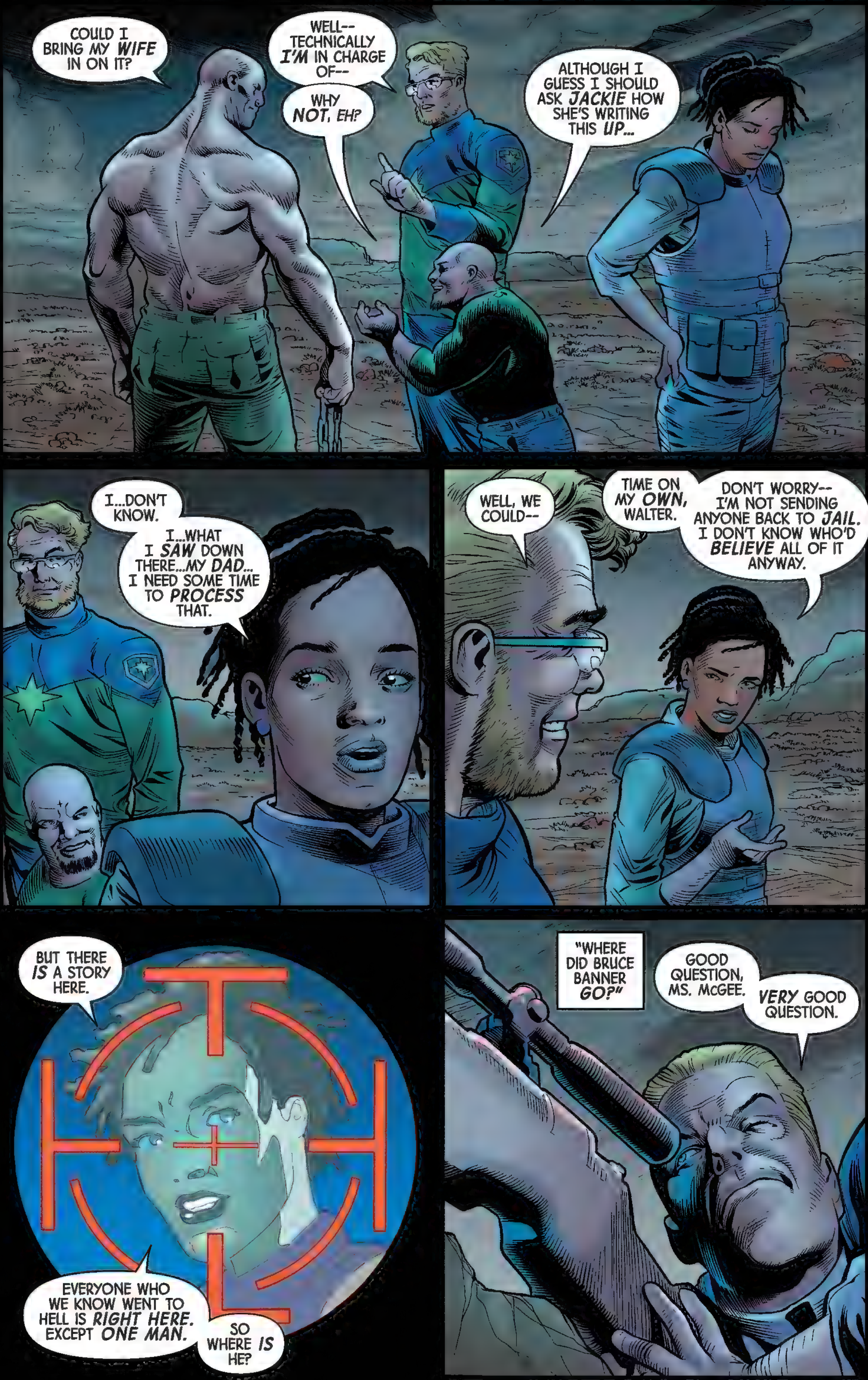

DAD!
ARE YOU-- *HRRRGH!*--ARE YOU *WATCHING*, DAD? *ARE YOU?*
YOU LIKE WHAT YOU SEE, DAD?
BECAUSE *YOU'RE NEXT*--
NO! YOU'RE NOT MY SON! *YOU NEVER WERE!*
YEAH? THAT YOUR NEW *THEORY?*
YOU'RE THE *DEVIL'S* CHILD! *HIS SON!*
YOU'RE THE SON OF THE ONE BELOW ALL!
LOOK AT YOU. TRYING TO *FIGURE ME OUT*--LEARN THE *RULES*, FIND THE *SECRET*--
YOU THINK YOU *EVER* KNEW WHAT I WAS, OLD MAN?
HERE'S YOUR *SPECIAL THEORY*, DAD. *THE ONLY EQUATION YOU NEED:*
HULK
IS
HULK!
WHOOOM
It is all too easy to fall to the *Qlippoth.*

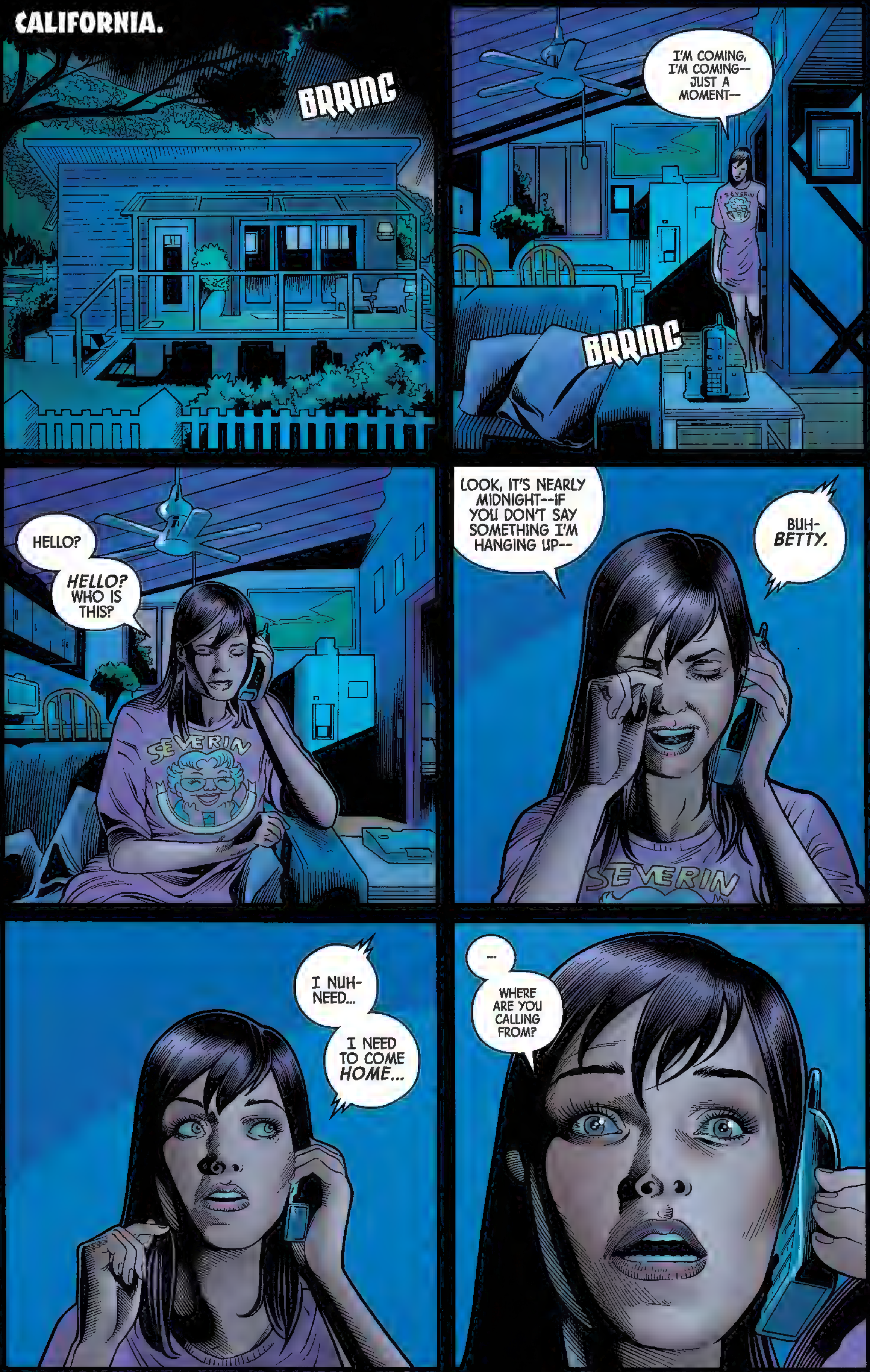

To become a creature of hate.
To use anger only to create pain.
To lose balance.
Geburah is called the left hand of God.
DADDY--
...THAT BOUGHT US MAYBE A MINUTE.
YOU OKAY?
LISTEN, CREEL GAVE ME THE GAMMA BACK. I THINK I CAN CLOSE THE DOOR. BRING US HOME.
BUT IF WE'RE NOT... TOGETHER...
WE WON'T LIVE THROUGH THAT.
GOOD.
TH-THEN LET IT HAPPEN. FINALLY.
JUST LET IT HAPPEN.

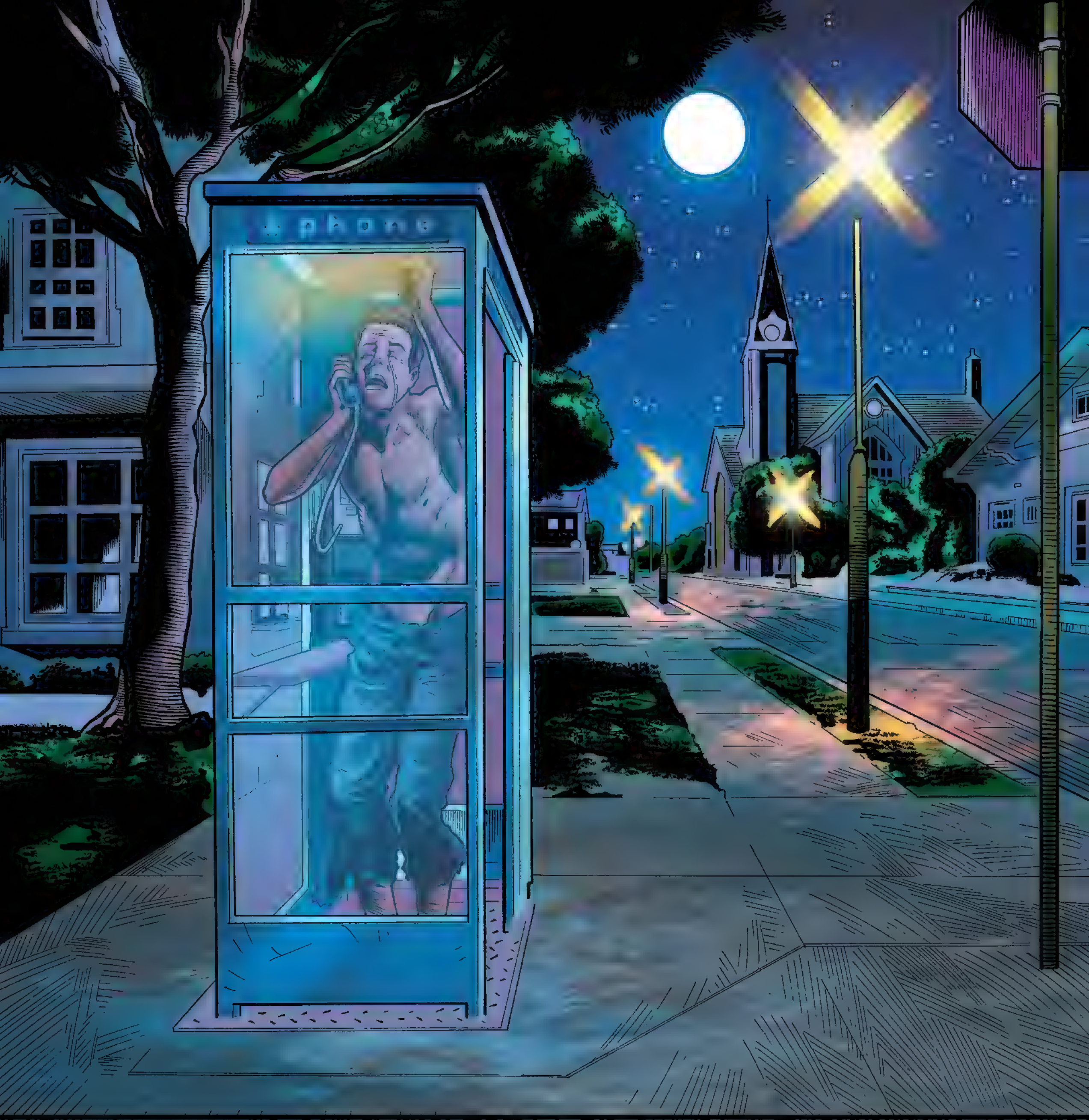

I KNOW YOU LOCKED ME AWAY FOR YEARS. I KNOW I SCARE YOU.
WHAT I DO. WHAT I AM.
BUT BEFORE ANY OF THE *OTHERS*... I WAS THERE, *PROTECTING* YOU.
I'LL *ALWAYS* PROTECT YOU.
...
'CAUSE I LOVE YOU, YOU STUPID KID.
SOMEBODY HAD TO.
COME ON HOME.
But the right hand is mercy.


And so I ask again.
What is the Hulk?
What will the Hulk be?
The accuser or the adversary? Khamael or Satan?
Is he of *Geburah* or of *Golachab*?
Is he man or monster?
What will you become, Bruce Banner of Earth?
Who are you?
And who am I?


I'll speak to you again.
In due time.
HNN.
WHAT?
WHO'S TALKING?
WELL, WELL. WALT LANGKOWSKI, BACK IN THE LAND OF THE *LIVING*...
I...I WAS WANDERING THROUGH A DESERT.
I COULDN'T *FIND* ANY OF YOU...
EASY TO GET LOST IN A PLACE LIKE THAT, *EH?* I'LL GIVE YOU A FEW LESSONS ON *NAVIGATION* SOMETIME.
WE'RE BACK AT *LOS DIABLOS?*
IS IT *SAFE* HERE?
DUNNO. BUT IT'S *CLEAN.* NO RESIDUAL GAMMA RADIATION IN A MILE OR MORE.
I'D *FEEL* IT IF THERE WERE...
GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME. AND GOOD *WORK* BACK THERE, MR. CREEL.
WANT TO STICK WITH *GAMMA FLIGHT?* WE COULD MAYBE *ARRANGE* SOMETHING...
YEAH?


COULD I BRING MY *WIFE* IN ON IT?
WELL-- TECHNICALLY *I'M* IN CHARGE OF--
WHY *NOT*, EH?
ALTHOUGH I GUESS I SHOULD ASK *JACKIE* HOW SHE'S WRITING THIS *UP*...
I...DON'T KNOW.
I...WHAT I *SAW* DOWN THERE...MY *DAD*... I NEED SOME TIME TO *PROCESS* THAT.
WELL, WE COULD--
TIME ON *MY OWN*, WALTER.
DON'T WORRY-- I'M NOT SENDING ANYONE BACK TO *JAIL*. I DON'T KNOW WHO'D *BELIEVE* ALL OF IT ANYWAY.
BUT THERE *IS* A STORY HERE.
EVERYONE WHO WE KNOW WENT TO HELL IS *RIGHT HERE*. EXCEPT *ONE MAN*.
SO WHERE *IS* HE?
"WHERE DID BRUCE BANNER *GO?*"
GOOD QUESTION, MS. McGEE.
VERY GOOD QUESTION.

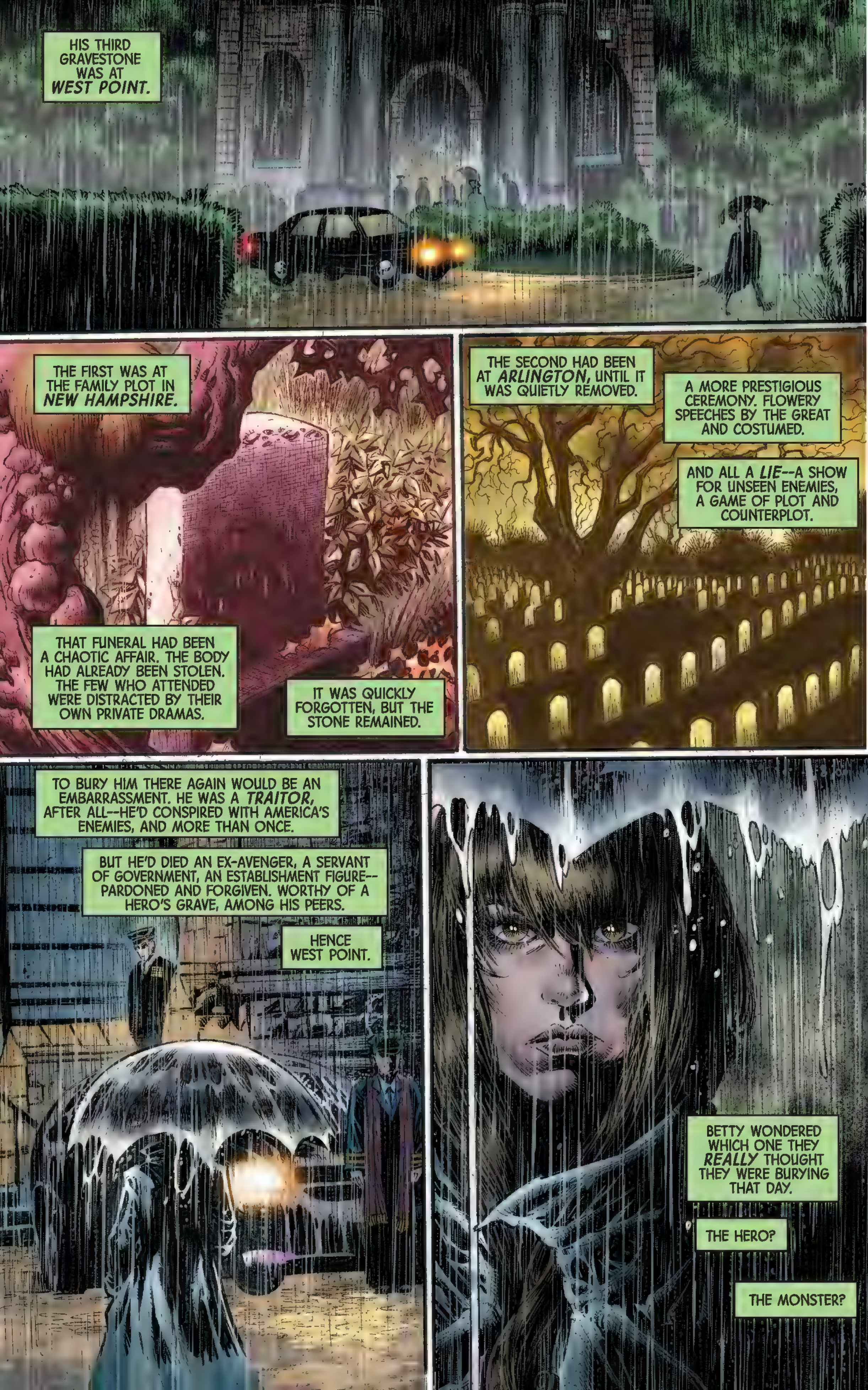

CALIFORNIA.
BRRING
I'M COMING, I'M COMING-- JUST A MOMENT--
BRRING
HELLO?
HELLO? WHO IS THIS?
LOOK, IT'S NEARLY MIDNIGHT--IF YOU DON'T SAY SOMETHING I'M HANGING UP--
BUH- *BETTY.*
SEVERIN
I NUH- NEED...
I NEED TO COME *HOME...*
...
WHERE ARE YOU CALLING FROM?

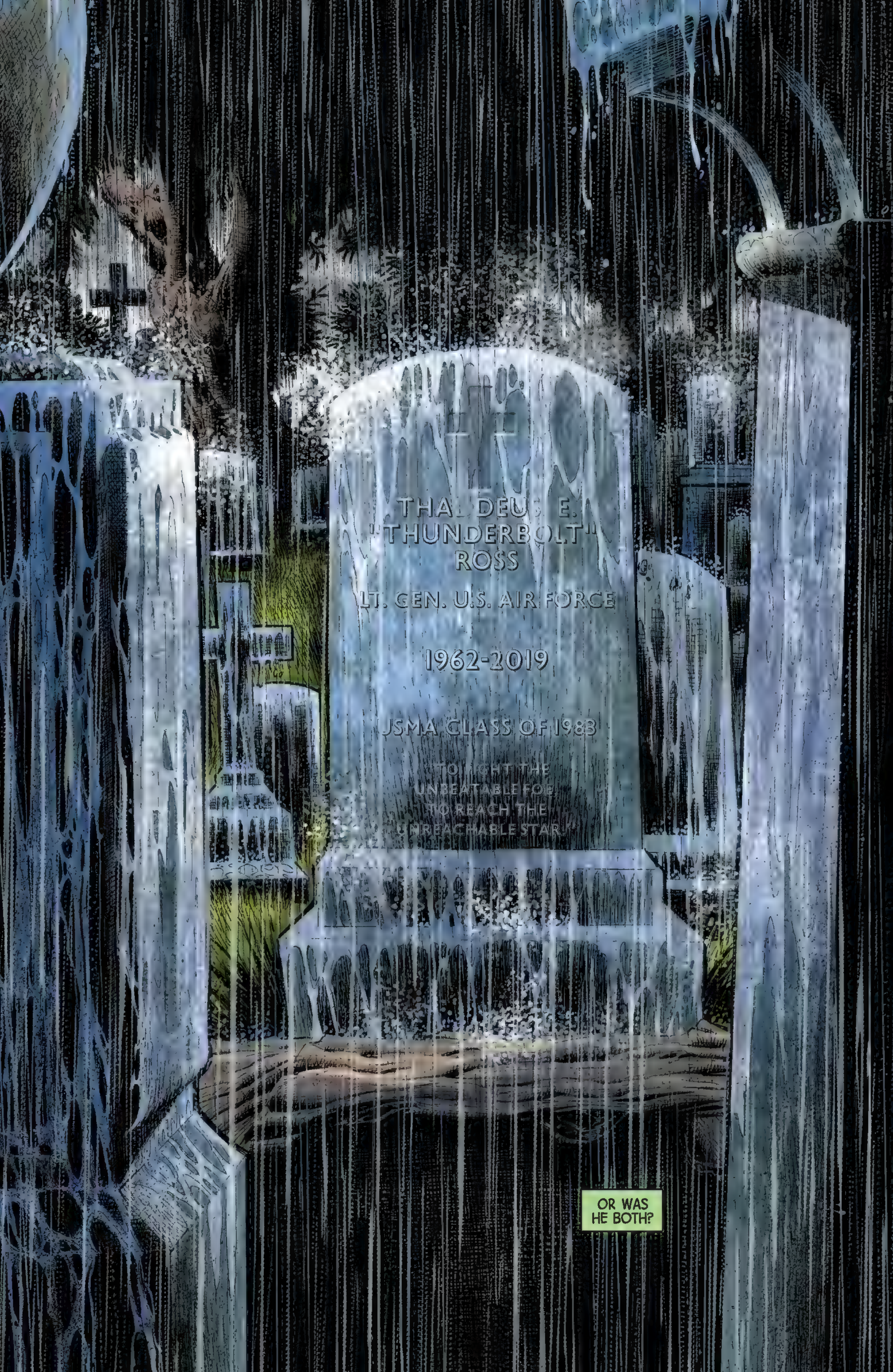


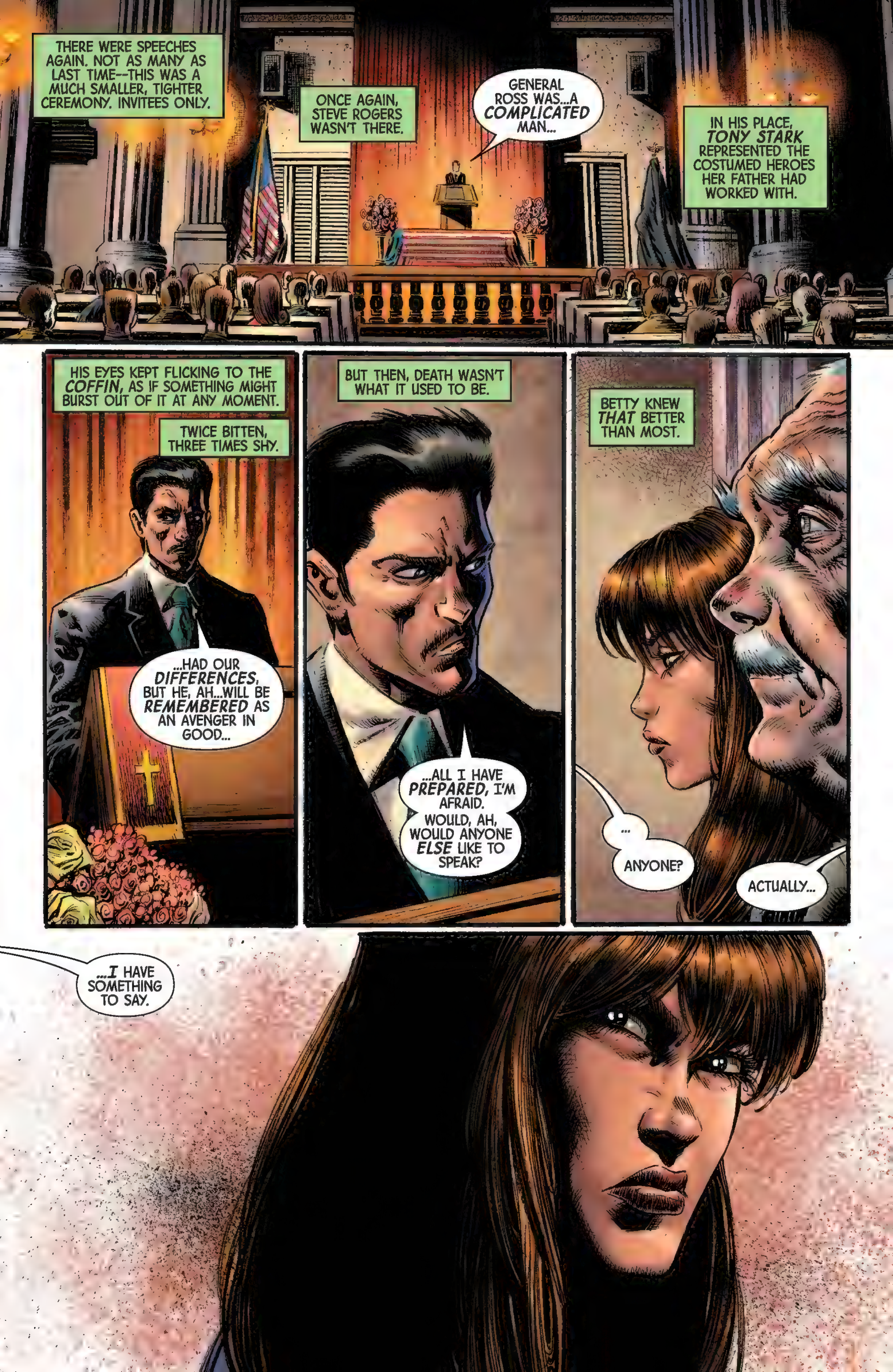
A BOOTH IN THE MIDWEST

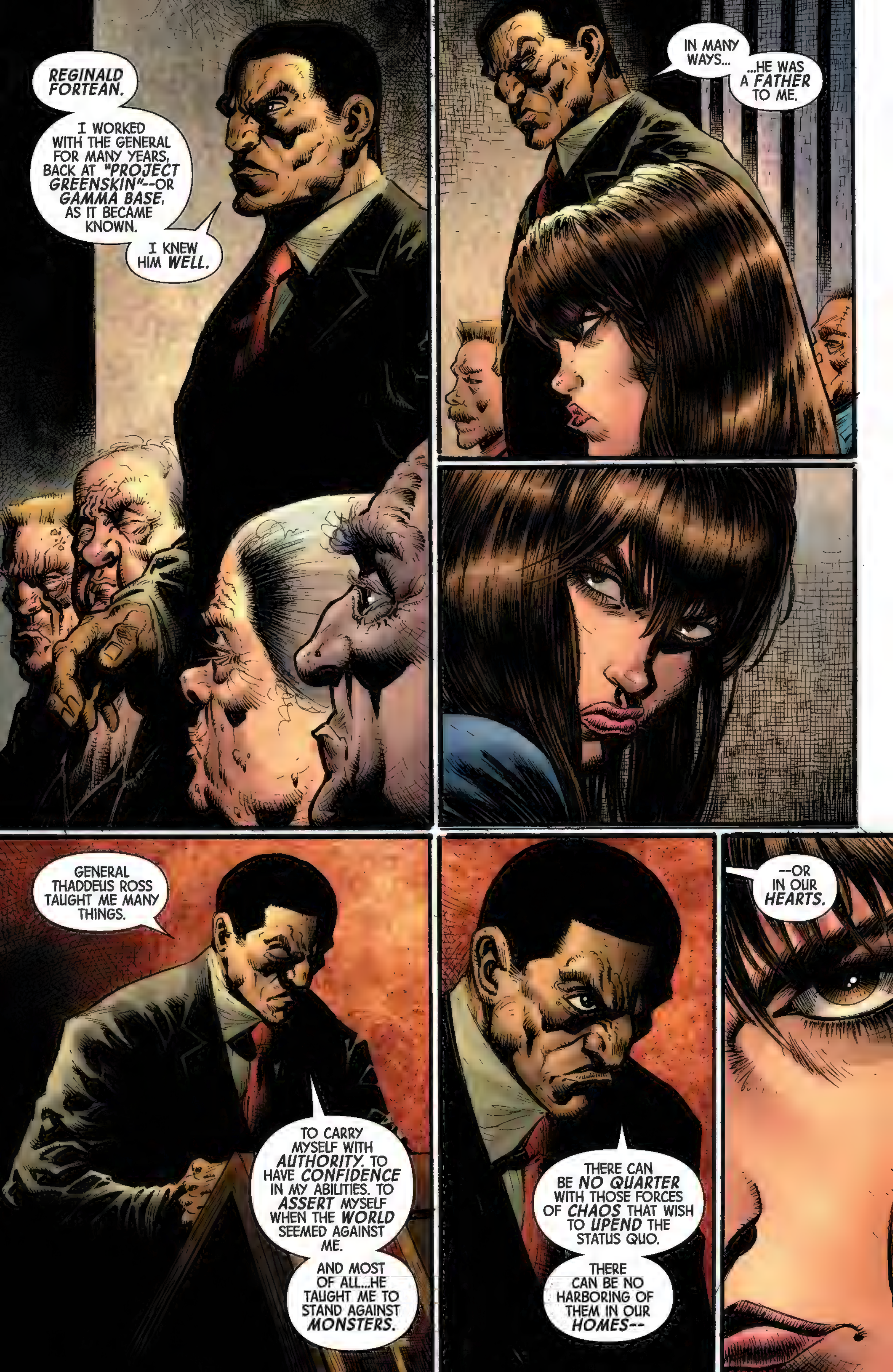
14

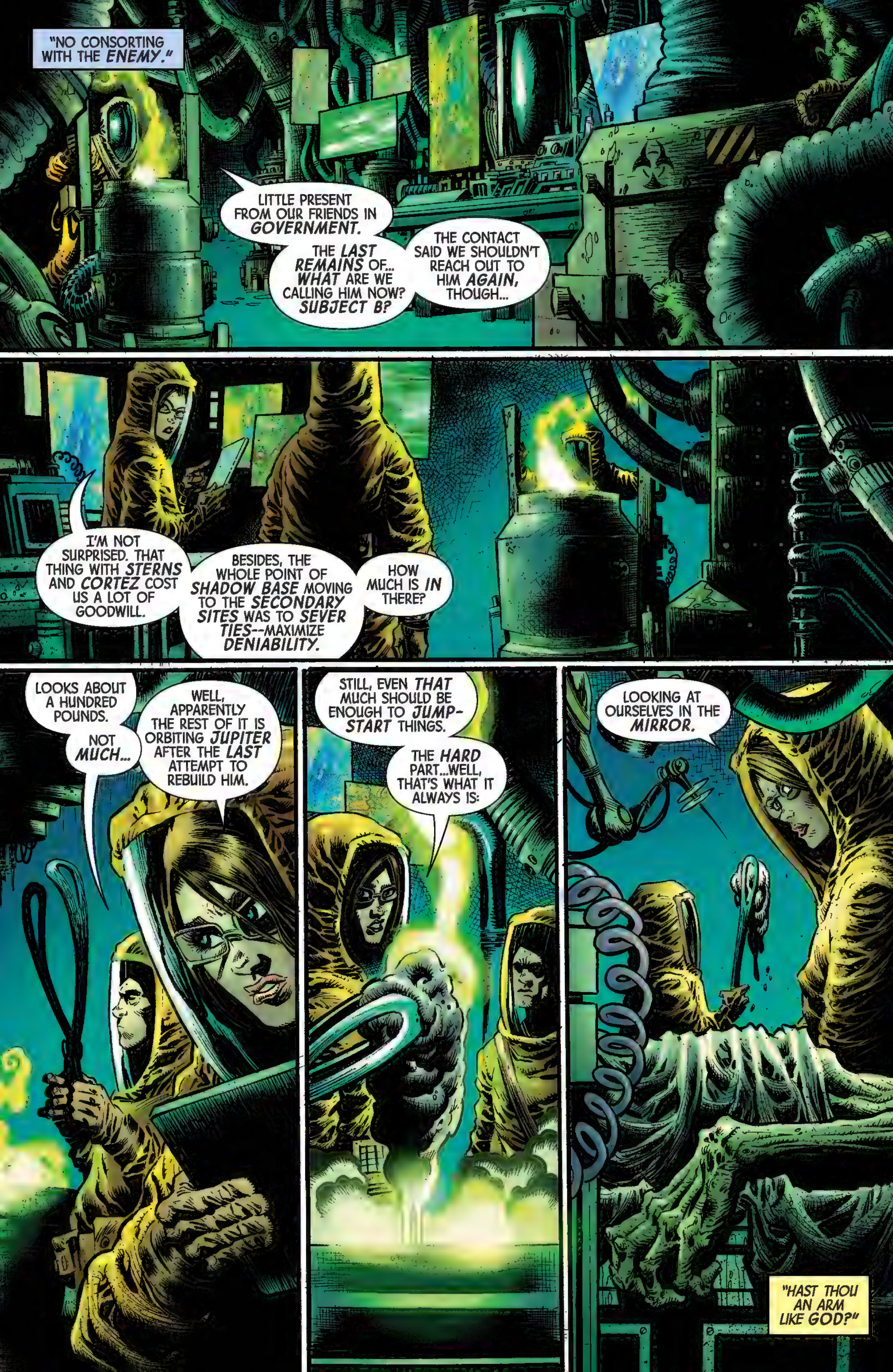
> "LOVE NEVER DIES
> A NATURAL DEATH."
>
> – ANAÏS NIN
> *THE FOUR-CHAMBERED HEART*

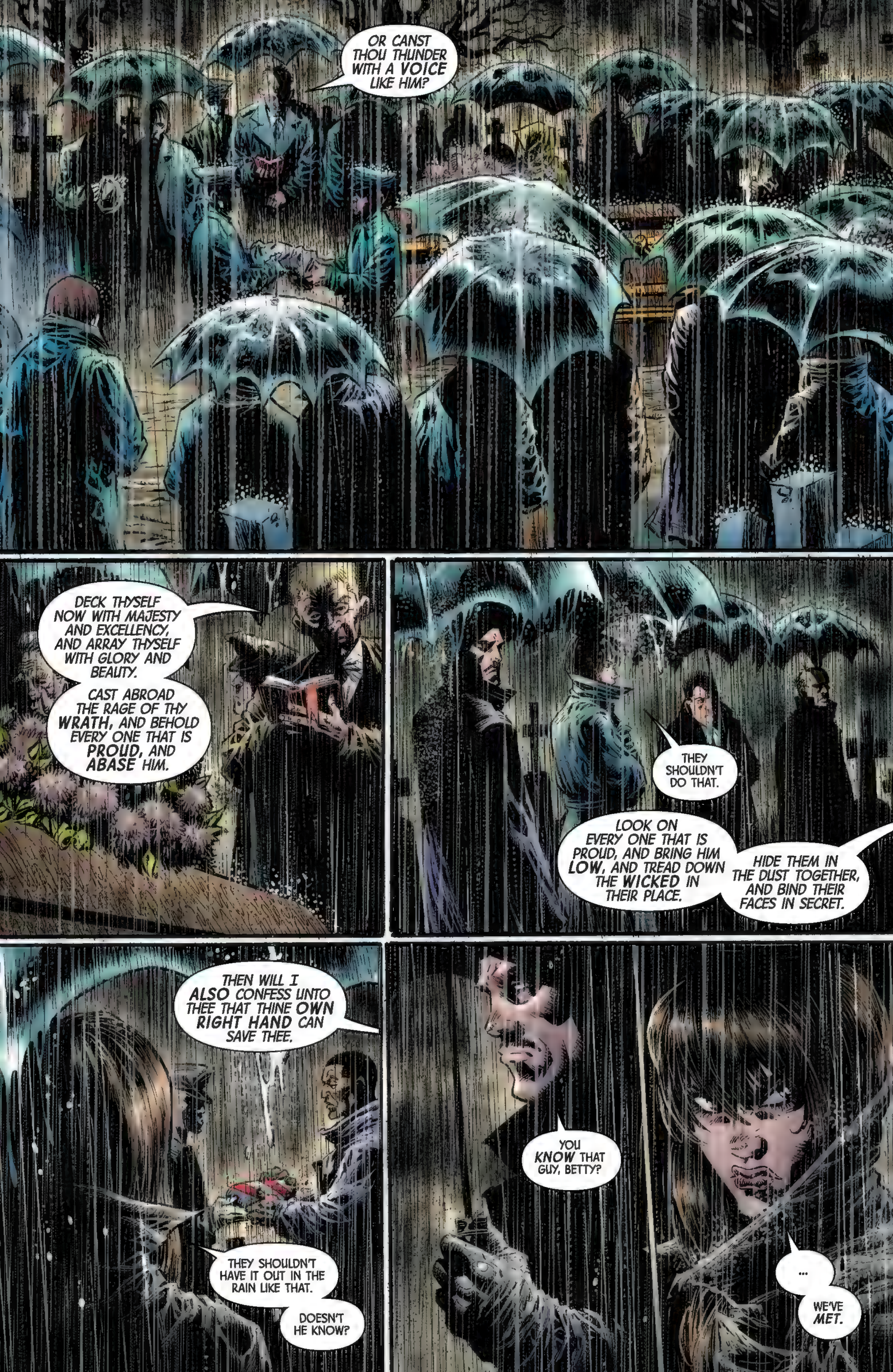

HIS THIRD GRAVESTONE WAS AT *WEST POINT.*
THE FIRST WAS AT THE FAMILY PLOT IN *NEW HAMPSHIRE.*
THAT FUNERAL HAD BEEN A CHAOTIC AFFAIR. THE BODY HAD ALREADY BEEN STOLEN. THE FEW WHO ATTENDED WERE DISTRACTED BY THEIR OWN PRIVATE DRAMAS.
IT WAS QUICKLY FORGOTTEN, BUT THE STONE REMAINED.
THE SECOND HAD BEEN AT *ARLINGTON,* UNTIL IT WAS QUIETLY REMOVED.
A MORE PRESTIGIOUS CEREMONY. FLOWERY SPEECHES BY THE GREAT AND COSTUMED.
AND ALL A *LIE*--A SHOW FOR UNSEEN ENEMIES, A GAME OF PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.
TO BURY HIM THERE AGAIN WOULD BE AN EMBARRASSMENT. HE WAS A *TRAITOR,* AFTER ALL--HE'D CONSPIRED WITH AMERICA'S ENEMIES, AND MORE THAN ONCE.
BUT HE'D DIED AN EX-AVENGER, A SERVANT OF GOVERNMENT, AN ESTABLISHMENT FIGURE--PARDONED AND FORGIVEN. WORTHY OF A HERO'S GRAVE, AMONG HIS PEERS.
HENCE WEST POINT.
BETTY WONDERED WHICH ONE THEY *REALLY* THOUGHT THEY WERE BURYING THAT DAY.
THE HERO?
THE MONSTER?

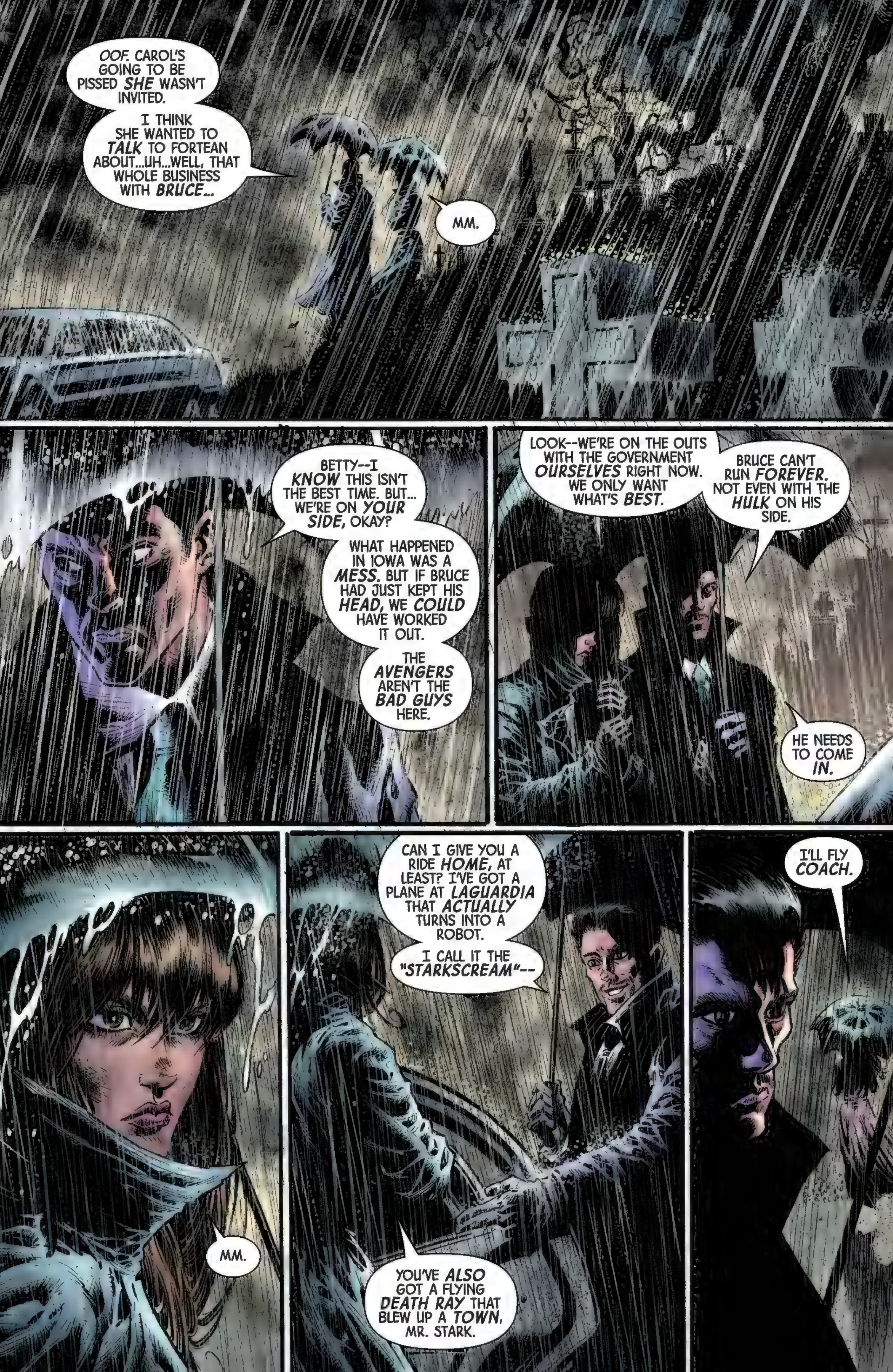

THADDEUS E.
"THUNDERBOLT"
ROSS
LT. GEN. U.S. AIR FORCE
1962-2019
USMA CLASS OF 1983
TO FIGHT THE
UNBEATABLE FOE,
TO REACH THE
UNREACHABLE STAR."
OR WAS HE BOTH?

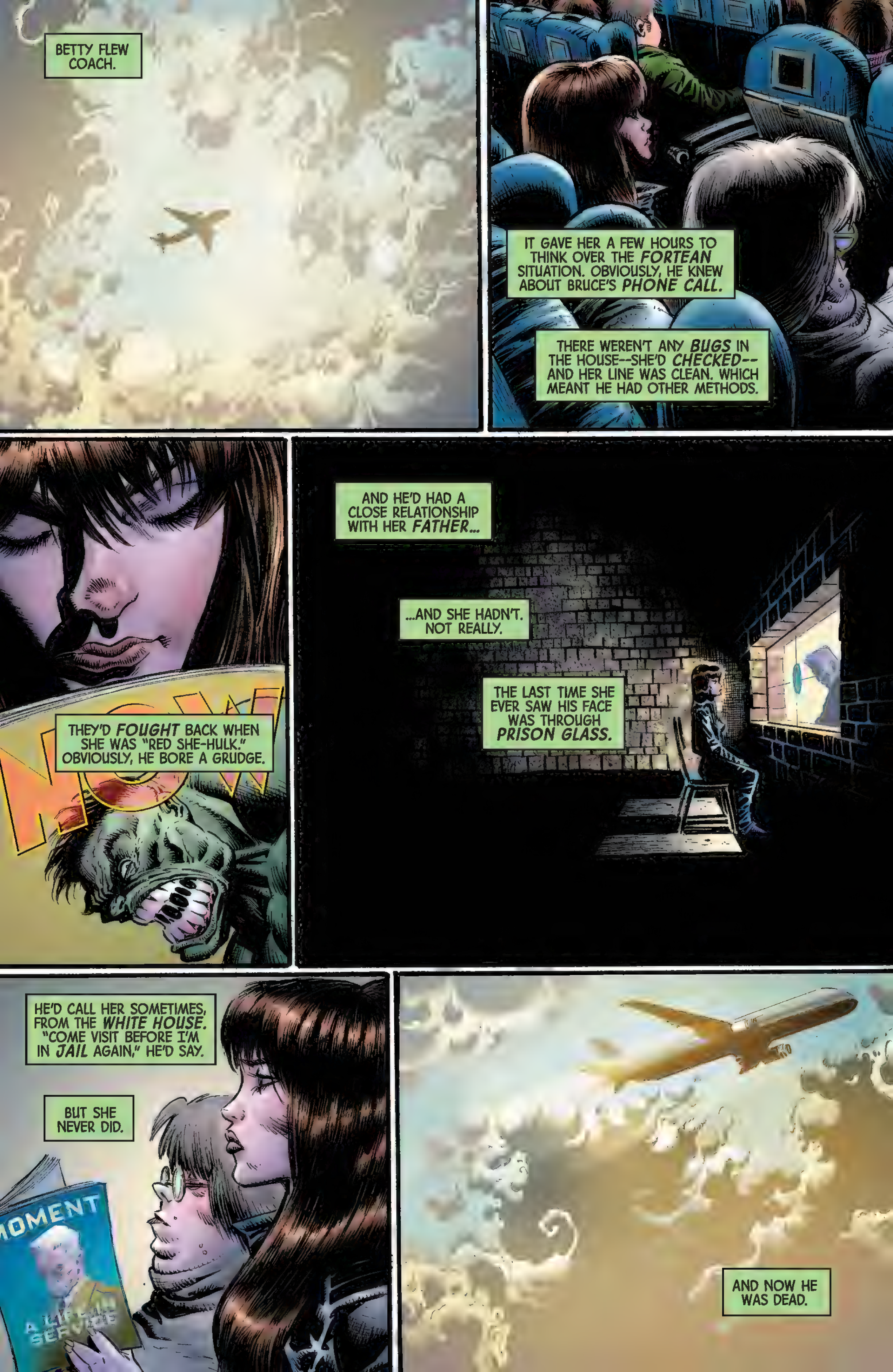

THERE WERE SPEECHES AGAIN. NOT AS MANY AS LAST TIME--THIS WAS A MUCH SMALLER, TIGHTER CEREMONY. INVITEES ONLY.
ONCE AGAIN, STEVE ROGERS WASN'T THERE.
GENERAL ROSS WAS...A *COMPLICATED* MAN...
IN HIS PLACE, *TONY STARK* REPRESENTED THE COSTUMED HEROES HER FATHER HAD WORKED WITH.
HIS EYES KEPT FLICKING TO THE *COFFIN*, AS IF SOMETHING MIGHT BURST OUT OF IT AT ANY MOMENT.
TWICE BITTEN, THREE TIMES SHY.
...HAD OUR *DIFFERENCES*, BUT HE, AH...WILL BE *REMEMBERED* AS AN AVENGER IN GOOD...
BUT THEN, DEATH WASN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE.
...ALL I HAVE *PREPARED*, I'M AFRAID.
WOULD, AH, WOULD ANYONE *ELSE* LIKE TO SPEAK?
BETTY KNEW *THAT* BETTER THAN MOST.
...
ANYONE?
ACTUALLY...
...*I* HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY.

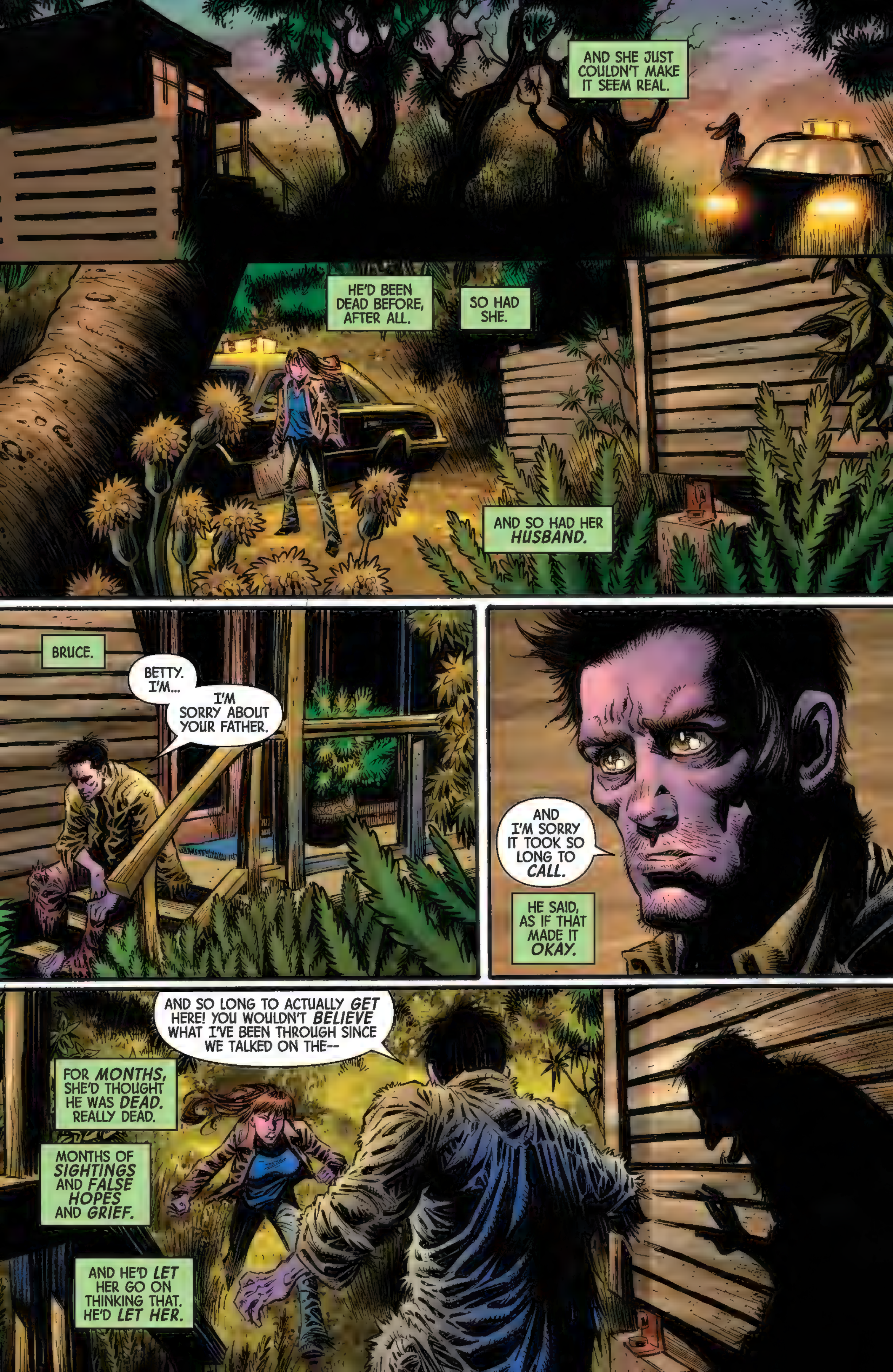

REGINALD FORTEAN.
I WORKED WITH THE GENERAL FOR MANY YEARS, BACK AT "PROJECT GREENSKIN"--OR GAMMA BASE, AS IT BECAME KNOWN.
I KNEW HIM WELL.
IN MANY WAYS...
...HE WAS A FATHER TO ME.
GENERAL THADDEUS ROSS TAUGHT ME MANY THINGS.
TO CARRY MYSELF WITH AUTHORITY. TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN MY ABILITIES. TO ASSERT MYSELF WHEN THE WORLD SEEMED AGAINST ME.
AND MOST OF ALL...HE TAUGHT ME TO STAND AGAINST MONSTERS.
THERE CAN BE NO QUARTER WITH THOSE FORCES OF CHAOS THAT WISH TO UPEND THE STATUS QUO.
THERE CAN BE NO HARBORING OF THEM IN OUR HOMES--
--OR IN OUR HEARTS.

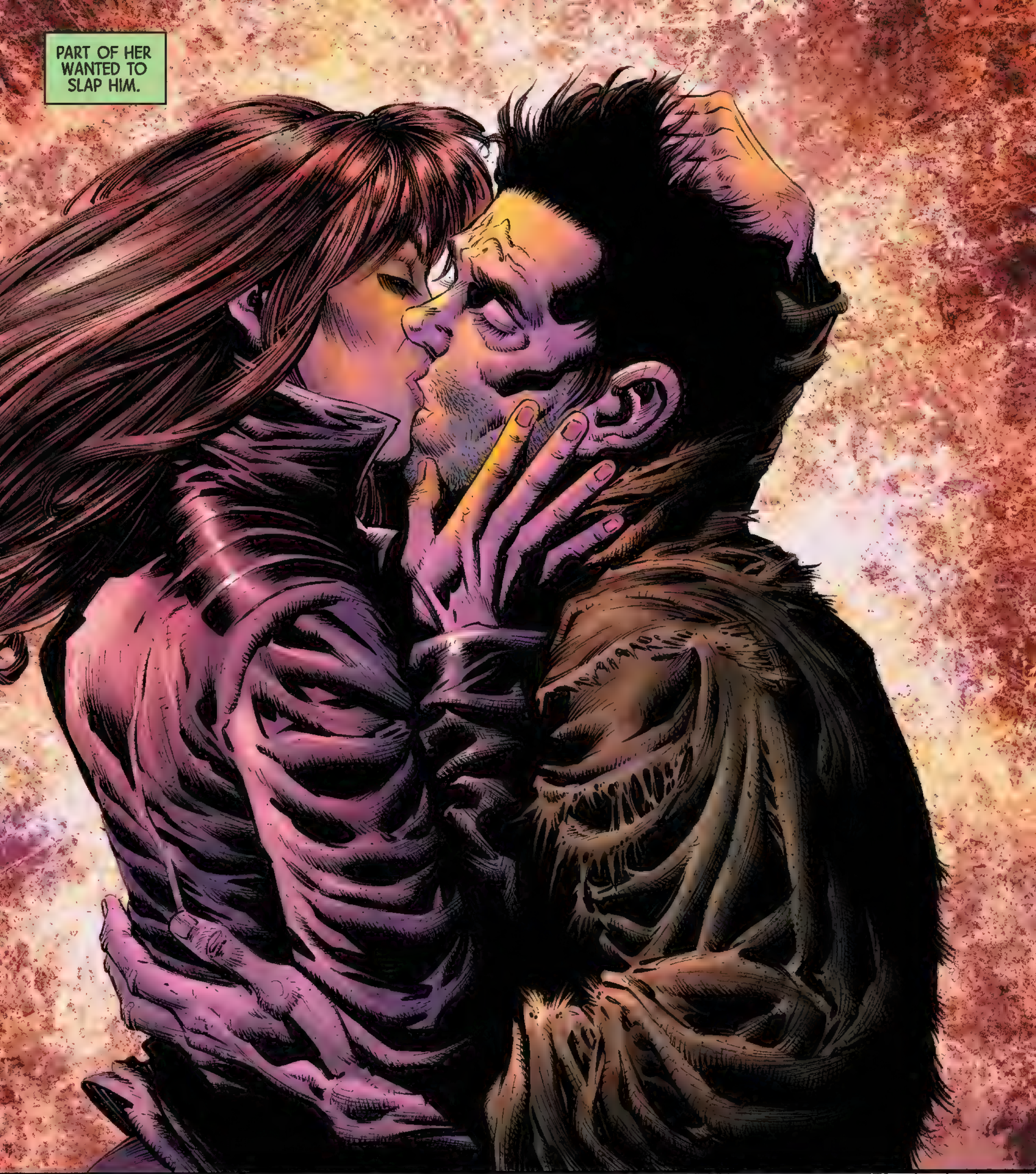

"NO CONSORTING WITH THE *ENEMY*."
LITTLE PRESENT FROM OUR FRIENDS IN *GOVERNMENT*.
THE *LAST REMAINS* OF... *WHAT* ARE WE CALLING HIM NOW? *SUBJECT B?*
THE CONTACT SAID WE SHOULDN'T REACH OUT TO HIM *AGAIN*, THOUGH...
I'M NOT SURPRISED. THAT THING WITH *STERNS* AND *CORTEZ* COST US A LOT OF GOODWILL.
BESIDES, THE WHOLE POINT OF *SHADOW BASE* MOVING TO THE *SECONDARY SITES* WAS TO *SEVER TIES*--MAXIMIZE *DENIABILITY*.
HOW MUCH IS *IN* THERE?
LOOKS ABOUT A HUNDRED POUNDS.
NOT *MUCH*...
WELL, APPARENTLY THE REST OF IT IS ORBITING *JUPITER* AFTER THE *LAST* ATTEMPT TO REBUILD HIM.
STILL, EVEN *THAT* MUCH SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO *JUMP-START* THINGS.
THE *HARD* PART...WELL, THAT'S WHAT IT ALWAYS IS:
LOOKING AT OURSELVES IN THE *MIRROR*.
"HAST THOU AN ARM LIKE GOD?"

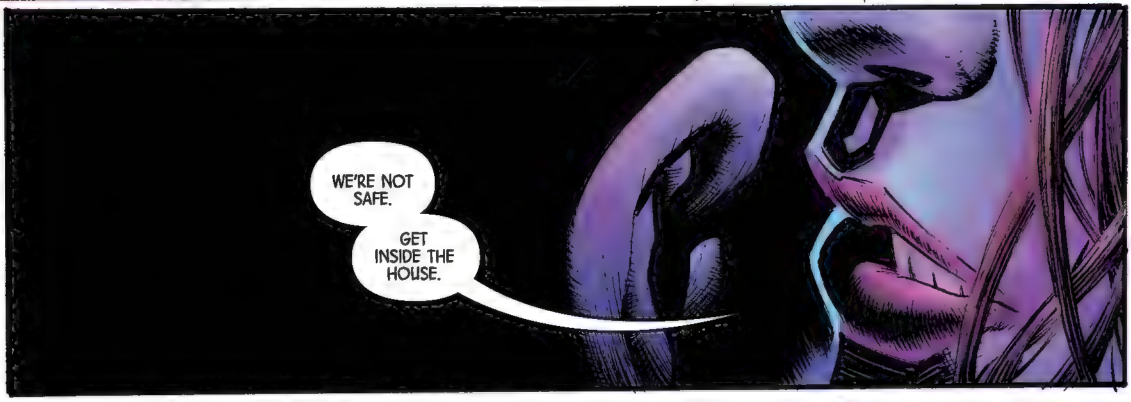

OR CANST THOU THUNDER WITH A VOICE LIKE HIM?
DECK THYSELF NOW WITH MAJESTY AND EXCELLENCY, AND ARRAY THYSELF WITH GLORY AND BEAUTY.
CAST ABROAD THE RAGE OF THY WRATH, AND BEHOLD EVERY ONE THAT IS PROUD, AND ABASE HIM.
THEY SHOULDN'T DO THAT.
LOOK ON EVERY ONE THAT IS PROUD, AND BRING HIM LOW, AND TREAD DOWN THE WICKED IN THEIR PLACE.
HIDE THEM IN THE DUST TOGETHER, AND BIND THEIR FACES IN SECRET.
THEN WILL I ALSO CONFESS UNTO THEE THAT THINE OWN RIGHT HAND CAN SAVE THEE.
THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE IT OUT IN THE RAIN LIKE THAT.
DOESN'T HE KNOW?
YOU KNOW THAT GUY, BETTY?
...
WE'VE MET.

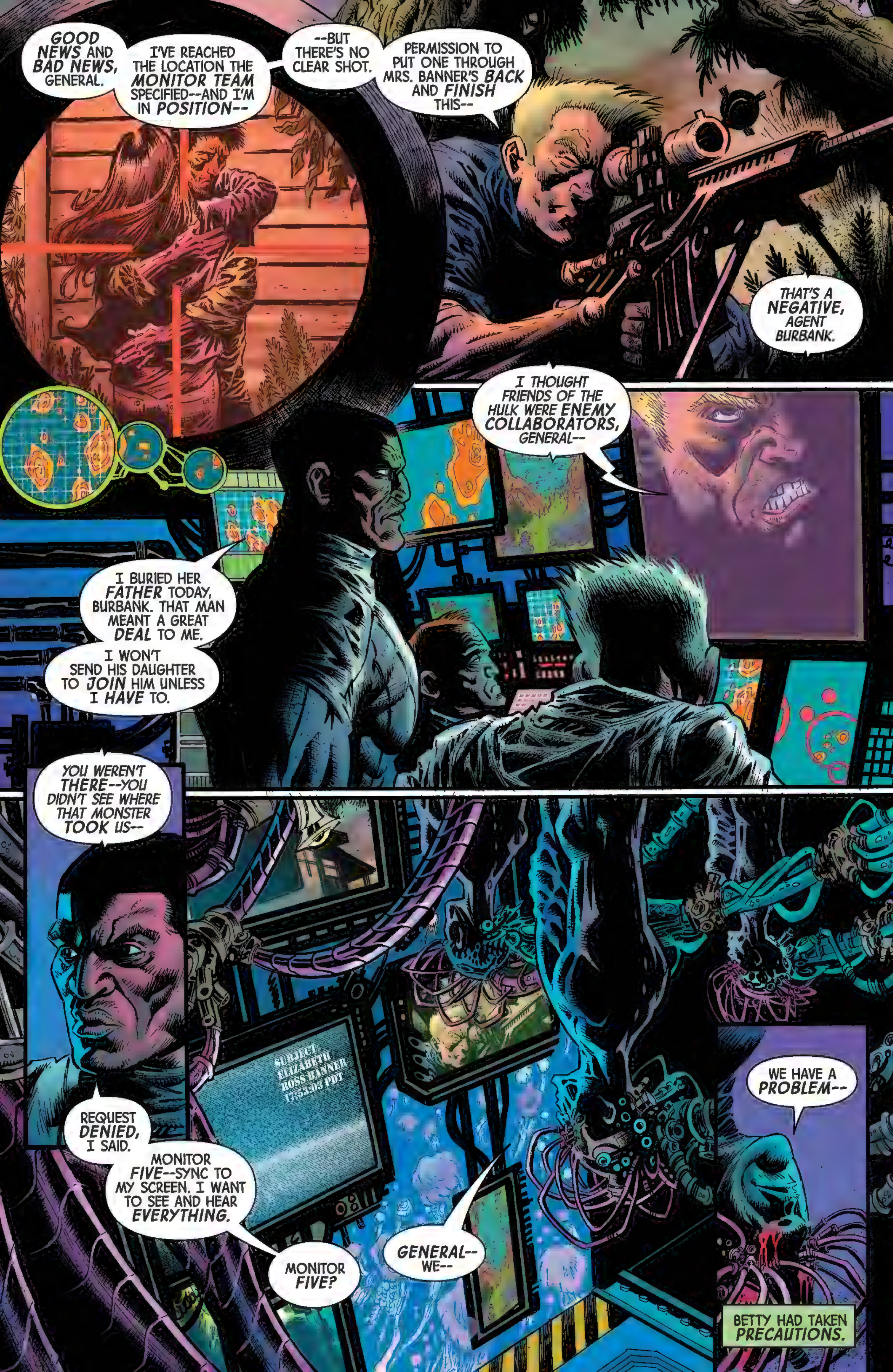

OOF. CAROL'S GOING TO BE PISSED SHE WASN'T INVITED.
I THINK SHE WANTED TO TALK TO FORTEAN ABOUT...UH...WELL, THAT WHOLE BUSINESS WITH BRUCE...
MM.
BETTY--I KNOW THIS ISN'T THE BEST TIME. BUT... WE'RE ON YOUR SIDE, OKAY?
WHAT HAPPENED IN IOWA WAS A MESS. BUT IF BRUCE HAD JUST KEPT HIS HEAD, WE COULD HAVE WORKED IT OUT.
THE AVENGERS AREN'T THE BAD GUYS HERE.
LOOK--WE'RE ON THE OUTS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OURSELVES RIGHT NOW. WE ONLY WANT WHAT'S BEST.
BRUCE CAN'T RUN FOREVER. NOT EVEN WITH THE HULK ON HIS SIDE.
HE NEEDS TO COME IN.
MM.
CAN I GIVE YOU A RIDE HOME, AT LEAST? I'VE GOT A PLANE AT LAGUARDIA THAT ACTUALLY TURNS INTO A ROBOT.
I CALL IT THE "STARKSCREAM"--
YOU'VE ALSO GOT A FLYING DEATH RAY THAT BLEW UP A TOWN, MR. STARK.
I'LL FLY COACH.

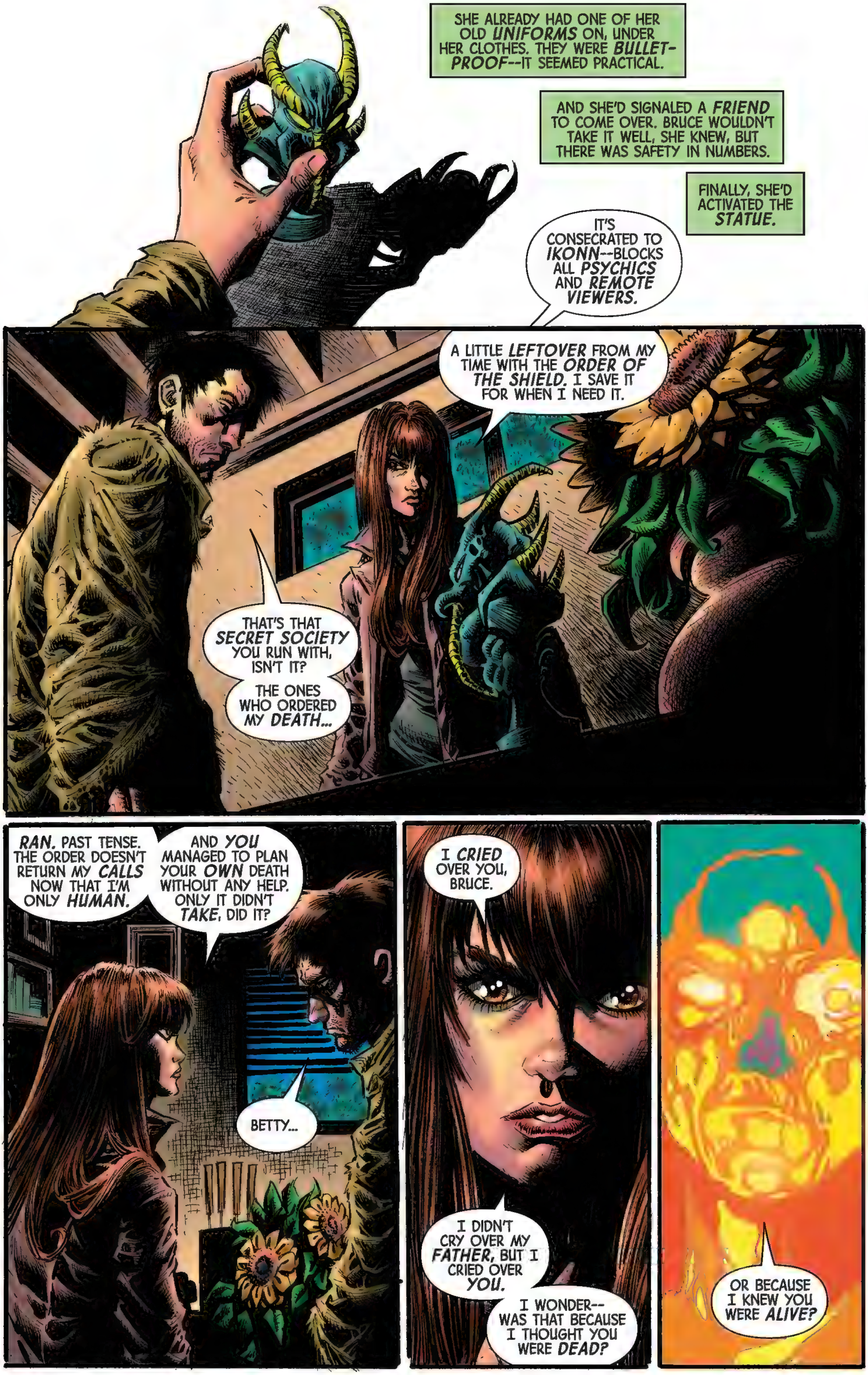

BETTY FLEW COACH.
IT GAVE HER A FEW HOURS TO THINK OVER THE *FORTEAN* SITUATION. OBVIOUSLY, HE KNEW ABOUT BRUCE'S *PHONE CALL.*
THERE WEREN'T ANY *BUGS* IN THE HOUSE--SHE'D *CHECKED*--AND HER LINE WAS CLEAN. WHICH MEANT HE HAD OTHER METHODS.
NOW
THEY'D *FOUGHT* BACK WHEN SHE WAS "RED SHE-HULK." OBVIOUSLY, HE BORE A GRUDGE.
AND HE'D HAD A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH HER *FATHER...*
...AND SHE HADN'T. NOT REALLY.
THE LAST TIME SHE EVER SAW HIS FACE WAS THROUGH *PRISON GLASS.*
HE'D CALL HER SOMETIMES, FROM THE *WHITE HOUSE.* "COME VISIT BEFORE I'M IN *JAIL* AGAIN," HE'D SAY.
BUT SHE NEVER DID.
MOMENT
A LIFE IN SERVICE
AND NOW HE WAS DEAD.

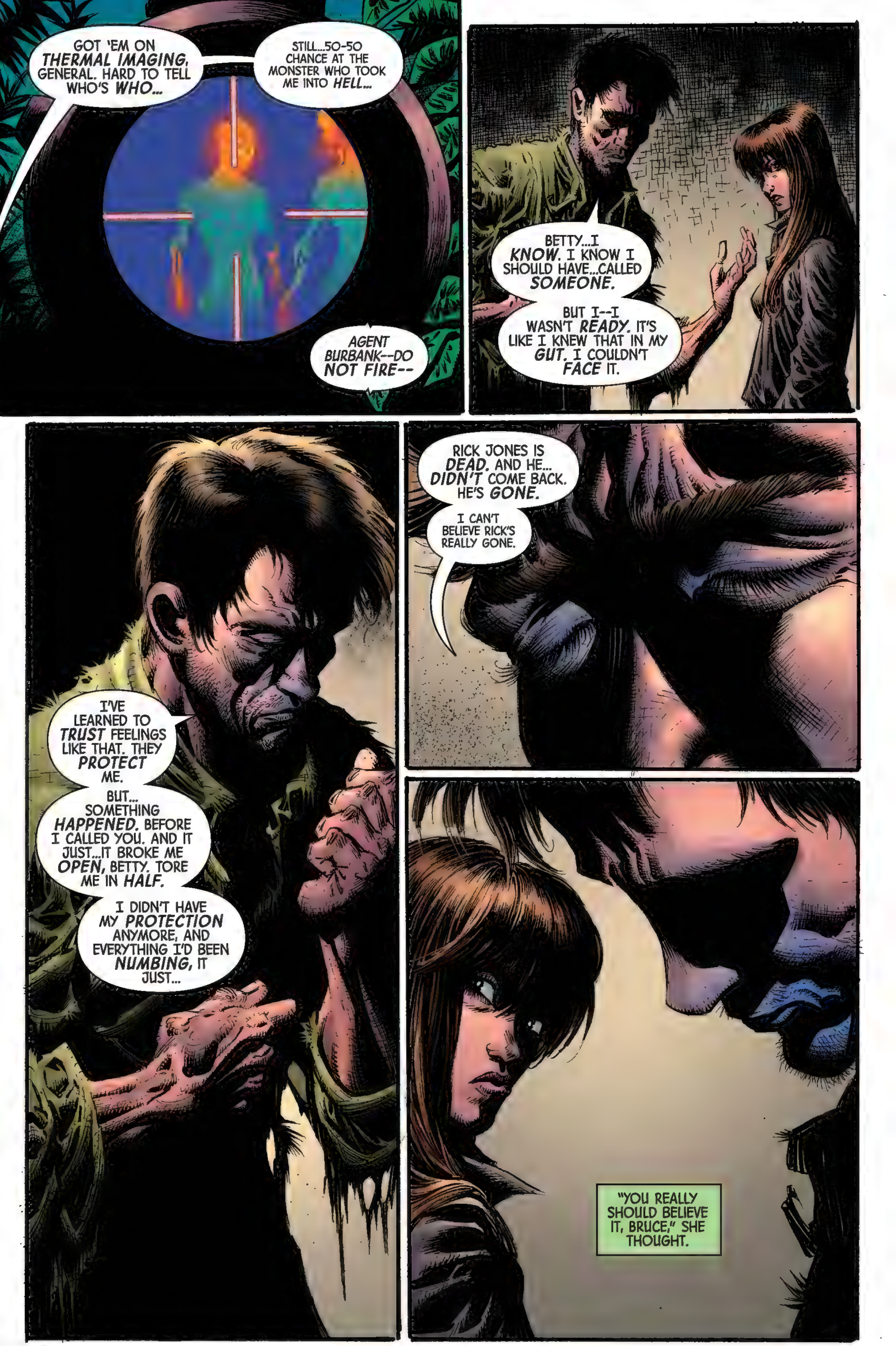

AND SHE JUST COULDN'T MAKE IT SEEM REAL.
HE'D BEEN DEAD BEFORE, AFTER ALL.
SO HAD SHE.
AND SO HAD HER *HUSBAND.*
BRUCE.
BETTY. I'M...
I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR FATHER.
AND I'M SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG TO *CALL.*
HE SAID, AS IF THAT MADE IT *OKAY.*
AND SO LONG TO ACTUALLY *GET* HERE! YOU WOULDN'T *BELIEVE* WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH SINCE WE TALKED ON THE--
FOR *MONTHS,* SHE'D THOUGHT HE WAS *DEAD.* REALLY DEAD.
MONTHS OF *SIGHTINGS* AND *FALSE HOPES* AND *GRIEF.*
AND HE'D *LET* HER GO ON THINKING THAT. HE'D *LET HER.*

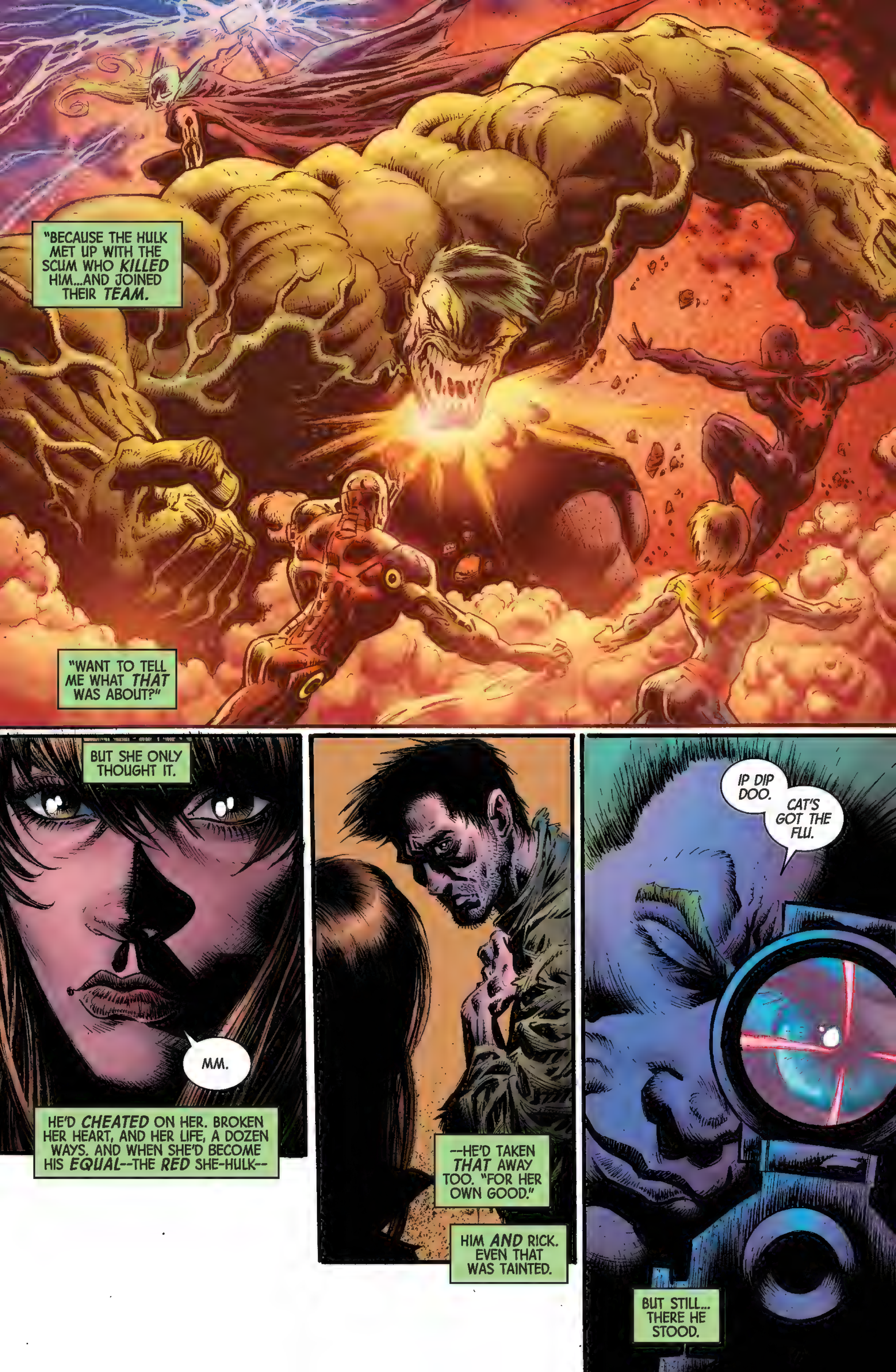

PART OF HER WANTED TO SLAP HIM.

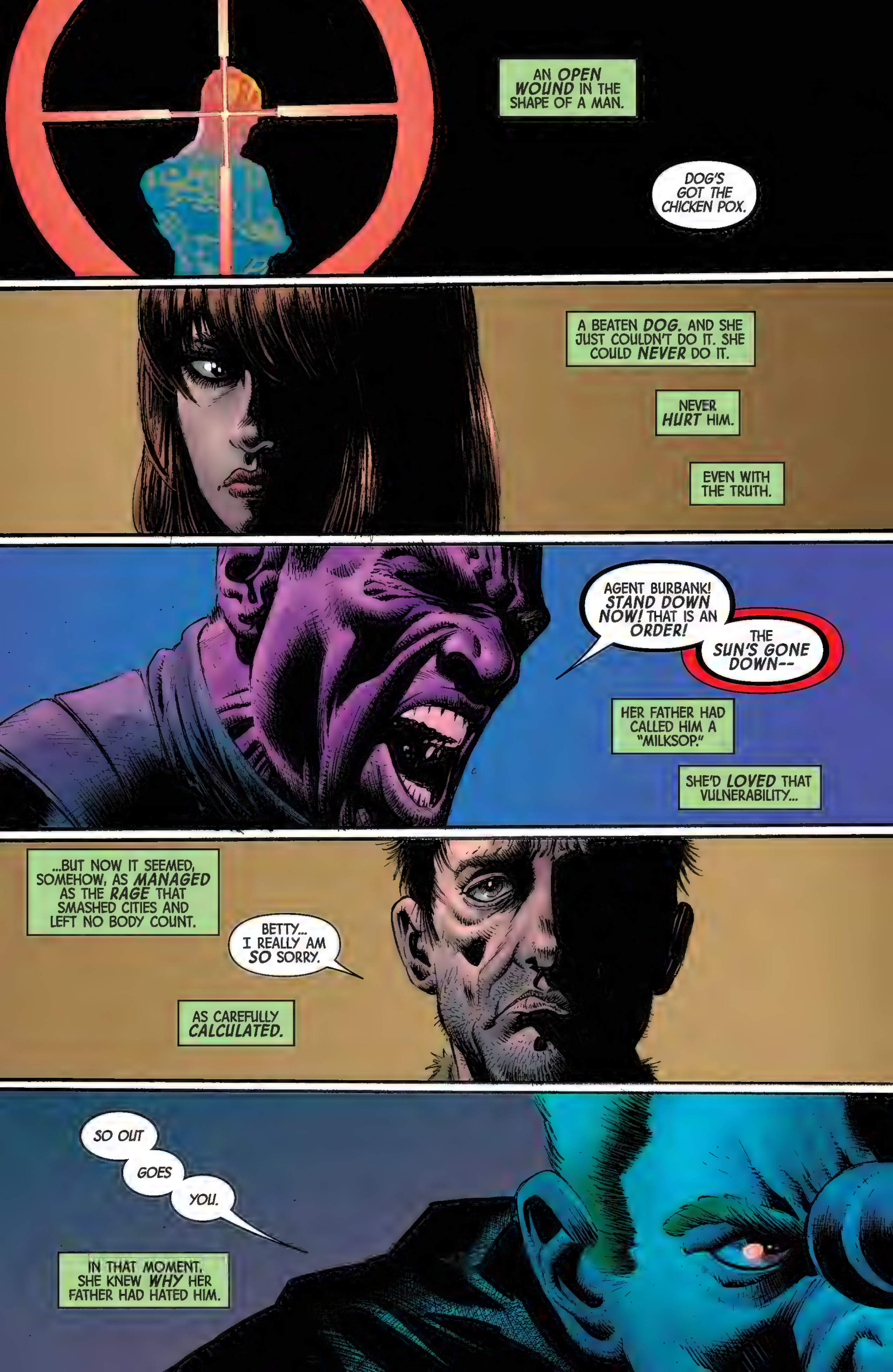

WE'RE NOT SAFE.
GET INSIDE THE HOUSE.

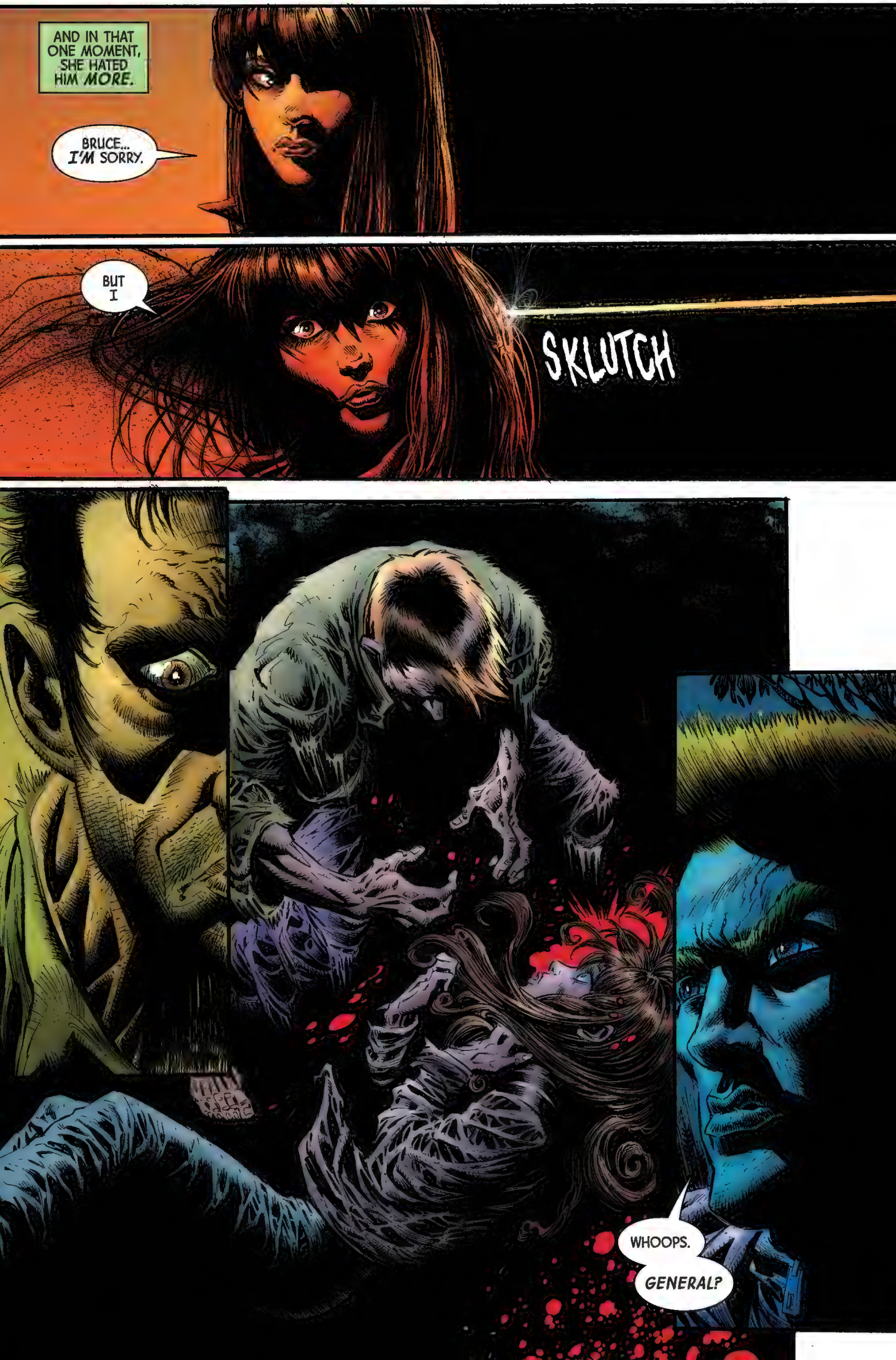

GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS, GENERAL.
I'VE REACHED THE LOCATION THE MONITOR TEAM SPECIFIED--AND I'M IN POSITION--
--BUT THERE'S NO CLEAR SHOT.
PERMISSION TO PUT ONE THROUGH MRS. BANNER'S BACK AND FINISH THIS--
THAT'S A NEGATIVE, AGENT BURBANK.
I THOUGHT FRIENDS OF THE HULK WERE ENEMY COLLABORATORS, GENERAL--
I BURIED HER FATHER TODAY, BURBANK. THAT MAN MEANT A GREAT DEAL TO ME.
I WON'T SEND HIS DAUGHTER TO JOIN HIM UNLESS I HAVE TO.
YOU WEREN'T THERE--YOU DIDN'T SEE WHERE THAT MONSTER TOOK US--
SUBJECT: ELIZABETH ROSS-BANNER 17:53:03 PDT
REQUEST DENIED, I SAID.
MONITOR FIVE--SYNC TO MY SCREEN. I WANT TO SEE AND HEAR EVERYTHING.
MONITOR FIVE?
GENERAL--WE--
WE HAVE A PROBLEM--
BETTY HAD TAKEN PRECAUTIONS.

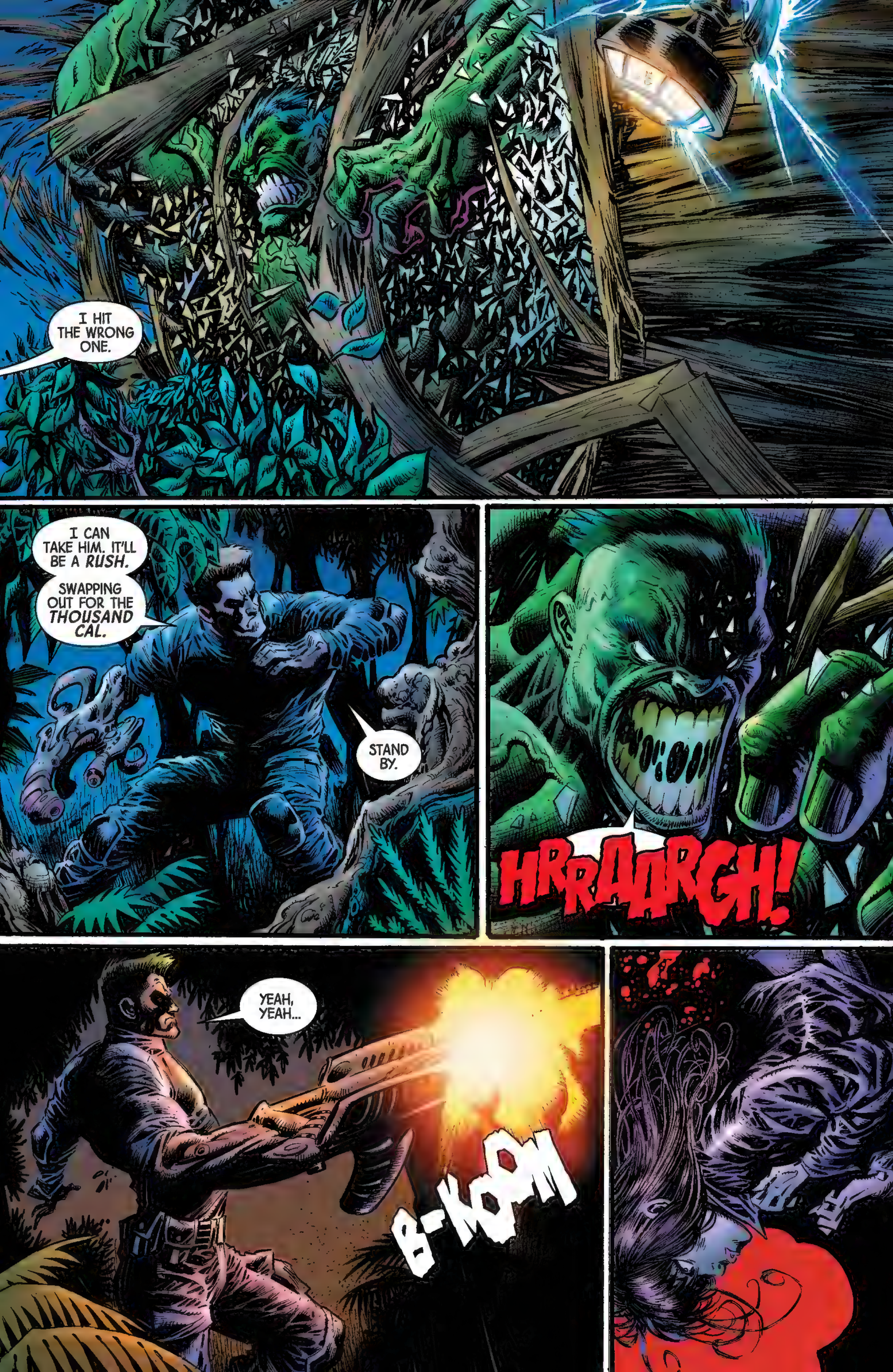

SHE ALREADY HAD ONE OF HER OLD UNIFORMS ON, UNDER HER CLOTHES. THEY WERE BULLET-PROOF--IT SEEMED PRACTICAL.
AND SHE'D SIGNALED A FRIEND TO COME OVER. BRUCE WOULDN'T TAKE IT WELL, SHE KNEW, BUT THERE WAS SAFETY IN NUMBERS.
FINALLY, SHE'D ACTIVATED THE STATUE.
IT'S CONSECRATED TO IKONN--BLOCKS ALL PSYCHICS AND REMOTE VIEWERS.
A LITTLE LEFTOVER FROM MY TIME WITH THE ORDER OF THE SHIELD. I SAVE IT FOR WHEN I NEED IT.
THAT'S THAT SECRET SOCIETY YOU RUN WITH, ISN'T IT?
THE ONES WHO ORDERED MY DEATH...
RAN. PAST TENSE. THE ORDER DOESN'T RETURN MY CALLS NOW THAT I'M ONLY HUMAN.
AND YOU MANAGED TO PLAN YOUR OWN DEATH WITHOUT ANY HELP. ONLY IT DIDN'T TAKE, DID IT?
BETTY...
I CRIED OVER YOU, BRUCE.
I DIDN'T CRY OVER MY FATHER, BUT I CRIED OVER YOU.
I WONDER-- WAS THAT BECAUSE I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD?
OR BECAUSE I KNEW YOU WERE ALIVE?

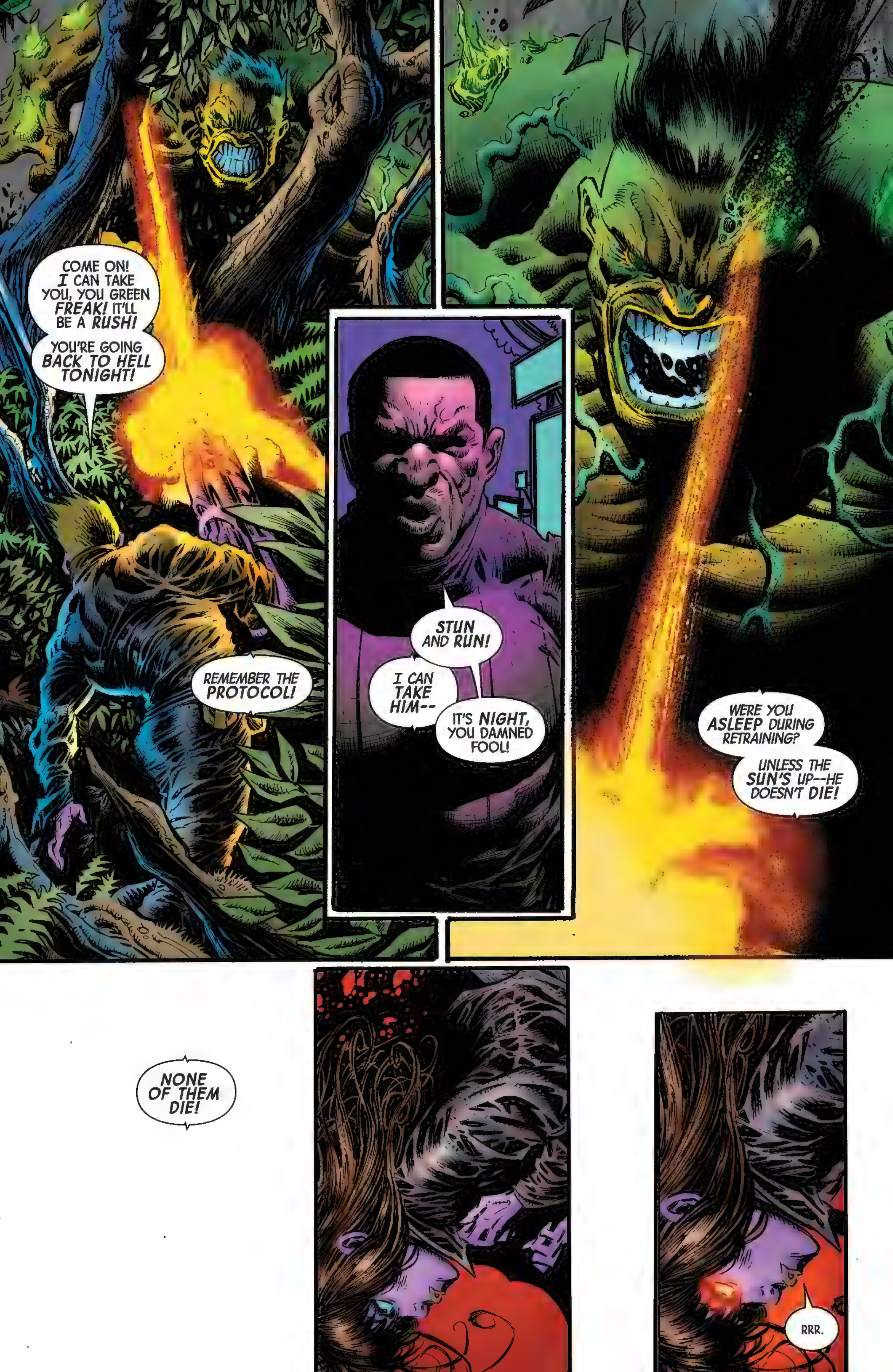

GOT 'EM ON *THERMAL IMAGING,* GENERAL. HARD TO TELL WHO'S *WHO...*
STILL...50-50 CHANCE AT THE MONSTER WHO TOOK ME INTO *HELL...*
AGENT BURBANK--DO NOT FIRE--
BETTY...I *KNOW.* I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE...CALLED *SOMEONE.*
BUT I--I WASN'T *READY.* IT'S LIKE I KNEW THAT IN MY *GUT.* I COULDN'T *FACE* IT.
I'VE LEARNED TO *TRUST* FEELINGS LIKE THAT. THEY *PROTECT* ME.
BUT... SOMETHING *HAPPENED.* BEFORE I CALLED YOU. AND IT JUST...IT BROKE ME *OPEN,* BETTY. TORE ME IN *HALF.*
I DIDN'T HAVE MY *PROTECTION* ANYMORE, AND EVERYTHING I'D BEEN *NUMBING,* IT JUST...
RICK JONES IS *DEAD.* AND HE... *DIDN'T* COME BACK. HE'S *GONE.*
I CAN'T BELIEVE RICK'S REALLY GONE.
"YOU REALLY SHOULD BELIEVE IT, BRUCE," SHE THOUGHT.

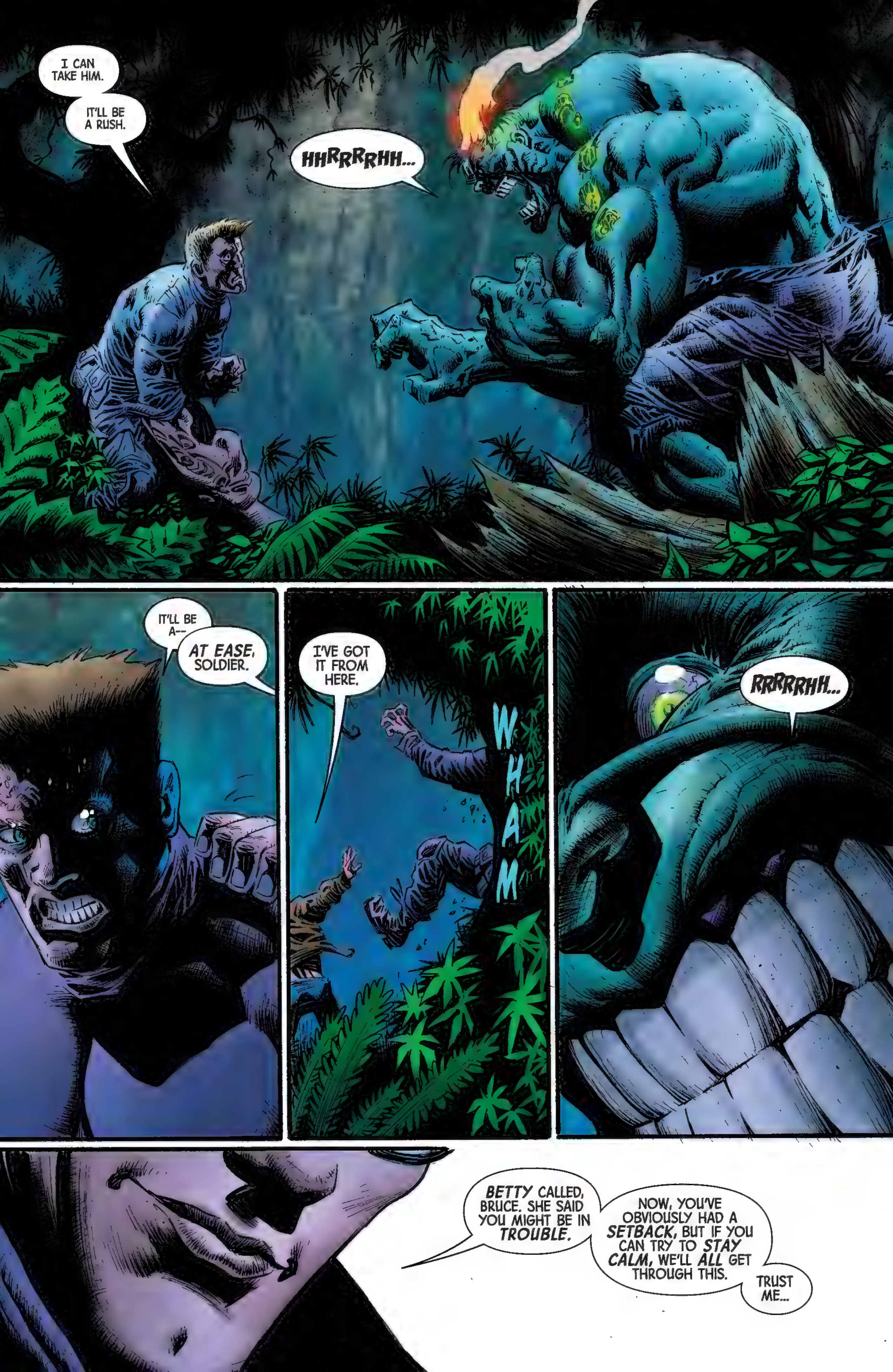

"BECAUSE THE HULK MET UP WITH THE SCUM WHO *KILLED* HIM...AND JOINED THEIR *TEAM.*
"WANT TO TELL ME WHAT *THAT* WAS ABOUT?"
BUT SHE ONLY THOUGHT IT.
MM.
HE'D *CHEATED* ON HER. BROKEN HER HEART, AND HER LIFE, A DOZEN WAYS. AND WHEN SHE'D BECOME HIS *EQUAL*--THE *RED* SHE-HULK--
--HE'D TAKEN *THAT* AWAY TOO. "FOR HER OWN GOOD."
HIM *AND* RICK. EVEN THAT WAS TAINTED.
IP DIP DOO.
CAT'S GOT THE FLU.
BUT STILL... THERE HE STOOD.

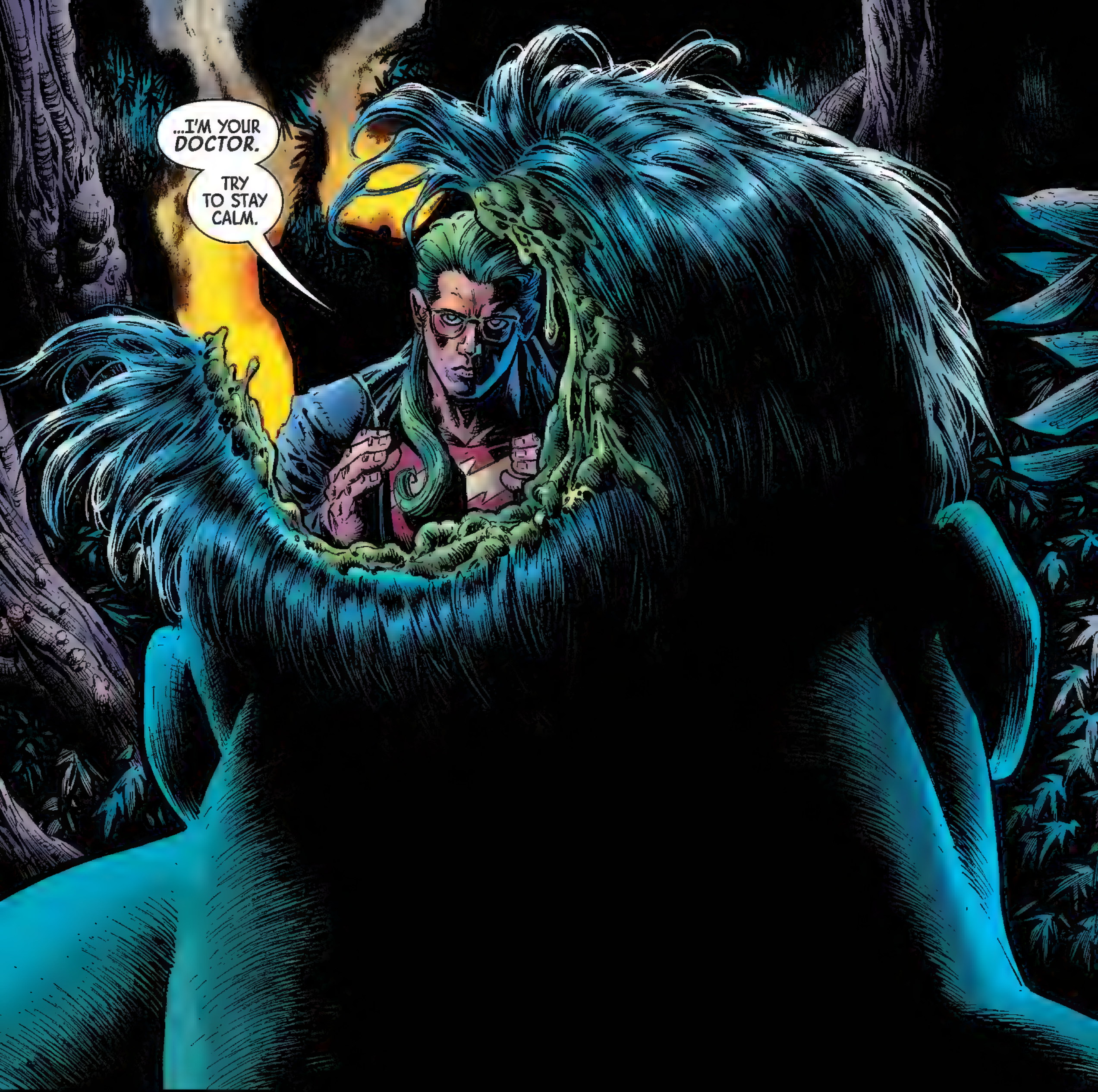

AN *OPEN WOUND* IN THE SHAPE OF A MAN.
DOG'S GOT THE CHICKEN POX.
A BEATEN *DOG.* AND SHE JUST COULDN'T DO IT. SHE COULD *NEVER* DO IT.
NEVER *HURT* HIM.
EVEN WITH THE TRUTH.
AGENT BURBANK! *STAND DOWN NOW!* THAT IS AN *ORDER!*
THE *SUN'S GONE DOWN--*
HER FATHER HAD CALLED HIM A "MILKSOP."
SHE'D *LOVED* THAT VULNERABILITY...
...BUT NOW IT SEEMED, SOMEHOW, AS *MANAGED* AS THE *RAGE* THAT SMASHED CITIES AND LEFT NO BODY COUNT.
BETTY... I REALLY AM *SO* SORRY.
AS CAREFULLY *CALCULATED.*
SO OUT
GOES
YOU.
IN THAT MOMENT, SHE KNEW *WHY* HER FATHER HAD HATED HIM.


AND IN THAT ONE MOMENT, SHE HATED HIM *MORE.*
BRUCE... *I'M* SORRY.
BUT I
SKLUTCH
WHOOPS.
GENERAL?


I HIT THE WRONG ONE.
I CAN TAKE HIM. IT'LL BE A *RUSH.*
SWAPPING OUT FOR THE *THOUSAND CAL.*
STAND BY.
HRRAARGH!
YEAH, YEAH...
B-KOOM


COME ON! I CAN TAKE YOU, YOU GREEN FREAK! IT'LL BE A RUSH!
YOU'RE GOING BACK TO HELL TONIGHT!
REMEMBER THE PROTOCOL!
STUN AND RUN!
I CAN TAKE HIM--
IT'S NIGHT, YOU DAMNED FOOL!
WERE YOU ASLEEP DURING RETRAINING?
UNLESS THE SUN'S UP--HE DOESN'T DIE!
NONE OF THEM DIE!
RRR.


I CAN TAKE HIM.
IT'LL BE A RUSH.
HHRRRRHH...
IT'LL BE A--
AT EASE, SOLDIER.
I'VE GOT IT FROM HERE.
WHAM
RRRRRHH...
BETTY CALLED, BRUCE. SHE SAID YOU MIGHT BE IN *TROUBLE*.
NOW, YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY HAD A *SETBACK*, BUT IF YOU CAN TRY TO *STAY CALM*, WE'LL *ALL* GET THROUGH THIS.
TRUST ME...

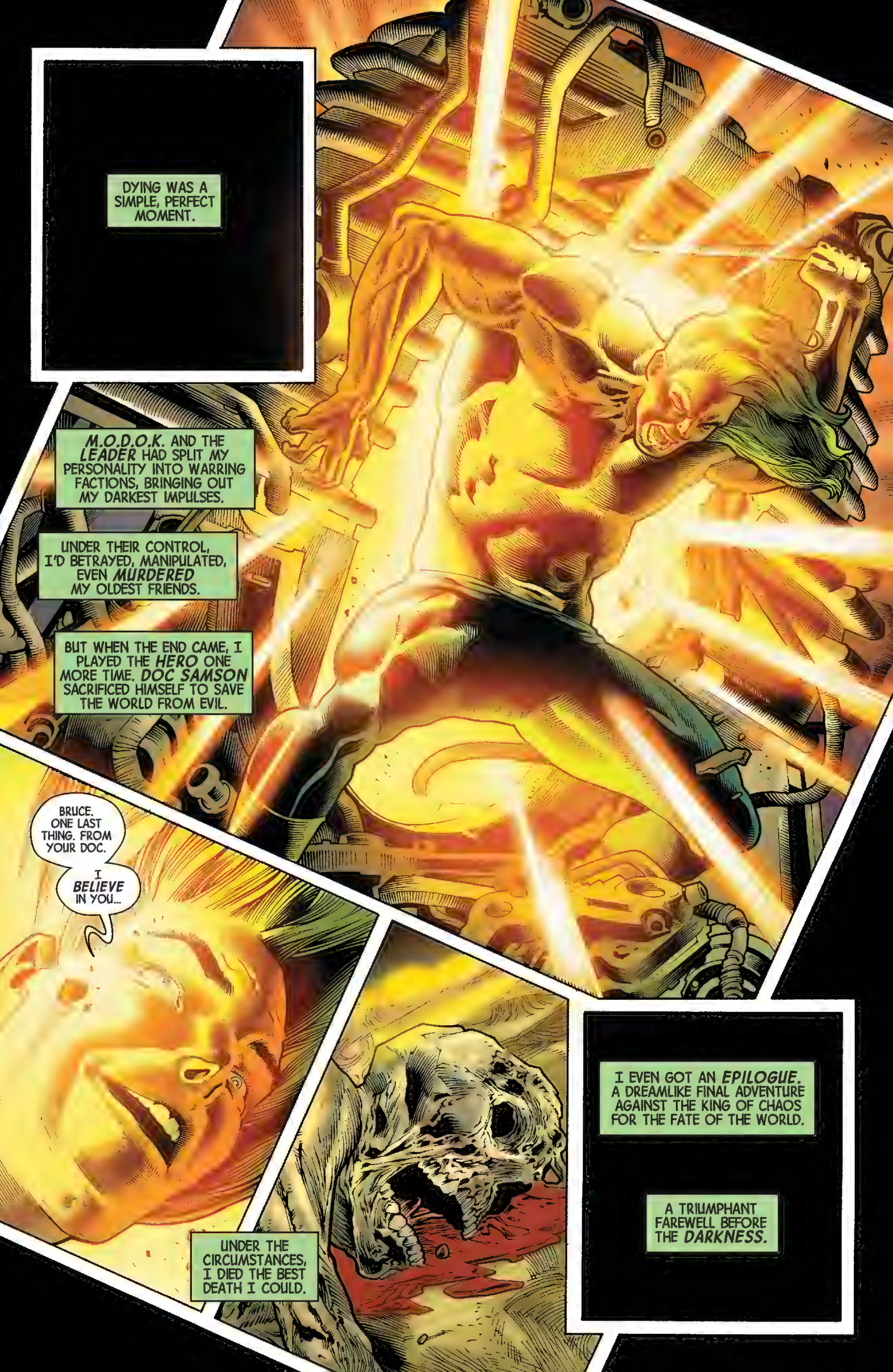

...I'M YOUR DOCTOR.
TRY TO STAY CALM.

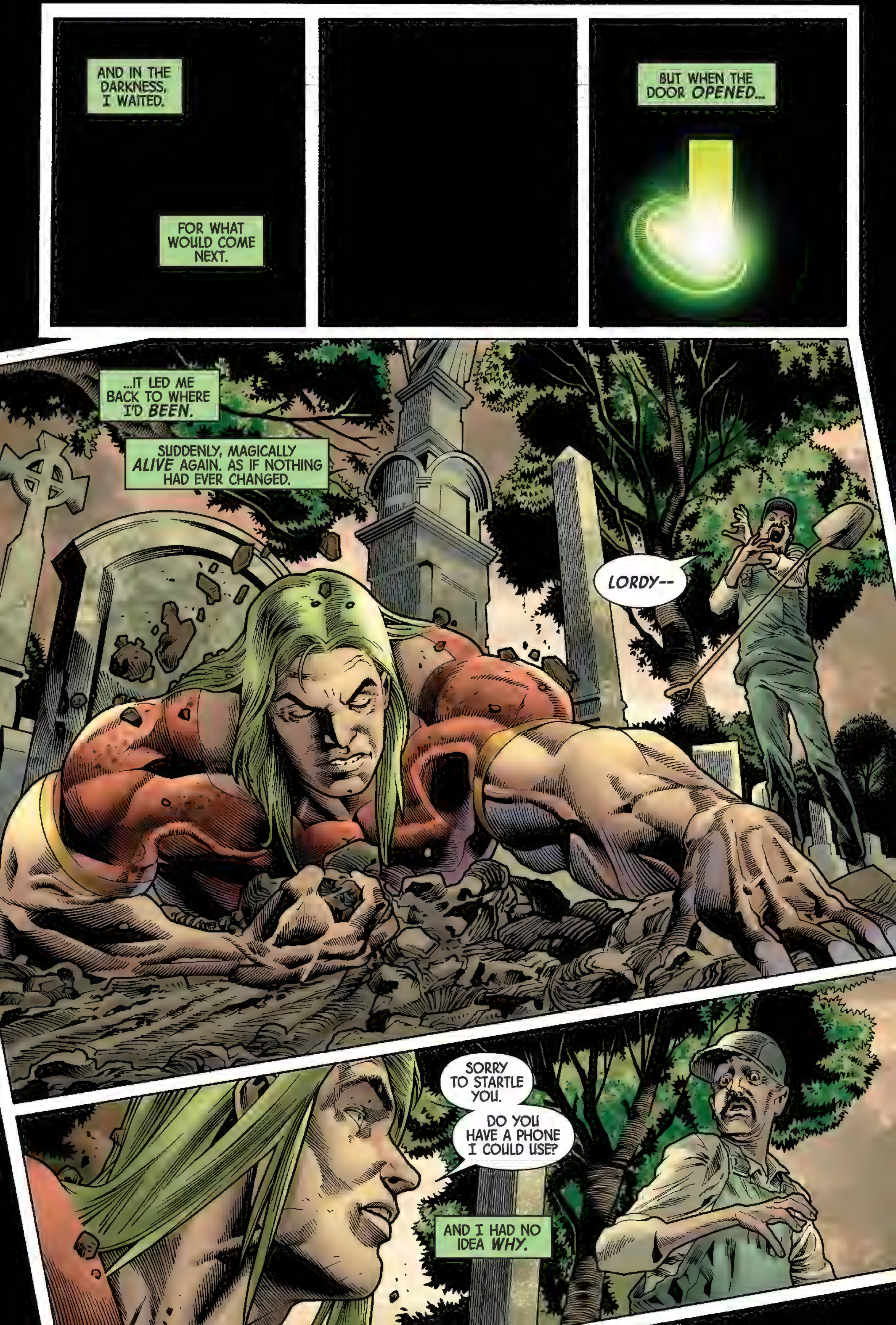
WE ONLY MEET AT FUNERALS

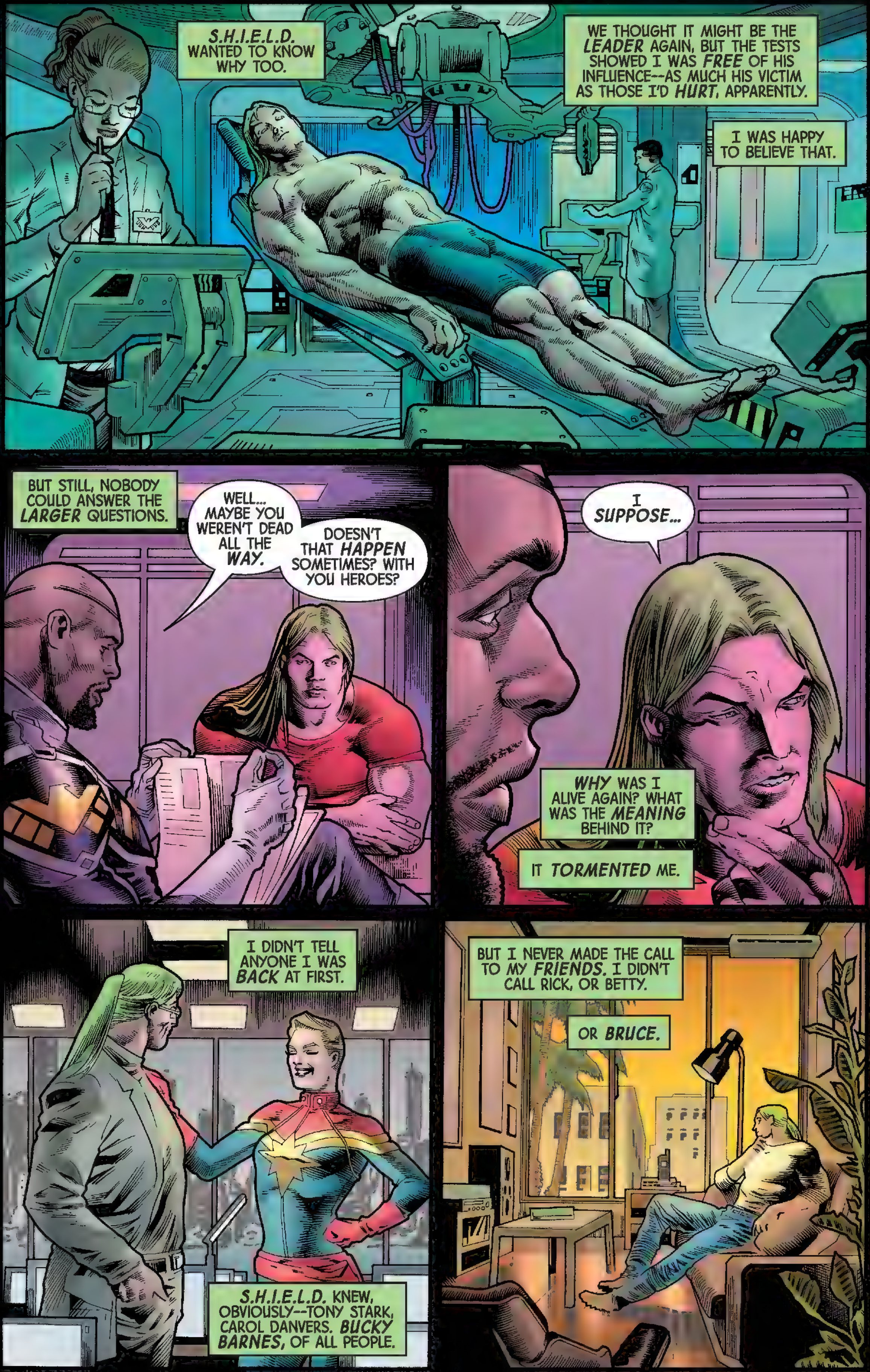
15

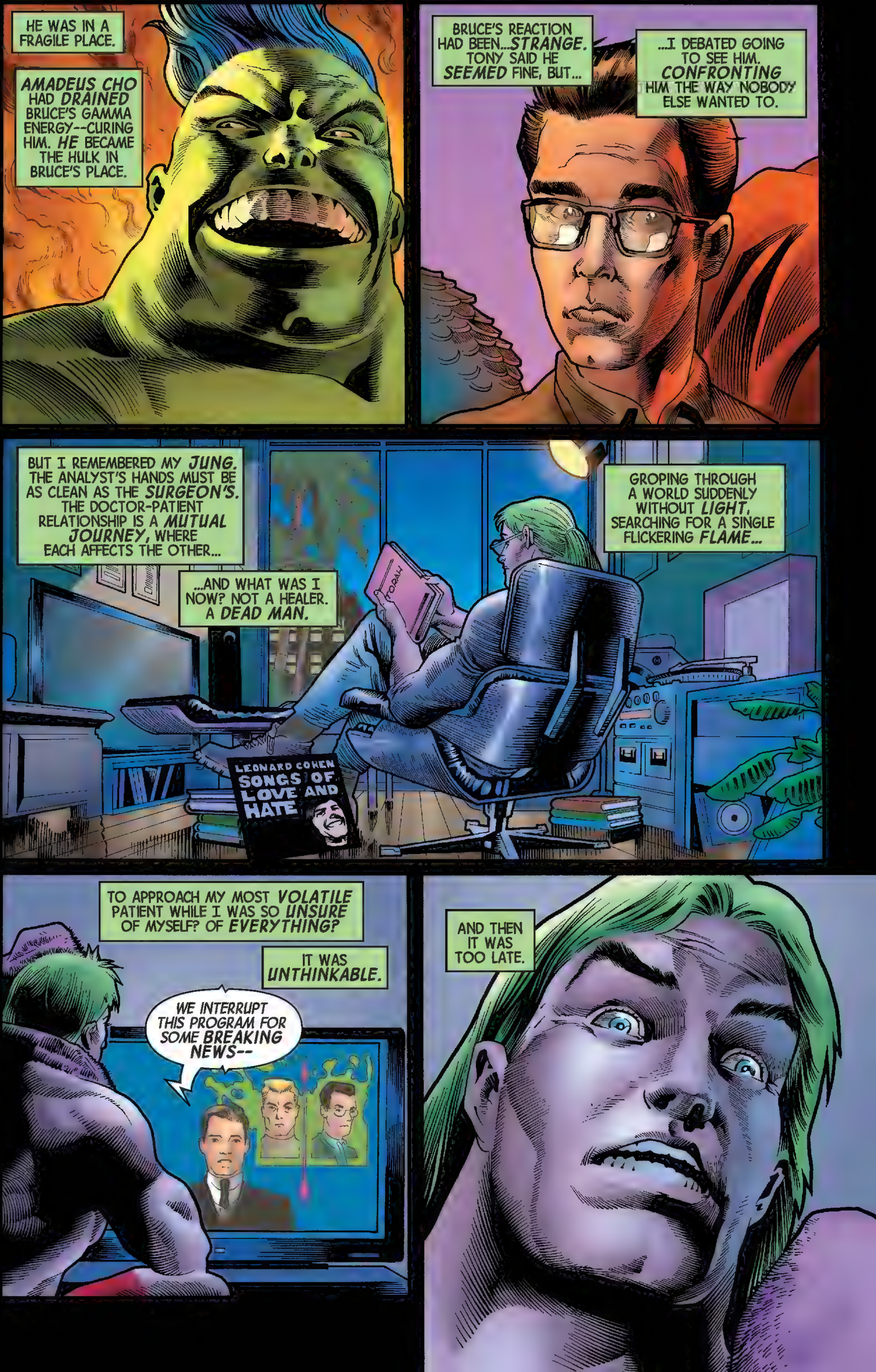
"YOU WILL NEVER LIVE IF
YOU ARE LOOKING FOR
THE MEANING OF LIFE."

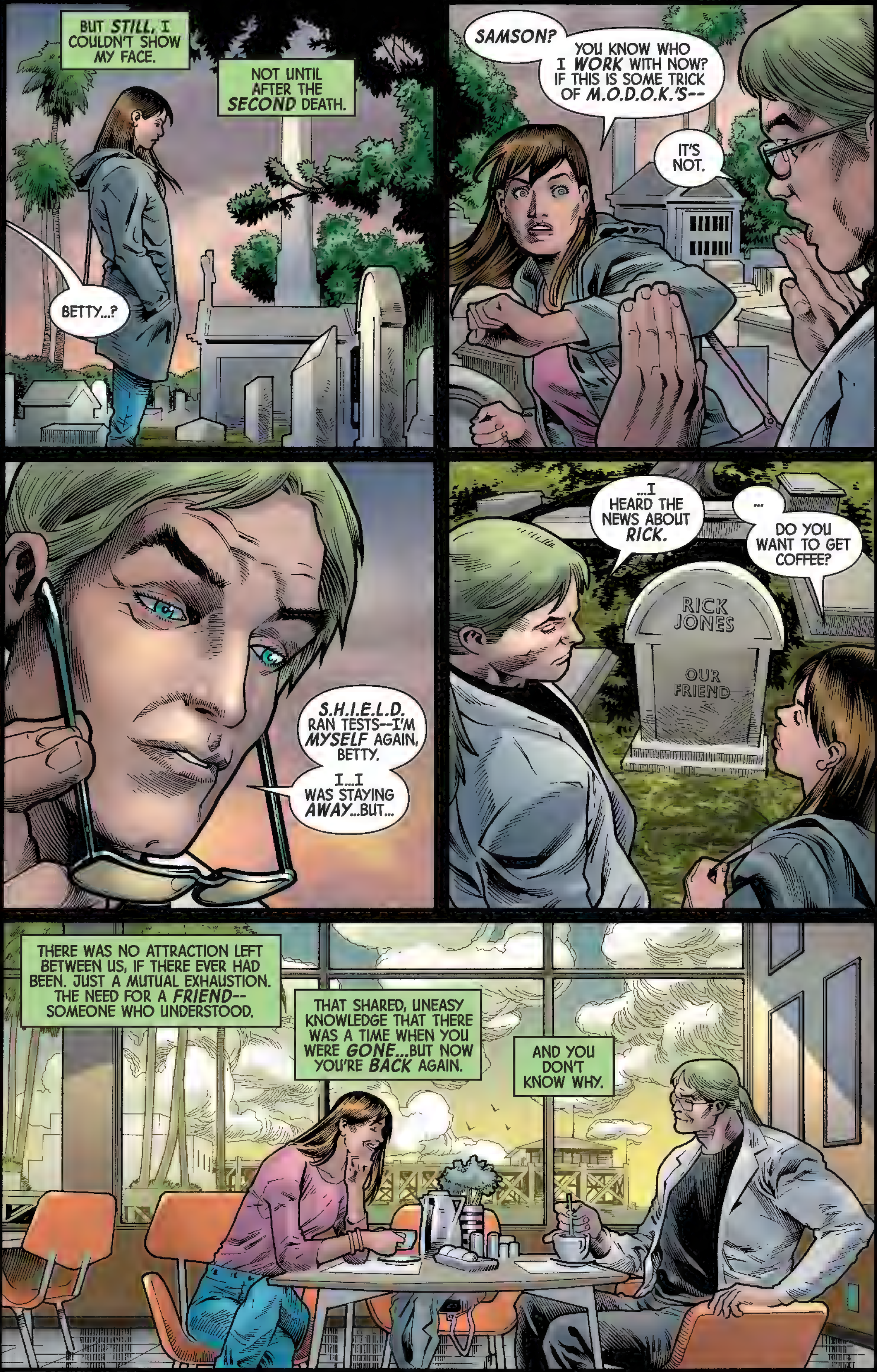
– ALBERT CAMUS
"INTUITIONS"

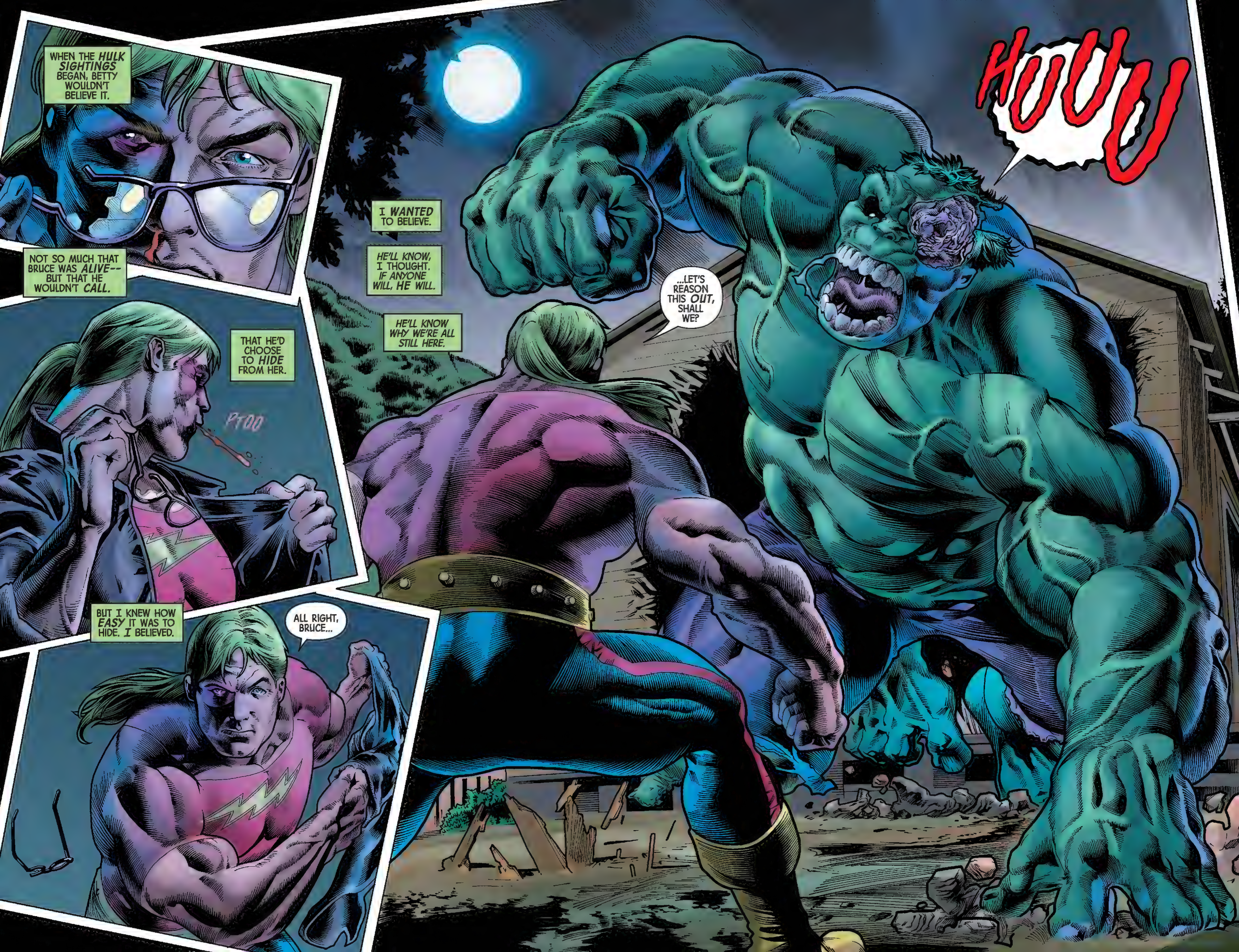

DYING WAS A SIMPLE, PERFECT MOMENT.
M.O.D.O.K. AND THE *LEADER* HAD SPLIT MY PERSONALITY INTO WARRING FACTIONS, BRINGING OUT MY DARKEST IMPULSES.
UNDER THEIR CONTROL, I'D BETRAYED, MANIPULATED, EVEN *MURDERED* MY OLDEST FRIENDS.
BUT WHEN THE END CAME, I PLAYED THE *HERO* ONE MORE TIME. *DOC SAMSON* SACRIFICED HIMSELF TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM EVIL.
BRUCE. ONE LAST THING. FROM YOUR DOC.
I *BELIEVE* IN YOU...
UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I DIED THE BEST DEATH I COULD.
I EVEN GOT AN *EPILOGUE*. A DREAMLIKE FINAL ADVENTURE AGAINST THE KING OF CHAOS FOR THE FATE OF THE WORLD.
A TRIUMPHANT FAREWELL BEFORE THE *DARKNESS*.

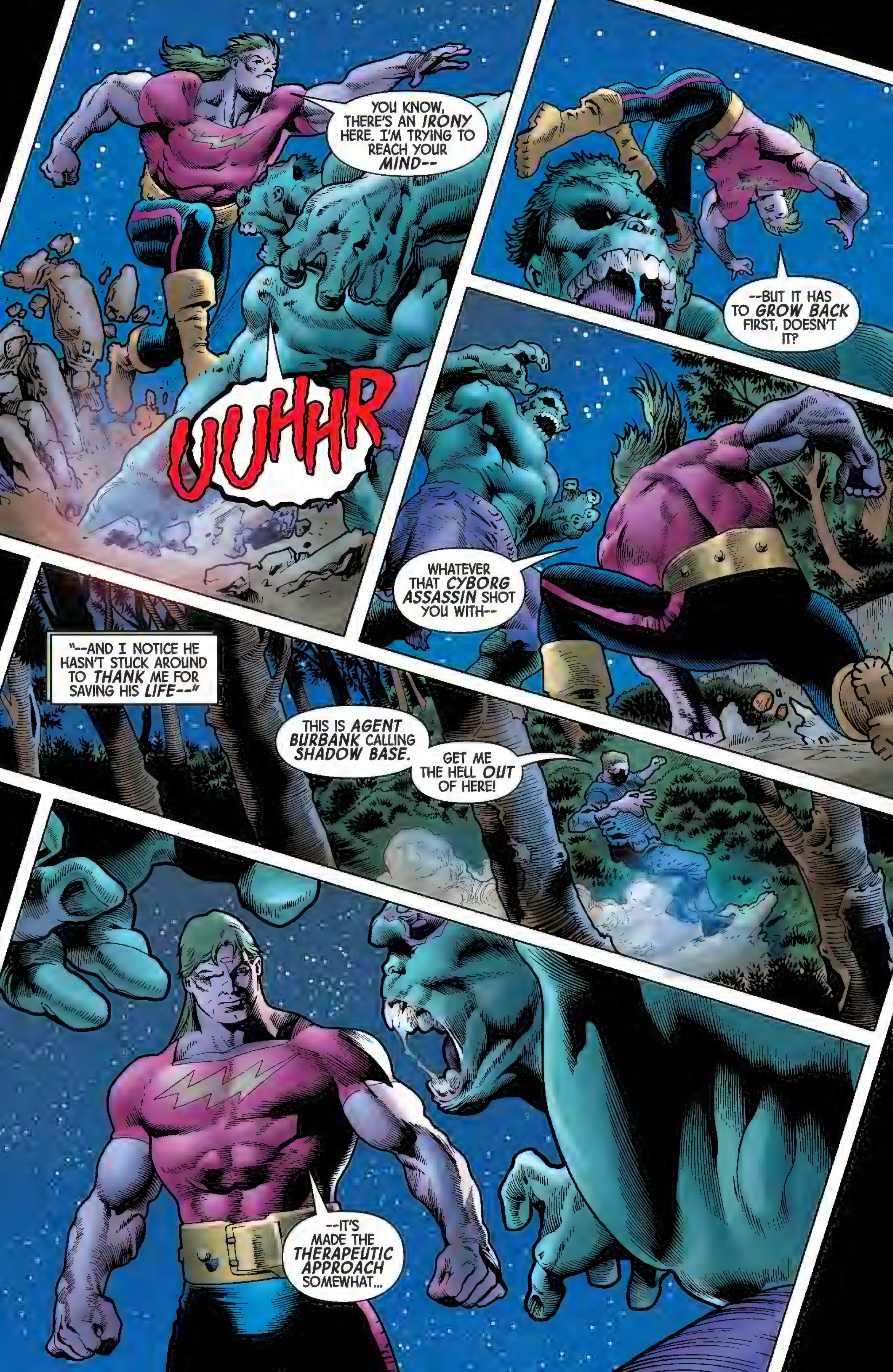

AND IN THE DARKNESS, I WAITED.
FOR WHAT WOULD COME NEXT.
BUT WHEN THE DOOR *OPENED*...
...IT LED ME BACK TO WHERE I'D *BEEN.*
SUDDENLY, MAGICALLY *ALIVE* AGAIN. AS IF NOTHING HAD EVER CHANGED.
LORDY--
SORRY TO STARTLE YOU.
DO YOU HAVE A PHONE I COULD USE?
AND I HAD NO IDEA *WHY.*

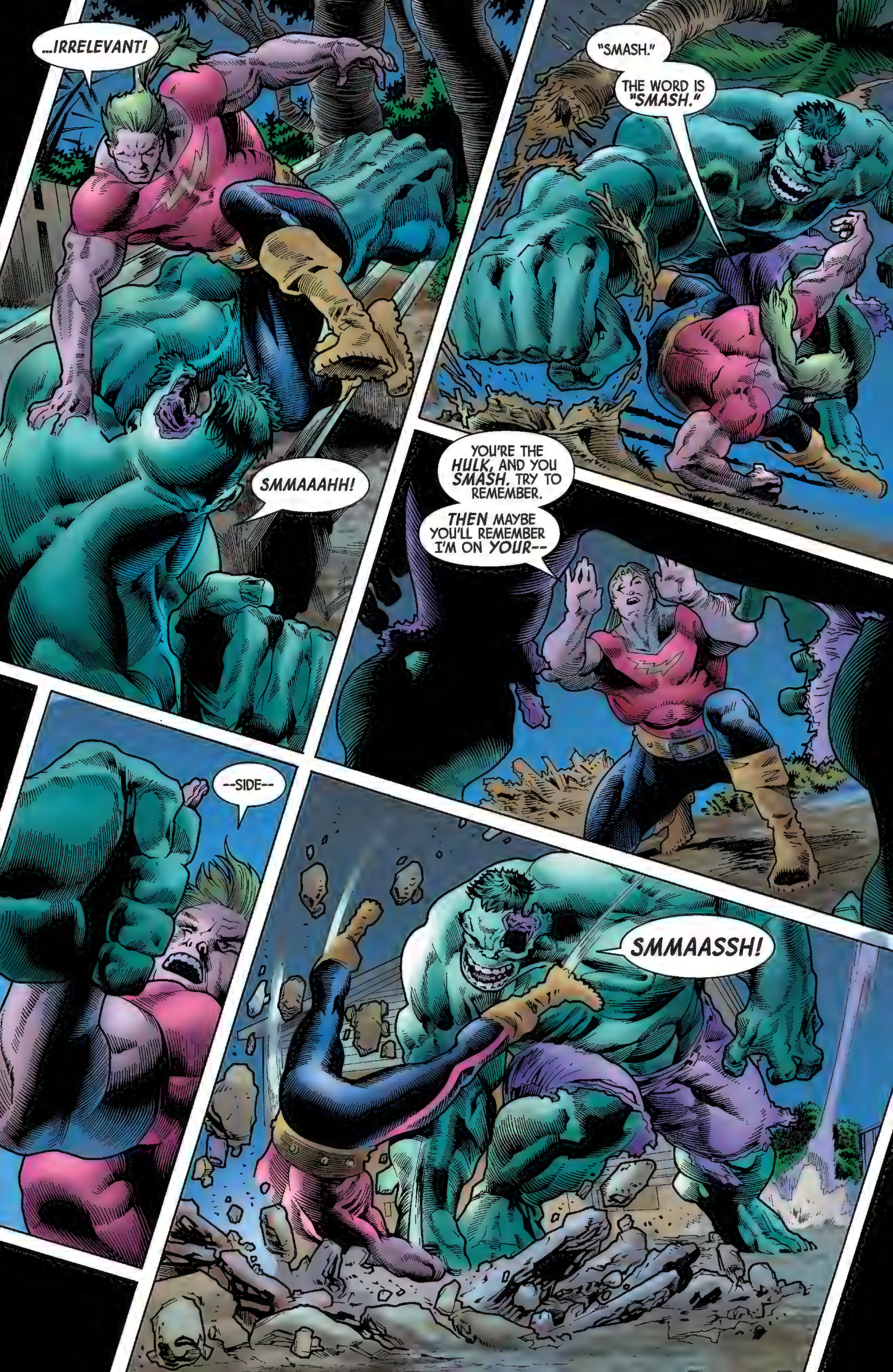

S.H.I.E.L.D. WANTED TO KNOW WHY TOO.
WE THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE THE LEADER AGAIN, BUT THE TESTS SHOWED I WAS FREE OF HIS INFLUENCE--AS MUCH HIS VICTIM AS THOSE I'D HURT, APPARENTLY.
I WAS HAPPY TO BELIEVE THAT.
BUT STILL, NOBODY COULD ANSWER THE LARGER QUESTIONS.
WELL... MAYBE YOU WEREN'T DEAD ALL THE WAY.
DOESN'T THAT HAPPEN SOMETIMES? WITH YOU HEROES?
I SUPPOSE...
WHY WAS I ALIVE AGAIN? WHAT WAS THE MEANING BEHIND IT?
IT TORMENTED ME.
I DIDN'T TELL ANYONE I WAS BACK AT FIRST.
S.H.I.E.L.D. KNEW, OBVIOUSLY--TONY STARK, CAROL DANVERS. BUCKY BARNES, OF ALL PEOPLE.
BUT I NEVER MADE THE CALL TO MY FRIENDS. I DIDN'T CALL RICK, OR BETTY.
OR BRUCE.

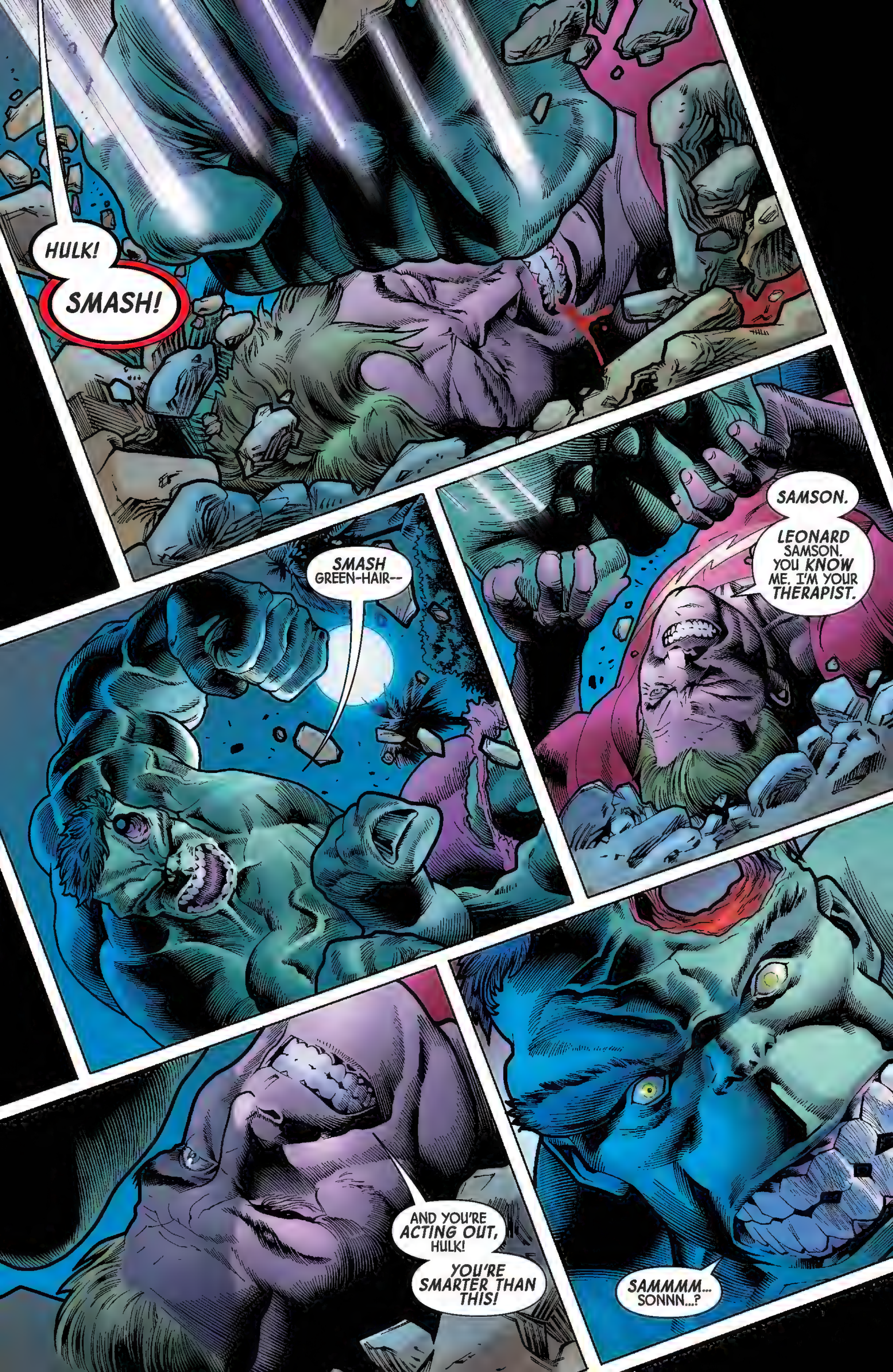

HE WAS IN A FRAGILE PLACE.
AMADEUS CHO HAD DRAINED BRUCE'S GAMMA ENERGY--CURING HIM. HE BECAME THE HULK IN BRUCE'S PLACE.
BRUCE'S REACTION HAD BEEN...STRANGE. TONY SAID HE SEEMED FINE, BUT...
...I DEBATED GOING TO SEE HIM. CONFRONTING HIM THE WAY NOBODY ELSE WANTED TO.
BUT I REMEMBERED MY JUNG. THE ANALYST'S HANDS MUST BE AS CLEAN AS THE SURGEON'S. THE DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP IS A MUTUAL JOURNEY, WHERE EACH AFFECTS THE OTHER...
...AND WHAT WAS I NOW? NOT A HEALER. A DEAD MAN.
GROPING THROUGH A WORLD SUDDENLY WITHOUT LIGHT, SEARCHING FOR A SINGLE FLICKERING FLAME...
TORAH
LEONARD COHEN SONGS OF LOVE AND HATE
TO APPROACH MY MOST VOLATILE PATIENT WHILE I WAS SO UNSURE OF MYSELF? OF EVERYTHING?
IT WAS UNTHINKABLE.
WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM FOR SOME BREAKING NEWS--
AND THEN IT WAS TOO LATE.

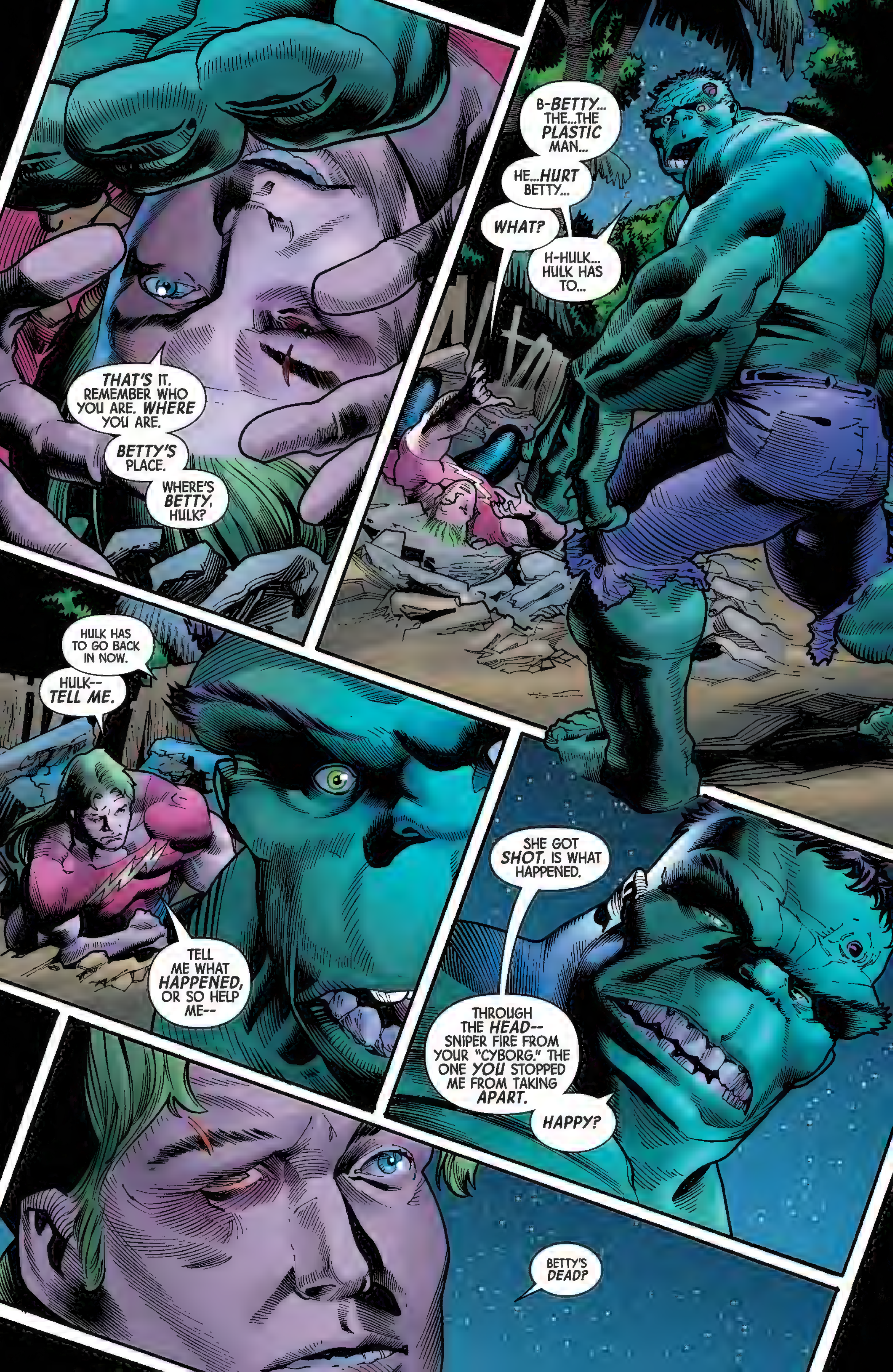

BUT STILL, I COULDN'T SHOW MY FACE.
NOT UNTIL AFTER THE SECOND DEATH.
BETTY...?
SAMSON?
YOU KNOW WHO I WORK WITH NOW? IF THIS IS SOME TRICK OF M.O.D.O.K.'S--
IT'S NOT.
S.H.I.E.L.D. RAN TESTS--I'M MYSELF AGAIN, BETTY.
I...I WAS STAYING AWAY...BUT...
...I HEARD THE NEWS ABOUT RICK.
...
DO YOU WANT TO GET COFFEE?
RICK JONES
OUR FRIEND
THERE WAS NO ATTRACTION LEFT BETWEEN US, IF THERE EVER HAD BEEN. JUST A MUTUAL EXHAUSTION. THE NEED FOR A FRIEND--SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTOOD.
THAT SHARED, UNEASY KNOWLEDGE THAT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN YOU WERE GONE...BUT NOW YOU'RE BACK AGAIN.
AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHY.

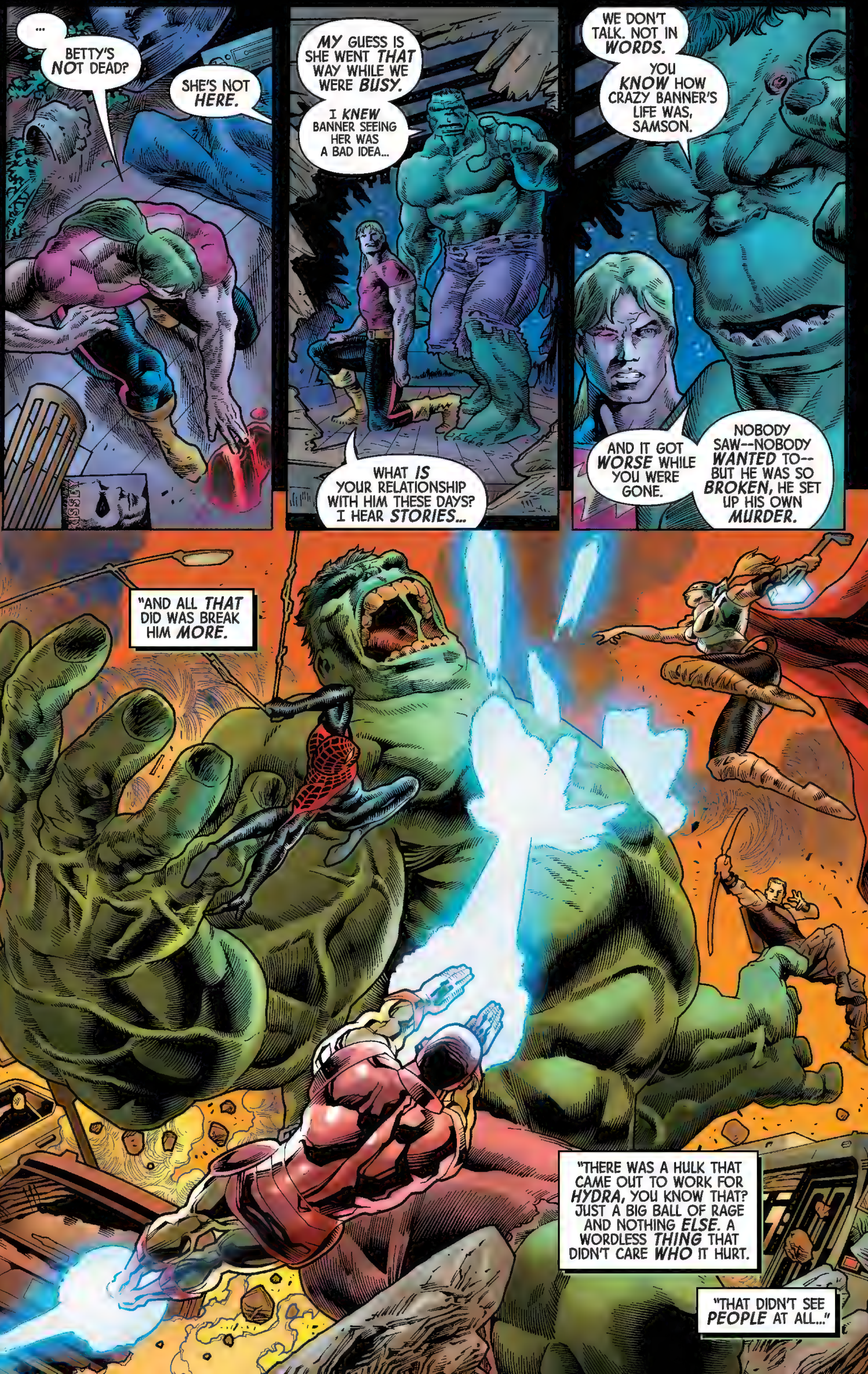

WHEN THE HULK SIGHTINGS BEGAN, BETTY WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT.
NOT SO MUCH THAT BRUCE WAS ALIVE-- BUT THAT HE WOULDN'T CALL.
THAT HE'D CHOOSE TO HIDE FROM HER.
PTOO
BUT I KNEW HOW EASY IT WAS TO HIDE. I BELIEVED.
ALL RIGHT, BRUCE...
I WANTED TO BELIEVE.
HE'LL KNOW, I THOUGHT. IF ANYONE WILL, HE WILL.
HE'LL KNOW WHY WE'RE ALL STILL HERE.
...LET'S REASON THIS OUT, SHALL WE?
HUUU

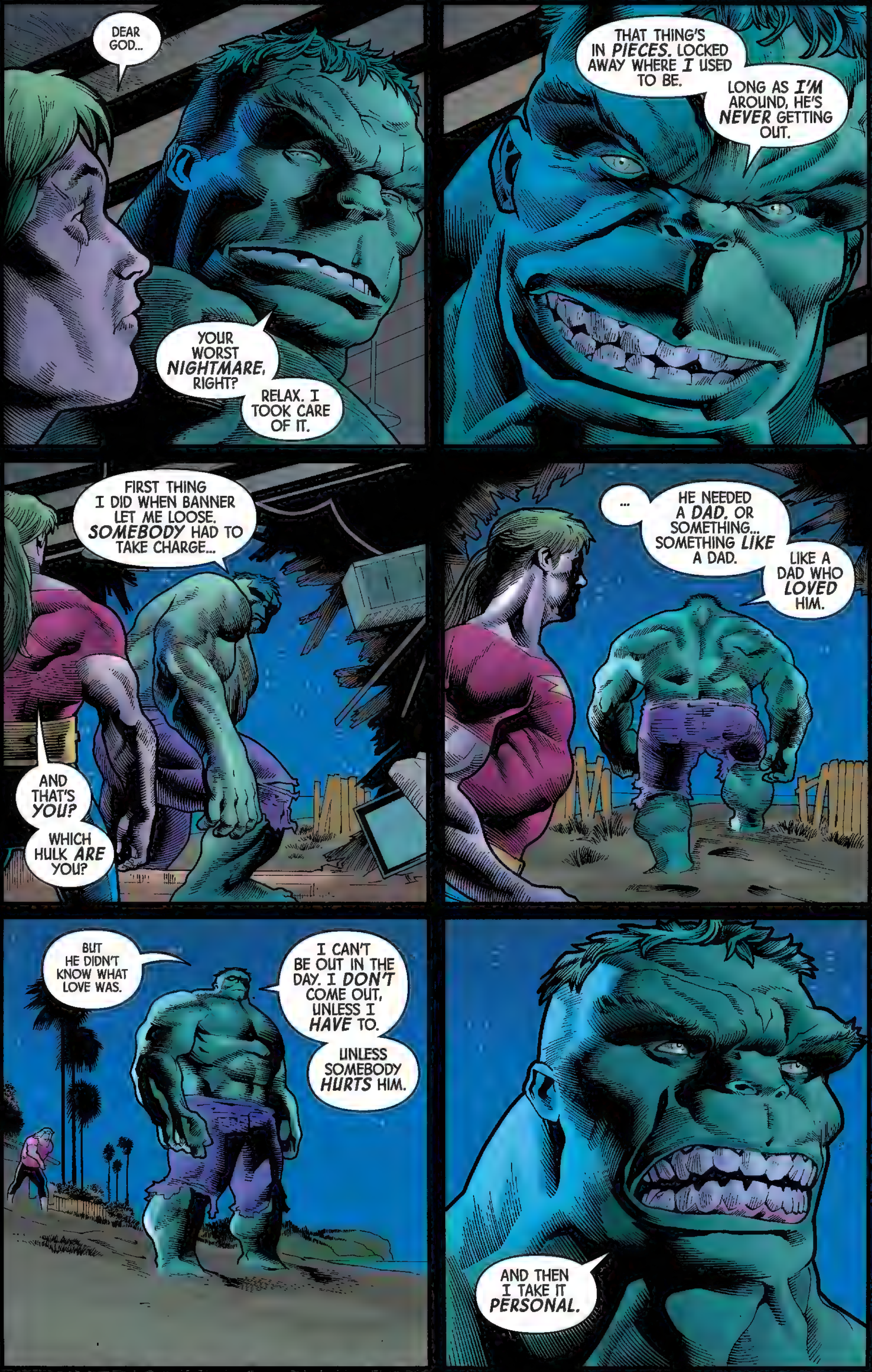

YOU KNOW, THERE'S AN *IRONY* HERE. I'M TRYING TO REACH YOUR *MIND*--
UUHHR
--BUT IT HAS TO *GROW BACK* FIRST, DOESN'T IT?
WHATEVER THAT *CYBORG ASSASSIN* SHOT YOU WITH--
"--AND I NOTICE HE HASN'T STUCK AROUND TO *THANK* ME FOR SAVING HIS *LIFE*--"
THIS IS *AGENT BURBANK* CALLING *SHADOW BASE.*
GET ME THE HELL *OUT* OF HERE!
--IT'S MADE THE *THERAPEUTIC APPROACH* SOMEWHAT...

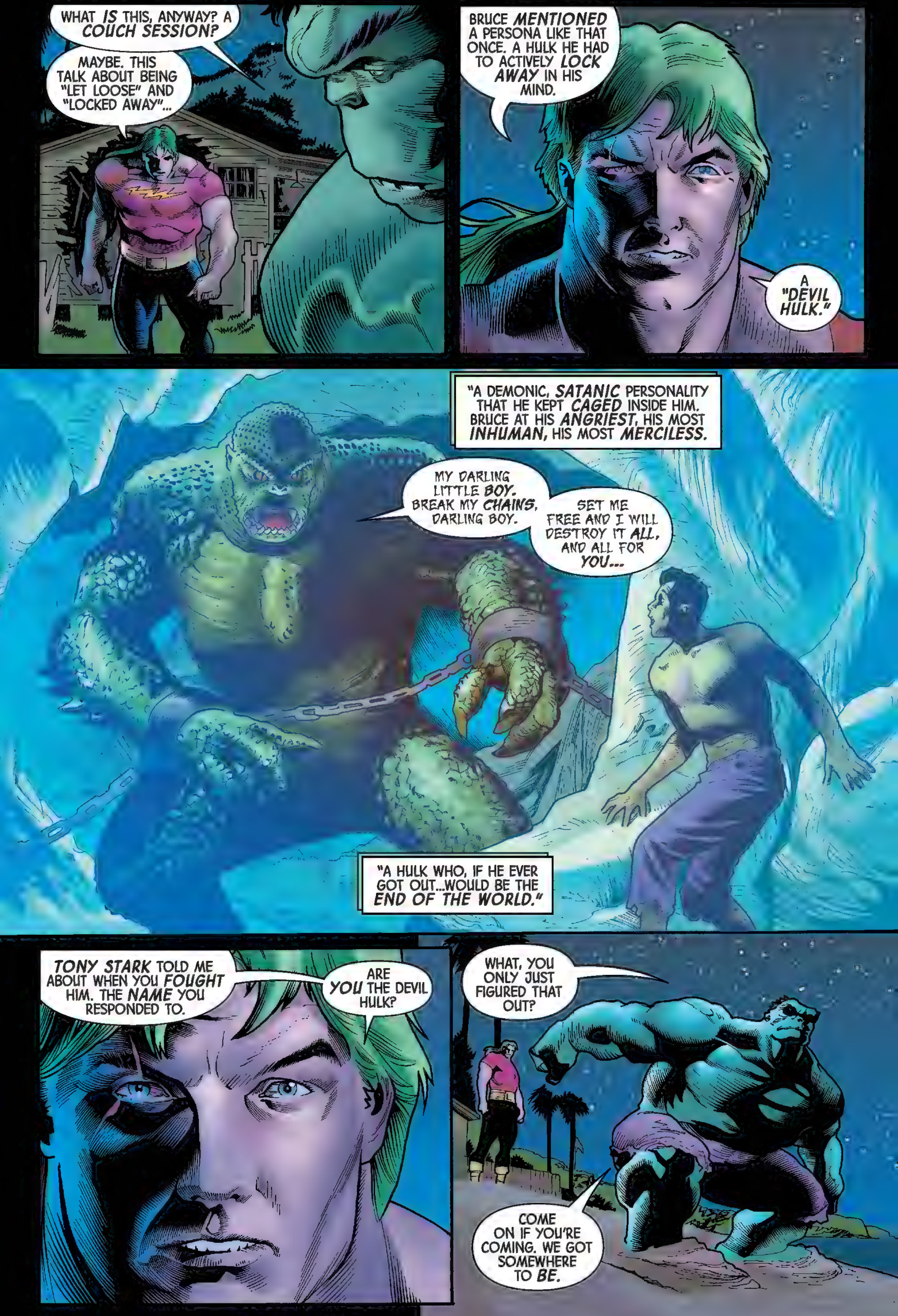

...IRRELEVANT!
SMMAAAHH!
"SMASH."
THE WORD IS "SMASH."
YOU'RE THE HULK, AND YOU SMASH. TRY TO REMEMBER.
THEN MAYBE YOU'LL REMEMBER I'M ON YOUR--
--SIDE--
SMMAASSH!

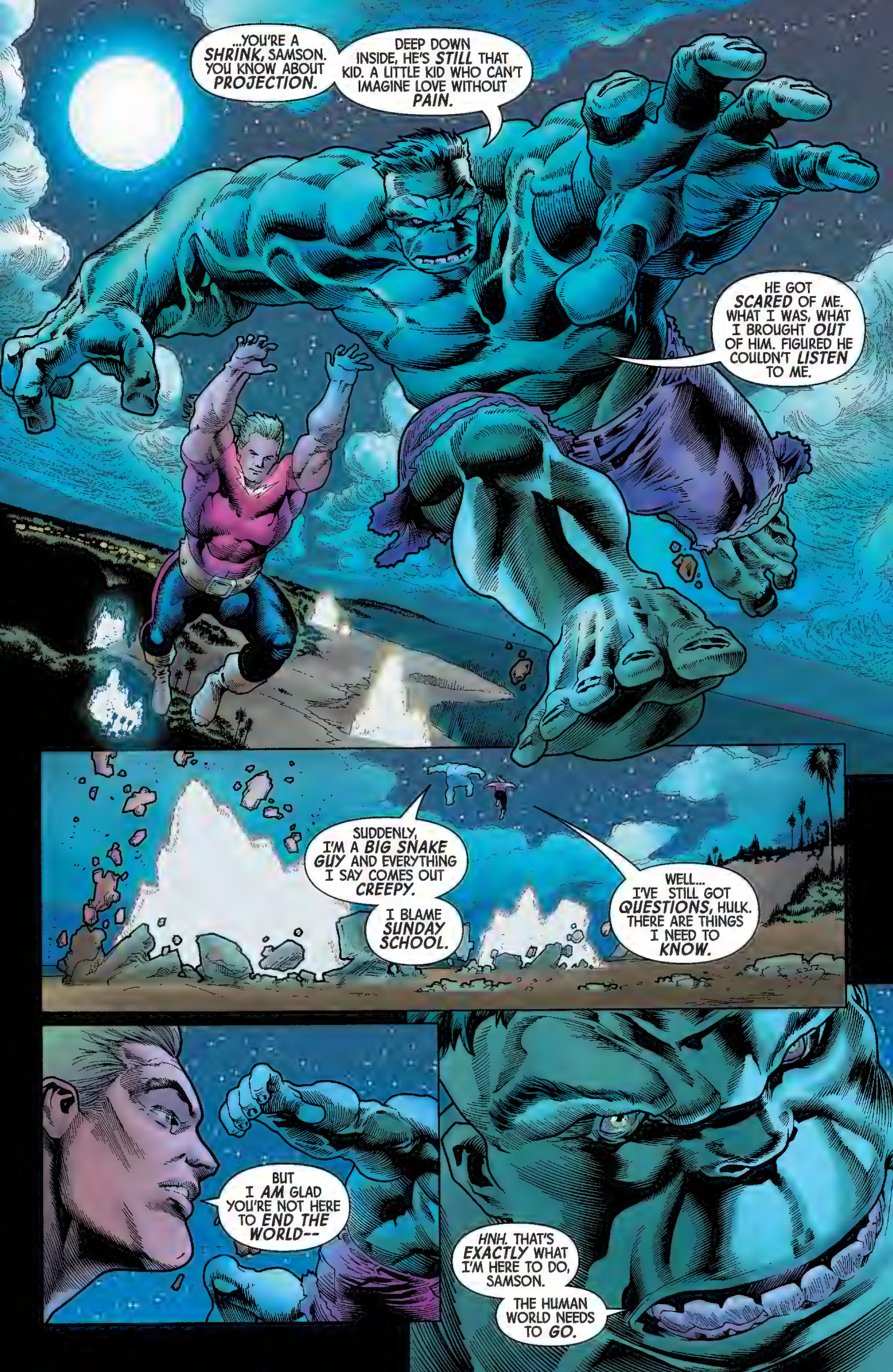

HULK!
SMASH!
SMASH GREEN-HAIR--
SAMSON.
LEONARD SAMSON. YOU KNOW ME. I'M YOUR THERAPIST.
AND YOU'RE ACTING OUT, HULK!
YOU'RE SMARTER THAN THIS!
SAMMMM... SONNN...?

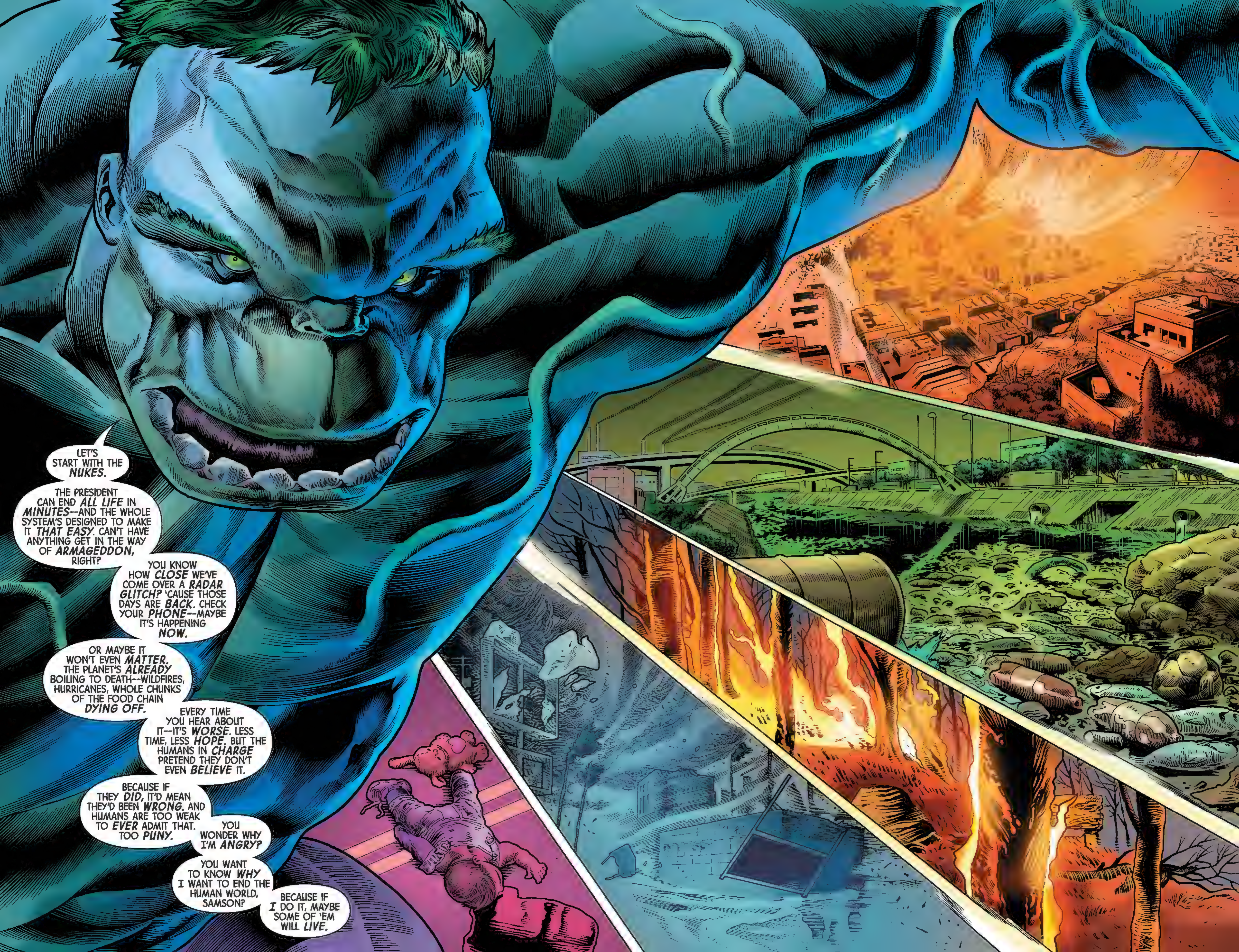

THAT'S IT. REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE. WHERE YOU ARE.
BETTY'S PLACE.
WHERE'S BETTY, HULK?
B-BETTY... THE...THE PLASTIC MAN...
HE...HURT BETTY...
WHAT?
H-HULK... HULK HAS TO...
HULK HAS TO GO BACK IN NOW.
HULK-- TELL ME.
TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED, OR SO HELP ME--
SHE GOT SHOT, IS WHAT HAPPENED.
THROUGH THE HEAD-- SNIPER FIRE FROM YOUR "CYBORG." THE ONE YOU STOPPED ME FROM TAKING APART.
HAPPY?
BETTY'S DEAD?

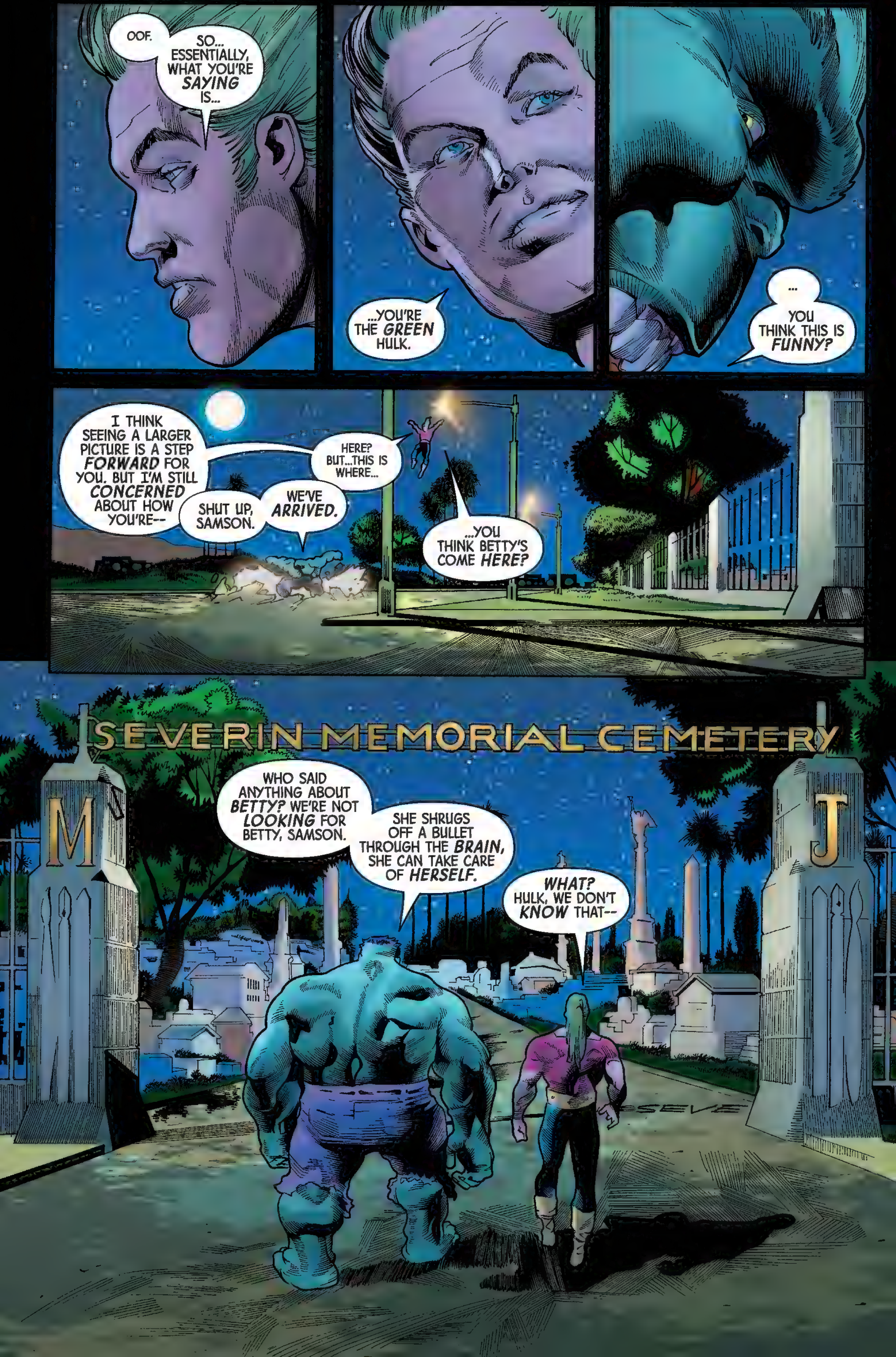

...
BETTY'S *NOT* DEAD?
SHE'S NOT *HERE.*
MY GUESS IS SHE WENT *THAT* WAY WHILE WE WERE *BUSY.*
I *KNEW* BANNER SEEING HER WAS A BAD IDEA...
WHAT *IS* YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM THESE DAYS? I HEAR *STORIES...*
WE DON'T TALK. NOT IN *WORDS.*
YOU *KNOW* HOW CRAZY BANNER'S LIFE WAS, SAMSON.
AND IT GOT *WORSE* WHILE YOU WERE GONE.
NOBODY SAW--NOBODY *WANTED* TO--BUT HE WAS SO *BROKEN,* HE SET UP HIS OWN *MURDER.*
"AND ALL *THAT* DID WAS BREAK HIM *MORE.*
"THERE WAS A HULK THAT CAME OUT TO WORK FOR *HYDRA,* YOU KNOW THAT? JUST A BIG BALL OF RAGE AND NOTHING *ELSE.* A WORDLESS *THING* THAT DIDN'T CARE *WHO* IT HURT.
"THAT DIDN'T SEE *PEOPLE* AT ALL..."

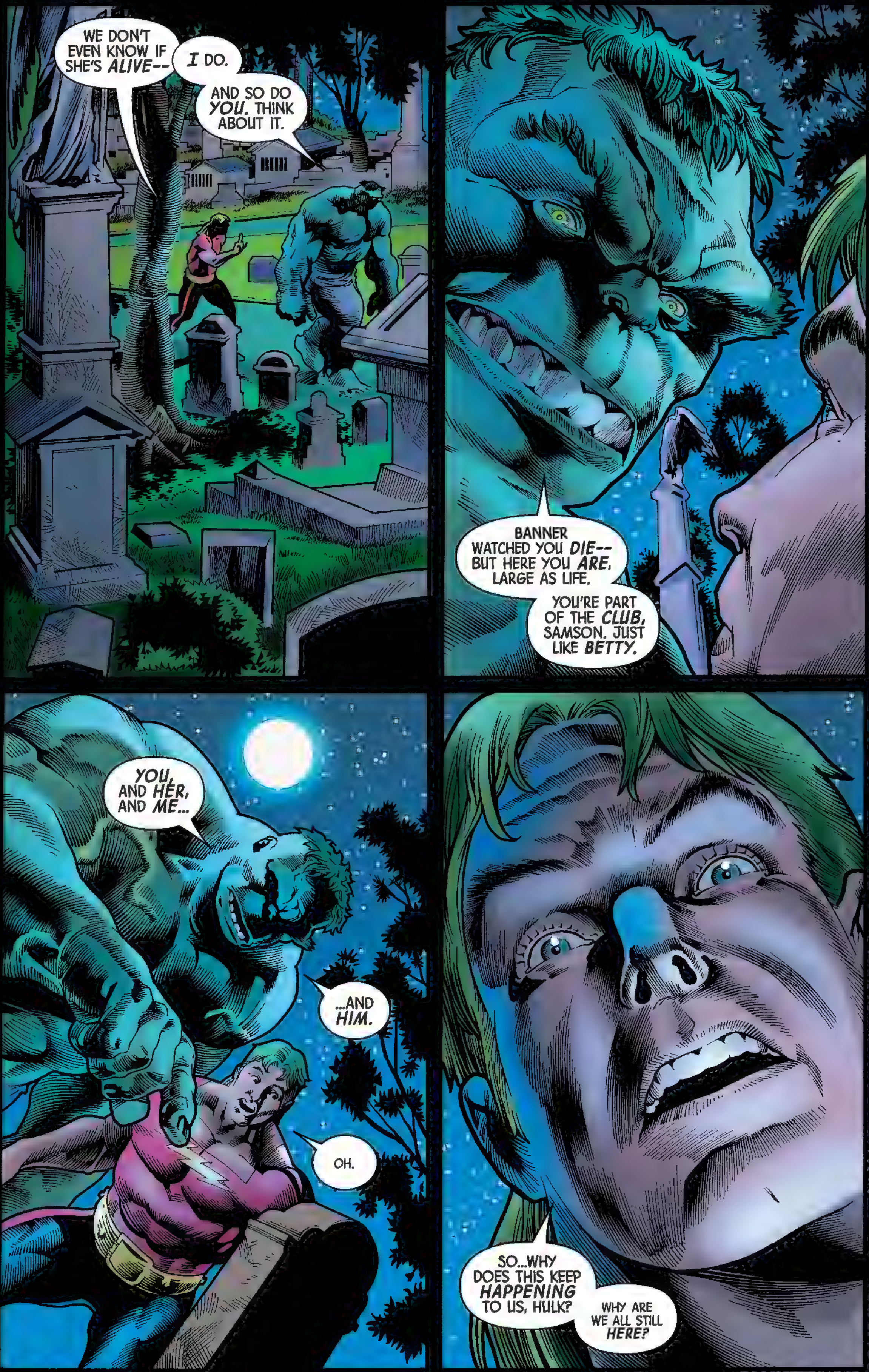

DEAR GOD...
YOUR WORST *NIGHTMARE*, RIGHT?
RELAX. I TOOK CARE OF IT.
THAT THING'S IN *PIECES*. LOCKED AWAY WHERE *I* USED TO BE.
LONG AS *I'M* AROUND, HE'S *NEVER* GETTING OUT.
FIRST THING I DID WHEN BANNER LET ME LOOSE. *SOMEBODY* HAD TO TAKE CHARGE...
AND THAT'S *YOU?*
WHICH HULK *ARE* YOU?
...
HE NEEDED A *DAD*. OR SOMETHING... SOMETHING *LIKE* A DAD.
LIKE A DAD WHO *LOVED* HIM.
BUT HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT LOVE WAS.
I CAN'T BE OUT IN THE DAY. I *DON'T* COME OUT, UNLESS I *HAVE* TO.
UNLESS SOMEBODY *HURTS* HIM.
AND THEN I TAKE IT *PERSONAL*.

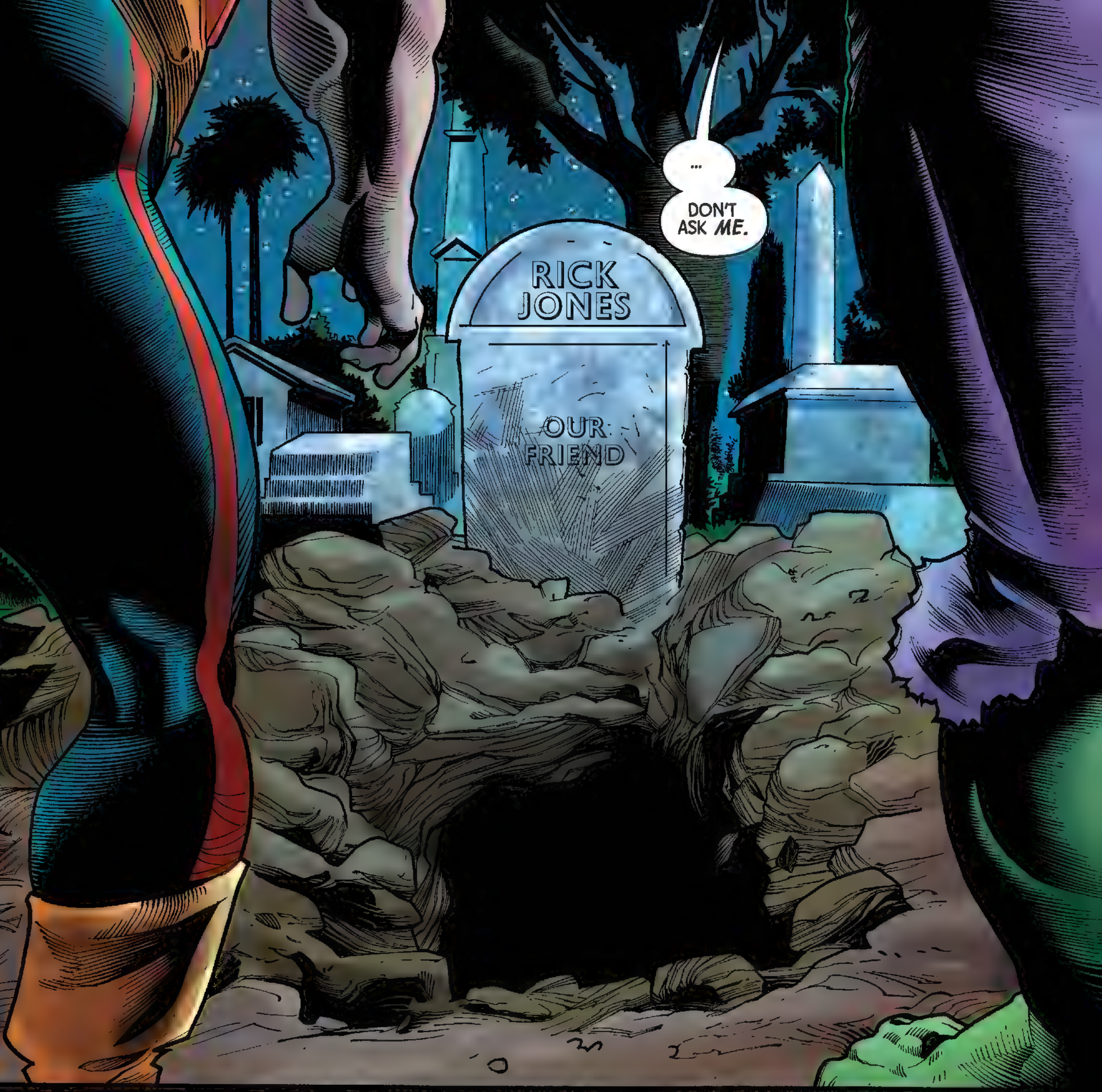

WHAT *IS* THIS, ANYWAY? A *COUCH SESSION?*
MAYBE. THIS TALK ABOUT BEING "LET LOOSE" AND "LOCKED AWAY"...
BRUCE *MENTIONED* A PERSONA LIKE THAT ONCE. A HULK HE HAD TO ACTIVELY *LOCK AWAY* IN HIS MIND.
A *"DEVIL HULK."*
"A DEMONIC, *SATANIC* PERSONALITY THAT HE KEPT *CAGED* INSIDE HIM. BRUCE AT HIS *ANGRIEST*, HIS MOST *INHUMAN*, HIS MOST *MERCILESS*.
MY DARLING LITTLE *BOY*. BREAK MY *CHAINS*, DARLING BOY.
SET ME FREE AND I WILL DESTROY IT *ALL*, AND ALL FOR *YOU*...
"A HULK WHO, IF HE EVER GOT OUT...WOULD BE THE *END OF THE WORLD*."
TONY STARK TOLD ME ABOUT WHEN YOU *FOUGHT* HIM. THE *NAME* YOU RESPONDED TO.
ARE *YOU* THE DEVIL HULK?
WHAT, YOU ONLY JUST FIGURED THAT OUT?
COME ON IF YOU'RE COMING. WE GOT SOMEWHERE TO *BE*.


...YOU'RE A SHRINK, SAMSON. YOU KNOW ABOUT PROJECTION.
DEEP DOWN INSIDE, HE'S STILL THAT KID. A LITTLE KID WHO CAN'T IMAGINE LOVE WITHOUT PAIN.
HE GOT SCARED OF ME. WHAT I WAS, WHAT I BROUGHT OUT OF HIM. FIGURED HE COULDN'T LISTEN TO ME.
SUDDENLY, I'M A BIG SNAKE GUY AND EVERYTHING I SAY COMES OUT CREEPY.
I BLAME SUNDAY SCHOOL.
WELL... I'VE STILL GOT QUESTIONS, HULK. THERE ARE THINGS I NEED TO KNOW.
BUT I AM GLAD YOU'RE NOT HERE TO END THE WORLD--
HNH. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'M HERE TO DO, SAMSON.
THE HUMAN WORLD NEEDS TO GO.


LET'S START WITH THE ***NUKES.***
THE PRESIDENT CAN END ***ALL LIFE*** IN ***MINUTES***--AND THE WHOLE SYSTEM'S DESIGNED TO MAKE IT ***THAT EASY.*** CAN'T HAVE ANYTHING GET IN THE WAY OF ***ARMAGEDDON,*** RIGHT?
YOU KNOW HOW ***CLOSE*** WE'VE COME OVER A ***RADAR GLITCH?*** 'CAUSE THOSE DAYS ARE ***BACK.*** CHECK YOUR ***PHONE***--MAYBE IT'S HAPPENING ***NOW.***
OR MAYBE IT WON'T EVEN ***MATTER.*** THE PLANET'S ***ALREADY*** BOILING TO DEATH--WILDFIRES, HURRICANES, WHOLE CHUNKS OF THE FOOD CHAIN ***DYING OFF.***
EVERY TIME YOU HEAR ABOUT IT--IT'S ***WORSE.*** LESS TIME, LESS ***HOPE.*** BUT THE HUMANS IN ***CHARGE*** PRETEND THEY DON'T EVEN ***BELIEVE*** IT.
BECAUSE IF THEY ***DID,*** IT'D MEAN THEY'D BEEN ***WRONG.*** AND HUMANS ARE TOO WEAK TO ***EVER*** ADMIT THAT. TOO ***PUNY.***
YOU WONDER WHY I'M ***ANGRY?***
YOU WANT TO KNOW ***WHY*** I WANT TO END THE HUMAN WORLD, SAMSON?
BECAUSE IF ***I*** DO IT, MAYBE SOME OF 'EM WILL ***LIVE.***


OOF.
SO... ESSENTIALLY, WHAT YOU'RE *SAYING* IS...
...YOU'RE THE *GREEN* HULK.
...
YOU THINK THIS IS *FUNNY?*
I THINK SEEING A LARGER PICTURE IS A STEP *FORWARD* FOR YOU. BUT I'M STILL *CONCERNED* ABOUT HOW YOU'RE--
SHUT UP, SAMSON.
WE'VE *ARRIVED.*
HERE? BUT...THIS IS WHERE...
...YOU THINK BETTY'S COME *HERE?*
SEVERIN MEMORIAL CEMETERY
M
J
WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT *BETTY?* WE'RE NOT *LOOKING* FOR BETTY, SAMSON.
SHE SHRUGS OFF A BULLET THROUGH THE *BRAIN,* SHE CAN TAKE CARE OF *HERSELF.*
WHAT? HULK, WE DON'T *KNOW* THAT--
SEVE


WE DON'T EVEN KNOW IF SHE'S *ALIVE*--
I DO.
AND SO DO *YOU*. THINK ABOUT IT.
BANNER WATCHED YOU *DIE*-- BUT HERE YOU *ARE*, LARGE AS LIFE.
YOU'RE PART OF THE *CLUB*, SAMSON. JUST LIKE *BETTY*.
YOU, AND *HER*, AND *ME*...
...AND *HIM*.
OH.
SO...WHY DOES THIS KEEP *HAPPENING* TO US, HULK?
WHY ARE WE ALL STILL *HERE?*

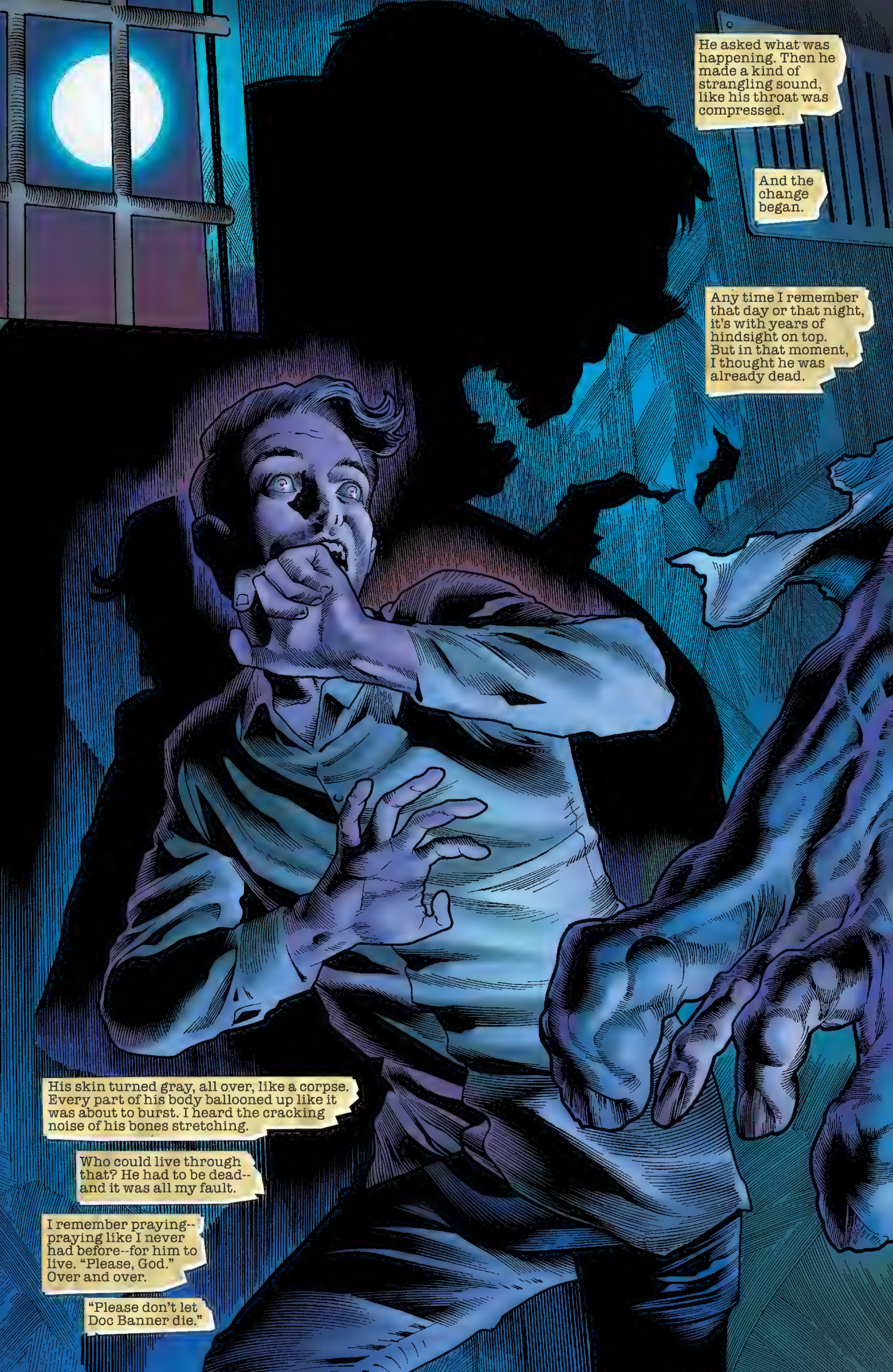

...
DON'T ASK *ME.*
RICK JONES
OUR FRIEND

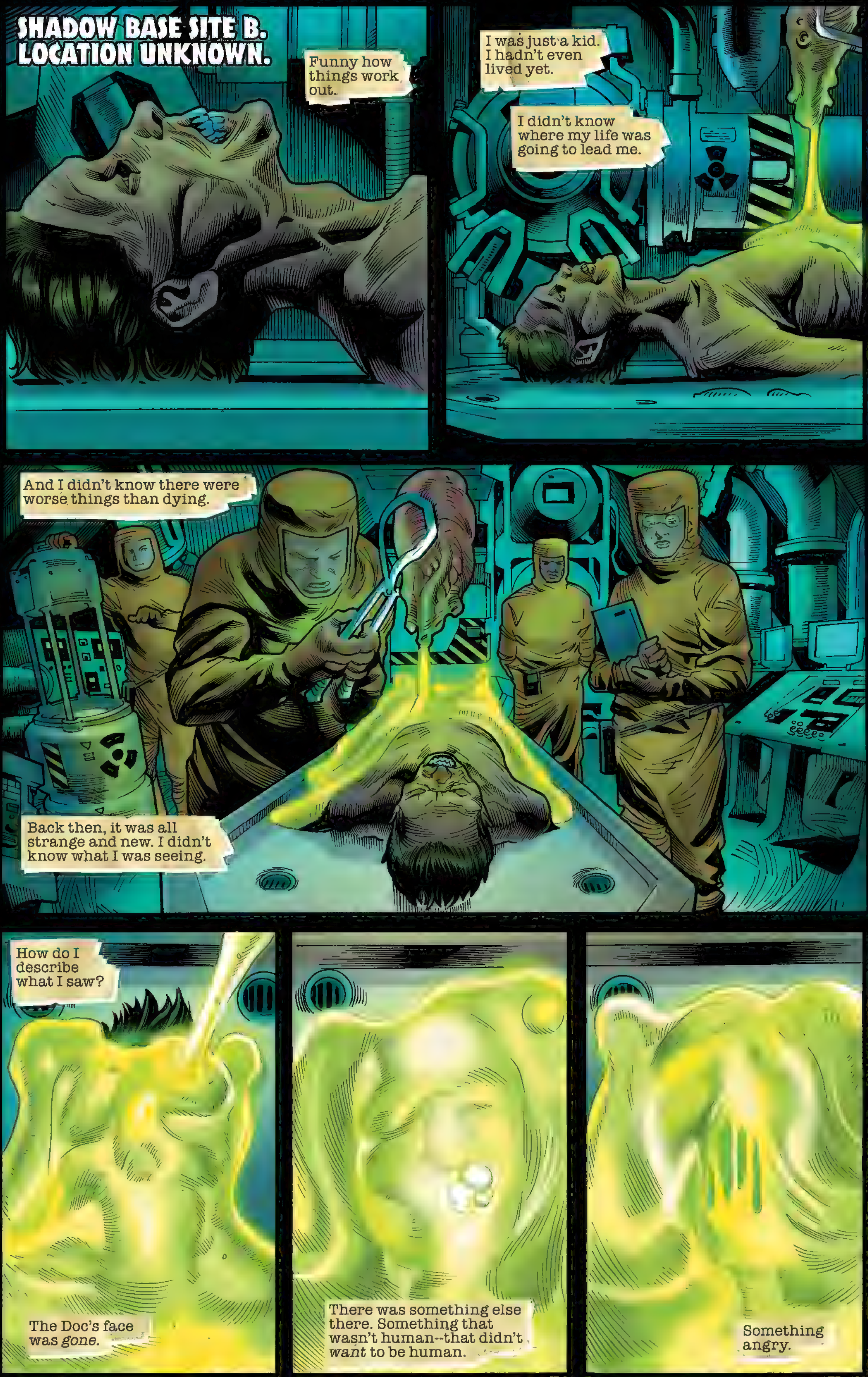
THE HOLY OR THE BROKEN

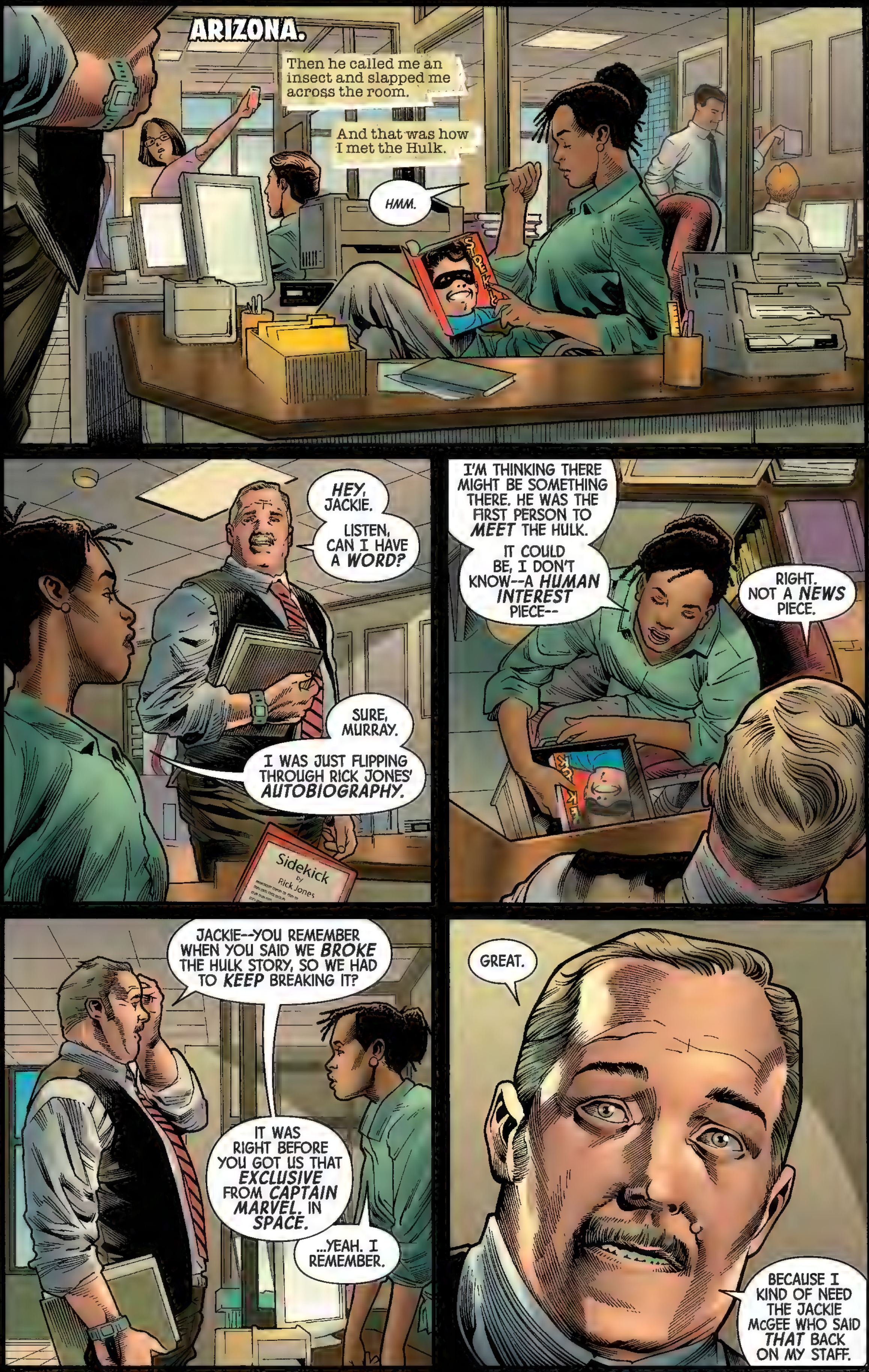
16

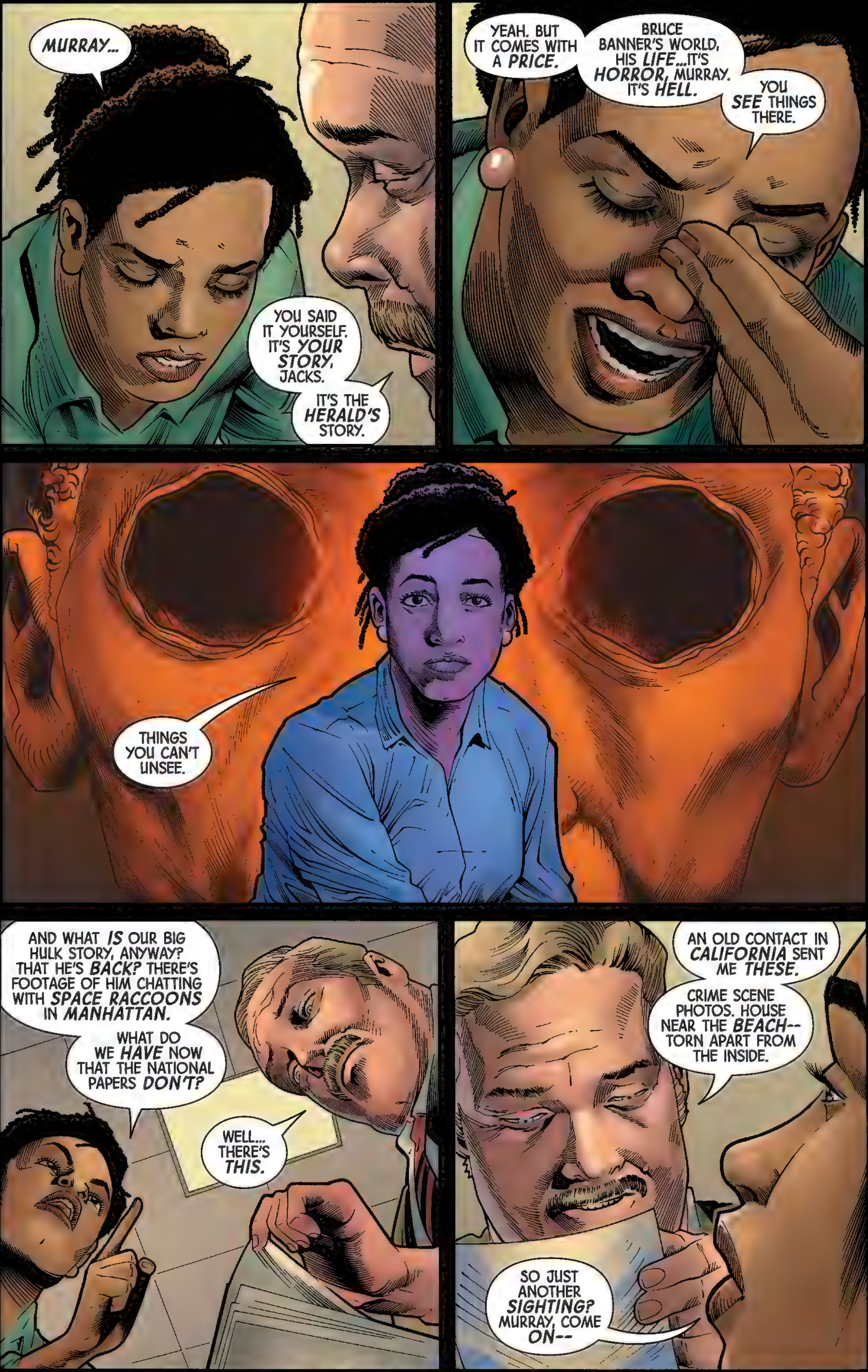
"THIS PLACE IS NOT A PLACE OF HONOR. NO HIGHLY ESTEEMED DEED IS COMMEMORATED HERE. NOTHING VALUED IS HERE. WHAT IS HERE IS DANGEROUS AND REPULSIVE TO US. THIS MESSAGE IS A WARNING ABOUT DANGER."

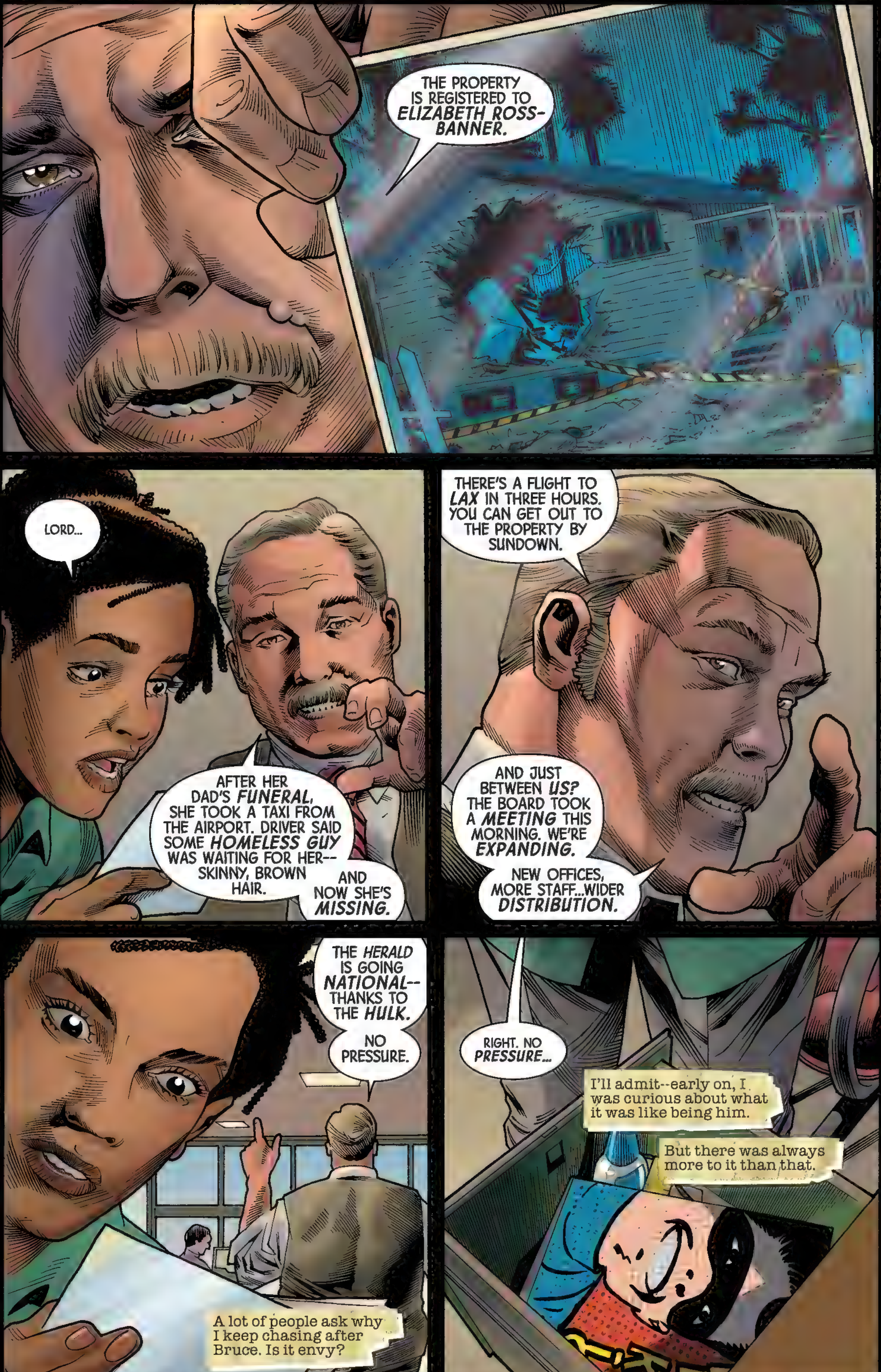
– U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

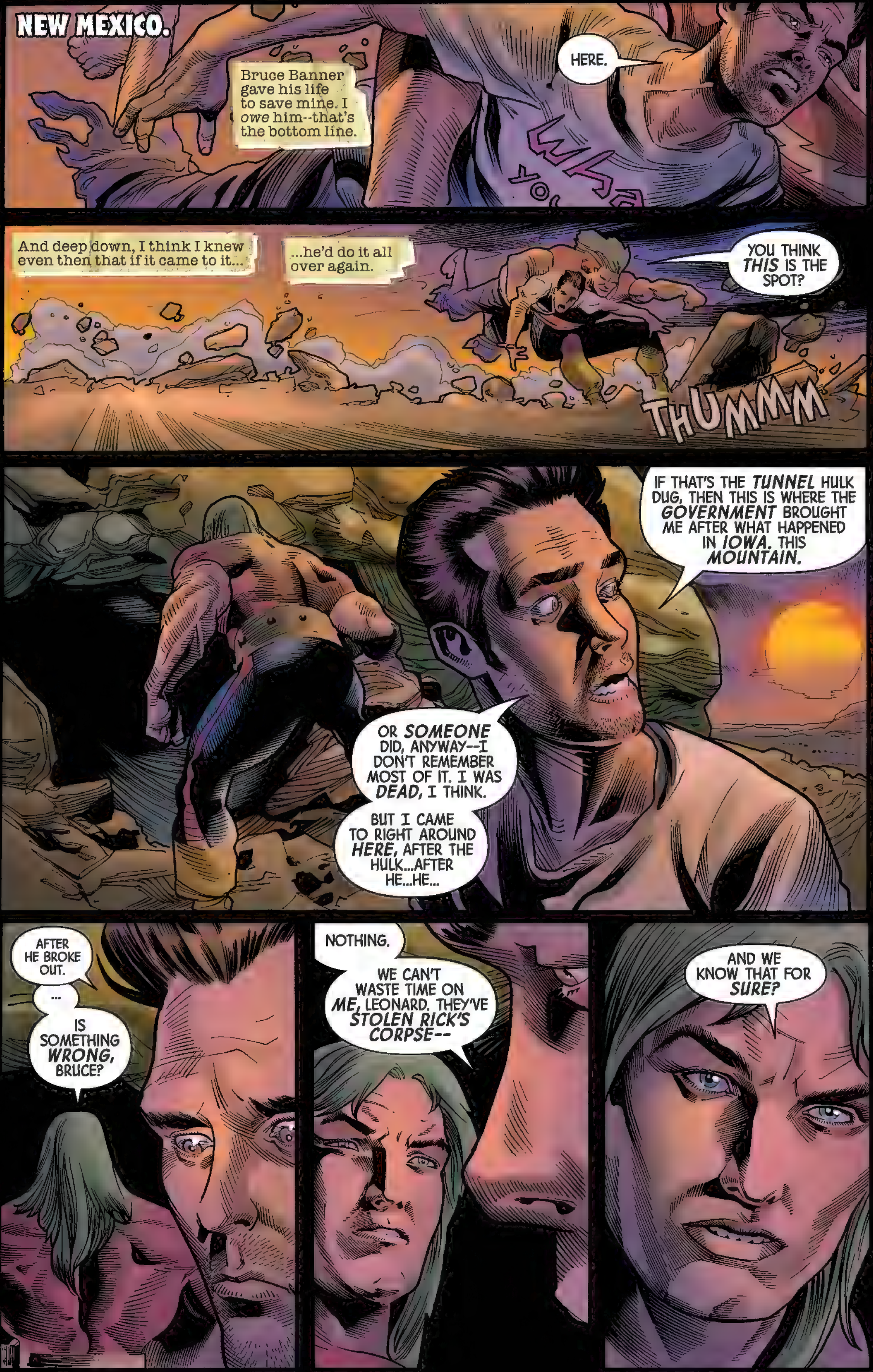

He asked what was happening. Then he made a kind of strangling sound, like his throat was compressed.
And the change began.
Any time I remember that day or that night, it's with years of hindsight on top. But in that moment, I thought he was already dead.
His skin turned gray, all over, like a corpse. Every part of his body ballooned up like it was about to burst. I heard the cracking noise of his bones stretching.
Who could live through that? He had to be dead--and it was all my fault.
I remember praying--praying like I never had before--for him to live. "Please, God." Over and over.
"Please don't let Doc Banner die."

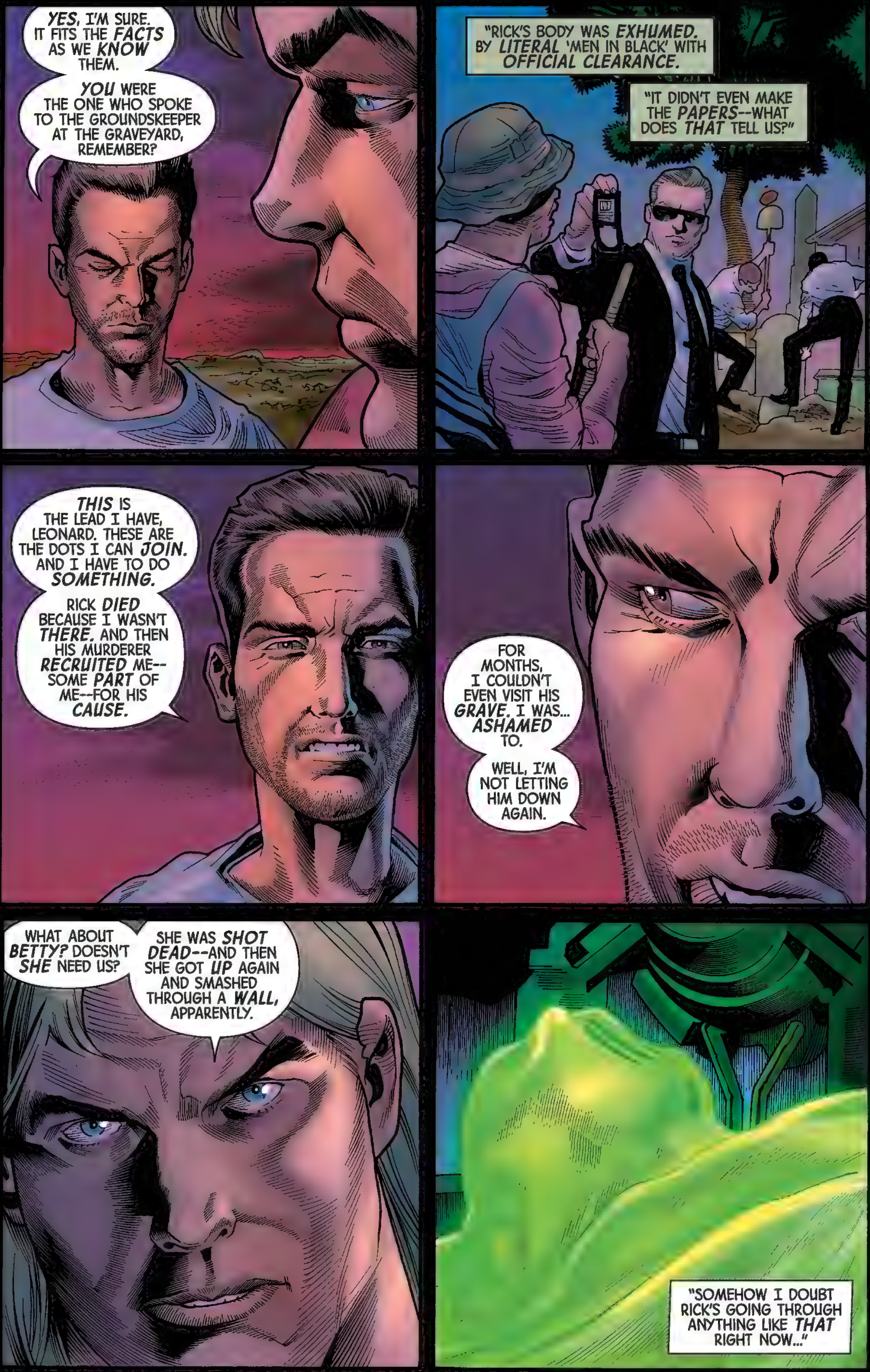

SHADOW BASE SITE B. LOCATION UNKNOWN.
Funny how things work out.
I was just a kid. I hadn't even lived yet.
I didn't know where my life was going to lead me.
And I didn't know there were worse things than dying.
Back then, it was all strange and new. I didn't know what I was seeing.
How do I describe what I saw?
The Doc's face was *gone*.
There was something else there. Something that wasn't human--that didn't *want* to be human.
Something angry.

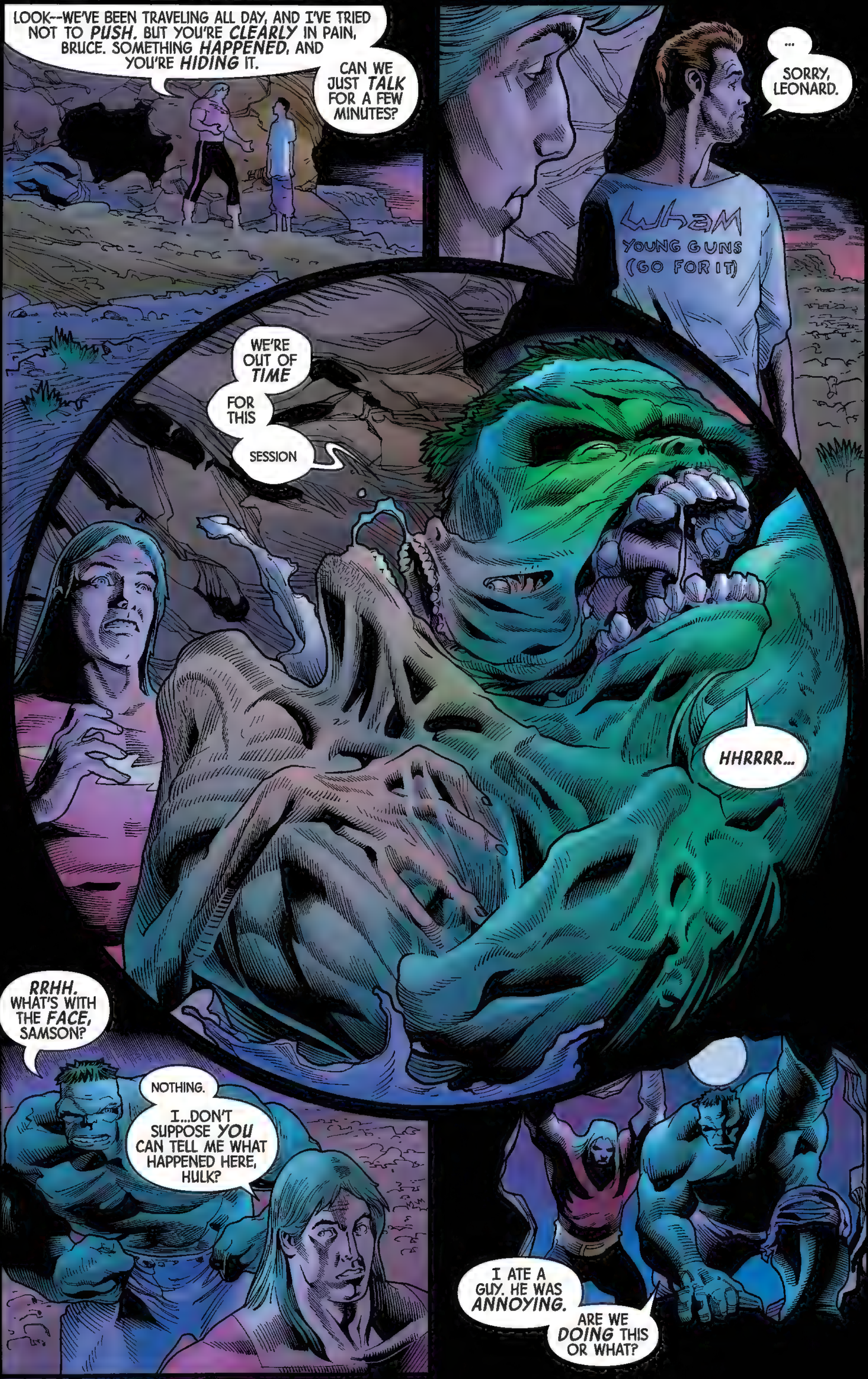

ARIZONA.
Then he called me an insect and slapped me across the room.
And that was how I met the Hulk.
HMM.
SIDEKICK
HEY, JACKIE.
LISTEN, CAN I HAVE A WORD?
SURE, MURRAY.
I WAS JUST FLIPPING THROUGH RICK JONES' AUTOBIOGRAPHY.
Sidekick by Rick Jones
I'M THINKING THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING THERE. HE WAS THE FIRST PERSON TO MEET THE HULK.
IT COULD BE, I DON'T KNOW--A HUMAN INTEREST PIECE--
RIGHT. NOT A NEWS PIECE.
JACKIE--YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU SAID WE BROKE THE HULK STORY, SO WE HAD TO KEEP BREAKING IT?
IT WAS RIGHT BEFORE YOU GOT US THAT EXCLUSIVE FROM CAPTAIN MARVEL. IN SPACE.
...YEAH. I REMEMBER.
GREAT.
BECAUSE I KIND OF NEED THE JACKIE McGEE WHO SAID THAT BACK ON MY STAFF.

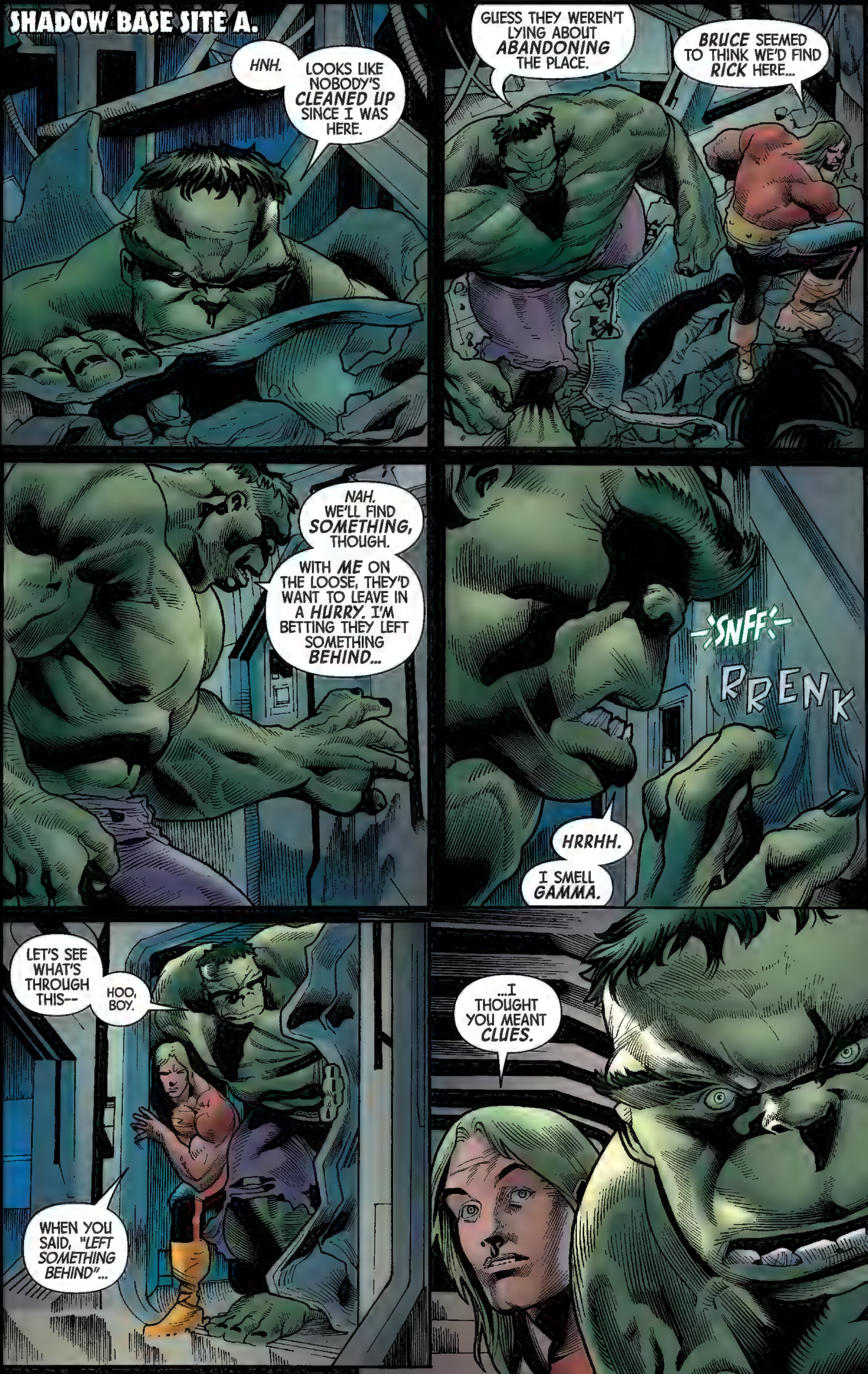

MURRAY...
YOU SAID IT YOURSELF. IT'S YOUR STORY, JACKS.
IT'S THE HERALD'S STORY.
YEAH. BUT IT COMES WITH A PRICE.
BRUCE BANNER'S WORLD, HIS LIFE...IT'S HORROR, MURRAY. IT'S HELL.
YOU SEE THINGS THERE.
THINGS YOU CAN'T UNSEE.
AND WHAT IS OUR BIG HULK STORY, ANYWAY? THAT HE'S BACK? THERE'S FOOTAGE OF HIM CHATTING WITH SPACE RACCOONS IN MANHATTAN.
WHAT DO WE HAVE NOW THAT THE NATIONAL PAPERS DON'T?
WELL... THERE'S THIS.
AN OLD CONTACT IN CALIFORNIA SENT ME THESE.
CRIME SCENE PHOTOS. HOUSE NEAR THE BEACH-- TORN APART FROM THE INSIDE.
SO JUST ANOTHER SIGHTING? MURRAY, COME ON--

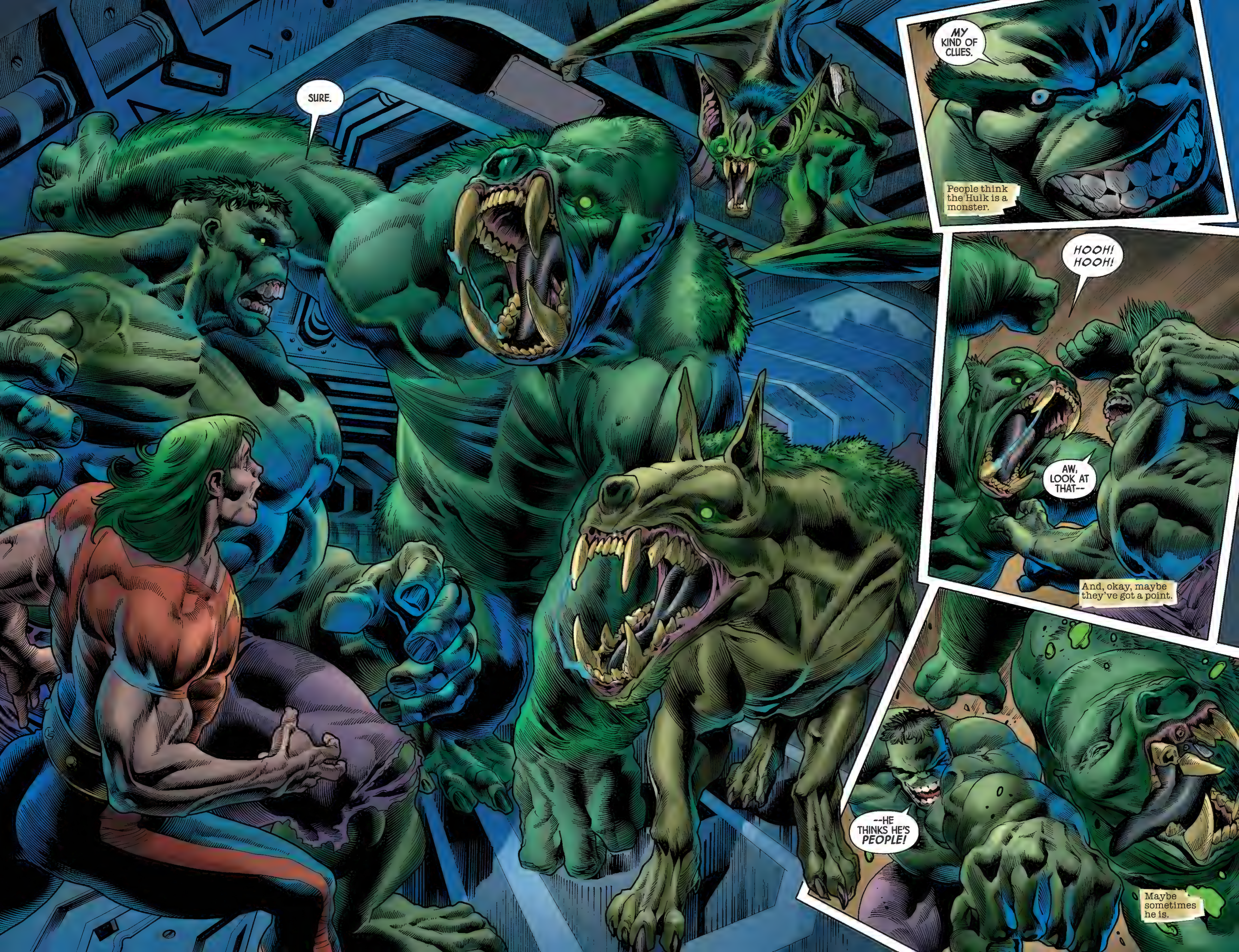

THE PROPERTY IS REGISTERED TO *ELIZABETH ROSS-BANNER.*
LORD...
AFTER HER DAD'S *FUNERAL,* SHE TOOK A TAXI FROM THE AIRPORT. DRIVER SAID SOME *HOMELESS GUY* WAS WAITING FOR HER--SKINNY, BROWN HAIR.
AND NOW SHE'S *MISSING.*
THERE'S A FLIGHT TO *LAX* IN THREE HOURS. YOU CAN GET OUT TO THE PROPERTY BY SUNDOWN.
AND JUST BETWEEN *US?* THE BOARD TOOK A *MEETING* THIS MORNING. WE'RE *EXPANDING.*
NEW OFFICES, MORE STAFF...WIDER *DISTRIBUTION.*
THE *HERALD* IS GOING *NATIONAL*--THANKS TO THE *HULK.*
NO PRESSURE.
A lot of people ask why I keep chasing after Bruce. Is it envy?
RIGHT. NO *PRESSURE...*
I'll admit--early on, I was curious about what it was like being him.
But there was always more to it than that.

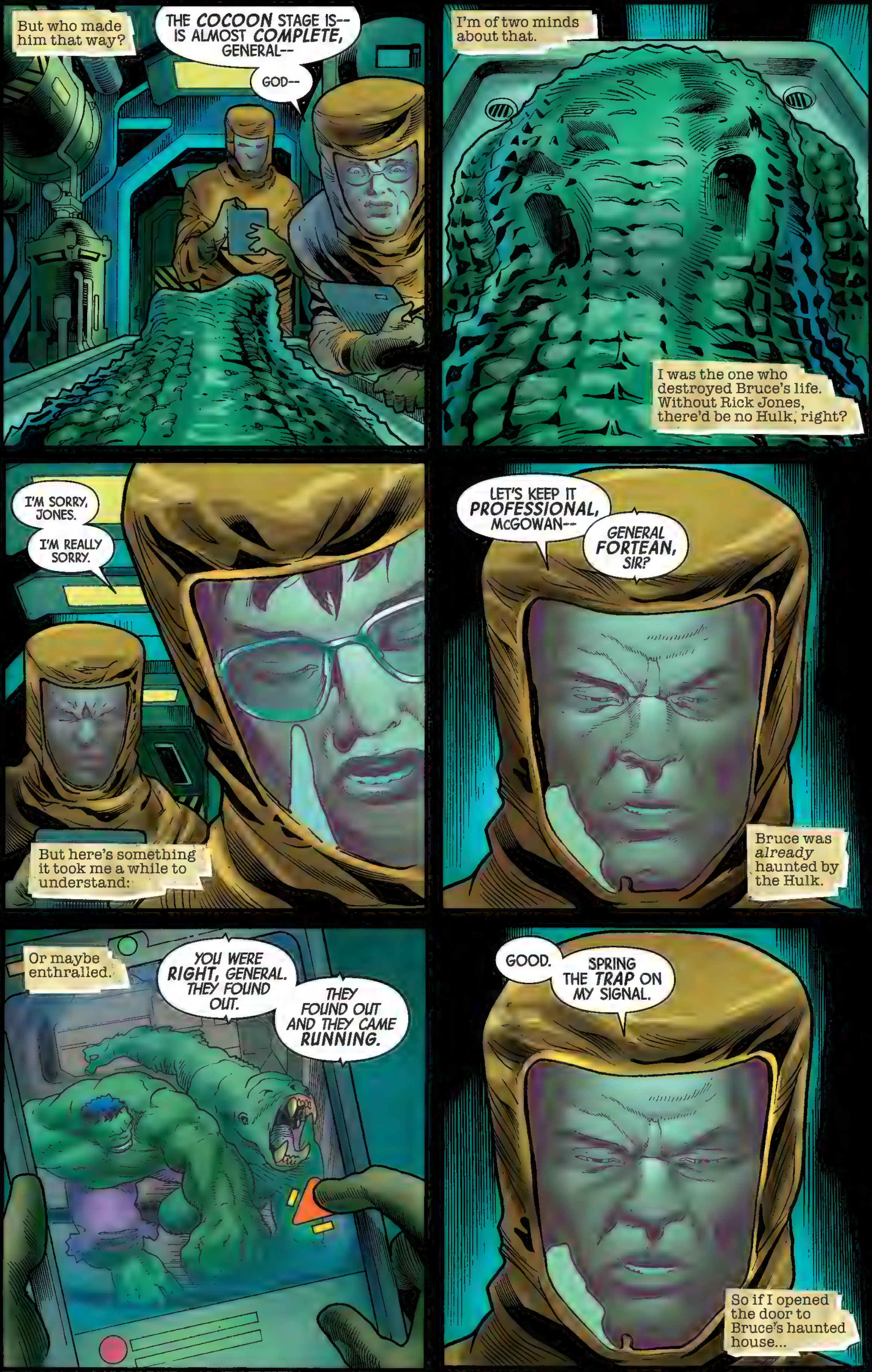

NEW MEXICO.
Bruce Banner gave his life to save mine. I *owe* him--that's the bottom line.
HERE.
And deep down, I think I knew even then that if it came to it...
...he'd do it all over again.
YOU THINK *THIS* IS THE SPOT?
THUMMM
IF THAT'S THE *TUNNEL* HULK DUG, THEN THIS IS WHERE THE *GOVERNMENT* BROUGHT ME AFTER WHAT HAPPENED IN *IOWA.* THIS *MOUNTAIN.*
OR *SOMEONE* DID, ANYWAY--I DON'T REMEMBER MOST OF IT. I WAS *DEAD,* I THINK.
BUT I CAME TO RIGHT AROUND *HERE,* AFTER THE HULK...AFTER HE...HE...
AFTER HE BROKE OUT.
...
IS SOMETHING *WRONG,* BRUCE?
NOTHING.
WE CAN'T WASTE TIME ON *ME,* LEONARD. THEY'VE *STOLEN RICK'S CORPSE--*
AND WE KNOW THAT FOR *SURE?*

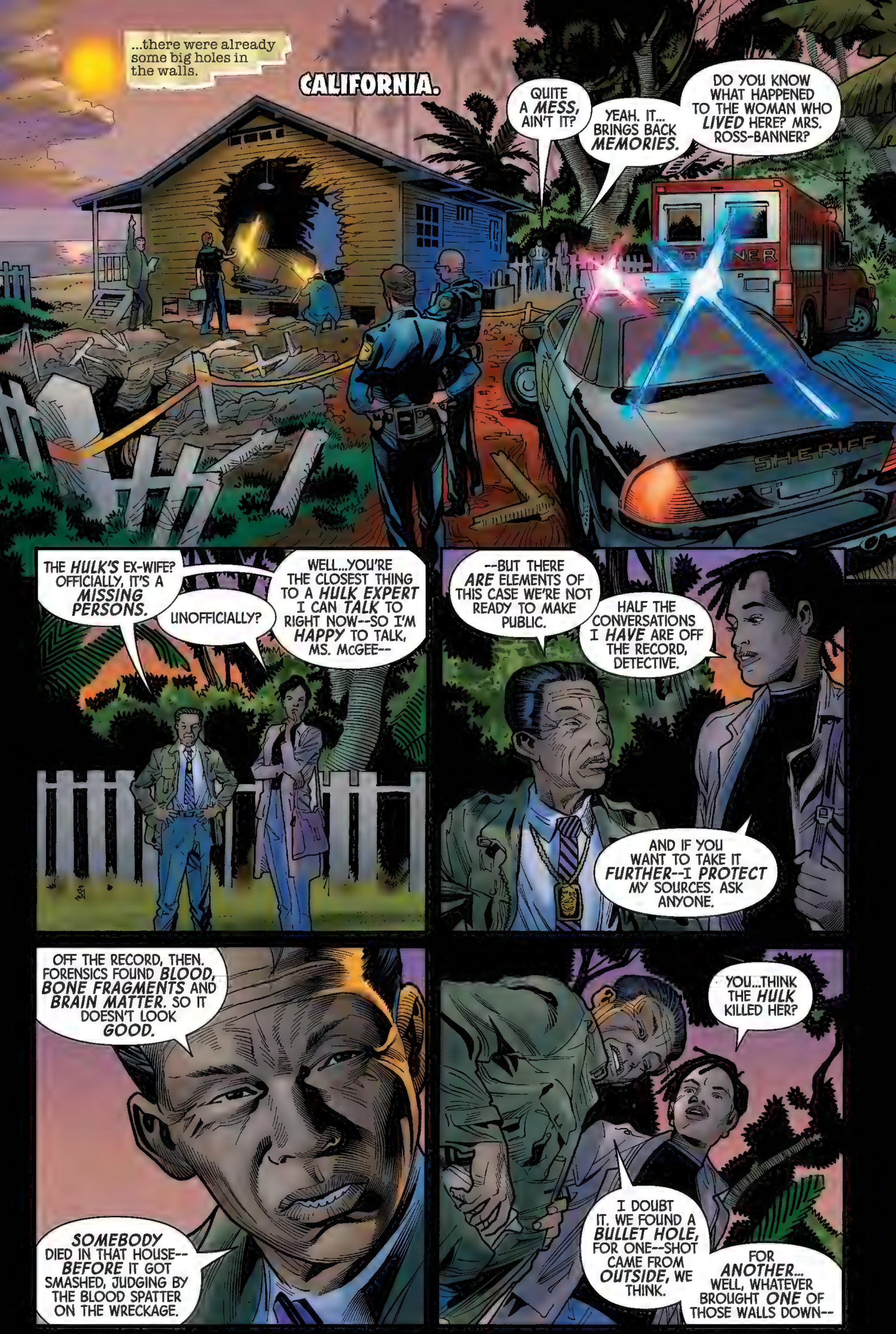

YES, I'M SURE. IT FITS THE FACTS AS WE KNOW THEM.
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SPOKE TO THE GROUNDSKEEPER AT THE GRAVEYARD, REMEMBER?
"RICK'S BODY WAS EXHUMED. BY LITERAL 'MEN IN BLACK' WITH OFFICIAL CLEARANCE.
"IT DIDN'T EVEN MAKE THE PAPERS--WHAT DOES THAT TELL US?"
THIS IS THE LEAD I HAVE, LEONARD. THESE ARE THE DOTS I CAN JOIN. AND I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
RICK DIED BECAUSE I WASN'T THERE. AND THEN HIS MURDERER RECRUITED ME--SOME PART OF ME--FOR HIS CAUSE.
FOR MONTHS, I COULDN'T EVEN VISIT HIS GRAVE. I WAS... ASHAMED TO.
WELL, I'M NOT LETTING HIM DOWN AGAIN.
WHAT ABOUT BETTY? DOESN'T SHE NEED US?
SHE WAS SHOT DEAD--AND THEN SHE GOT UP AGAIN AND SMASHED THROUGH A WALL, APPARENTLY.
"SOMEHOW I DOUBT RICK'S GOING THROUGH ANYTHING LIKE THAT RIGHT NOW..."

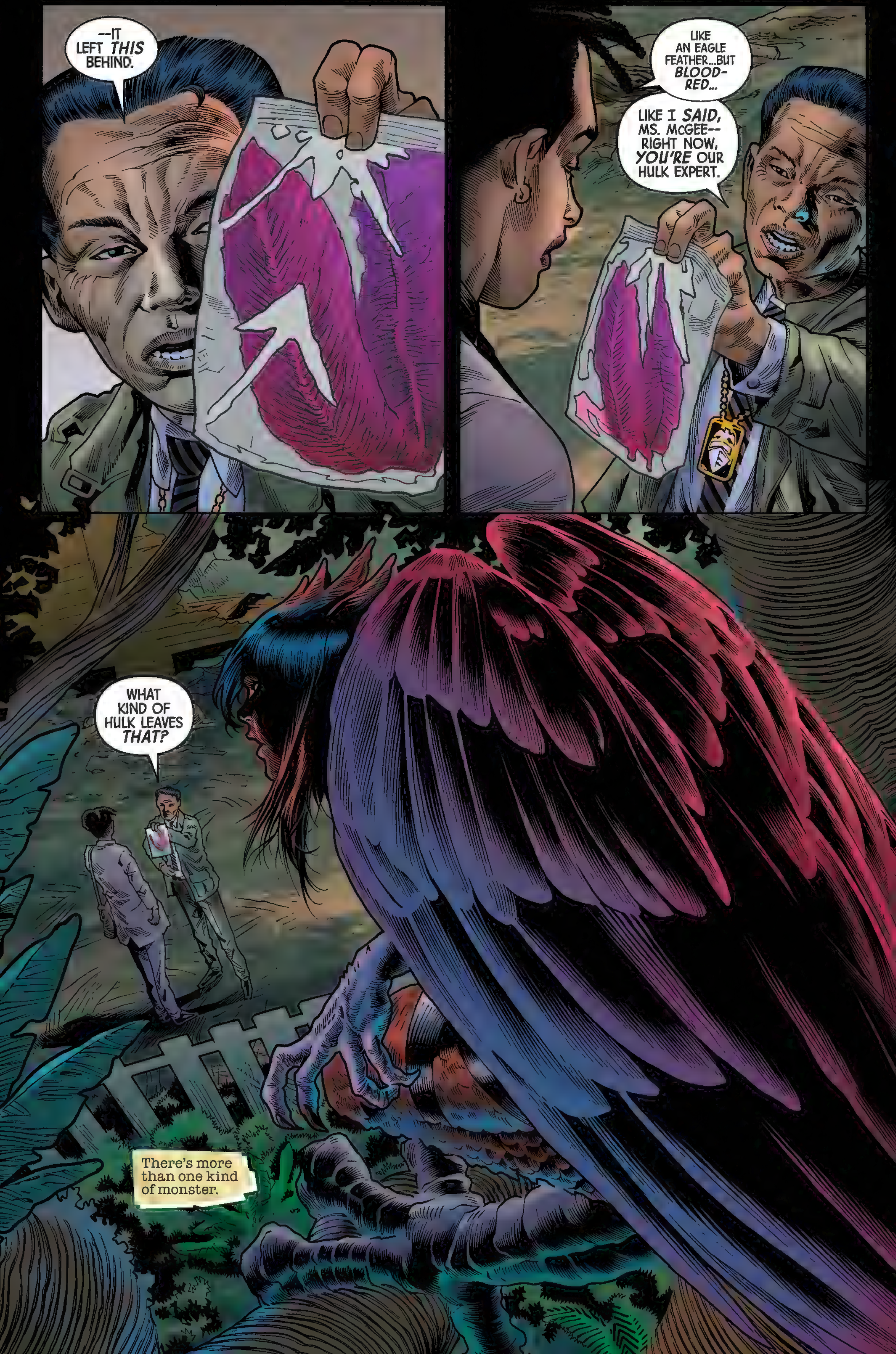

LOOK--WE'VE BEEN TRAVELING ALL DAY, AND I'VE TRIED NOT TO *PUSH*. BUT YOU'RE *CLEARLY* IN PAIN, BRUCE. SOMETHING *HAPPENED*, AND YOU'RE *HIDING* IT.
CAN WE JUST *TALK* FOR A FEW MINUTES?
...
SORRY, LEONARD.
WHAM
YOUNG GUNS
(GO FOR IT)
WE'RE OUT OF *TIME*
FOR THIS
SESSION
HHRRRR...
RRHH. WHAT'S WITH THE *FACE*, SAMSON?
NOTHING.
I...DON'T SUPPOSE *YOU* CAN TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED HERE, HULK?
I ATE A GUY. HE WAS *ANNOYING*.
ARE WE *DOING* THIS OR WHAT?

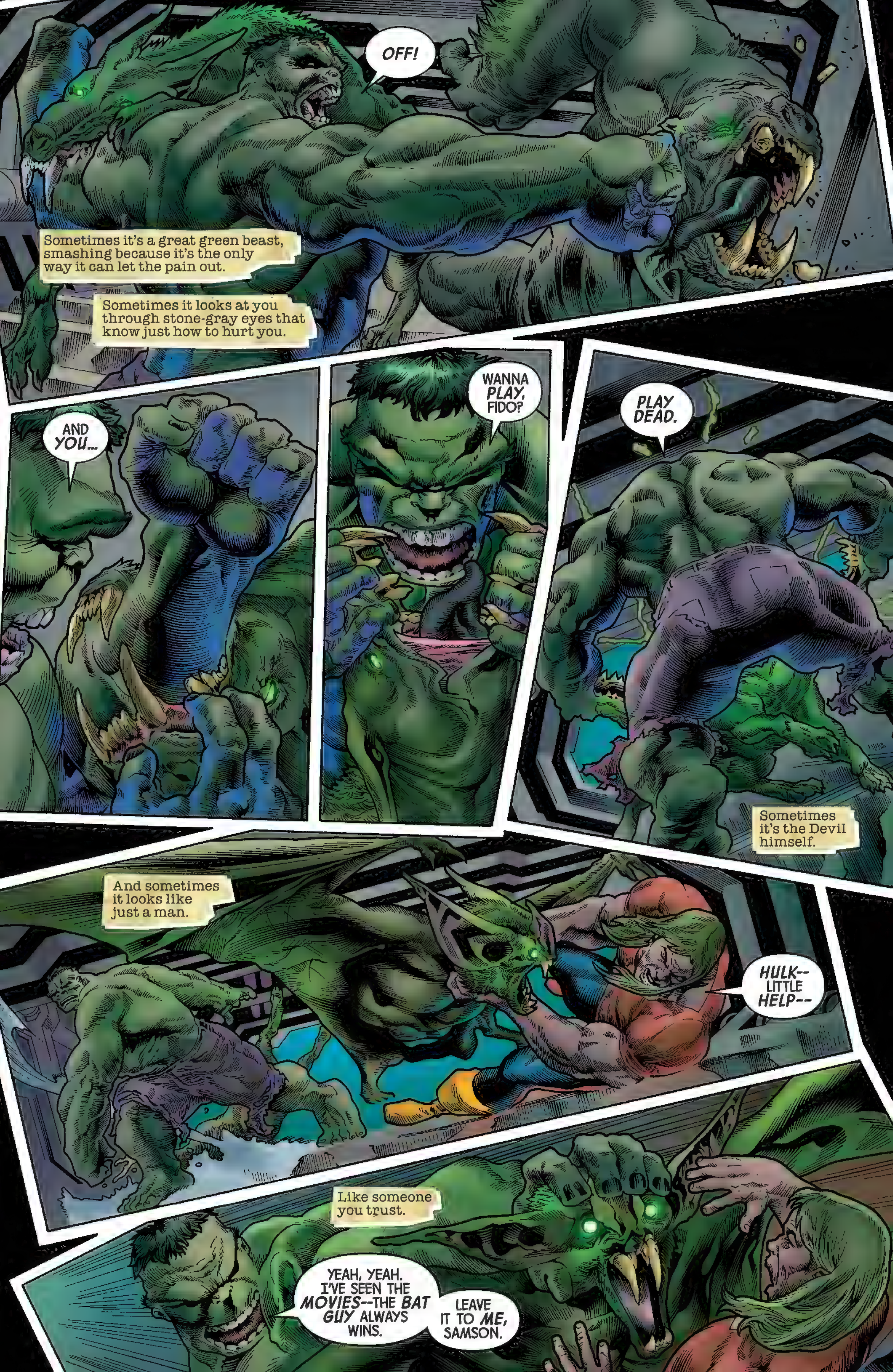

SHADOW BASE SITE A.
HNH.
LOOKS LIKE NOBODY'S CLEANED UP SINCE I WAS HERE.
GUESS THEY WEREN'T LYING ABOUT ABANDONING THE PLACE.
BRUCE SEEMED TO THINK WE'D FIND RICK HERE...
NAH. WE'LL FIND SOMETHING, THOUGH.
WITH ME ON THE LOOSE, THEY'D WANT TO LEAVE IN A HURRY. I'M BETTING THEY LEFT SOMETHING BEHIND...
SNFF
RRENK
HRRHH.
I SMELL GAMMA.
LET'S SEE WHAT'S THROUGH THIS--
HOO, BOY.
WHEN YOU SAID, "LEFT SOMETHING BEHIND"...
...I THOUGHT YOU MEANT CLUES.

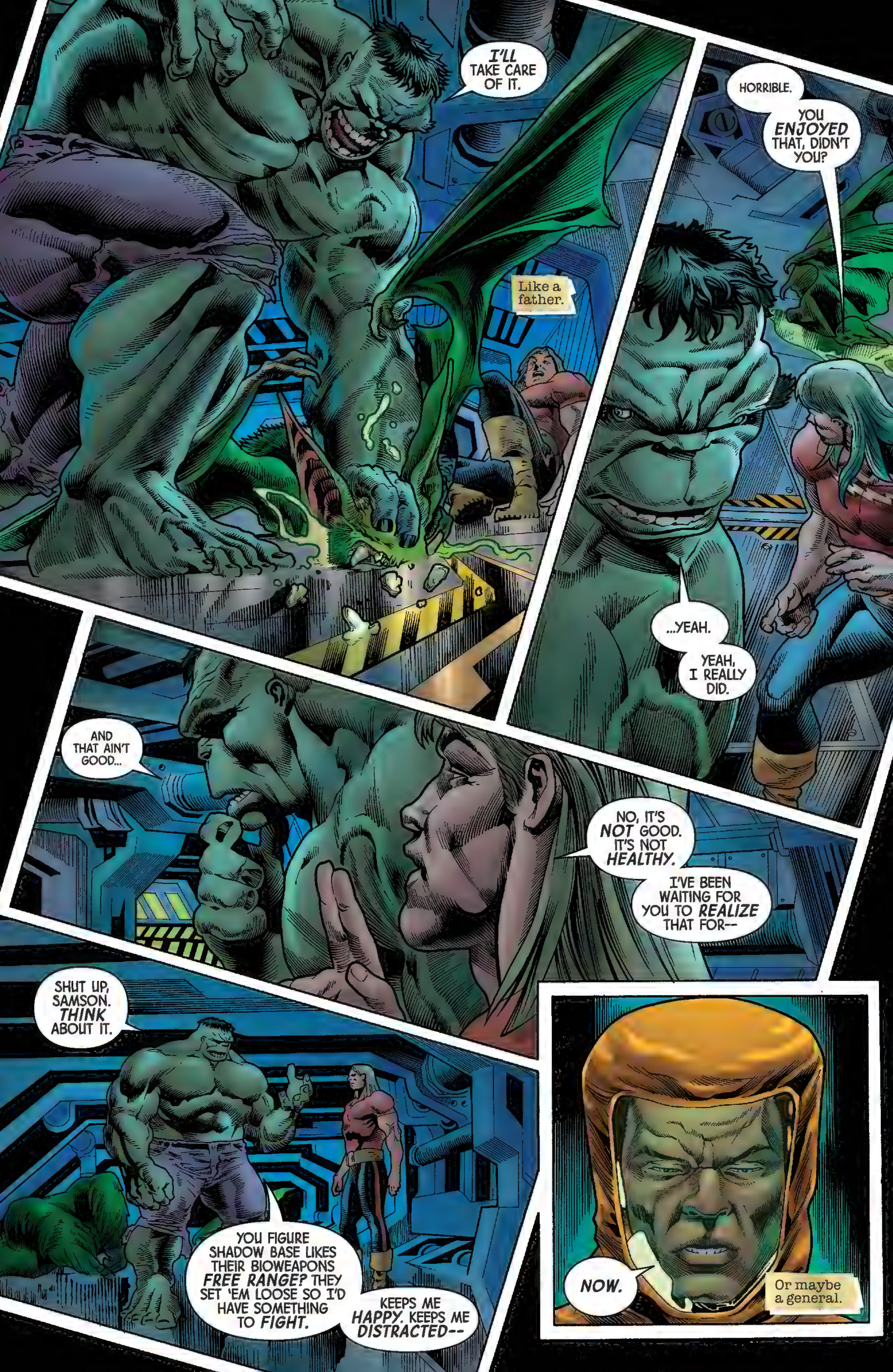

SURE.
MY KIND OF CLUES.
People think the Hulk is a monster.
HOOH! HOOH!
AW, LOOK AT THAT--
And, okay, maybe they've got a point.
--HE THINKS HE'S PEOPLE!
Maybe sometimes he is.

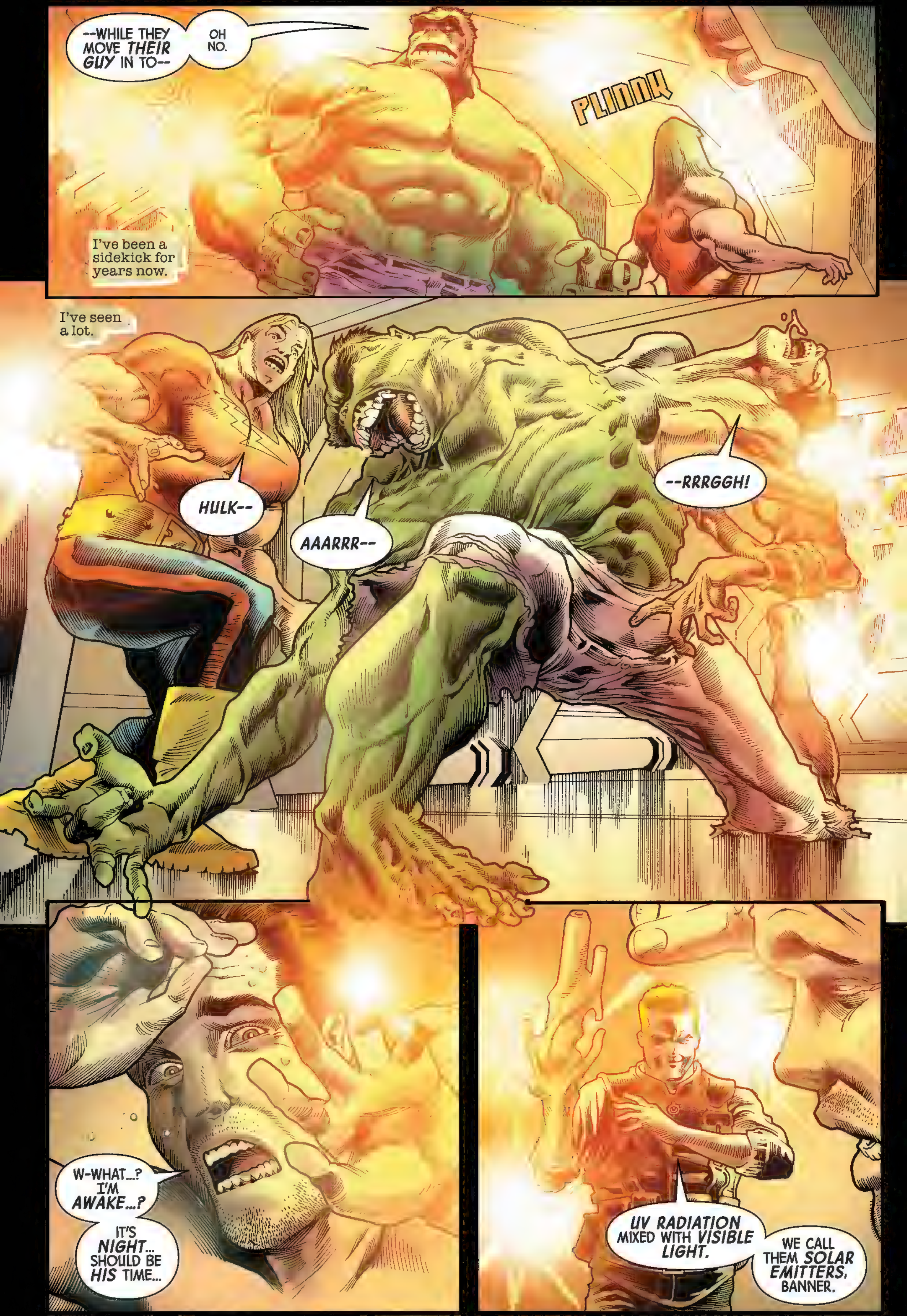

But who made him that way?
THE *COCOON* STAGE IS-- IS ALMOST *COMPLETE,* GENERAL--
GOD--
I'm of two minds about that.
I was the one who destroyed Bruce's life. Without Rick Jones, there'd be no Hulk, right?
I'M SORRY, JONES.
I'M REALLY SORRY.
But here's something it took me a while to understand:
LET'S KEEP IT *PROFESSIONAL,* McGOWAN--
GENERAL *FORTEAN,* SIR?
Bruce was *already* haunted by the Hulk.
Or maybe enthralled.
YOU WERE *RIGHT,* GENERAL. THEY FOUND OUT.
THEY FOUND OUT AND THEY CAME *RUNNING.*
GOOD.
SPRING THE *TRAP* ON MY SIGNAL.
So if I opened the door to Bruce's haunted house...

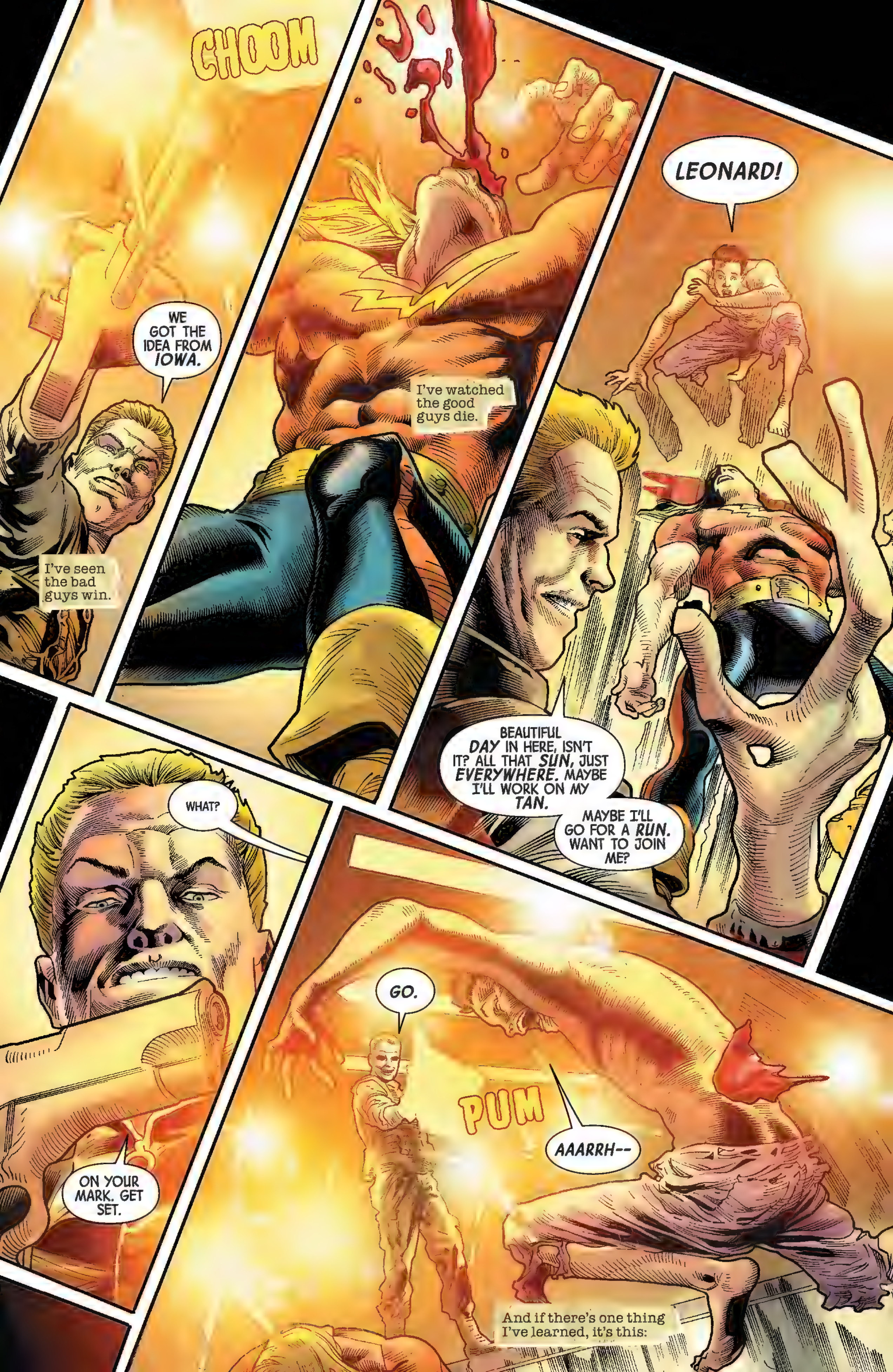

...there were already some big holes in the walls.
CALIFORNIA.
QUITE A MESS, AIN'T IT?
YEAH. IT... BRINGS BACK MEMORIES.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WOMAN WHO LIVED HERE? MRS. ROSS-BANNER?
SHERIFF
THE HULK'S EX-WIFE? OFFICIALLY, IT'S A MISSING PERSONS.
UNOFFICIALLY?
WELL...YOU'RE THE CLOSEST THING TO A HULK EXPERT I CAN TALK TO RIGHT NOW--SO I'M HAPPY TO TALK, MS. McGEE--
--BUT THERE ARE ELEMENTS OF THIS CASE WE'RE NOT READY TO MAKE PUBLIC.
HALF THE CONVERSATIONS I HAVE ARE OFF THE RECORD, DETECTIVE.
AND IF YOU WANT TO TAKE IT FURTHER--I PROTECT MY SOURCES. ASK ANYONE.
OFF THE RECORD, THEN. FORENSICS FOUND BLOOD, BONE FRAGMENTS AND BRAIN MATTER. SO IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD.
SOMEBODY DIED IN THAT HOUSE--BEFORE IT GOT SMASHED, JUDGING BY THE BLOOD SPATTER ON THE WRECKAGE.
YOU...THINK THE HULK KILLED HER?
I DOUBT IT. WE FOUND A BULLET HOLE, FOR ONE--SHOT CAME FROM OUTSIDE, WE THINK.
FOR ANOTHER... WELL, WHATEVER BROUGHT ONE OF THOSE WALLS DOWN--

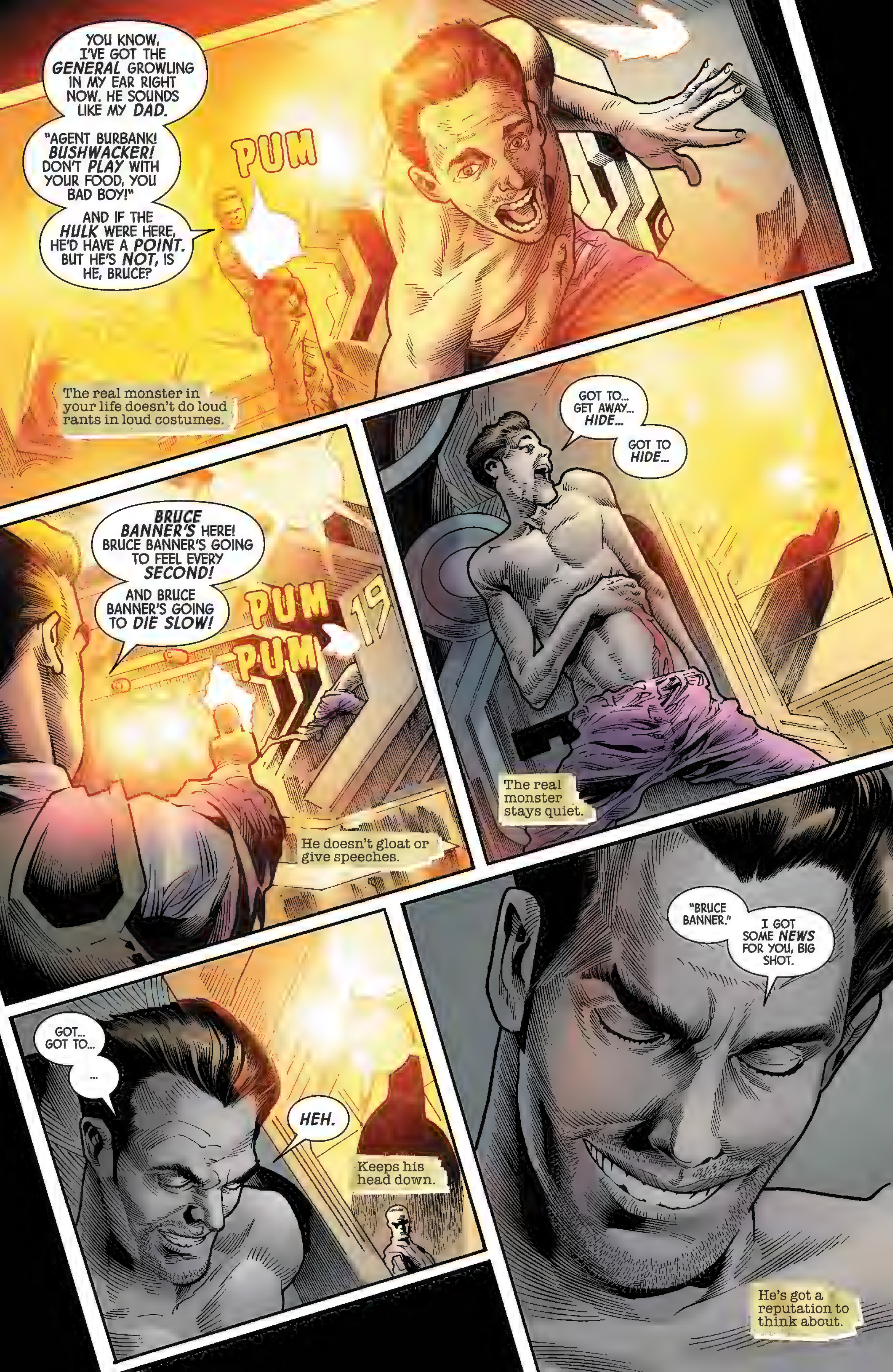

--IT LEFT *THIS* BEHIND.
LIKE AN EAGLE FEATHER...BUT *BLOOD-RED*...
LIKE I *SAID*, MS. McGEE--RIGHT NOW, *YOU'RE* OUR HULK EXPERT.
WHAT KIND OF HULK LEAVES *THAT?*
There's more than one kind of monster.

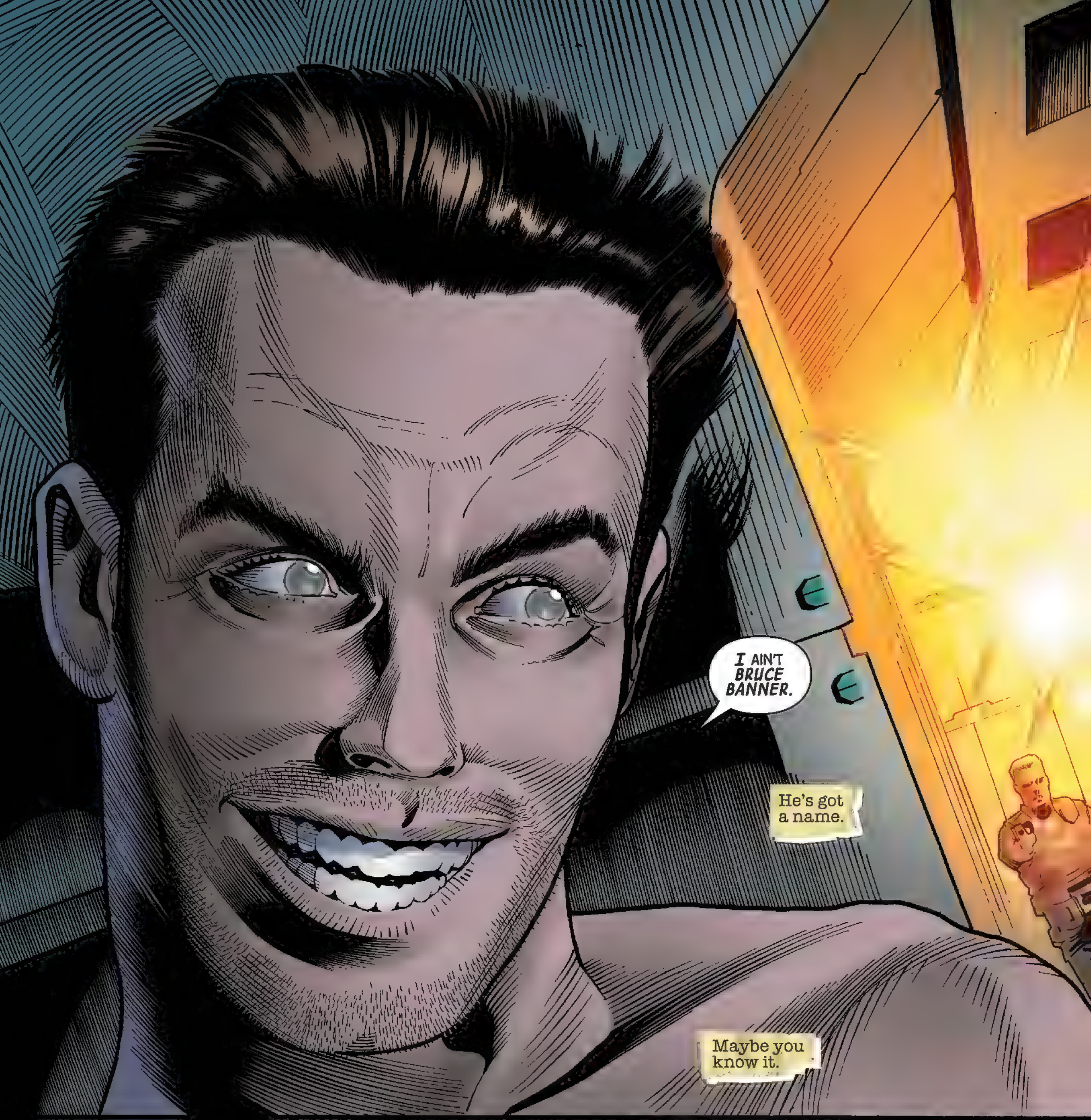

OFF!
Sometimes it's a great green beast, smashing because it's the only way it can let the pain out.
Sometimes it looks at you through stone-gray eyes that know just how to hurt you.
AND *YOU*...
WANNA *PLAY,* FIDO?
PLAY DEAD.
Sometimes it's the Devil himself.
And sometimes it looks like just a man.
HULK--LITTLE *HELP*--
Like someone you trust.
YEAH, YEAH. I'VE SEEN THE *MOVIES*--THE *BAT GUY* ALWAYS WINS.
LEAVE IT TO *ME,* SAMSON.


I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.
Like a father.
HORRIBLE.
YOU *ENJOYED* THAT, DIDN'T YOU?
...YEAH.
YEAH, I REALLY DID.
AND THAT AIN'T GOOD...
NO, IT'S *NOT* GOOD. IT'S NOT *HEALTHY.*
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU TO *REALIZE* THAT FOR--
SHUT UP, SAMSON. *THINK* ABOUT IT.
YOU FIGURE SHADOW BASE LIKES THEIR BIOWEAPONS *FREE RANGE?* THEY SET 'EM LOOSE SO I'D HAVE SOMETHING TO *FIGHT.*
KEEPS ME *HAPPY.* KEEPS ME *DISTRACTED--*
NOW.
Or maybe a general.


--WHILE THEY MOVE THEIR GUY IN TO--
OH NO.
PLINNK
I've been a sidekick for years now.
I've seen a lot.
HULK--
AAARRR--
--RRRGGH!
W-WHAT...? I'M AWAKE...?
IT'S NIGHT... SHOULD BE HIS TIME...
UV RADIATION MIXED WITH VISIBLE LIGHT.
WE CALL THEM SOLAR EMITTERS, BANNER.


CHOOM
WE GOT THE IDEA FROM *IOWA.*
I've seen the bad guys win.
I've watched the good guys die.
LEONARD!
BEAUTIFUL *DAY* IN HERE, ISN'T IT? ALL THAT *SUN,* JUST *EVERYWHERE.* MAYBE I'LL WORK ON MY *TAN.*
MAYBE I'LL GO FOR A *RUN.* WANT TO JOIN ME?
WHAT?
ON YOUR MARK. GET SET.
GO.
PUM
AAARRH--
And if there's one thing I've learned, it's this:


YOU KNOW, I'VE GOT THE *GENERAL* GROWLING IN MY EAR RIGHT NOW. HE SOUNDS LIKE MY *DAD.*
"AGENT BURBANK! *BUSHWACKER!* DON'T *PLAY* WITH YOUR FOOD, YOU BAD BOY!"
AND IF THE *HULK* WERE HERE, HE'D HAVE A *POINT.* BUT HE'S *NOT,* IS HE, BRUCE?
PUM
The real monster in your life doesn't do loud rants in loud costumes.
BRUCE BANNER'S HERE! BRUCE BANNER'S GOING TO FEEL EVERY *SECOND!*
AND BRUCE BANNER'S GOING TO *DIE SLOW!*
PUM
PUM
He doesn't gloat or give speeches.
GOT TO... GET AWAY... *HIDE...*
GOT TO *HIDE...*
The real monster stays quiet.
GOT... GOT TO...
...
HEH.
Keeps his head down.
"BRUCE BANNER."
I GOT SOME *NEWS* FOR YOU, BIG SHOT.
He's got a reputation to think about.

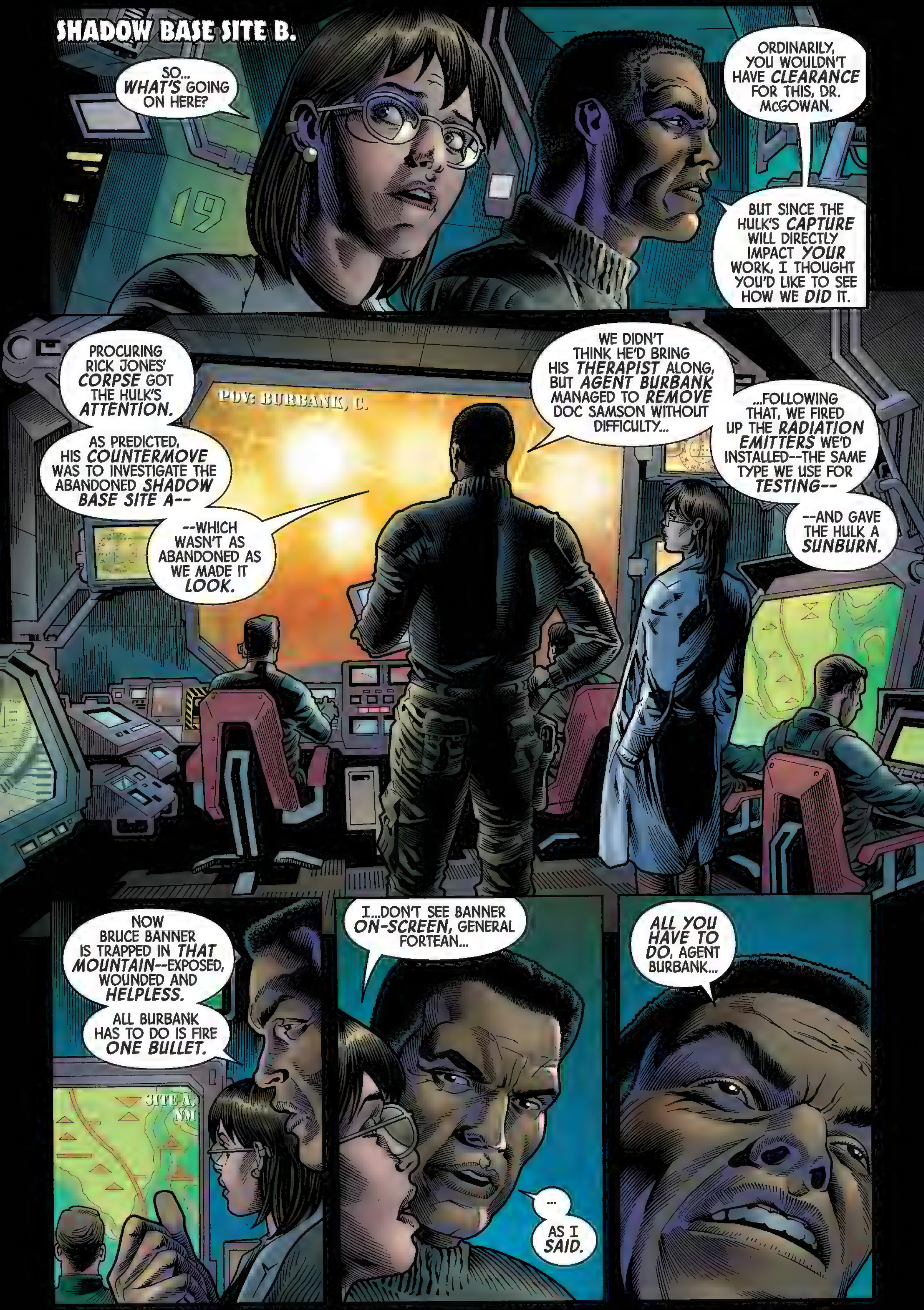

I AIN'T BRUCE BANNER.
He's got a name.
Maybe you know it.

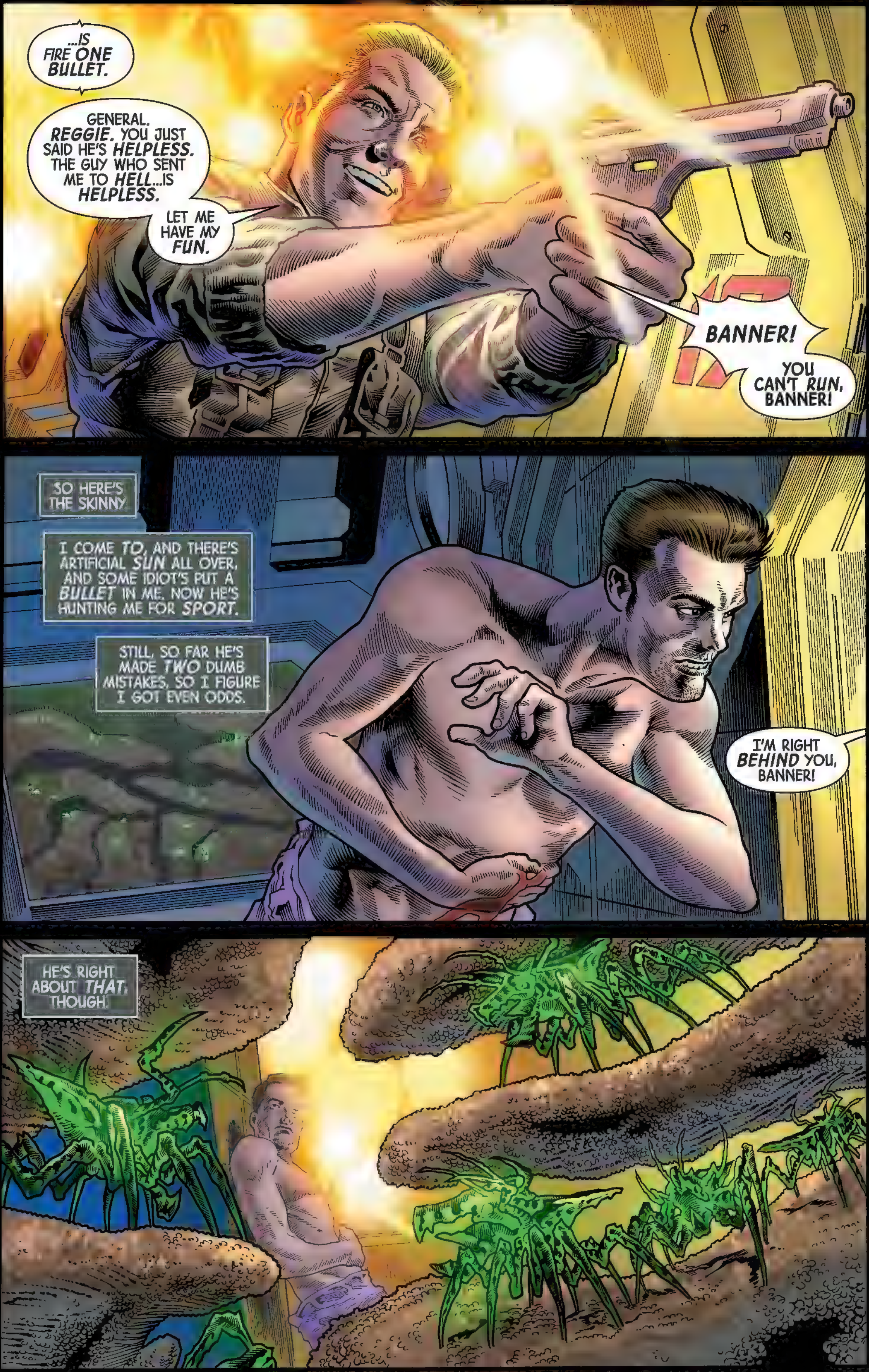
IT'S JOE

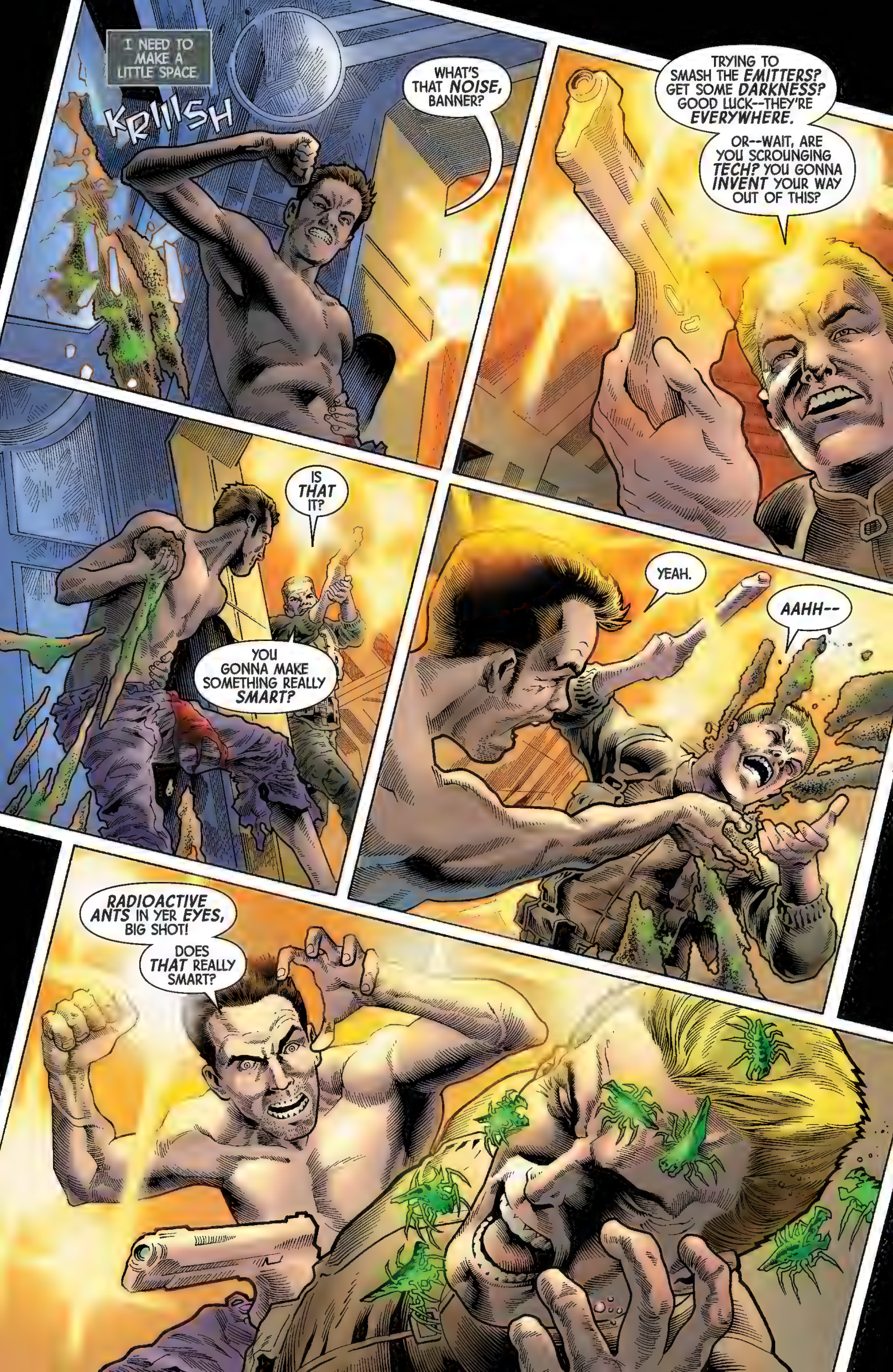
17

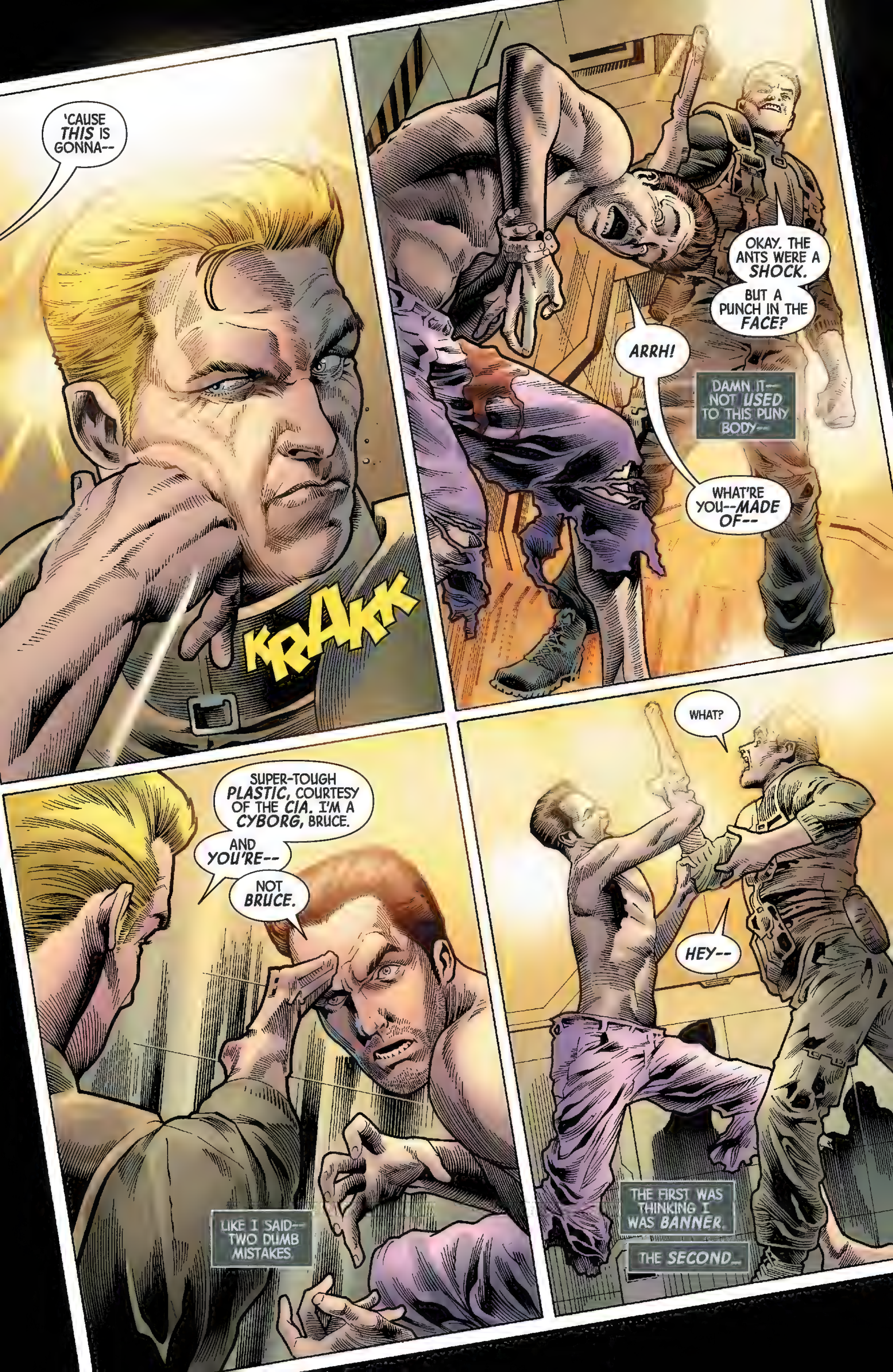
“NOBODY TELLS ME WHAT TO DO. YOU KEEP NEEDLIN’ ME, AND IF I WANT TO, I’M GONNA TAKE THIS JOINT APART. AND YOU’RE NOT GONNA KNOW WHAT HIT YA.”

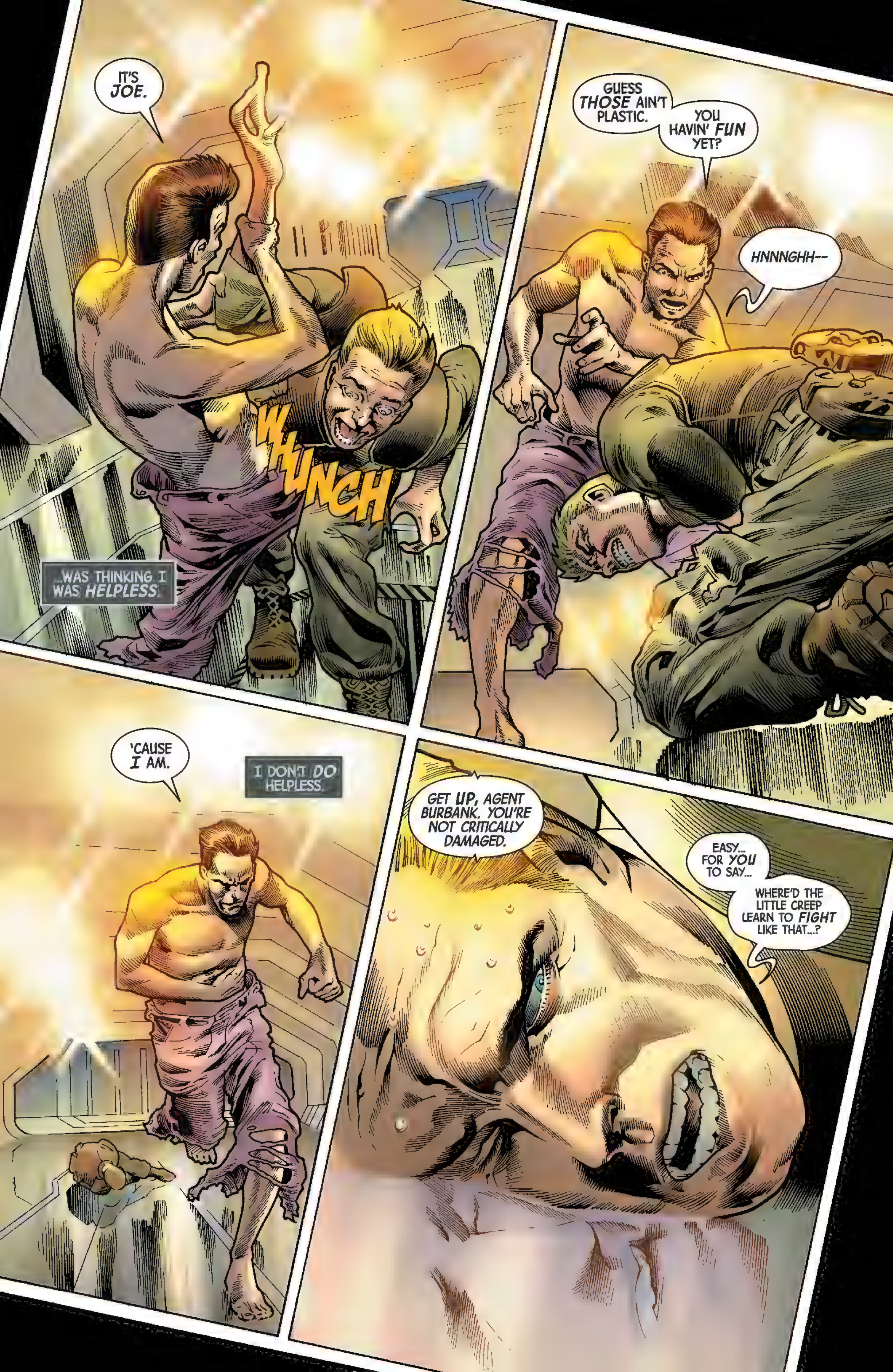
– JOHN PAXTON & BEN MADDOW
THE WILD ONE

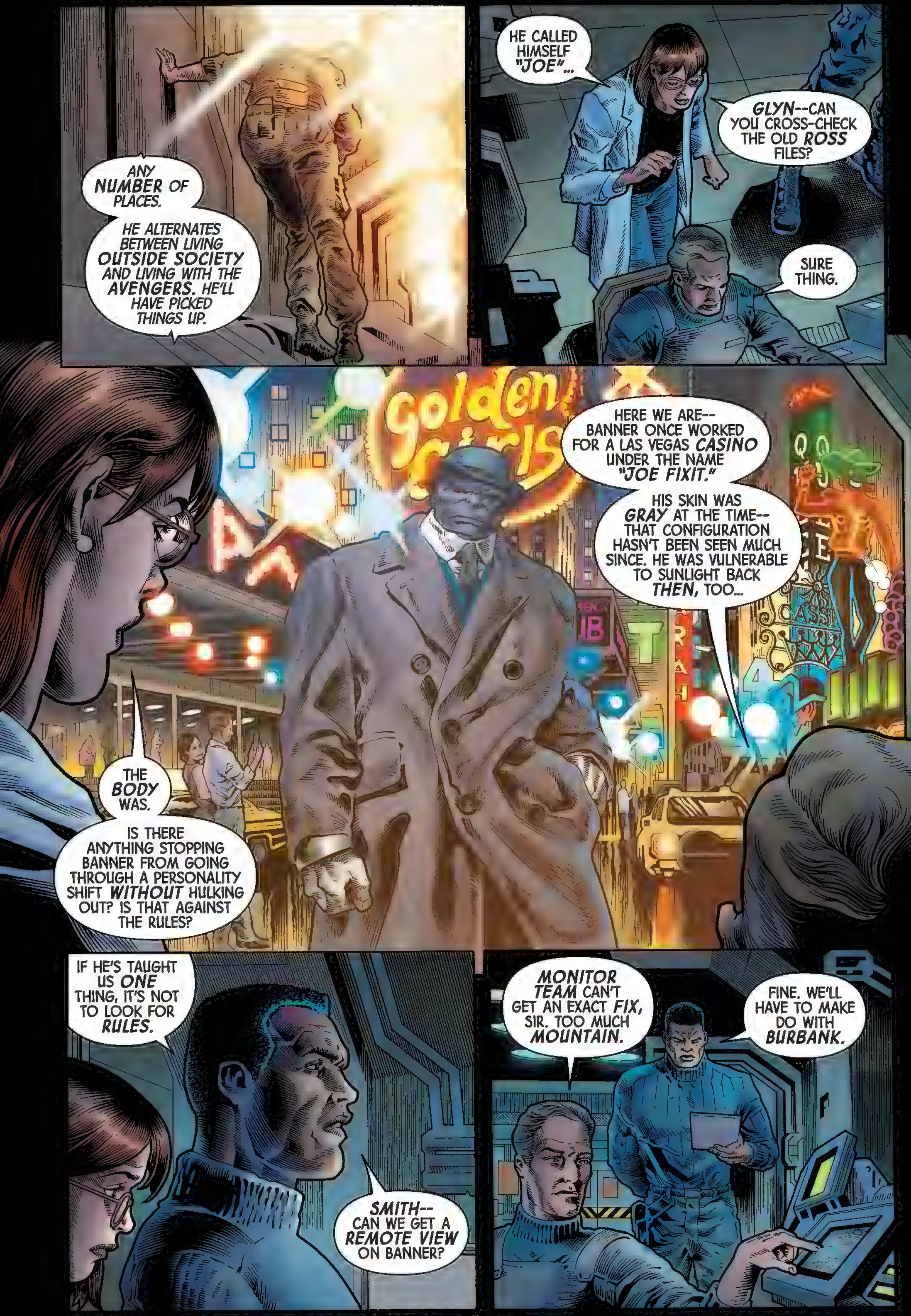

SHADOW BASE SITE B.
SO... *WHAT'S* GOING ON HERE?
ORDINARILY, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE *CLEARANCE* FOR THIS, DR. McGOWAN.
BUT SINCE THE HULK'S *CAPTURE* WILL DIRECTLY IMPACT *YOUR* WORK, I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO SEE HOW WE *DID* IT.
POV: BURBANK, C.
PROCURING RICK JONES' *CORPSE* GOT THE HULK'S *ATTENTION.*
AS PREDICTED, HIS *COUNTERMOVE* WAS TO INVESTIGATE THE ABANDONED *SHADOW BASE SITE A--*
--WHICH WASN'T AS ABANDONED AS WE MADE IT *LOOK.*
WE DIDN'T THINK HE'D BRING HIS *THERAPIST* ALONG, BUT *AGENT BURBANK* MANAGED TO *REMOVE* DOC SAMSON WITHOUT DIFFICULTY...
...FOLLOWING THAT, WE FIRED UP THE *RADIATION EMITTERS* WE'D INSTALLED--THE SAME TYPE WE USE FOR *TESTING--*
--AND GAVE THE HULK A *SUNBURN.*
NOW BRUCE BANNER IS TRAPPED IN *THAT MOUNTAIN*--EXPOSED, WOUNDED AND *HELPLESS.*
ALL BURBANK HAS TO DO IS FIRE *ONE BULLET.*
SITE A, NM
I...DON'T SEE BANNER *ON-SCREEN,* GENERAL FORTEAN...
... AS I *SAID.*
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO, AGENT BURBANK...

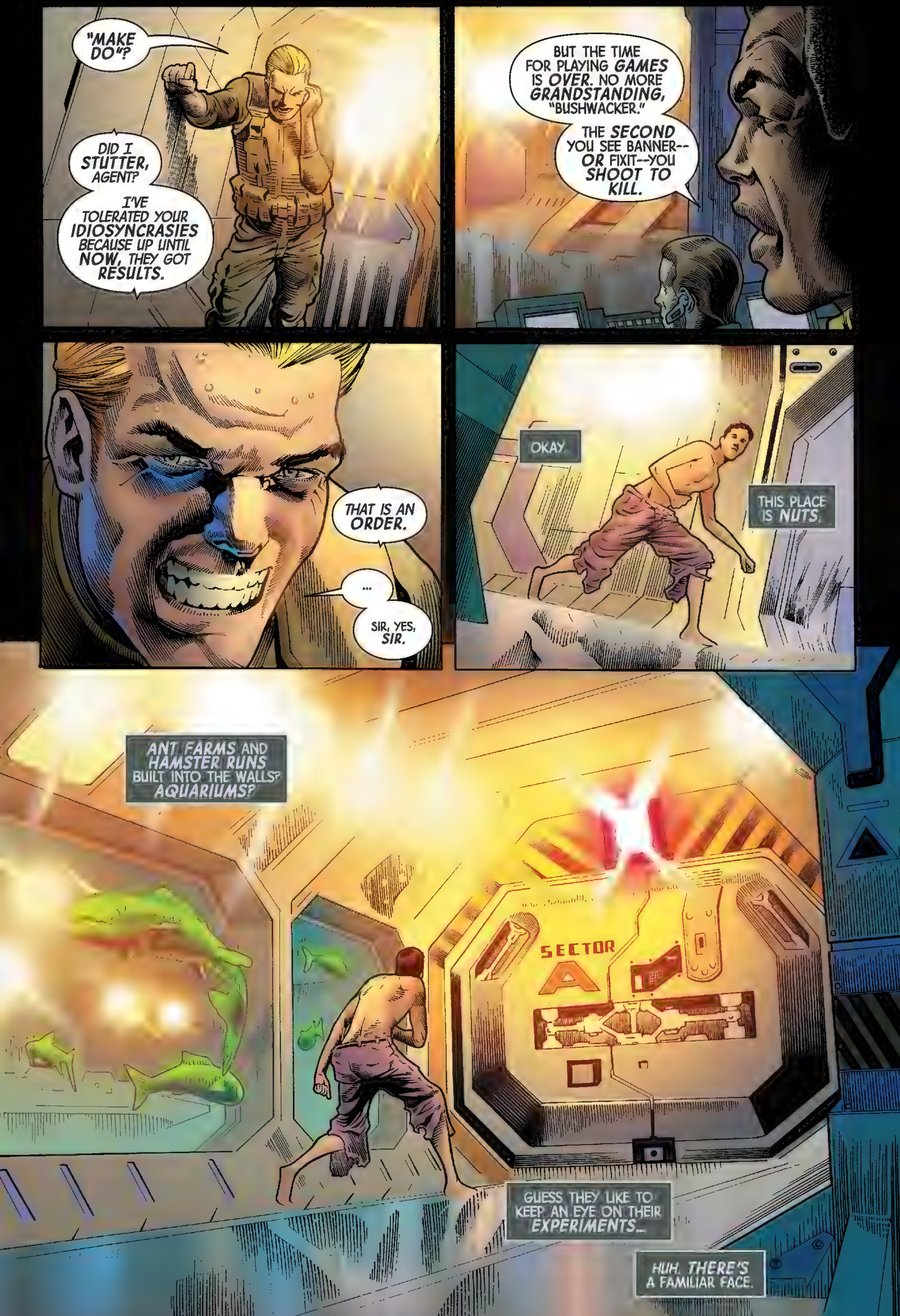

...IS FIRE ONE BULLET.
GENERAL. REGGIE. YOU JUST SAID HE'S HELPLESS. THE GUY WHO SENT ME TO HELL...IS HELPLESS.
LET ME HAVE MY FUN.
BANNER!
YOU CAN'T RUN, BANNER!
SO HERE'S THE SKINNY.
I COME TO, AND THERE'S ARTIFICIAL SUN ALL OVER, AND SOME IDIOT'S PUT A BULLET IN ME. NOW HE'S HUNTING ME FOR SPORT.
STILL, SO FAR HE'S MADE TWO DUMB MISTAKES, SO I FIGURE I GOT EVEN ODDS.
I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU, BANNER!
HE'S RIGHT ABOUT THAT, THOUGH.

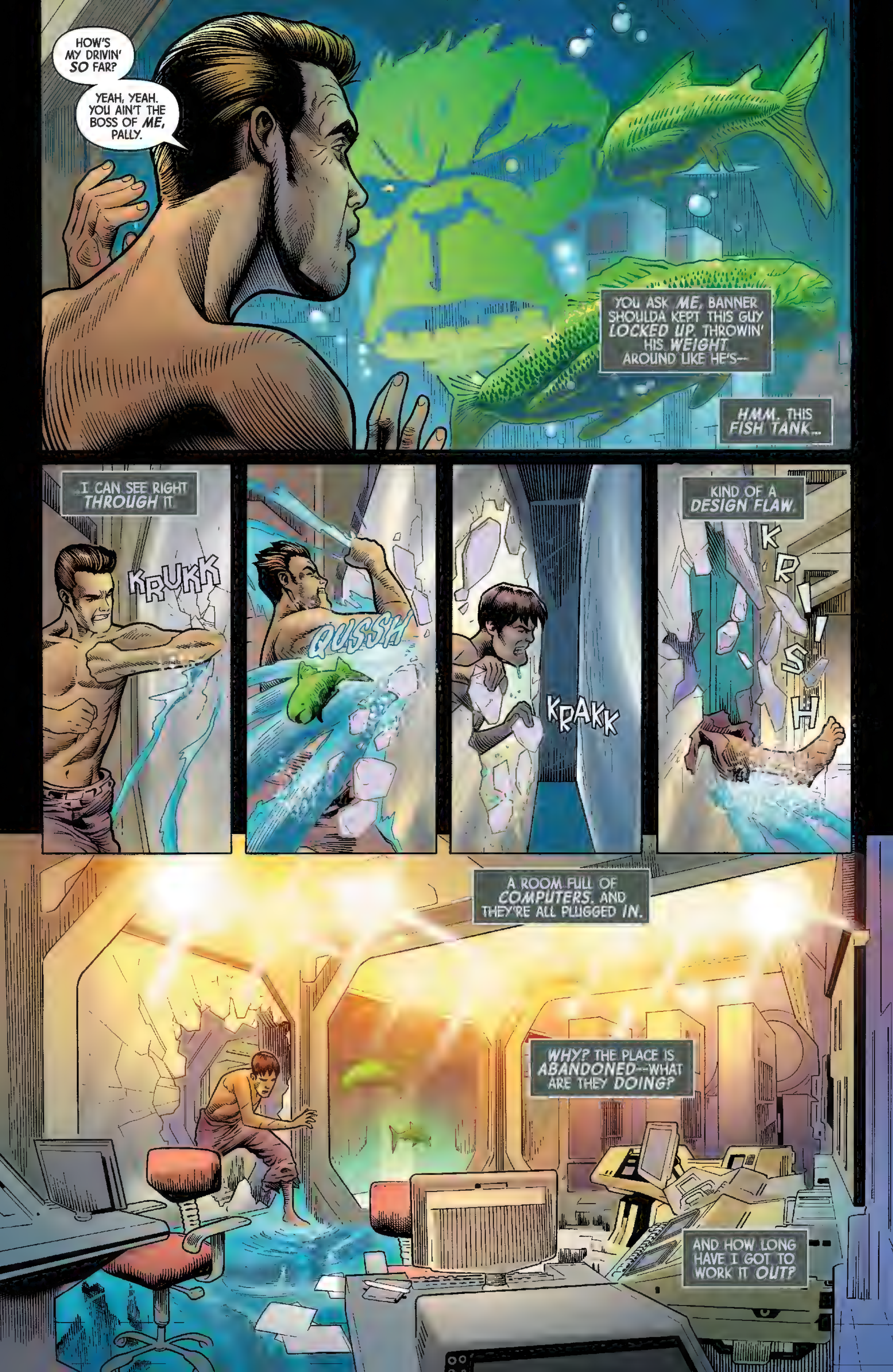

I NEED TO MAKE A LITTLE SPACE
KRIIISH
WHAT'S THAT *NOISE*, BANNER?
TRYING TO SMASH THE *EMITTERS?* GET SOME *DARKNESS?* GOOD LUCK--THEY'RE *EVERYWHERE.*
OR--WAIT, ARE YOU SCROUNGING *TECH?* YOU GONNA *INVENT* YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS?
IS *THAT* IT?
YOU GONNA MAKE SOMETHING REALLY *SMART?*
YEAH.
AAHH--
RADIOACTIVE ANTS IN YER *EYES,* BIG SHOT!
DOES *THAT* REALLY SMART?

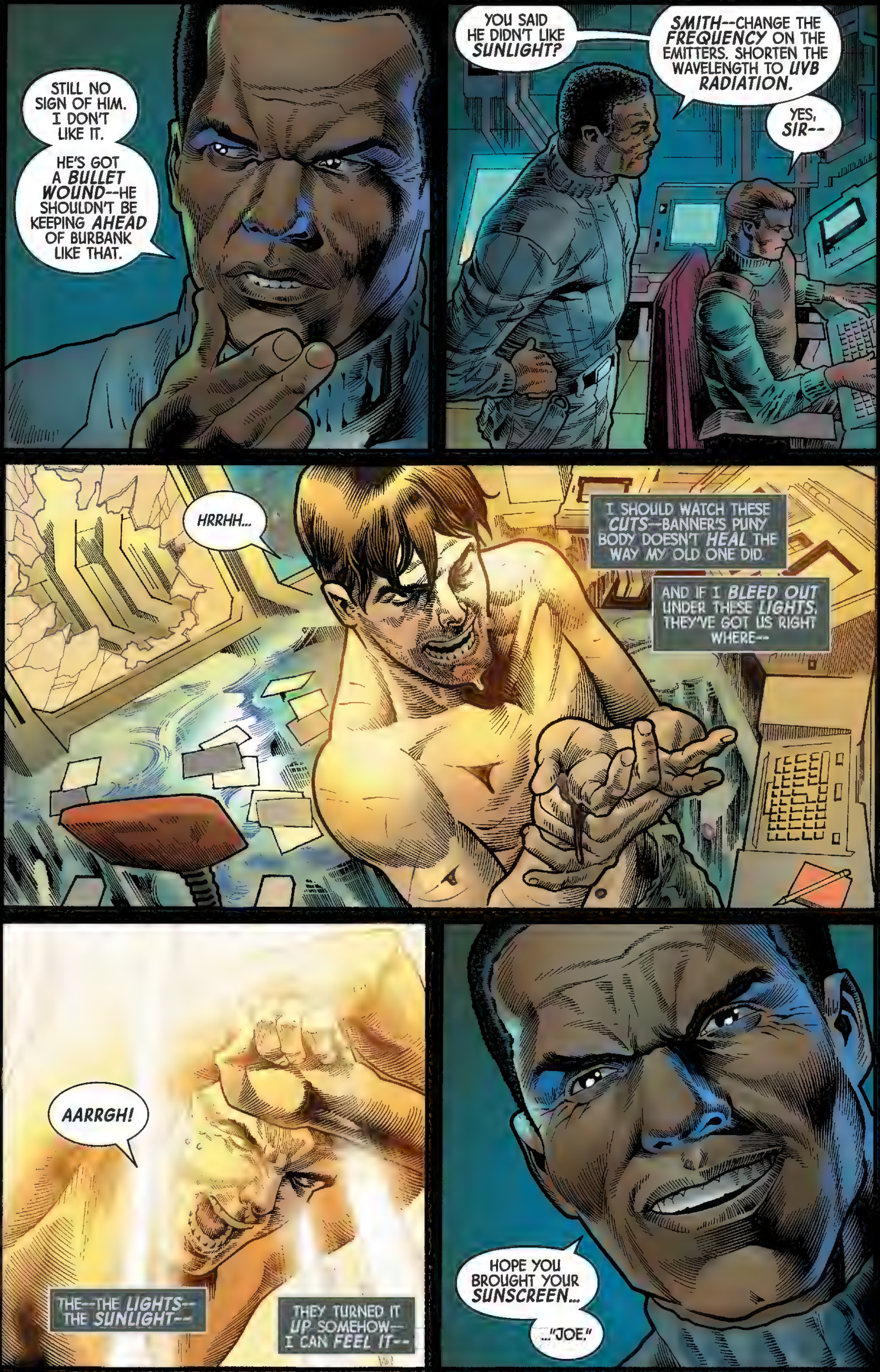

'CAUSE *THIS* IS GONNA--
KRAKK
OKAY. THE ANTS WERE A *SHOCK.*
BUT A PUNCH IN THE *FACE?*
ARRH!
DAMN IT-- NOT *USED* TO THIS PUNY BODY--
WHAT'RE YOU--*MADE* OF--
SUPER-TOUGH *PLASTIC,* COURTESY OF THE *CIA.* I'M A *CYBORG,* BRUCE.
AND *YOU'RE*--
NOT *BRUCE.*
LIKE I SAID-- TWO DUMB MISTAKES.
WHAT?
HEY--
THE FIRST WAS THINKING I WAS *BANNER.*
THE *SECOND*...

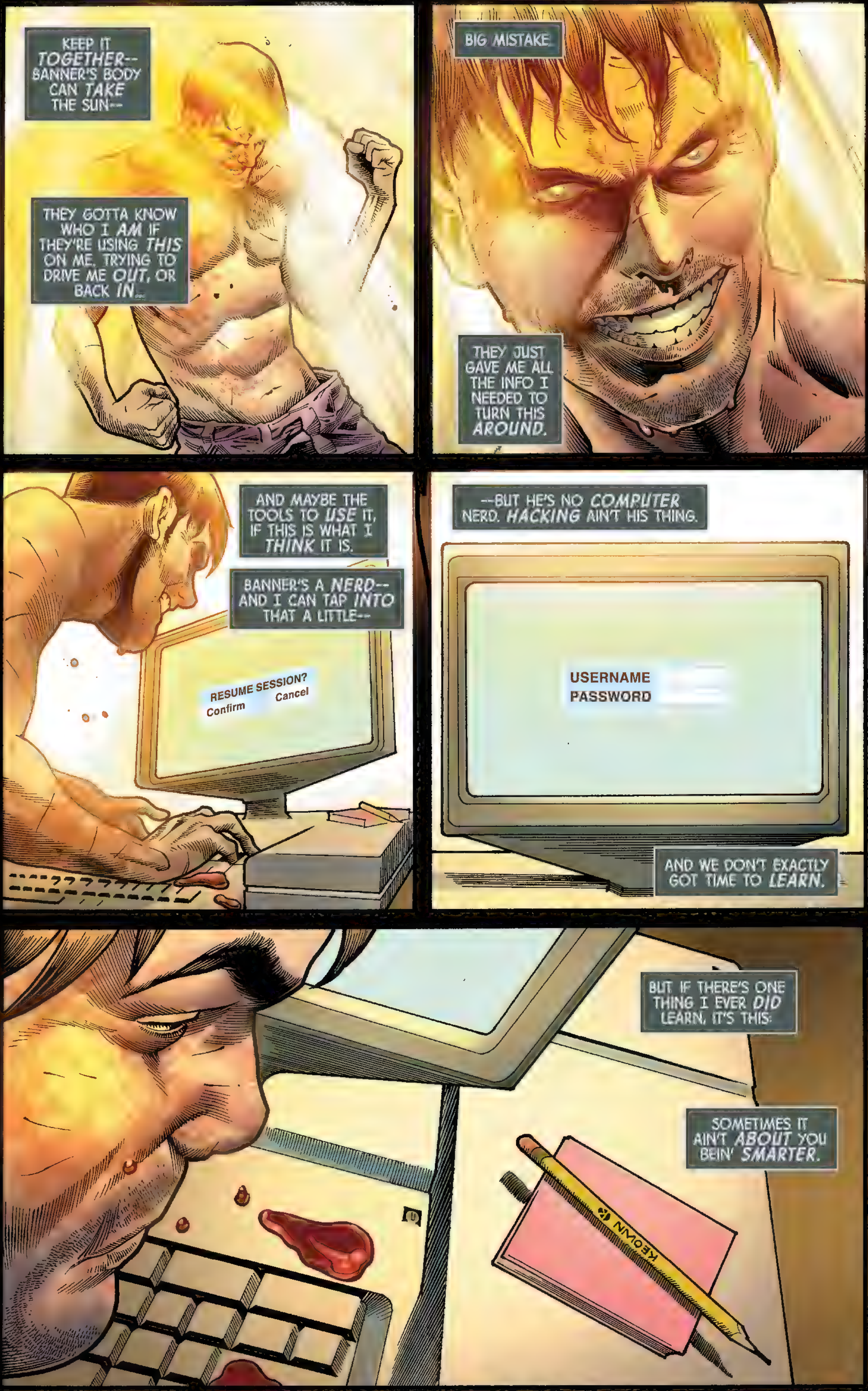

IT'S *JOE.*
WHUNCH
...WAS THINKING I WAS *HELPLESS.*
GUESS *THOSE* AIN'T PLASTIC.
YOU HAVIN' *FUN* YET?
HNNNGHH--
'CAUSE *I* AM.
I DON'T *DO* HELPLESS.
GET *UP,* AGENT BURBANK. YOU'RE NOT CRITICALLY DAMAGED.
EASY... FOR *YOU* TO SAY...
WHERE'D THE LITTLE CREEP LEARN TO *FIGHT* LIKE THAT...?

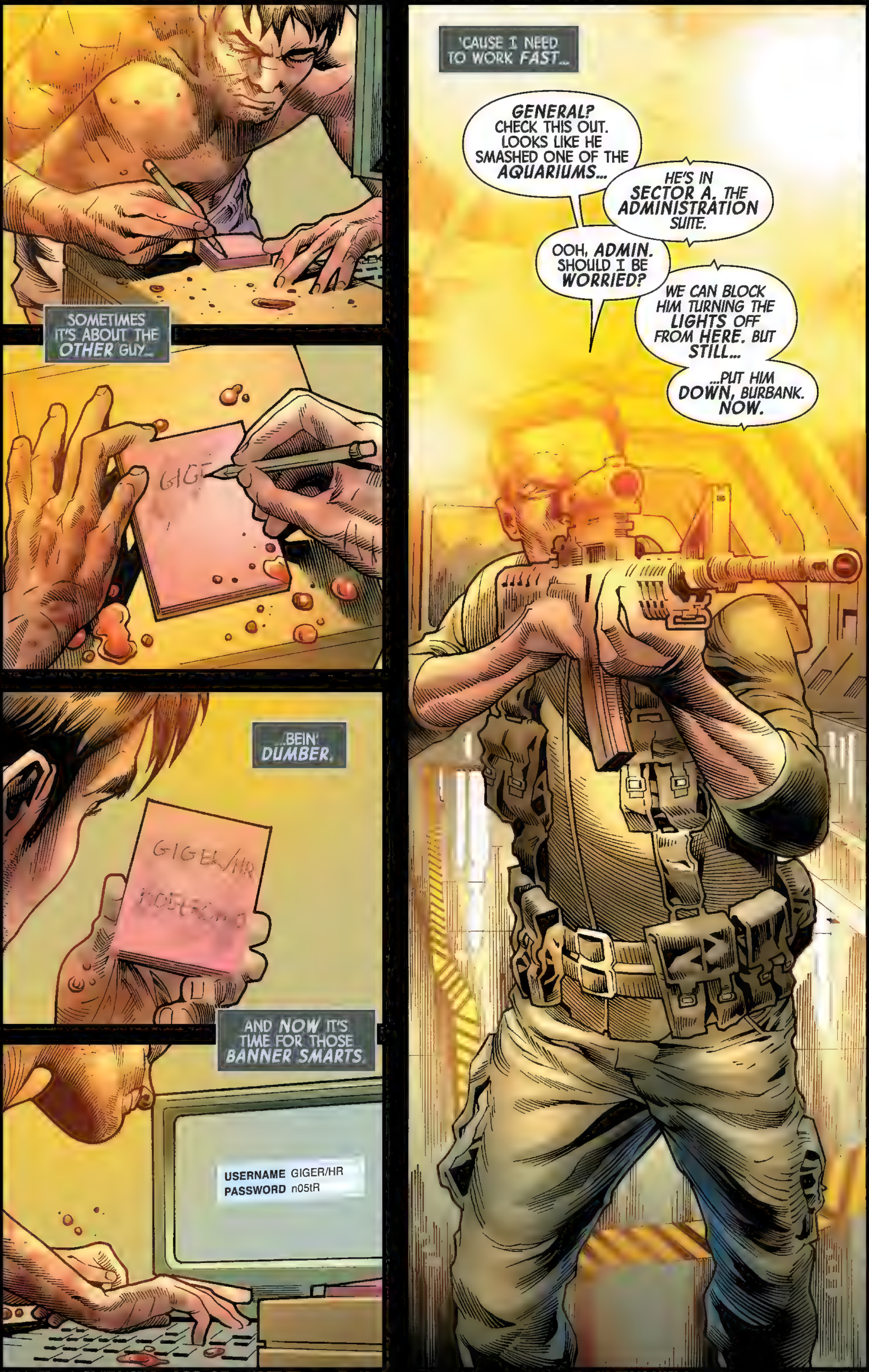

ANY NUMBER OF PLACES.
HE ALTERNATES BETWEEN LIVING OUTSIDE SOCIETY AND LIVING WITH THE AVENGERS. HE'LL HAVE PICKED THINGS UP.
HE CALLED HIMSELF "JOE"...
GLYN--CAN YOU CROSS-CHECK THE OLD ROSS FILES?
SURE THING.
Golden Girls
HERE WE ARE-- BANNER ONCE WORKED FOR A LAS VEGAS CASINO UNDER THE NAME "JOE FIXIT."
HIS SKIN WAS GRAY AT THE TIME-- THAT CONFIGURATION HASN'T BEEN SEEN MUCH SINCE. HE WAS VULNERABLE TO SUNLIGHT BACK THEN, TOO...
THE BODY WAS.
IS THERE ANYTHING STOPPING BANNER FROM GOING THROUGH A PERSONALITY SHIFT WITHOUT HULKING OUT? IS THAT AGAINST THE RULES?
IF HE'S TAUGHT US ONE THING, IT'S NOT TO LOOK FOR RULES.
SMITH-- CAN WE GET A REMOTE VIEW ON BANNER?
MONITOR TEAM CAN'T GET AN EXACT FIX, SIR. TOO MUCH MOUNTAIN.
FINE. WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH BURBANK.

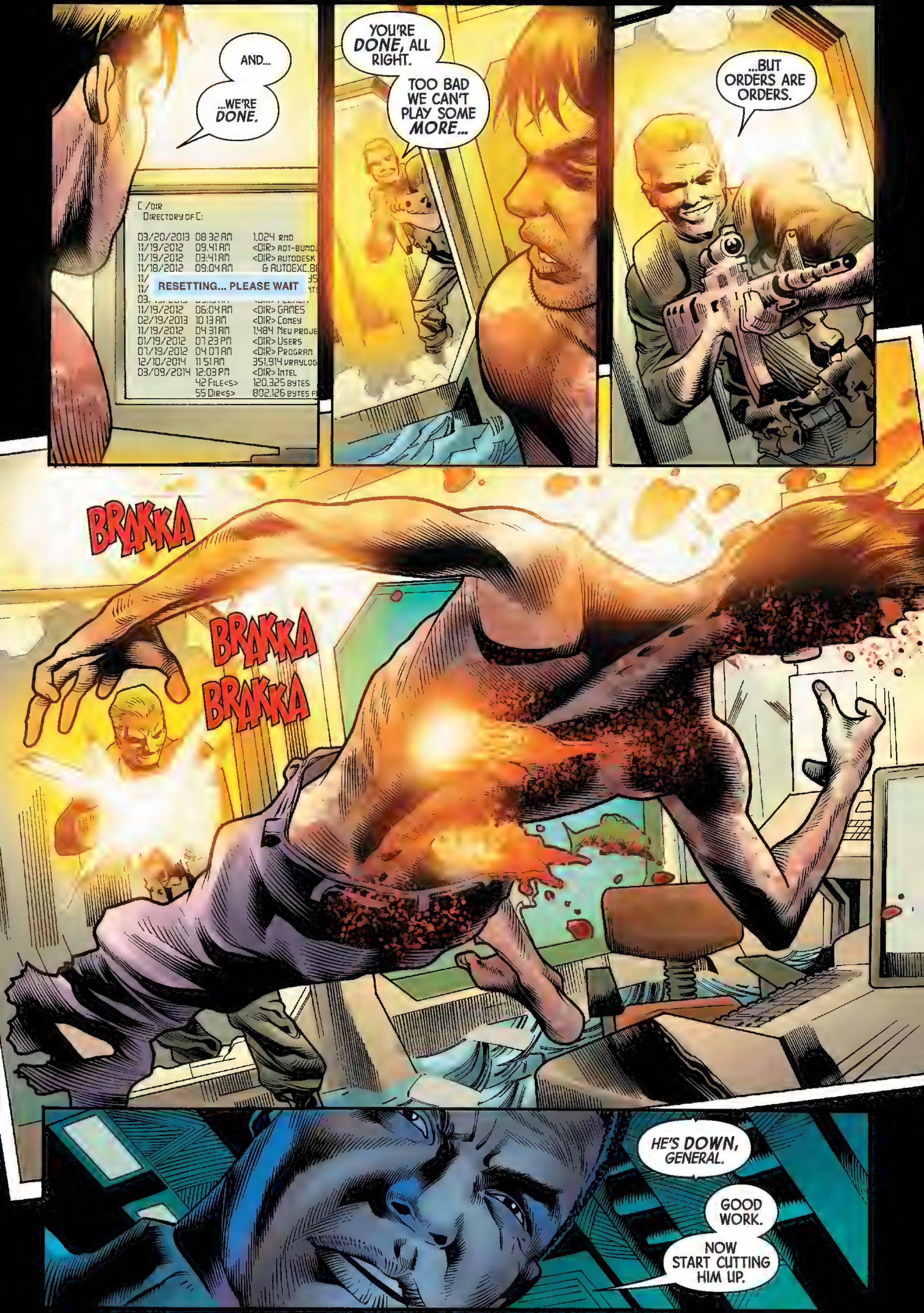

"MAKE DO"?
DID I STUTTER, AGENT?
I'VE TOLERATED YOUR IDIOSYNCRASIES BECAUSE UP UNTIL NOW, THEY GOT RESULTS.
BUT THE TIME FOR PLAYING GAMES IS OVER. NO MORE GRANDSTANDING, "BUSHWACKER."
THE SECOND YOU SEE BANNER--OR FIXIT--YOU SHOOT TO KILL.
THAT IS AN ORDER.
...
SIR, YES, SIR.
OKAY.
THIS PLACE IS NUTS.
ANT FARMS AND HAMSTER RUNS BUILT INTO THE WALLS? AQUARIUMS?
SECTOR A
GUESS THEY LIKE TO KEEP AN EYE ON THEIR EXPERIMENTS...
HUH. THERE'S A FAMILIAR FACE.

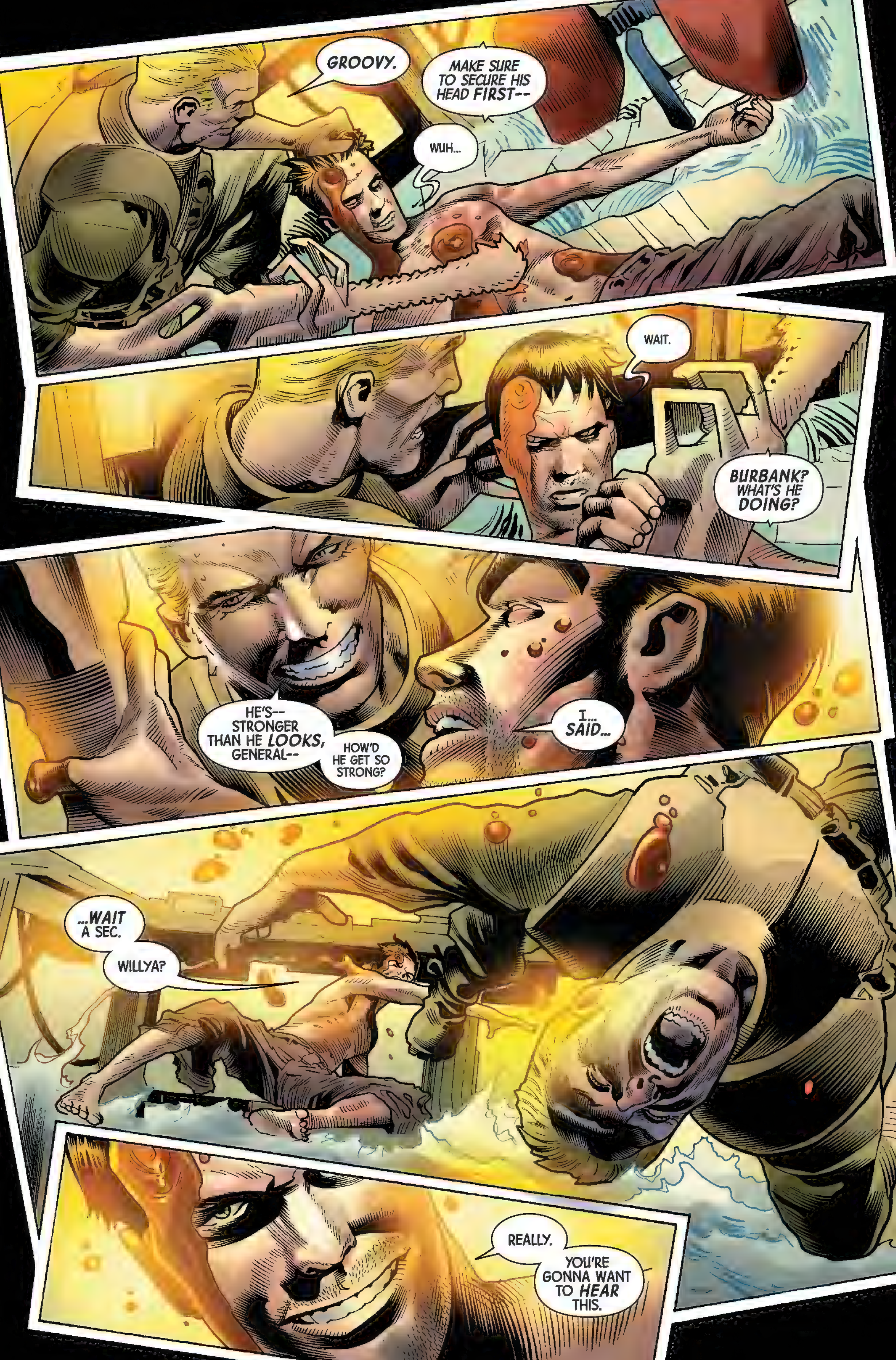

HOW'S MY DRIVIN' SO FAR?
YEAH, YEAH. YOU AIN'T THE BOSS OF ME, PALLY.
YOU ASK ME, BANNER SHOULDA KEPT THIS GUY LOCKED UP. THROWIN' HIS WEIGHT AROUND LIKE HE'S--
HMM. THIS FISH TANK...
...I CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH IT.
KRUKK
QUSSH
KRAKK
KIND OF A DESIGN FLAW.
KRIISSH
A ROOM FULL OF COMPUTERS. AND THEY'RE ALL PLUGGED IN.
WHY? THE PLACE IS ABANDONED--WHAT ARE THEY DOING?
AND HOW LONG HAVE I GOT TO WORK IT OUT?

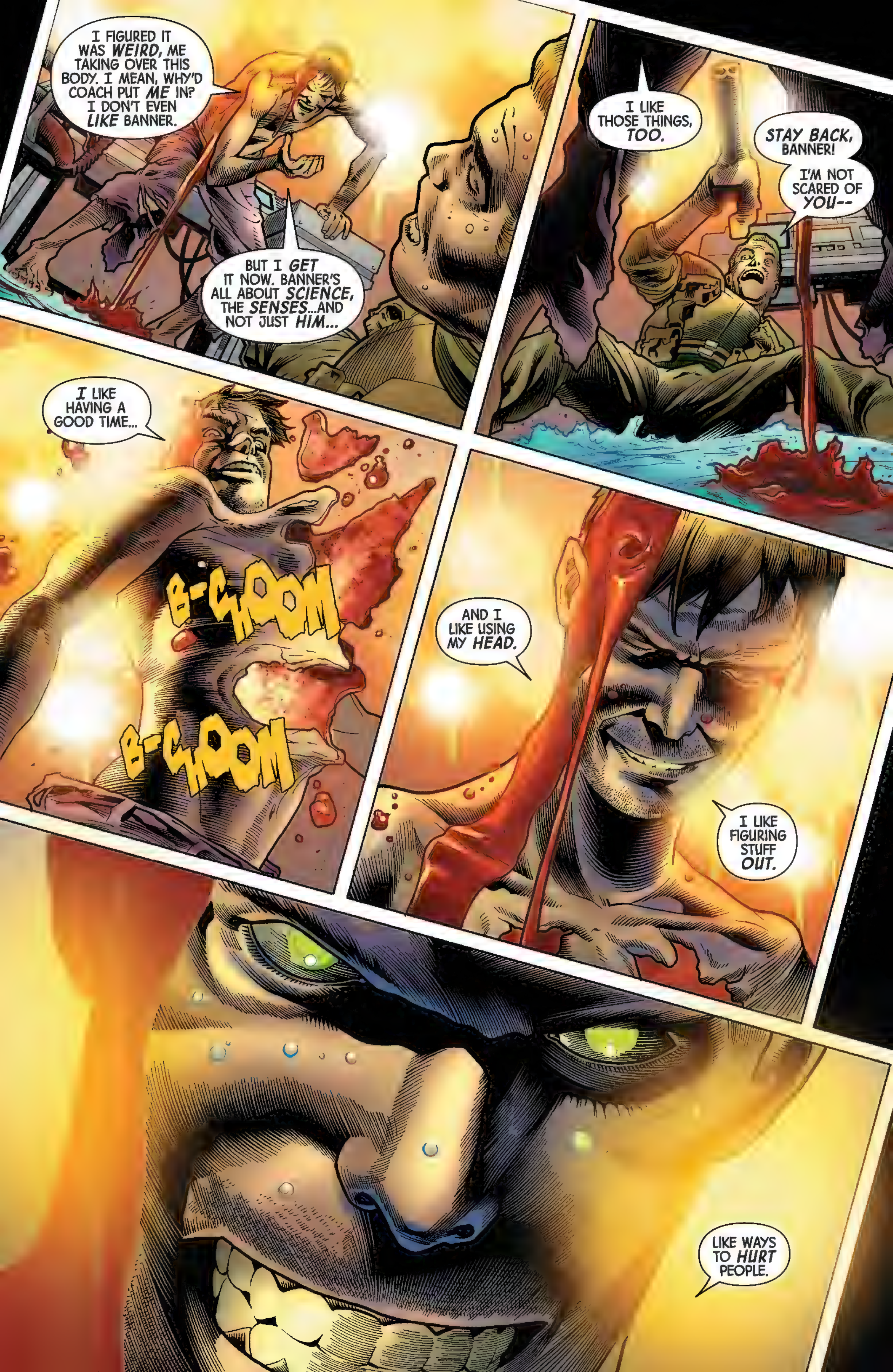

STILL NO SIGN OF HIM. I DON'T LIKE IT.
HE'S GOT A *BULLET WOUND*--HE SHOULDN'T BE KEEPING *AHEAD* OF BURBANK LIKE THAT.
YOU SAID HE DIDN'T LIKE *SUNLIGHT?*
SMITH--CHANGE THE *FREQUENCY* ON THE EMITTERS. SHORTEN THE WAVELENGTH TO *UVB RADIATION.*
YES, *SIR*--
HRRHH...
I SHOULD WATCH THESE *CUTS*--BANNER'S PUNY BODY DOESN'T *HEAL* THE WAY MY OLD ONE DID.
AND IF I *BLEED OUT* UNDER THESE *LIGHTS,* THEY'VE GOT US RIGHT WHERE--
AARRGH!
THE--THE *LIGHTS*--THE *SUNLIGHT*--
THEY TURNED IT *UP* SOMEHOW--I CAN *FEEL IT*--
HOPE YOU BROUGHT YOUR *SUNSCREEN...*
..."JOE."

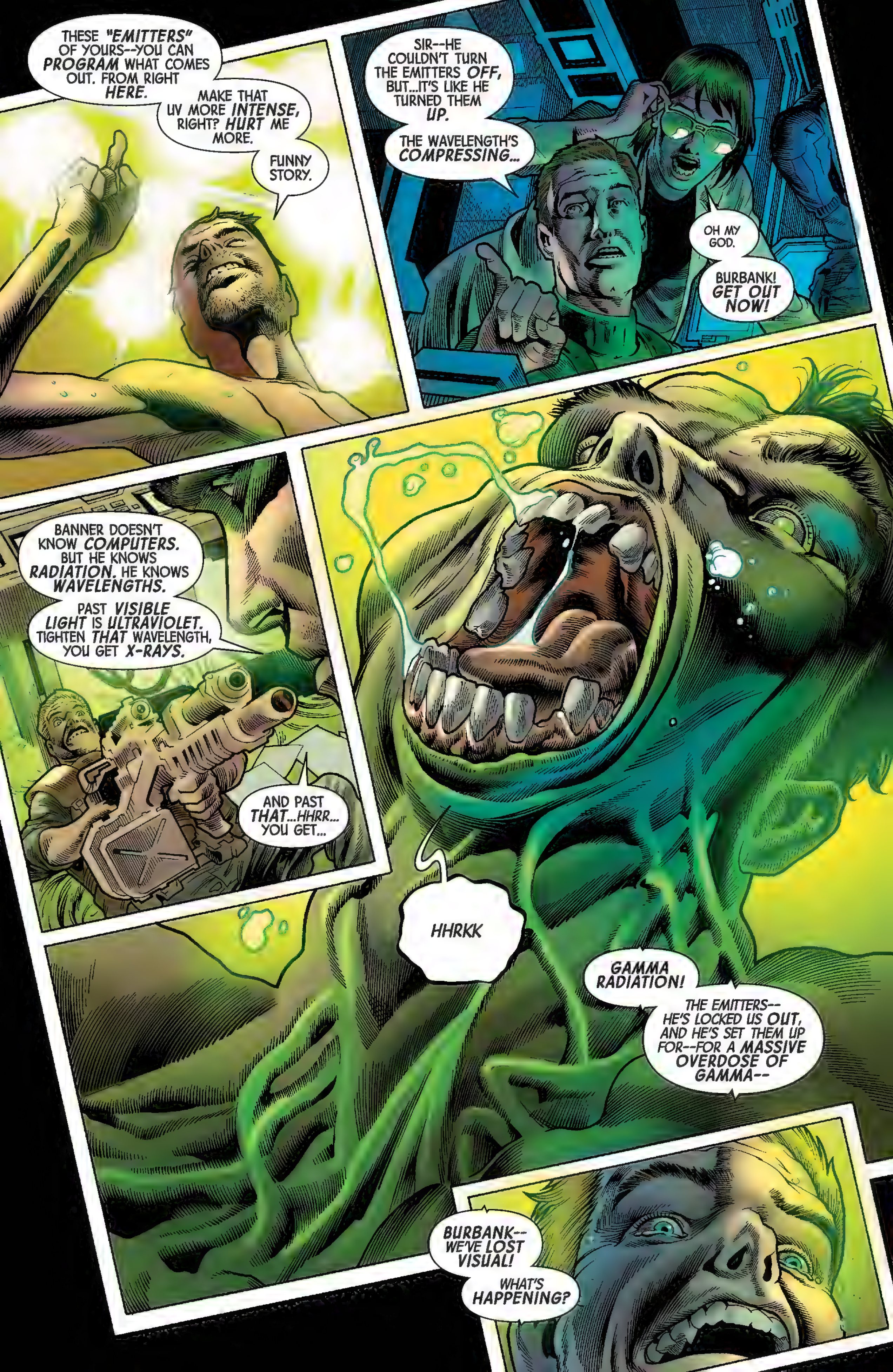

KEEP IT TOGETHER-- BANNER'S BODY CAN TAKE THE SUN--
THEY GOTTA KNOW WHO I AM IF THEY'RE USING THIS ON ME, TRYING TO DRIVE ME OUT, OR BACK IN...
BIG MISTAKE.
THEY JUST GAVE ME ALL THE INFO I NEEDED TO TURN THIS AROUND.
AND MAYBE THE TOOLS TO USE IT, IF THIS IS WHAT I THINK IT IS.
BANNER'S A NERD-- AND I CAN TAP INTO THAT A LITTLE--
RESUME SESSION?
Confirm
Cancel
--BUT HE'S NO COMPUTER NERD. HACKING AIN'T HIS THING.
USERNAME
PASSWORD
AND WE DON'T EXACTLY GOT TIME TO LEARN.
BUT IF THERE'S ONE THING I EVER DID LEARN, IT'S THIS:
SOMETIMES IT AIN'T ABOUT YOU BEIN' SMARTER.
KEOWN

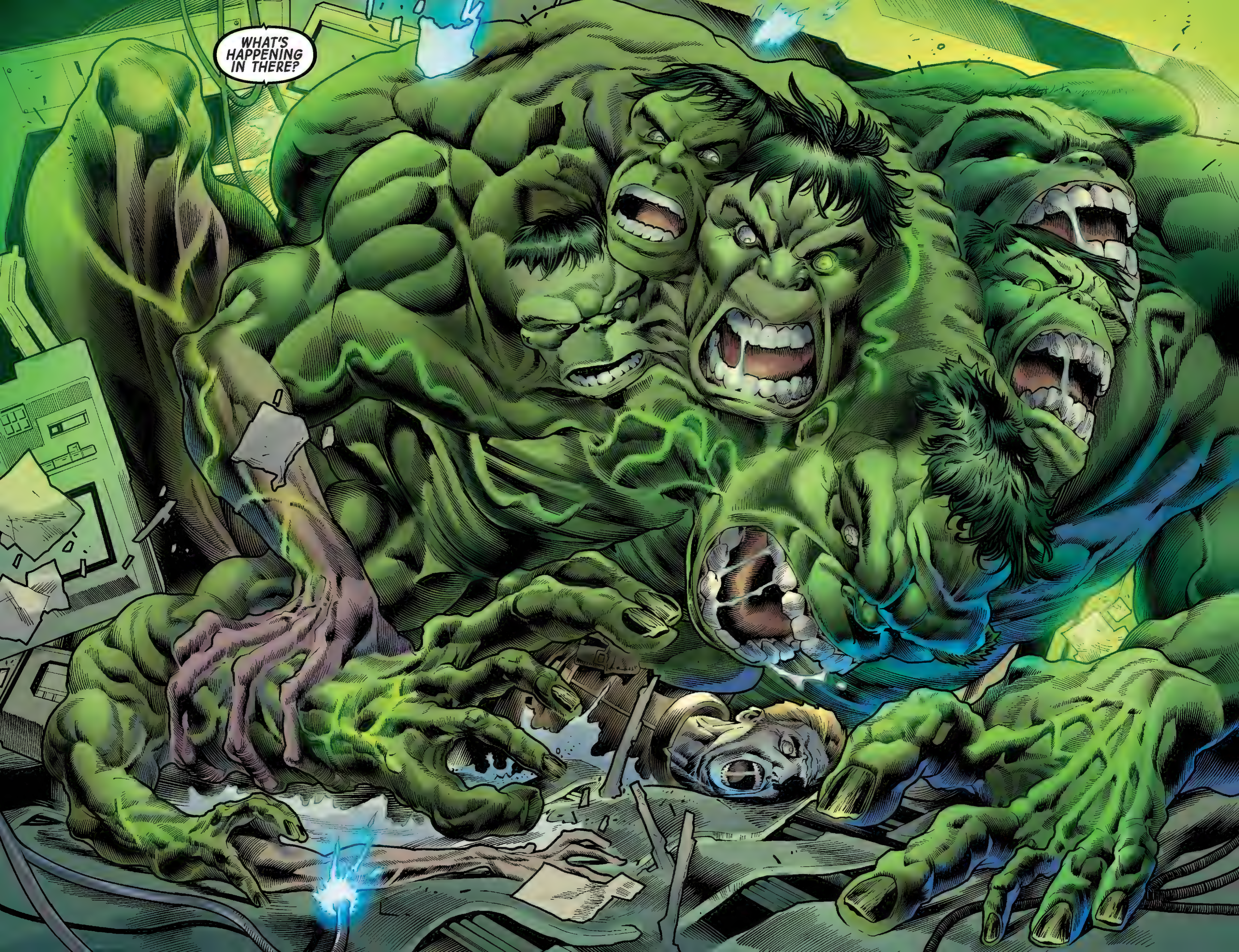

SOMETIMES IT'S ABOUT THE *OTHER* GUY...
GIGE
...BEIN' *DUMBER*.
GIGER/HR
AND *NOW* IT'S TIME FOR THOSE *BANNER SMARTS*.
USERNAME GIGER/HR
PASSWORD n05tR
'CAUSE I NEED TO WORK *FAST*...
GENERAL? CHECK THIS OUT. LOOKS LIKE HE SMASHED ONE OF THE *AQUARIUMS*...
HE'S IN *SECTOR A*. THE *ADMINISTRATION* SUITE.
OOH, *ADMIN*. SHOULD I BE *WORRIED?*
WE CAN BLOCK HIM TURNING THE *LIGHTS* OFF FROM *HERE*. BUT *STILL*...
...PUT HIM *DOWN*, BURBANK. *NOW*.

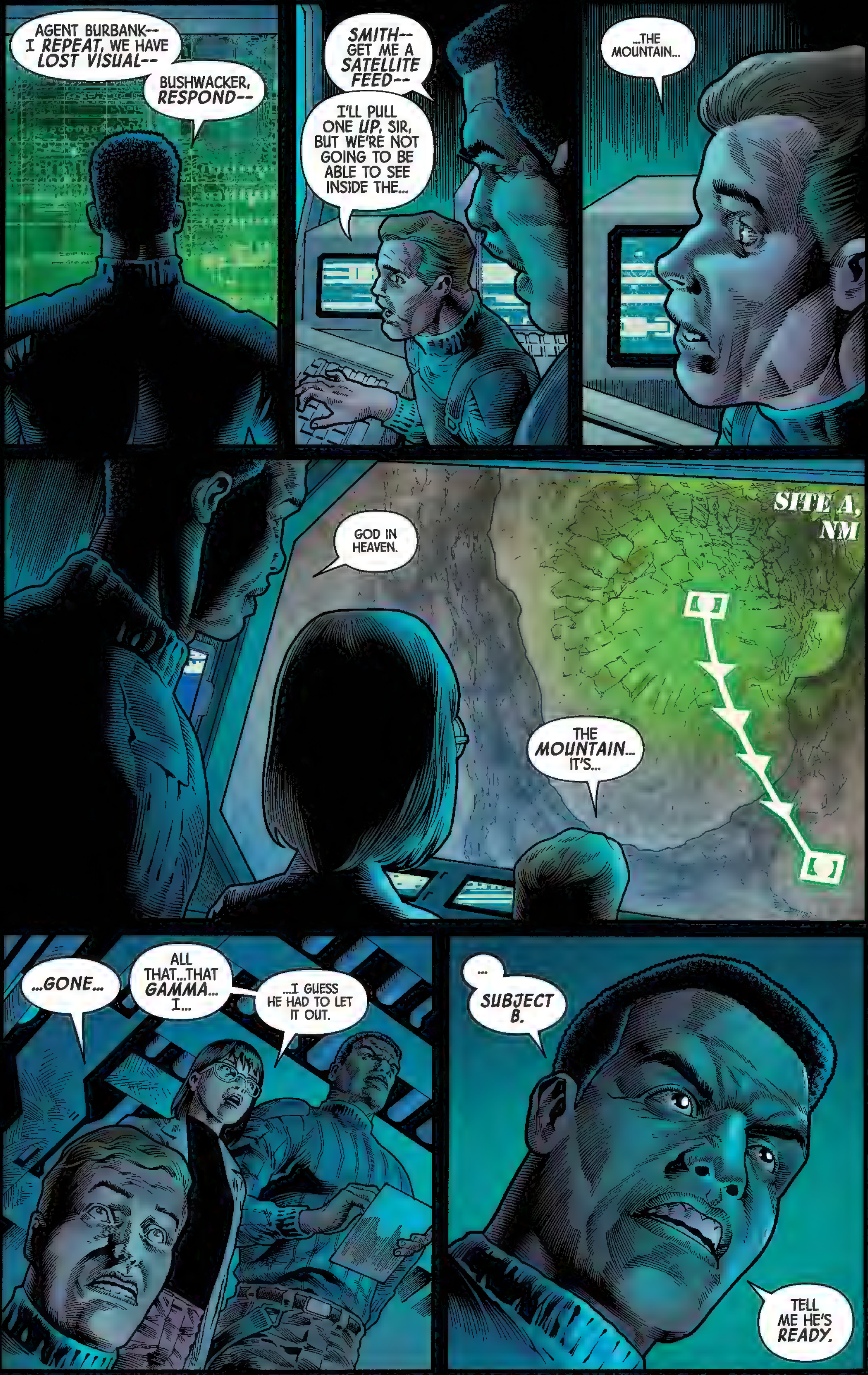

AND...
...WE'RE DONE.
C /DIR
DIRECTORY OF C:
03/20/2013 08 32 AM 1,024 RND
11/19/2012 09.41 AM <DIR> ADT-BUND
11/19/2012 03:41 AM <DIR> AUTODESK
11/18/2012 09.04 AM & AUTOEXC.B
RESETTING... PLEASE WAIT
11/19/2012 06:04 AM <DIR> GAMES
02/19/2013 10 13 AM <DIR> Coney
11/19/2012 04 31 AM 1,484 New proje
01/19/2012 07 23 PM <DIR> Users
07/19/2012 04 07 AM <DIR> Program
12/10/2014 11 51 AM 351,914 vraylog
03/09/2014 12:03 PM <DIR> Intel
42 File<s> 120,325 bytes
55 Dir<s> 802,126 bytes f
YOU'RE DONE, ALL RIGHT.
TOO BAD WE CAN'T PLAY SOME MORE...
...BUT ORDERS ARE ORDERS.
BRAKKA
BRAKKA
BRAKKA
HE'S DOWN, GENERAL.
GOOD WORK.
NOW START CUTTING HIM UP.

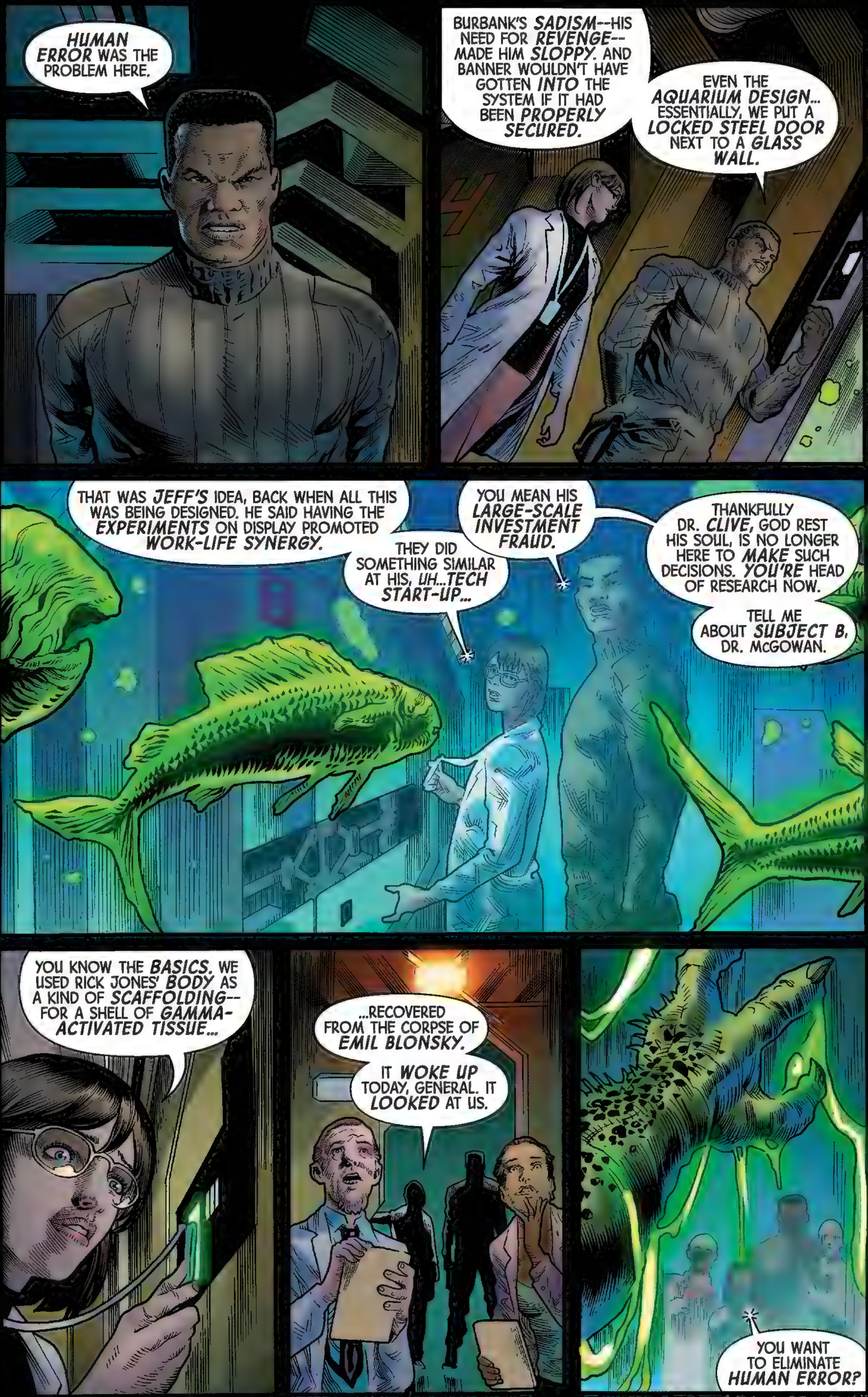

GROOVY.
MAKE SURE TO SECURE HIS HEAD *FIRST*--
WUH...
WAIT.
BURBANK? WHAT'S HE *DOING?*
HE'S-- STRONGER THAN HE *LOOKS,* GENERAL--
HOW'D HE GET SO STRONG?
I... *SAID...*
...*WAIT* A SEC.
WILLYA?
REALLY.
YOU'RE GONNA WANT TO *HEAR* THIS.

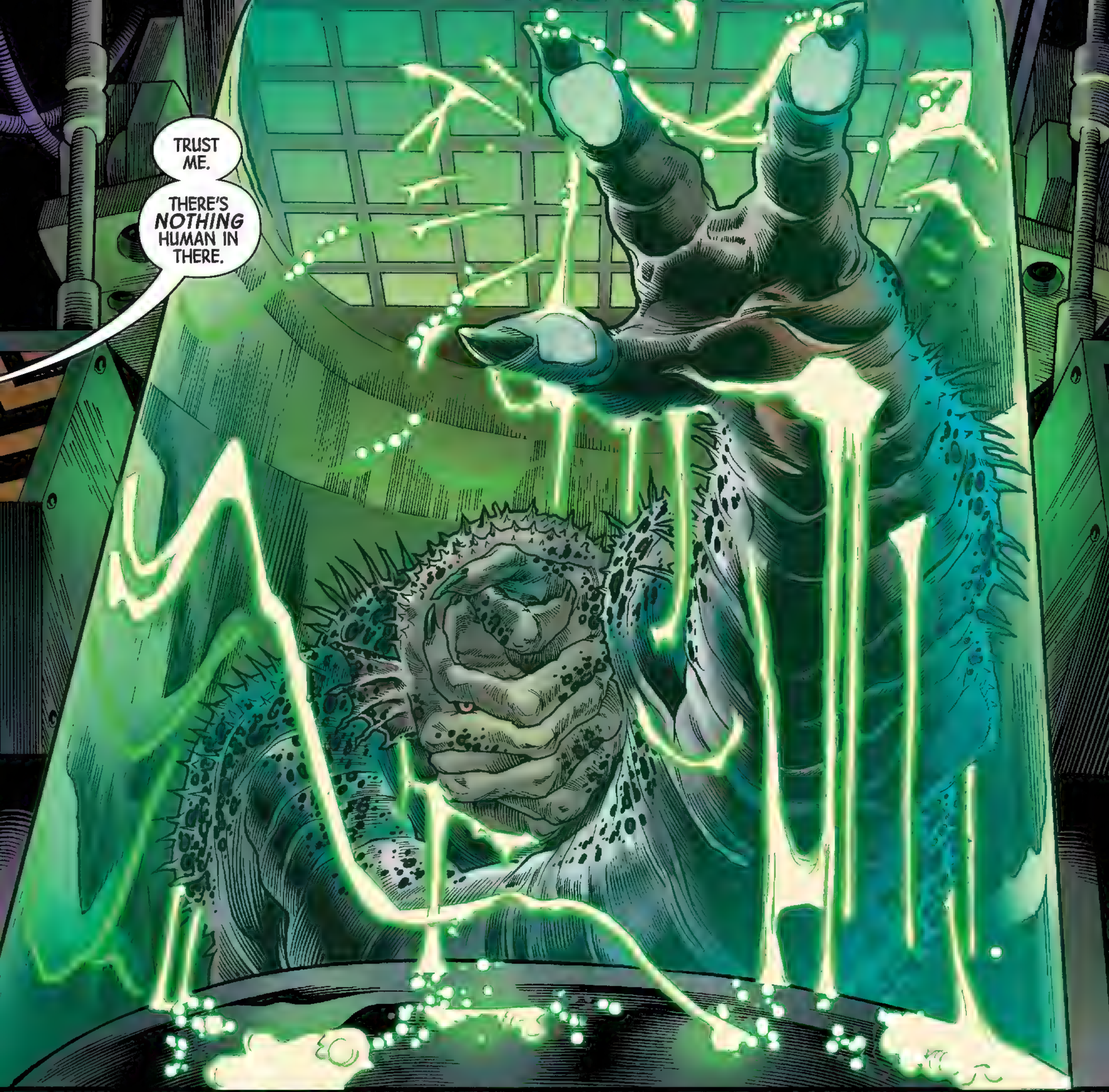

I FIGURED IT WAS *WEIRD*, ME TAKING OVER THIS BODY. I MEAN, WHY'D COACH PUT *ME* IN? I DON'T EVEN *LIKE* BANNER.
BUT I *GET* IT NOW. BANNER'S ALL ABOUT *SCIENCE*, THE *SENSES*...AND NOT JUST *HIM*...
I LIKE THOSE THINGS, *TOO*.
STAY BACK, BANNER!
I'M NOT SCARED OF *YOU*--
I LIKE HAVING A GOOD TIME...
B-CHOOM
B-CHOOM
AND I LIKE USING MY *HEAD*.
I LIKE FIGURING STUFF *OUT*.
LIKE WAYS TO *HURT* PEOPLE.


THESE "EMITTERS" OF YOURS--YOU CAN PROGRAM WHAT COMES OUT. FROM RIGHT HERE.
MAKE THAT UV MORE INTENSE, RIGHT? HURT ME MORE.
FUNNY STORY.
SIR--HE COULDN'T TURN THE EMITTERS OFF, BUT...IT'S LIKE HE TURNED THEM UP.
THE WAVELENGTH'S COMPRESSING...
OH MY GOD.
BURBANK! GET OUT NOW!
BANNER DOESN'T KNOW COMPUTERS. BUT HE KNOWS RADIATION. HE KNOWS WAVELENGTHS.
PAST VISIBLE LIGHT IS ULTRAVIOLET. TIGHTEN THAT WAVELENGTH, YOU GET X-RAYS.
AND PAST THAT...HHRR... YOU GET...
HHRKK
GAMMA RADIATION!
THE EMITTERS-- HE'S LOCKED US OUT, AND HE'S SET THEM UP FOR--FOR A MASSIVE OVERDOSE OF GAMMA--
BURBANK-- WE'VE LOST VISUAL!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?


WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THERE?


AGENT BURBANK-- I *REPEAT*, WE HAVE *LOST VISUAL*--
BUSHWACKER, *RESPOND*--
SMITH-- GET ME A *SATELLITE FEED*--
I'LL PULL ONE *UP*, SIR, BUT WE'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO SEE INSIDE THE...
...THE MOUNTAIN...
SITE A, NM
GOD IN HEAVEN.
THE *MOUNTAIN*... IT'S...
...*GONE*...
ALL THAT...THAT *GAMMA*... I...
...I GUESS HE HAD TO LET IT OUT.
... *SUBJECT B.*
TELL ME HE'S *READY.*


HUMAN ERROR WAS THE PROBLEM HERE.
BURBANK'S SADISM--HIS NEED FOR REVENGE--MADE HIM SLOPPY. AND BANNER WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN INTO THE SYSTEM IF IT HAD BEEN PROPERLY SECURED.
EVEN THE AQUARIUM DESIGN... ESSENTIALLY, WE PUT A LOCKED STEEL DOOR NEXT TO A GLASS WALL.
THAT WAS JEFF'S IDEA, BACK WHEN ALL THIS WAS BEING DESIGNED. HE SAID HAVING THE EXPERIMENTS ON DISPLAY PROMOTED WORK-LIFE SYNERGY.
THEY DID SOMETHING SIMILAR AT HIS, UH...TECH START-UP...
YOU MEAN HIS LARGE-SCALE INVESTMENT FRAUD.
THANKFULLY DR. CLIVE, GOD REST HIS SOUL, IS NO LONGER HERE TO MAKE SUCH DECISIONS. YOU'RE HEAD OF RESEARCH NOW.
TELL ME ABOUT SUBJECT B, DR. McGOWAN.
YOU KNOW THE BASICS. WE USED RICK JONES' BODY AS A KIND OF SCAFFOLDING--FOR A SHELL OF GAMMA-ACTIVATED TISSUE...
...RECOVERED FROM THE CORPSE OF EMIL BLONSKY.
IT WOKE UP TODAY, GENERAL. IT LOOKED AT US.
YOU WANT TO ELIMINATE HUMAN ERROR?

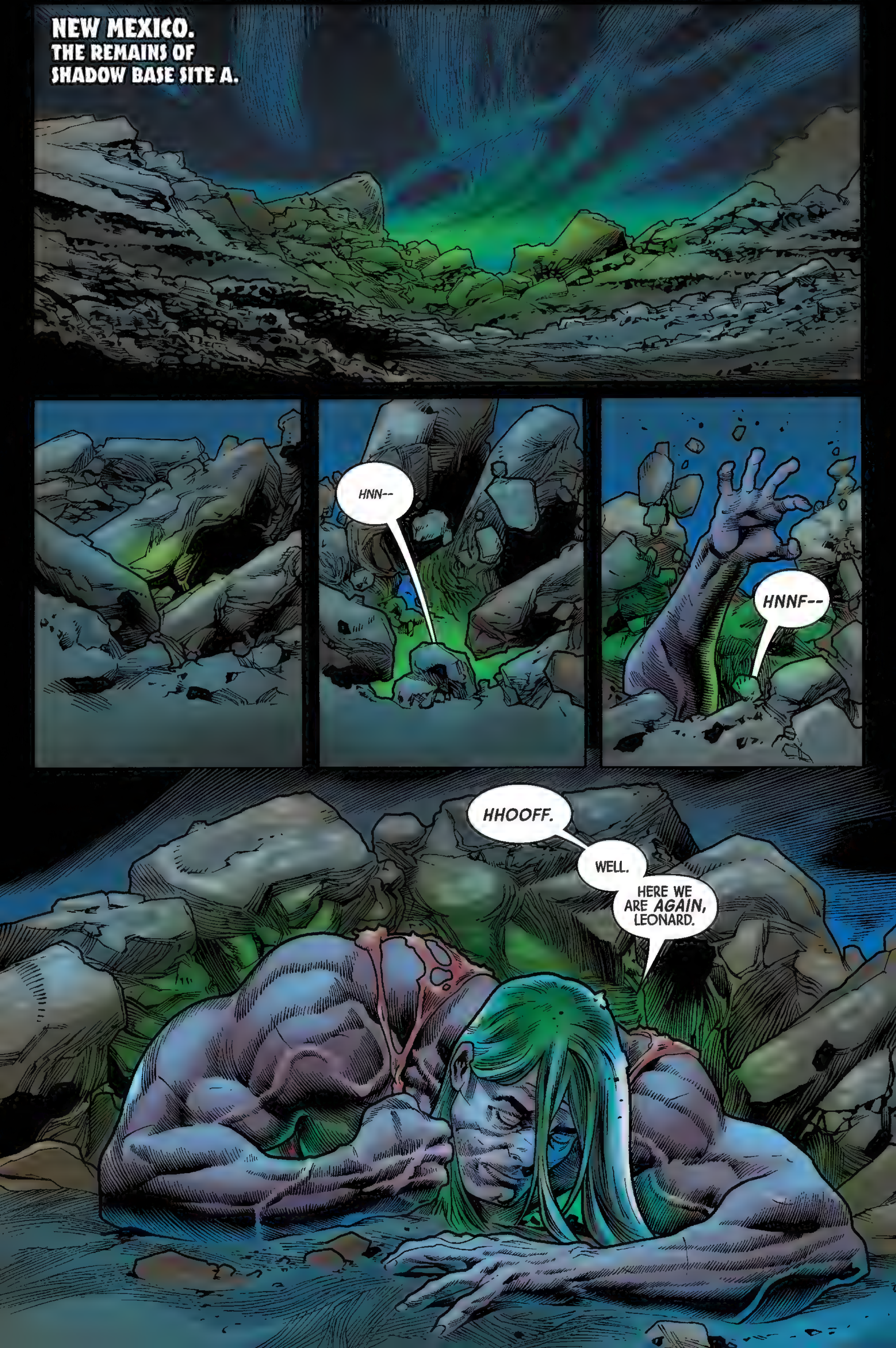

TRUST ME.
THERE'S *NOTHING* HUMAN IN THERE.

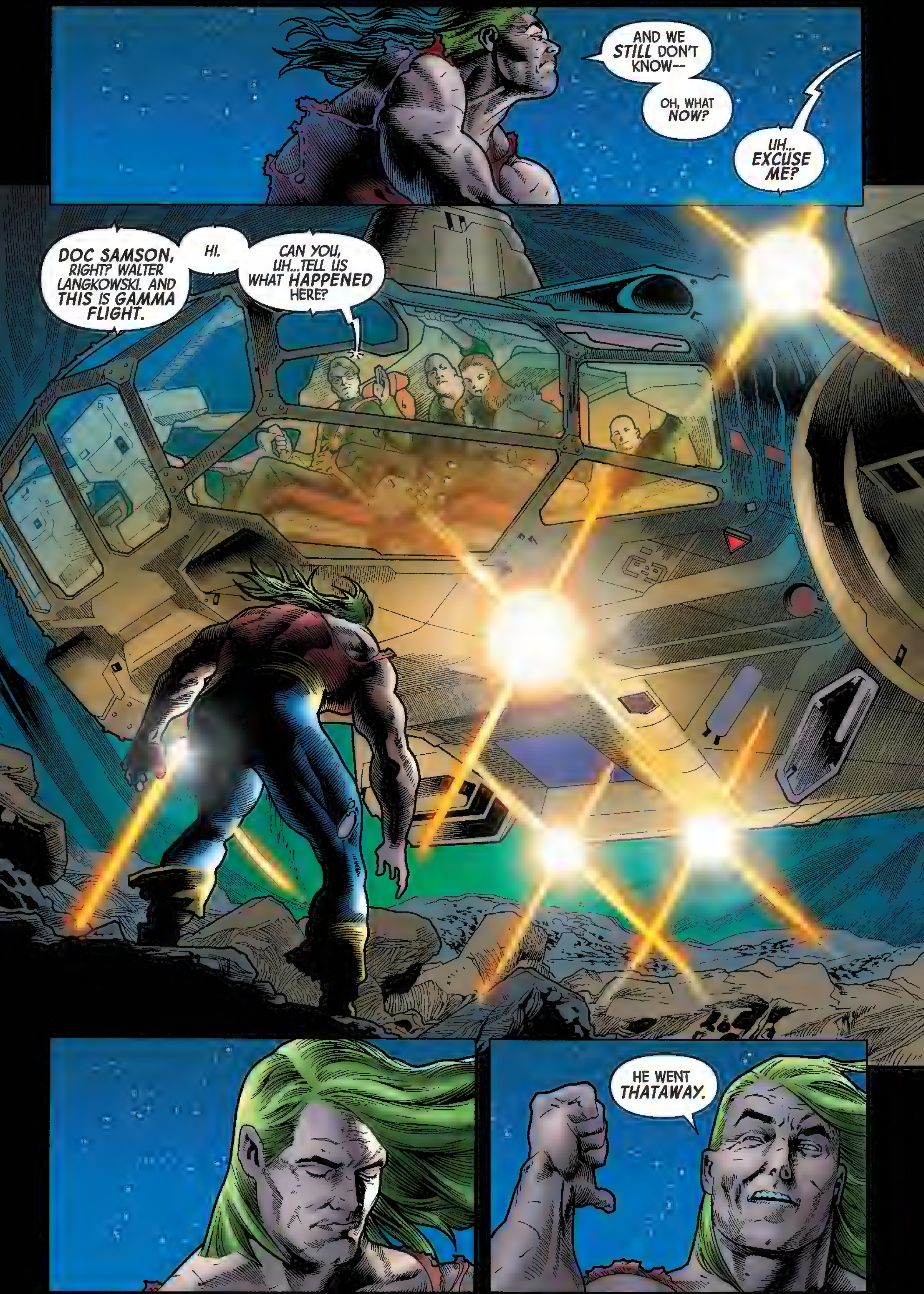
ABOMINATION

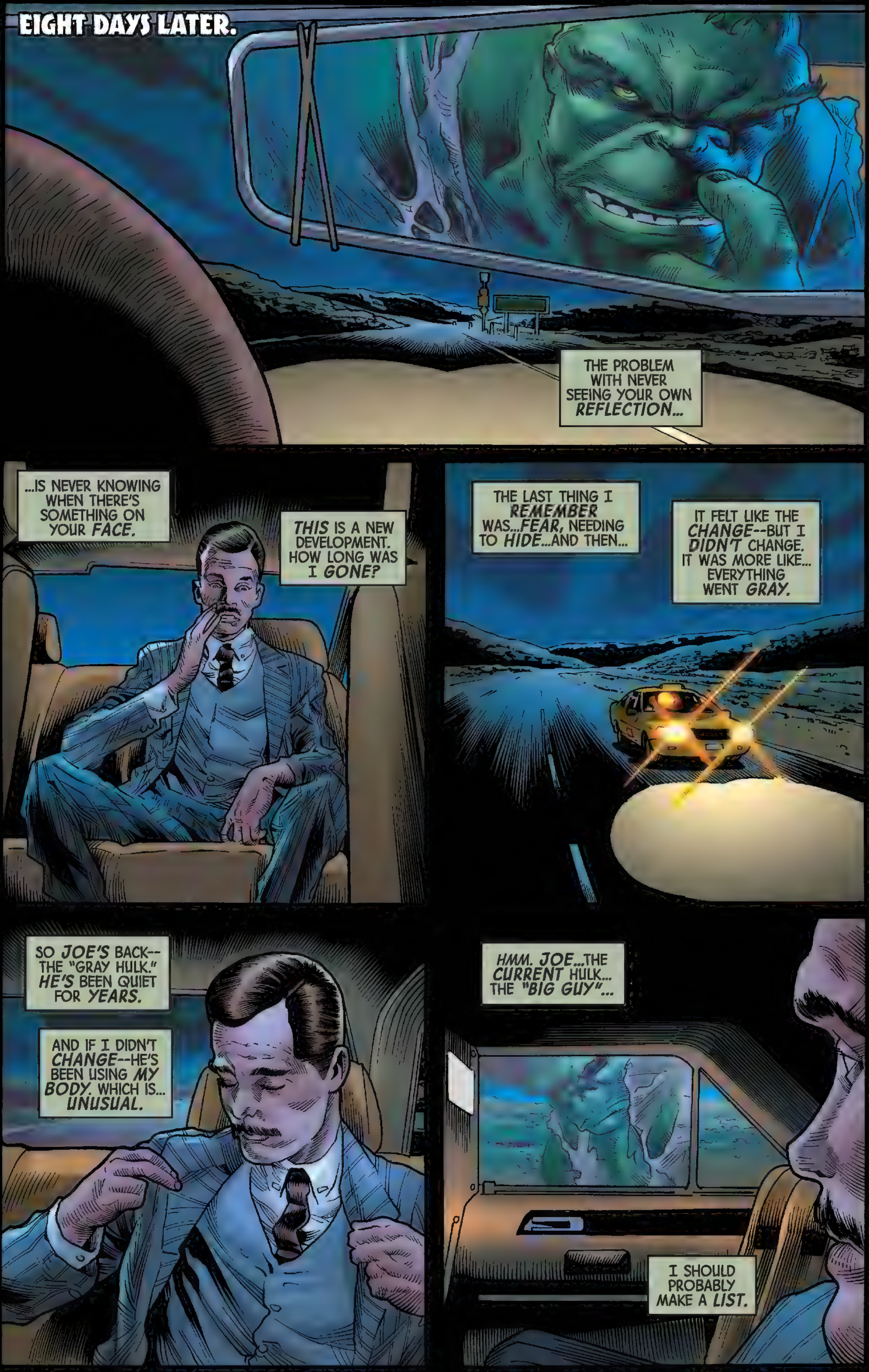
18

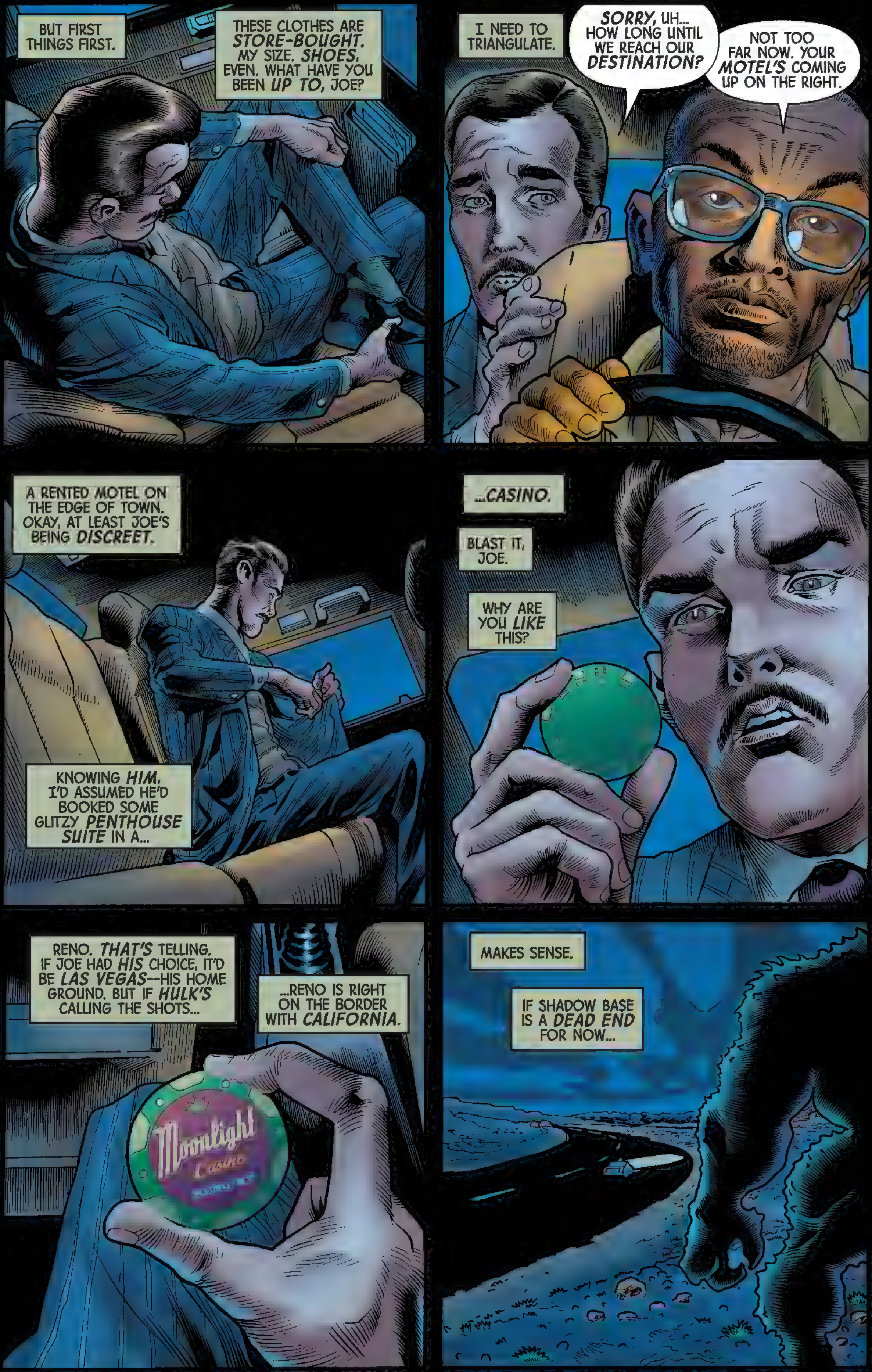
"NOTHING IS INTOLERABLE
THAT IS NECESSARY."

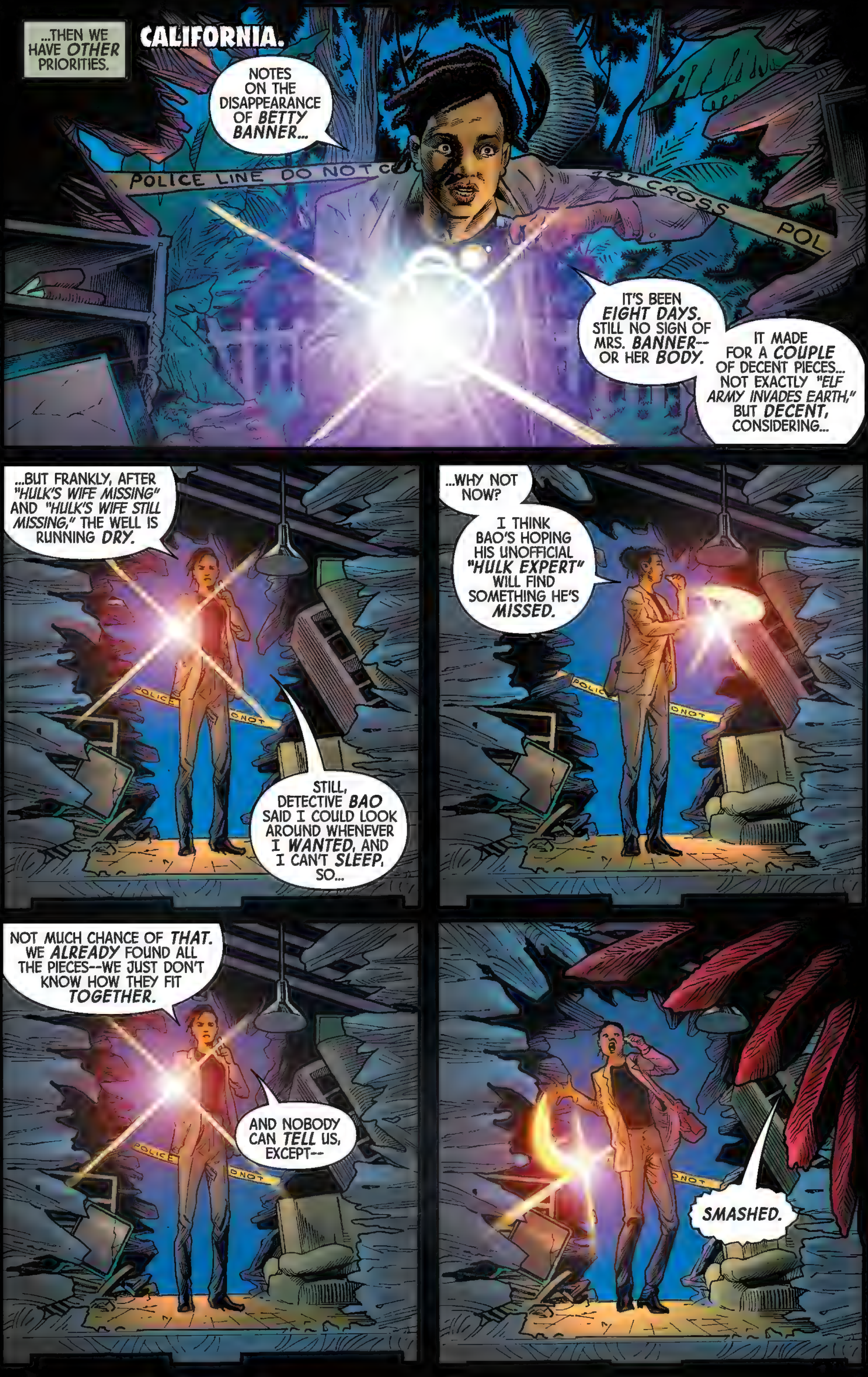
– JEREMY TAYLOR
THE RULE AND EXERCISES OF HOLY DYING

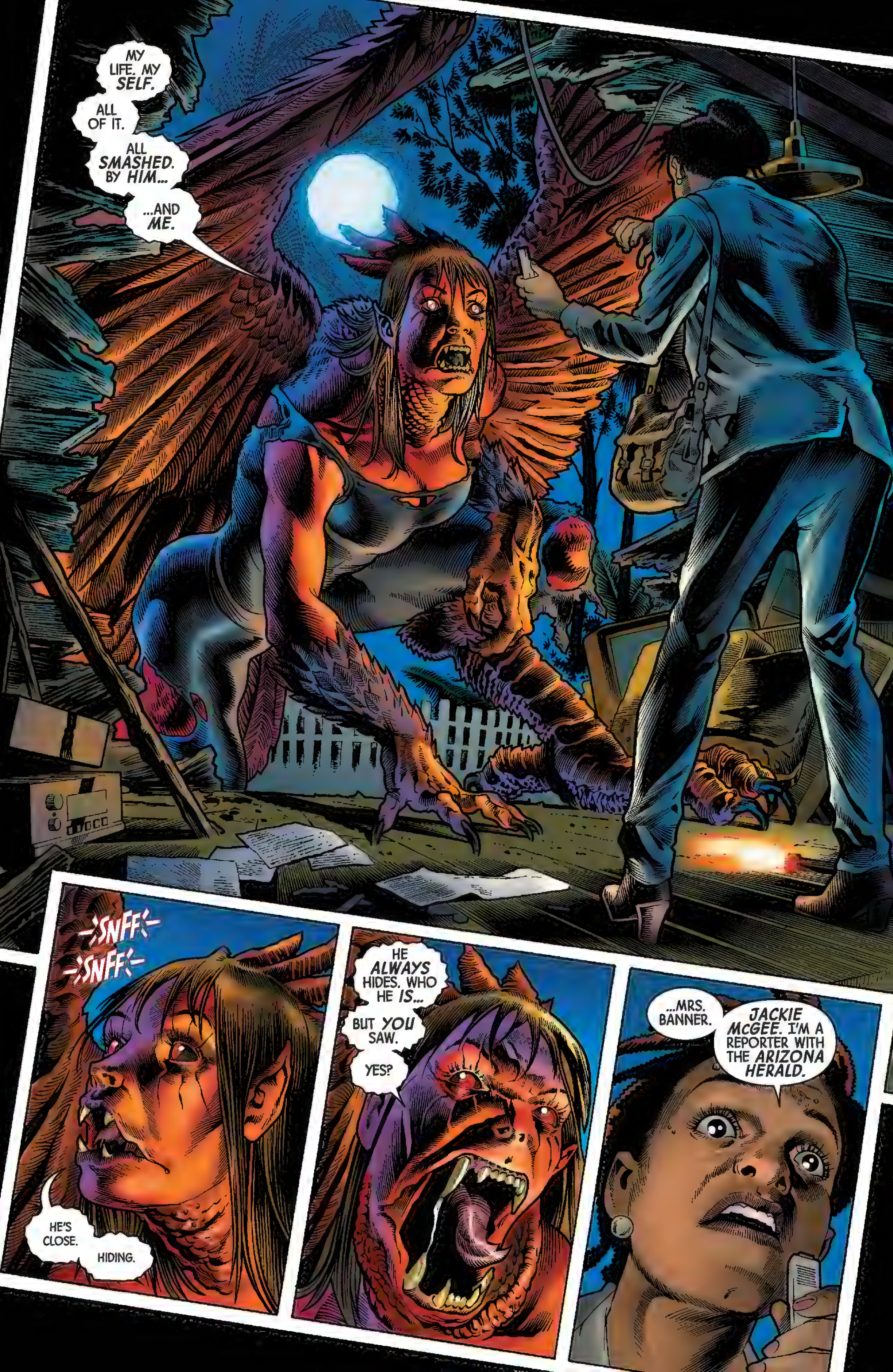

NEW MEXICO.
THE REMAINS OF
SHADOW BASE SITE A.
HNN--
HNNF--
HHOOFF.
WELL.
HERE WE ARE AGAIN, LEONARD.

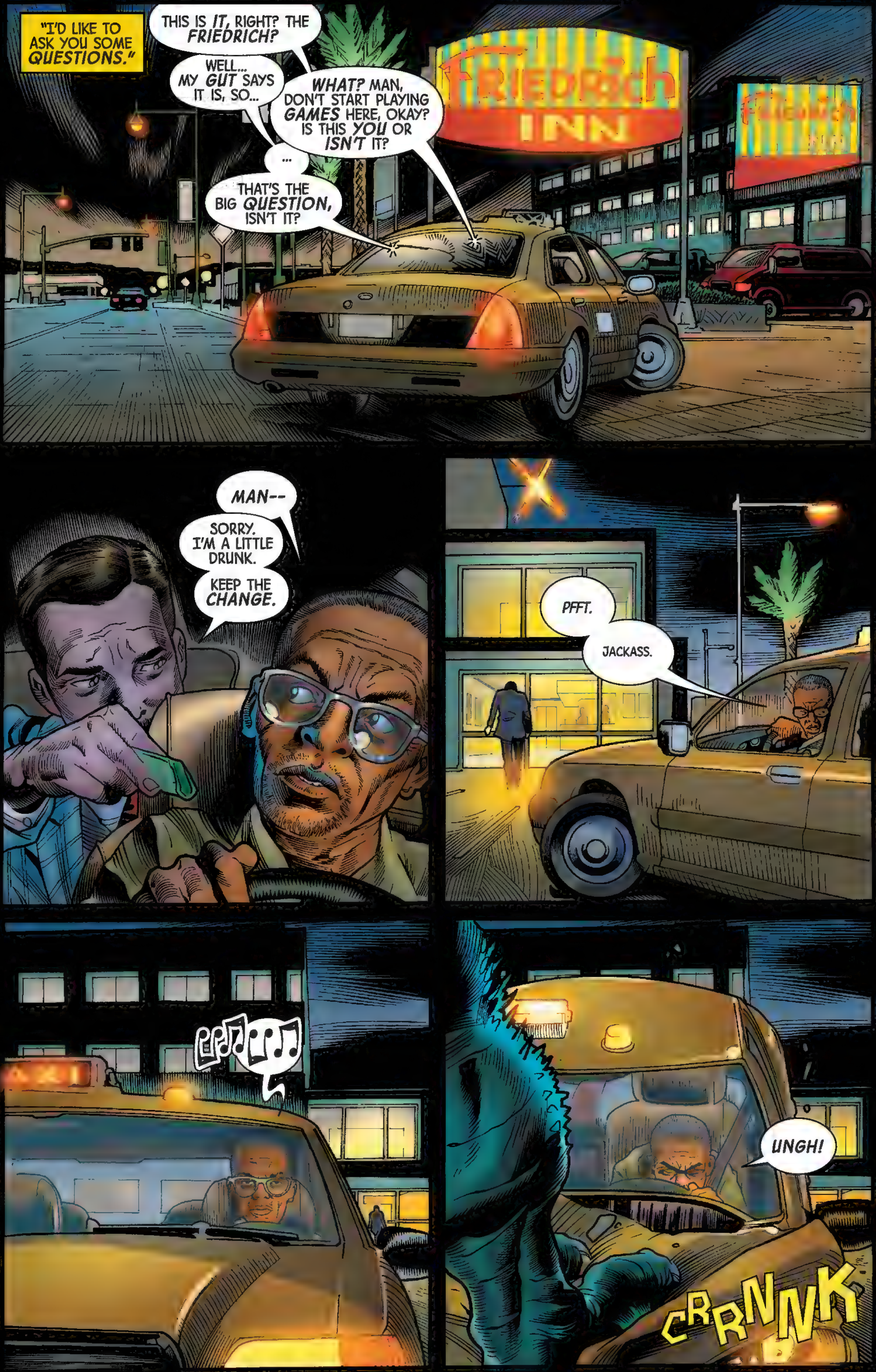

AND WE *STILL* DON'T KNOW--
OH, WHAT *NOW?*
UH... *EXCUSE ME?*
DOC SAMSON, RIGHT? WALTER LANGKOWSKI. AND *THIS* IS *GAMMA FLIGHT.*
HI.
CAN YOU, UH...TELL US WHAT *HAPPENED* HERE?
HE WENT *THATAWAY.*

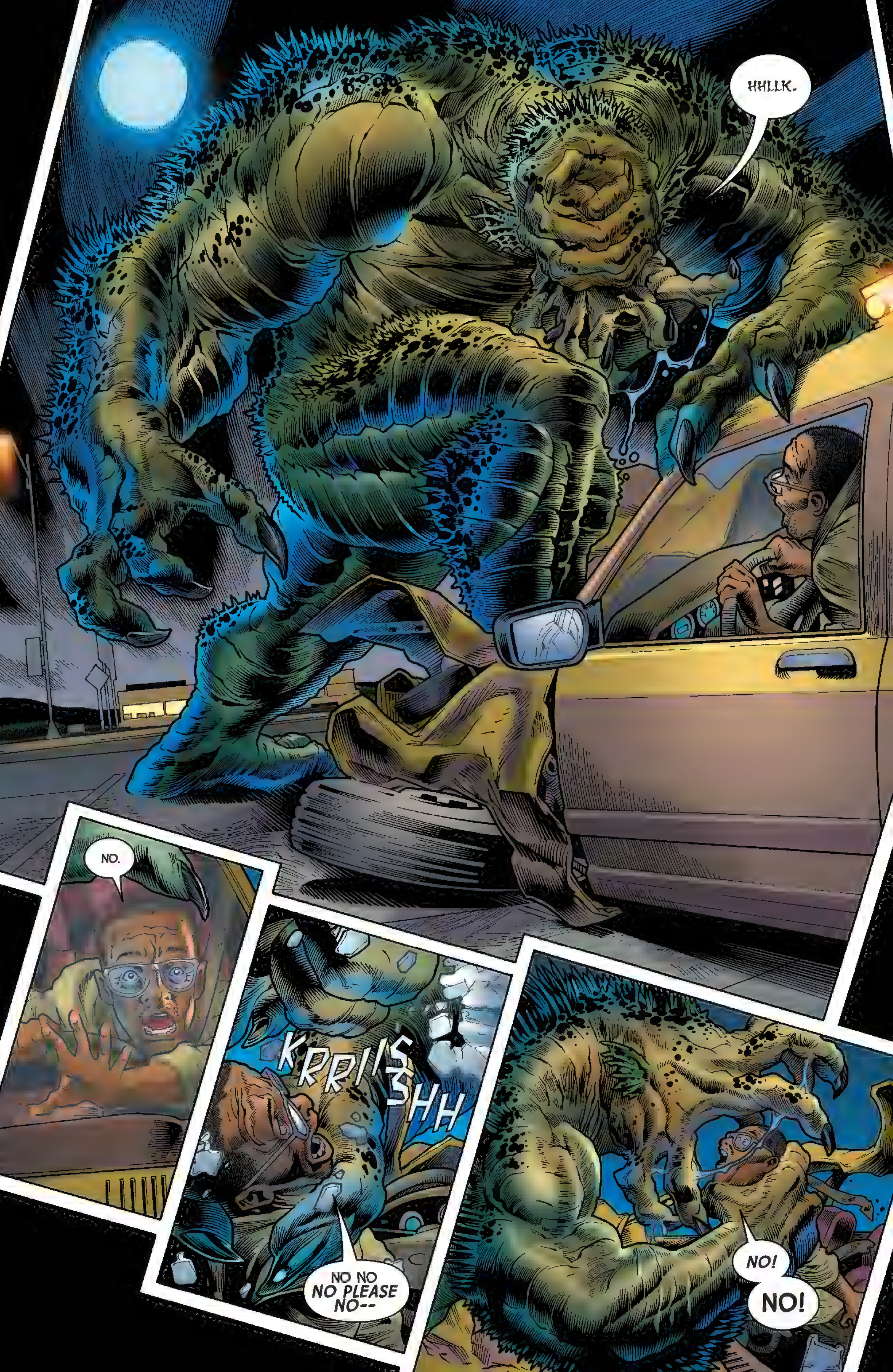

EIGHT DAYS LATER.
THE PROBLEM WITH NEVER SEEING YOUR OWN REFLECTION...
...IS NEVER KNOWING WHEN THERE'S SOMETHING ON YOUR FACE.
THIS IS A NEW DEVELOPMENT. HOW LONG WAS I GONE?
THE LAST THING I REMEMBER WAS...FEAR, NEEDING TO HIDE...AND THEN...
IT FELT LIKE THE CHANGE--BUT I DIDN'T CHANGE. IT WAS MORE LIKE... EVERYTHING WENT GRAY.
SO JOE'S BACK--THE "GRAY HULK." HE'S BEEN QUIET FOR YEARS.
AND IF I DIDN'T CHANGE--HE'S BEEN USING MY BODY. WHICH IS... UNUSUAL.
HMM. JOE...THE CURRENT HULK... THE "BIG GUY"...
I SHOULD PROBABLY MAKE A LIST.

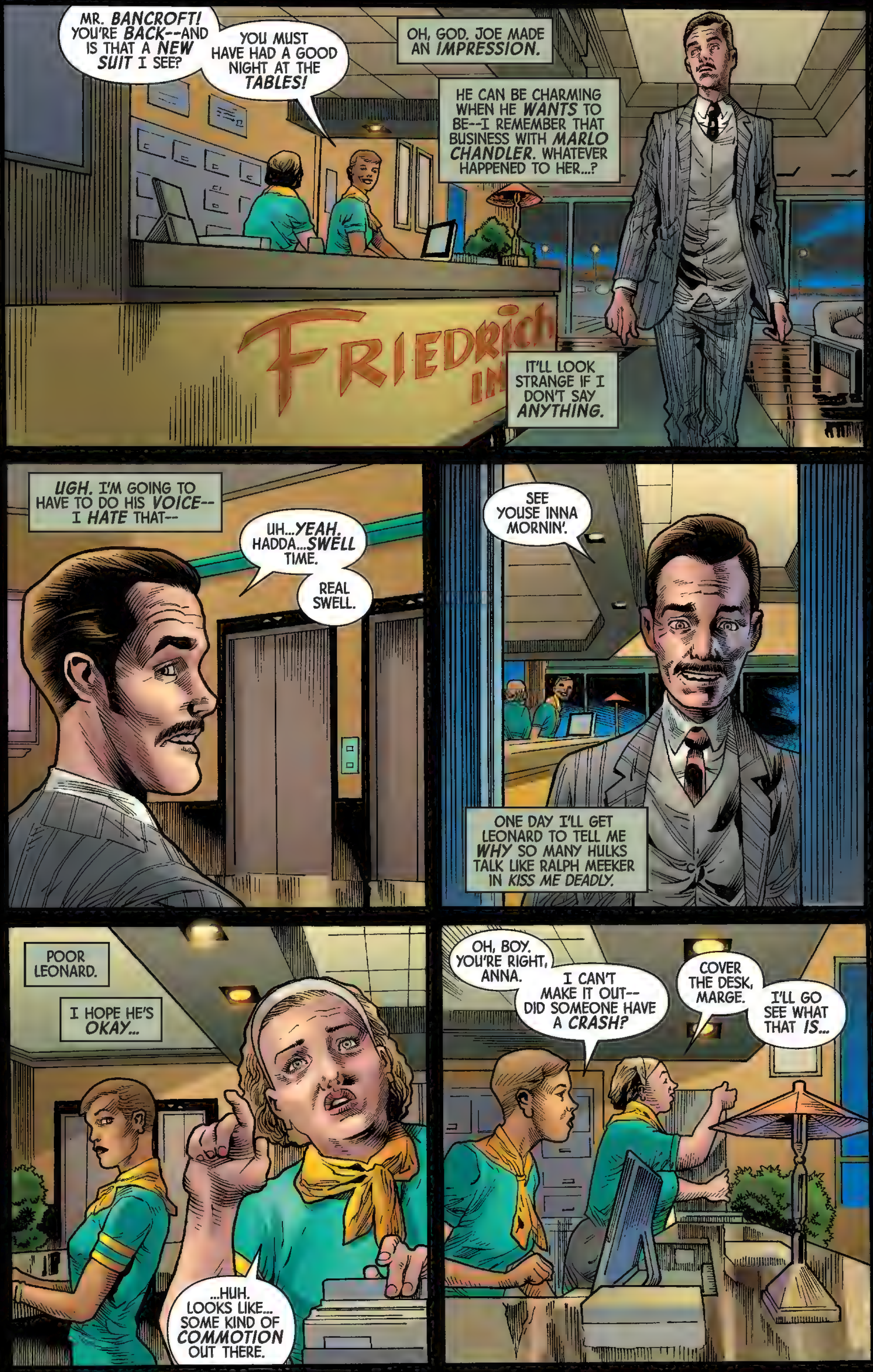

BUT FIRST THINGS FIRST.
THESE CLOTHES ARE *STORE-BOUGHT.* MY SIZE. *SHOES,* EVEN. WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN *UP TO,* JOE?
I NEED TO TRIANGULATE.
SORRY, UH... HOW LONG UNTIL WE REACH OUR *DESTINATION?*
NOT TOO FAR NOW. YOUR *MOTEL'S* COMING UP ON THE RIGHT.
A RENTED MOTEL ON THE EDGE OF TOWN. OKAY, AT LEAST JOE'S BEING *DISCREET.*
KNOWING *HIM,* I'D ASSUMED HE'D BOOKED SOME GLITZY *PENTHOUSE SUITE* IN A...
...CASINO.
BLAST IT, JOE.
WHY ARE YOU *LIKE* THIS?
RENO. *THAT'S* TELLING. IF JOE HAD *HIS* CHOICE, IT'D BE *LAS VEGAS*--HIS HOME GROUND. BUT IF *HULK'S* CALLING THE SHOTS...
...RENO IS RIGHT ON THE BORDER WITH *CALIFORNIA.*
Moonlight
Casino
MAKES SENSE.
IF SHADOW BASE IS A *DEAD END* FOR NOW...

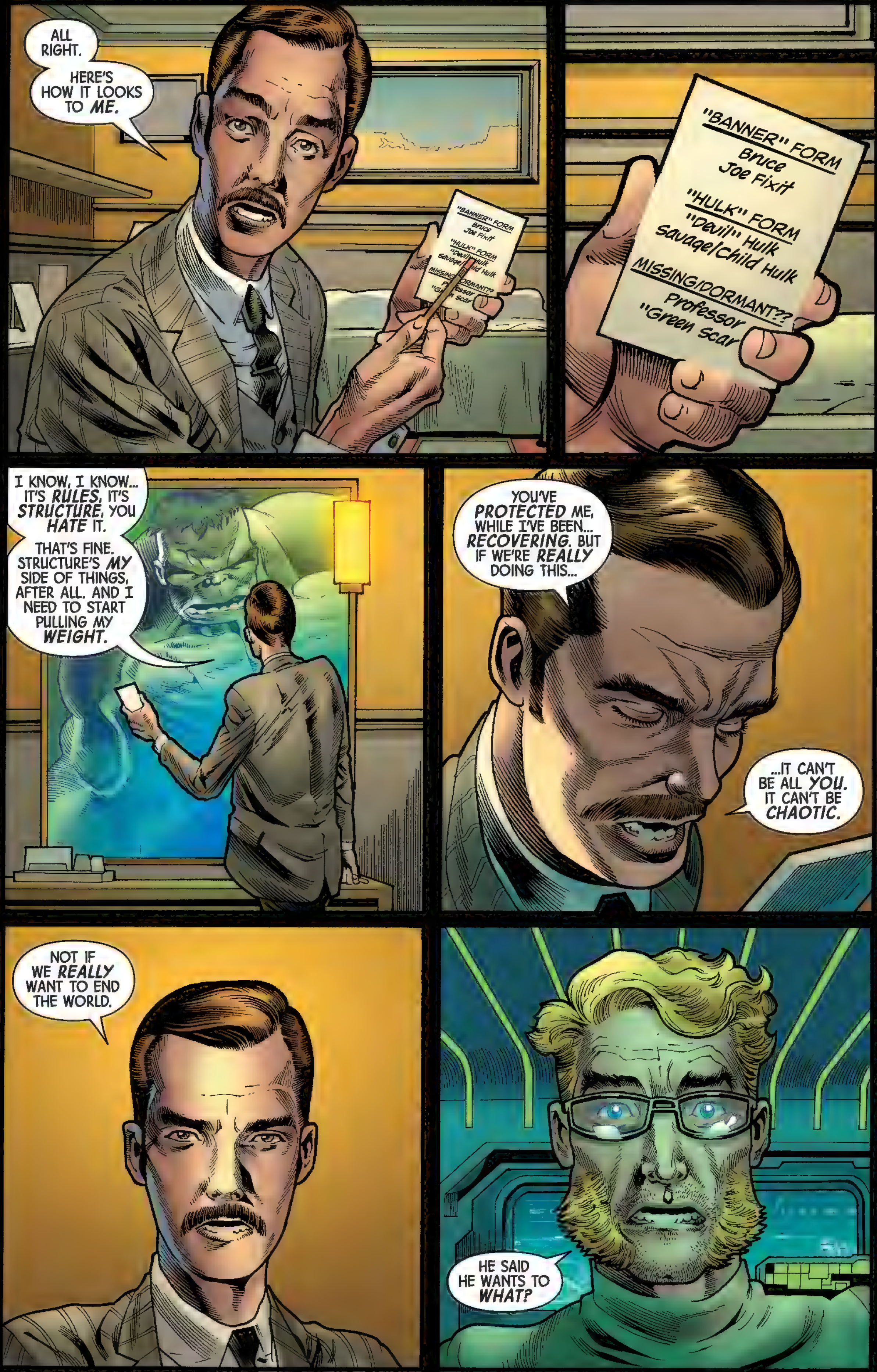

...THEN WE HAVE *OTHER* PRIORITIES.
CALIFORNIA.
NOTES ON THE DISAPPEARANCE OF *BETTY BANNER*...
POLICE LINE DO NOT C
NOT CROSS
POL
IT'S BEEN *EIGHT DAYS.* STILL NO SIGN OF MRS. *BANNER*--OR HER *BODY.*
IT MADE FOR A *COUPLE* OF DECENT PIECES... NOT EXACTLY *"ELF ARMY INVADES EARTH,"* BUT *DECENT,* CONSIDERING...
...BUT FRANKLY, AFTER *"HULK'S WIFE MISSING"* AND *"HULK'S WIFE STILL MISSING,"* THE WELL IS RUNNING *DRY.*
STILL, DETECTIVE *BAO* SAID I COULD LOOK AROUND WHENEVER I *WANTED,* AND I CAN'T *SLEEP,* SO...
...WHY NOT NOW?
I THINK BAO'S HOPING HIS UNOFFICIAL *"HULK EXPERT"* WILL FIND SOMETHING HE'S *MISSED.*
NOT MUCH CHANCE OF *THAT.* WE *ALREADY* FOUND ALL THE PIECES--WE JUST DON'T KNOW HOW THEY FIT *TOGETHER.*
AND NOBODY CAN *TELL* US, EXCEPT--
SMASHED.

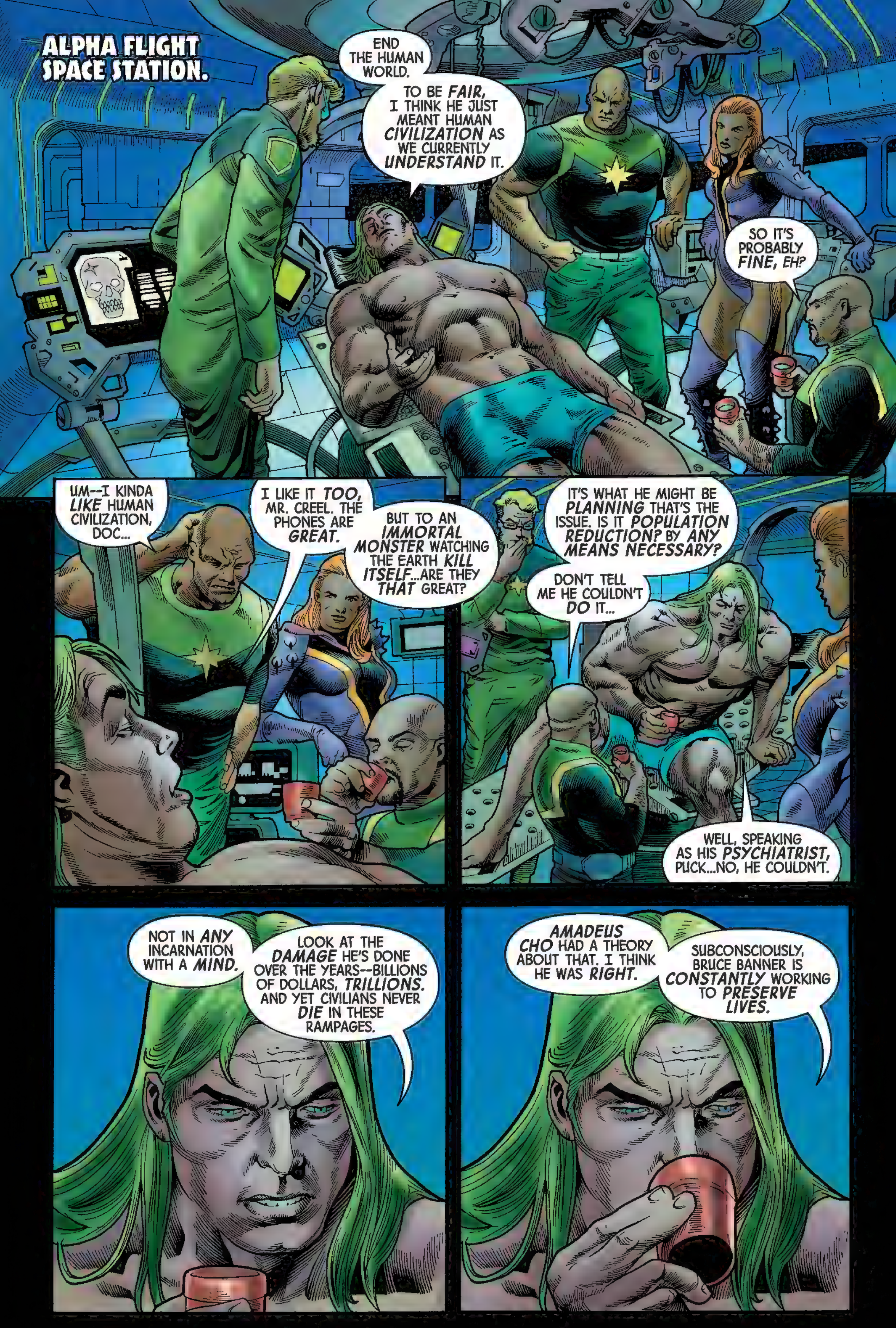

MY LIFE. MY *SELF.*
ALL OF IT.
ALL *SMASHED.* BY *HIM...*
...AND *ME.*
SNFF
SNFF
HE'S CLOSE.
HIDING.
HE *ALWAYS* HIDES. WHO HE *IS...*
BUT *YOU* SAW.
YES?
...MRS. BANNER.
JACKIE McGEE. I'M A REPORTER WITH THE *ARIZONA HERALD.*

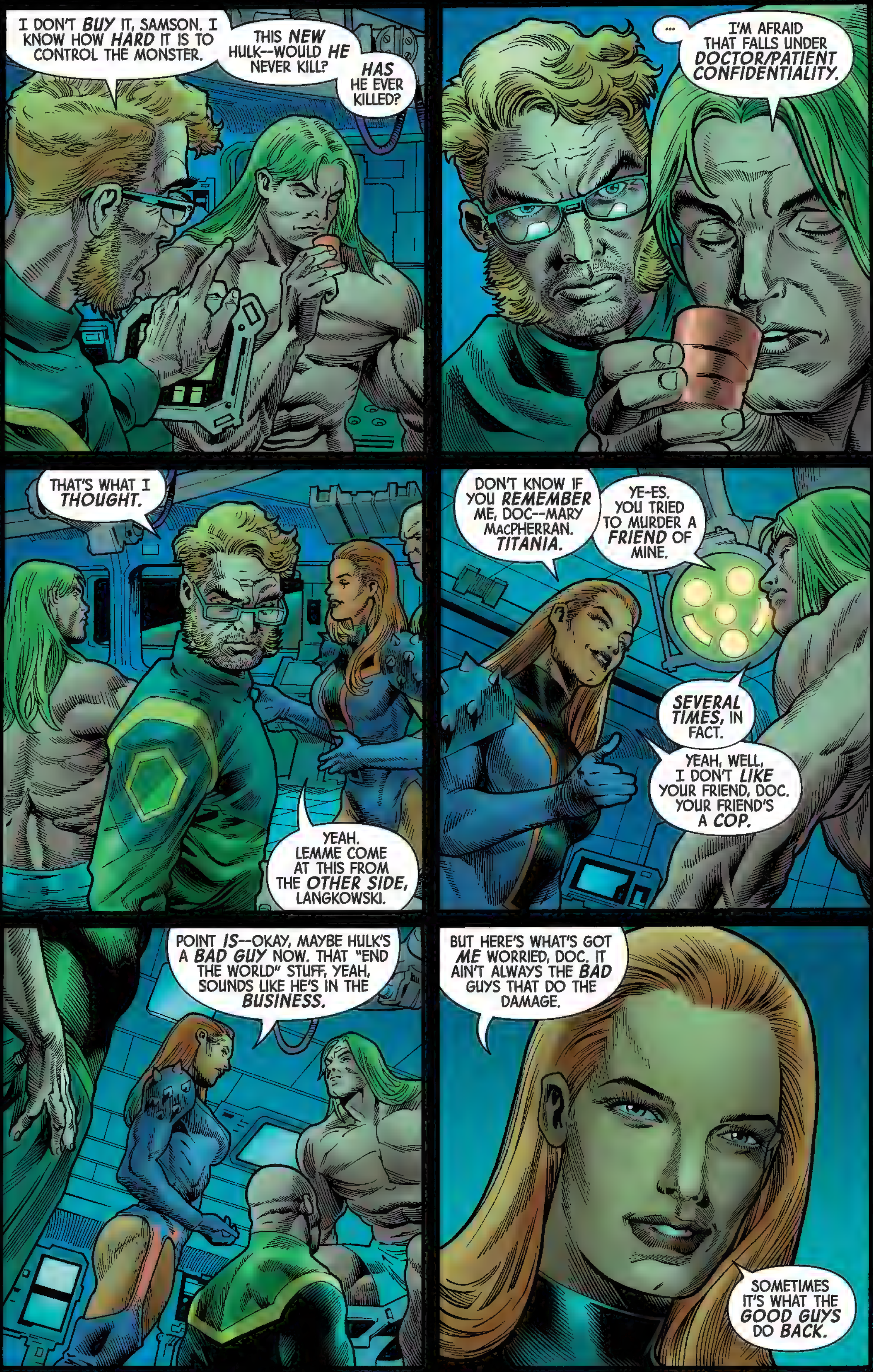

"I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME *QUESTIONS.*"
THIS IS *IT*, RIGHT? THE *FRIEDRICH?*
WELL... MY *GUT* SAYS IT IS, SO...
WHAT? MAN, DON'T START PLAYING *GAMES* HERE, OKAY? IS THIS *YOU* OR *ISN'T* IT?
...
THAT'S THE BIG *QUESTION*, ISN'T IT?
FRIEDRICH INN
MAN--
SORRY. I'M A LITTLE DRUNK.
KEEP THE *CHANGE.*
PFFT.
JACKASS.
UNGH!
CRRNNK

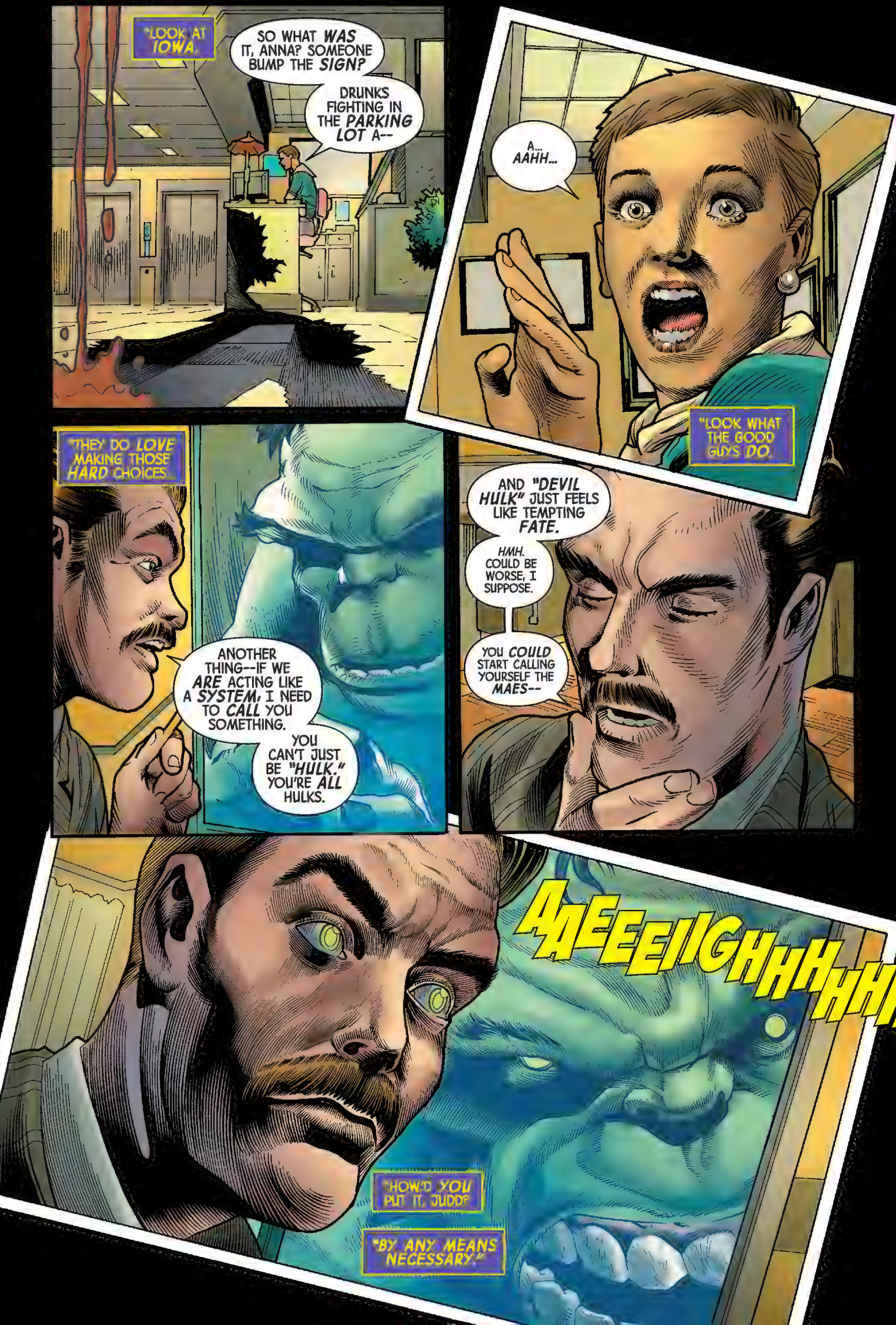

HHLLK.
NO.
KRRIISSHH
NO NO NO PLEASE NO--
NO!
NO!

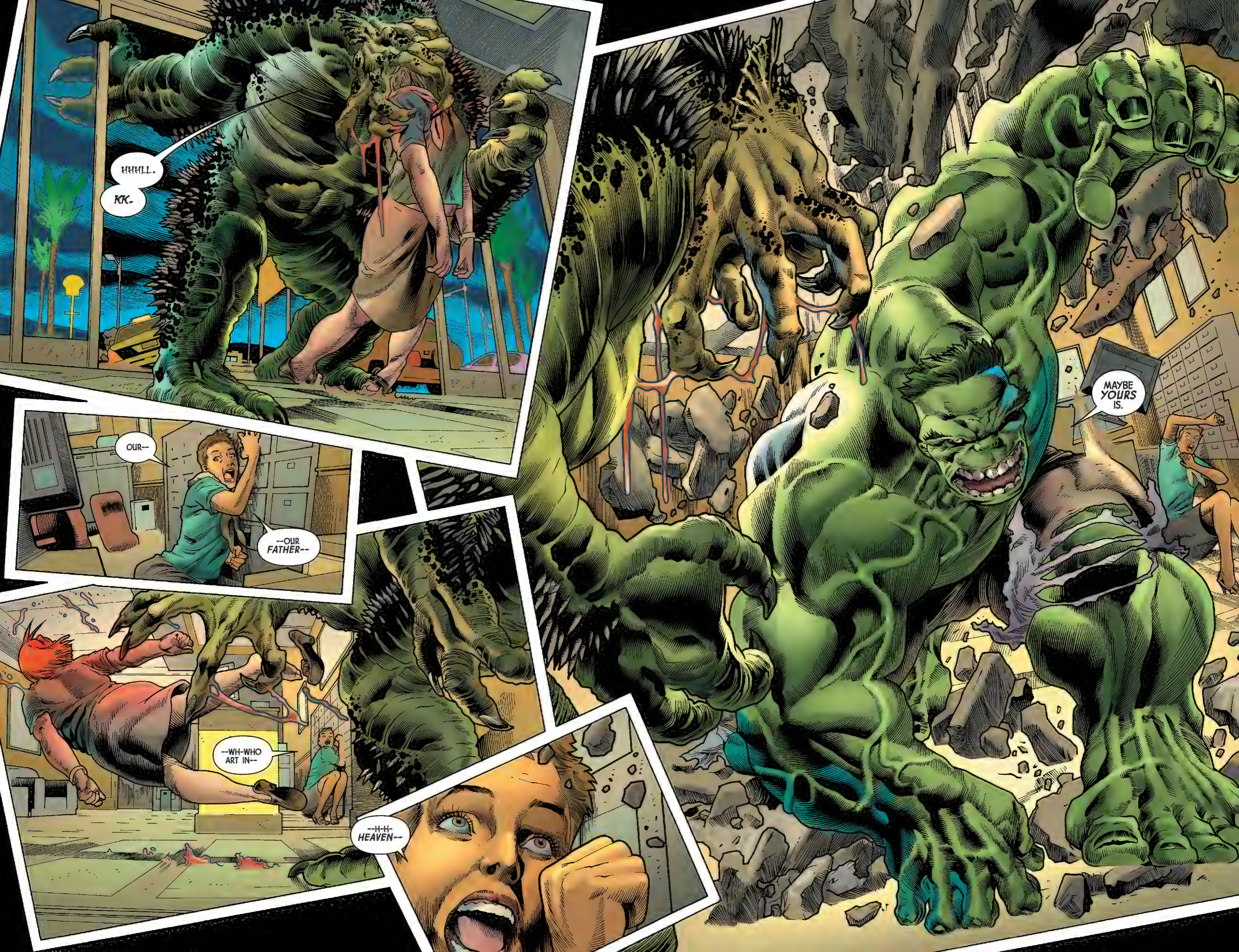

MR. BANCROFT! YOU'RE BACK--AND IS THAT A NEW SUIT I SEE?
YOU MUST HAVE HAD A GOOD NIGHT AT THE TABLES!
OH, GOD. JOE MADE AN IMPRESSION.
HE CAN BE CHARMING WHEN HE WANTS TO BE--I REMEMBER THAT BUSINESS WITH MARLO CHANDLER. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HER...?
FRIEDRICH IN
IT'LL LOOK STRANGE IF I DON'T SAY ANYTHING.
UGH. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DO HIS VOICE--I HATE THAT--
UH...YEAH. HADDA...SWELL TIME.
REAL SWELL.
SEE YOUSE INNA MORNIN'.
ONE DAY I'LL GET LEONARD TO TELL ME WHY SO MANY HULKS TALK LIKE RALPH MEEKER IN KISS ME DEADLY.
POOR LEONARD.
I HOPE HE'S OKAY...
...HUH. LOOKS LIKE... SOME KIND OF COMMOTION OUT THERE.
OH, BOY. YOU'RE RIGHT, ANNA.
I CAN'T MAKE IT OUT--DID SOMEONE HAVE A CRASH?
COVER THE DESK, MARGE.
I'LL GO SEE WHAT THAT IS...

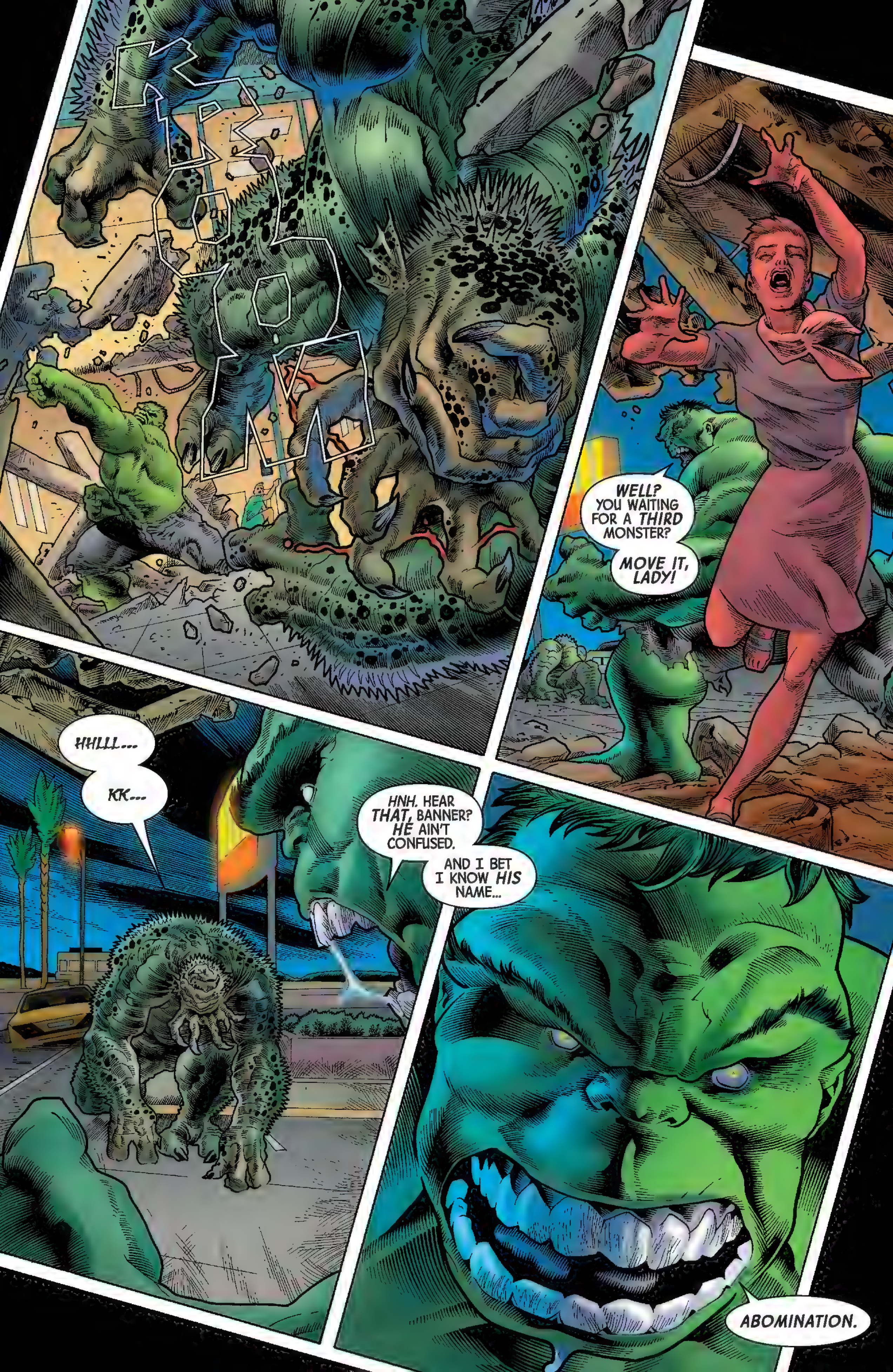

ALL RIGHT.
HERE'S HOW IT LOOKS TO ME.
"BANNER" FORM
Bruce
Joe Fixit
"HULK" FORM
"Devil" Hulk
Savage/Child Hulk
MISSING/DORMANT??
Professor
"Green Scar"
I KNOW, I KNOW... IT'S RULES, IT'S STRUCTURE, YOU HATE IT.
THAT'S FINE. STRUCTURE'S MY SIDE OF THINGS, AFTER ALL. AND I NEED TO START PULLING MY WEIGHT.
YOU'VE PROTECTED ME, WHILE I'VE BEEN... RECOVERING. BUT IF WE'RE REALLY DOING THIS...
...IT CAN'T BE ALL YOU. IT CAN'T BE CHAOTIC.
NOT IF WE REALLY WANT TO END THE WORLD.
HE SAID HE WANTS TO WHAT?

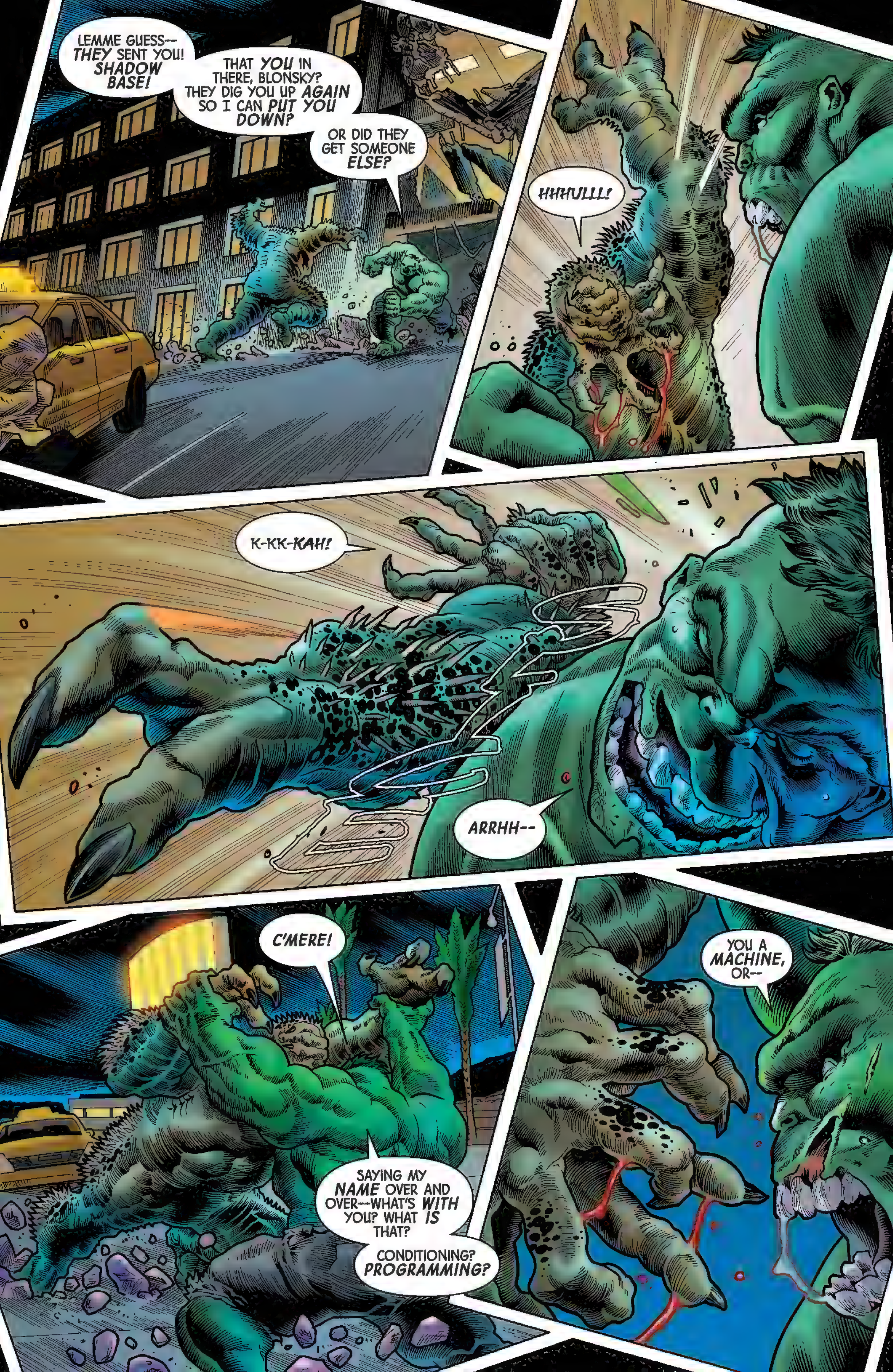

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
END THE HUMAN WORLD.
TO BE *FAIR,* I THINK HE JUST MEANT HUMAN *CIVILIZATION* AS WE CURRENTLY *UNDERSTAND* IT.
SO IT'S PROBABLY *FINE,* EH?
UM--I KINDA *LIKE* HUMAN CIVILIZATION, DOC...
I LIKE IT *TOO,* MR. CREEL. THE PHONES ARE *GREAT.*
BUT TO AN *IMMORTAL MONSTER* WATCHING THE EARTH *KILL ITSELF*...ARE THEY *THAT* GREAT?
IT'S WHAT HE MIGHT BE *PLANNING* THAT'S THE ISSUE. IS IT *POPULATION REDUCTION?* BY *ANY MEANS NECESSARY?*
DON'T TELL ME HE COULDN'T *DO* IT...
WELL, SPEAKING AS HIS *PSYCHIATRIST,* PUCK...NO, HE COULDN'T.
NOT IN *ANY* INCARNATION WITH A *MIND.*
LOOK AT THE *DAMAGE* HE'S DONE OVER THE YEARS--BILLIONS OF DOLLARS, *TRILLIONS.* AND YET CIVILIANS NEVER *DIE* IN THESE RAMPAGES.
AMADEUS CHO HAD A THEORY ABOUT THAT. I THINK HE WAS *RIGHT.*
SUBCONSCIOUSLY, BRUCE BANNER IS *CONSTANTLY* WORKING TO *PRESERVE LIVES.*

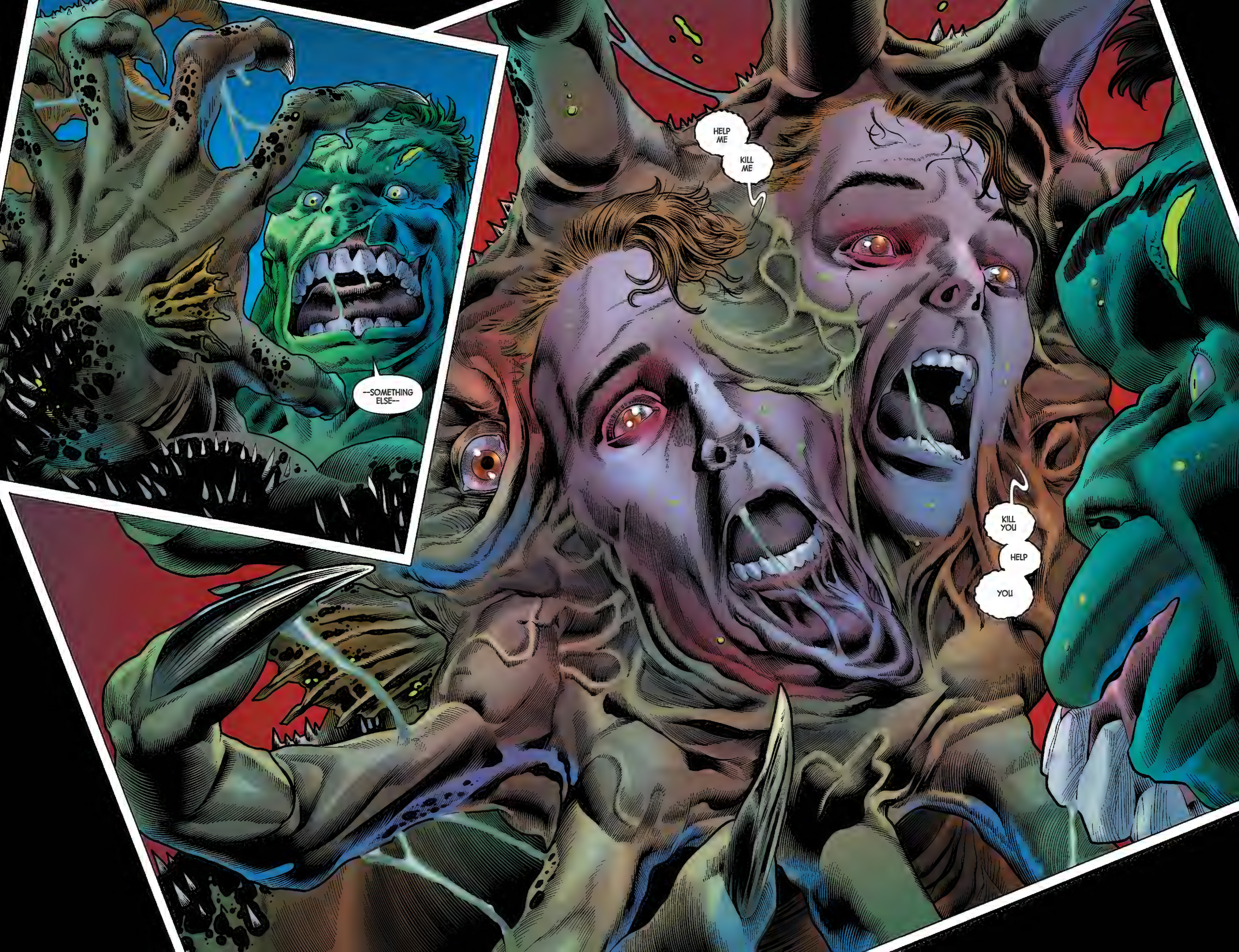

I DON'T BUY IT, SAMSON. I KNOW HOW HARD IT IS TO CONTROL THE MONSTER.
THIS NEW HULK--WOULD HE NEVER KILL?
HAS HE EVER KILLED?
...
I'M AFRAID THAT FALLS UNDER DOCTOR/PATIENT CONFIDENTIALITY.
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.
YEAH. LEMME COME AT THIS FROM THE OTHER SIDE, LANGKOWSKI.
DON'T KNOW IF YOU REMEMBER ME, DOC--MARY MacPHERRAN. TITANIA.
YE-ES. YOU TRIED TO MURDER A FRIEND OF MINE.
SEVERAL TIMES, IN FACT.
YEAH, WELL, I DON'T LIKE YOUR FRIEND, DOC. YOUR FRIEND'S A COP.
POINT IS--OKAY, MAYBE HULK'S A BAD GUY NOW. THAT "END THE WORLD" STUFF, YEAH, SOUNDS LIKE HE'S IN THE BUSINESS.
BUT HERE'S WHAT'S GOT ME WORRIED, DOC. IT AIN'T ALWAYS THE BAD GUYS THAT DO THE DAMAGE.
SOMETIMES IT'S WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DO BACK.

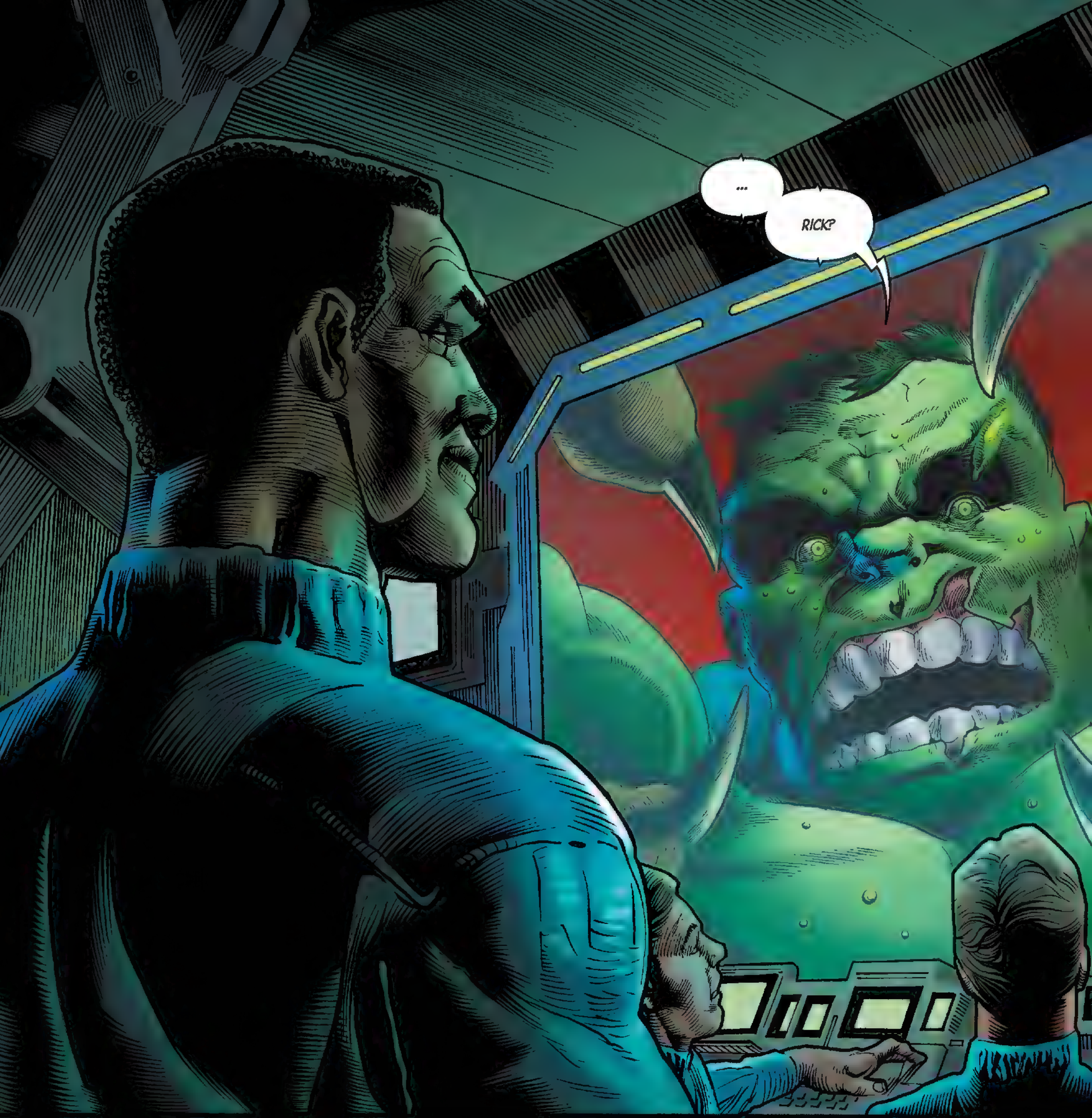

"LOOK AT IOWA.
SO WHAT WAS IT, ANNA? SOMEONE BUMP THE SIGN?
DRUNKS FIGHTING IN THE PARKING LOT A--
A... AAHH...
"LOOK WHAT THE GOOD GUYS DO.
"THEY DO LOVE MAKING THOSE HARD CHOICES.
ANOTHER THING--IF WE ARE ACTING LIKE A SYSTEM, I NEED TO CALL YOU SOMETHING.
YOU CAN'T JUST BE "HULK." YOU'RE ALL HULKS.
AND "DEVIL HULK" JUST FEELS LIKE TEMPTING FATE.
HMH. COULD BE WORSE, I SUPPOSE.
YOU COULD START CALLING YOURSELF THE MAES--
AAEEEIIGHHHHH
"HOW'D YOU PUT IT, JUDD?
"BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY."


HHHLL.
KK.
OUR--
--OUR FATHER--
--WH-WHO ART IN--
--H-H-HEAVEN--
MAYBE YOURS IS.


KROOM
WELL? YOU WAITING FOR A THIRD MONSTER?
MOVE IT, LADY!
HHLLL...
KK...
HNH. HEAR THAT, BANNER? HE AIN'T CONFUSED.
AND I BET I KNOW HIS NAME...
ABOMINATION.


LEMME GUESS-- THEY SENT YOU! SHADOW BASE!
THAT YOU IN THERE, BLONSKY? THEY DIG YOU UP AGAIN SO I CAN PUT YOU DOWN?
OR DID THEY GET SOMEONE ELSE?
HHHULLL!
K-KK-KAH!
ARRHH--
C'MERE!
SAYING MY NAME OVER AND OVER--WHAT'S WITH YOU? WHAT IS THAT?
CONDITIONING? PROGRAMMING?
YOU A MACHINE, OR--

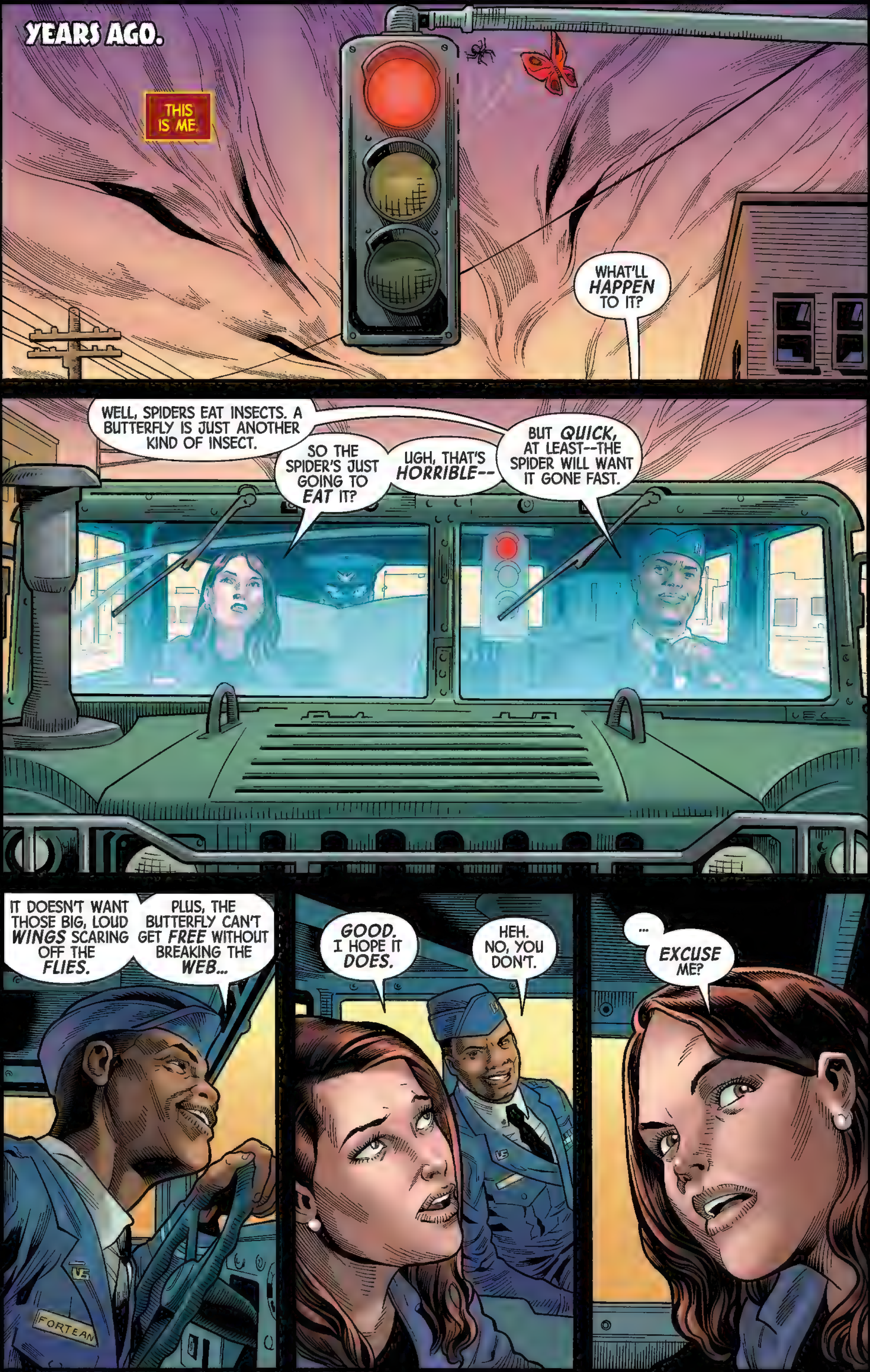

--SOMETHING ELSE--
HELP ME
KILL ME
KILL YOU
HELP
YOU

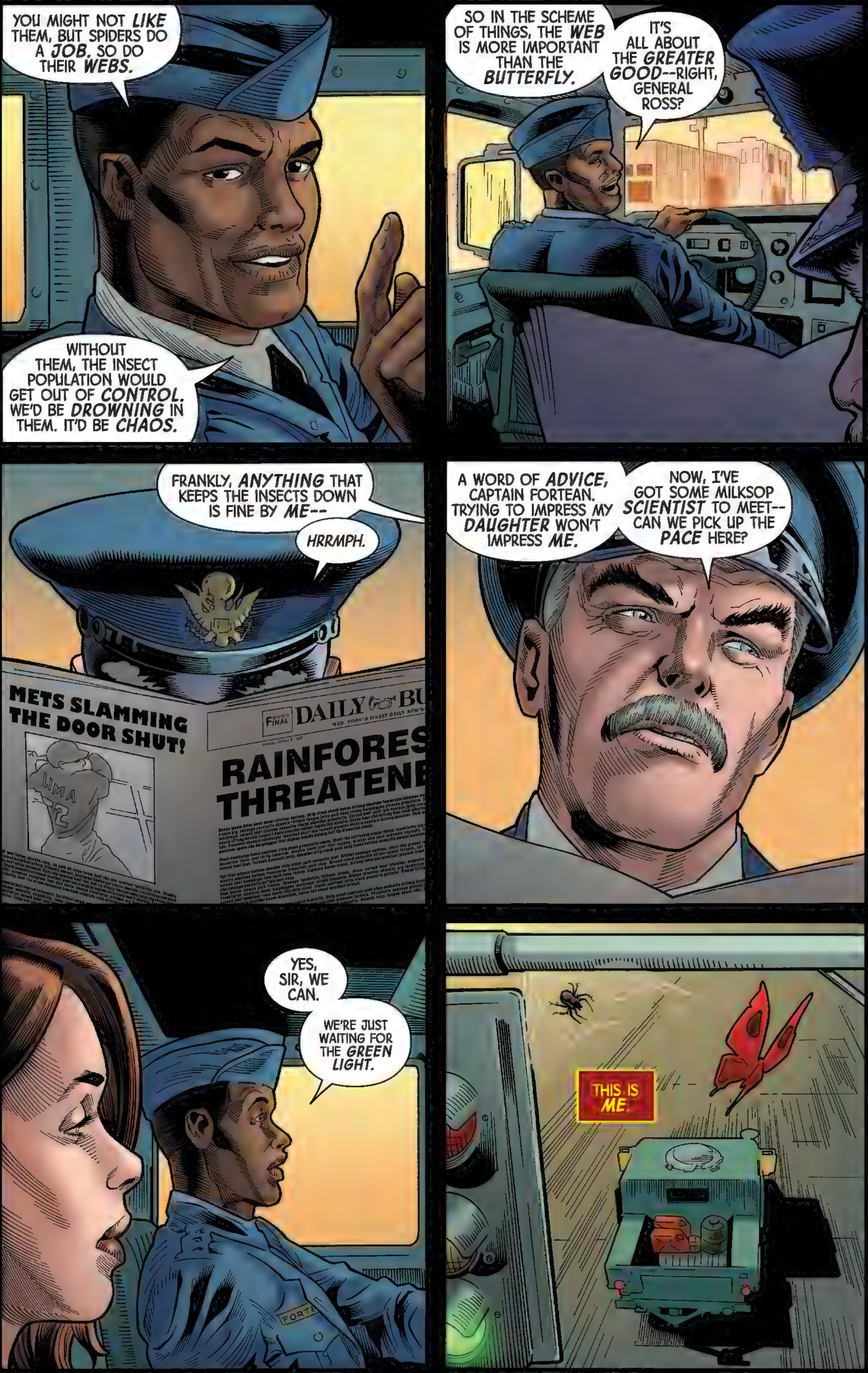


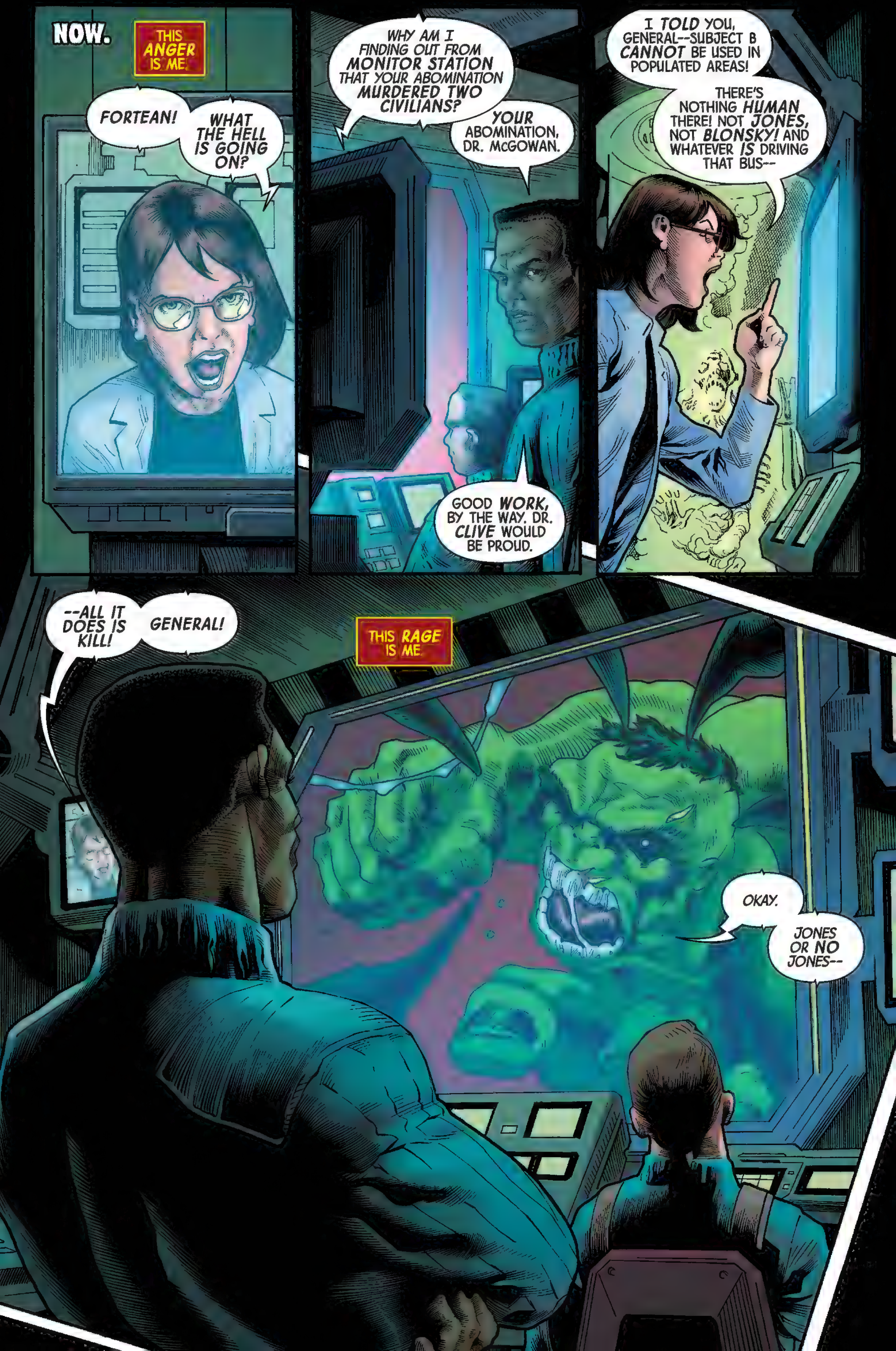
NECESSARY

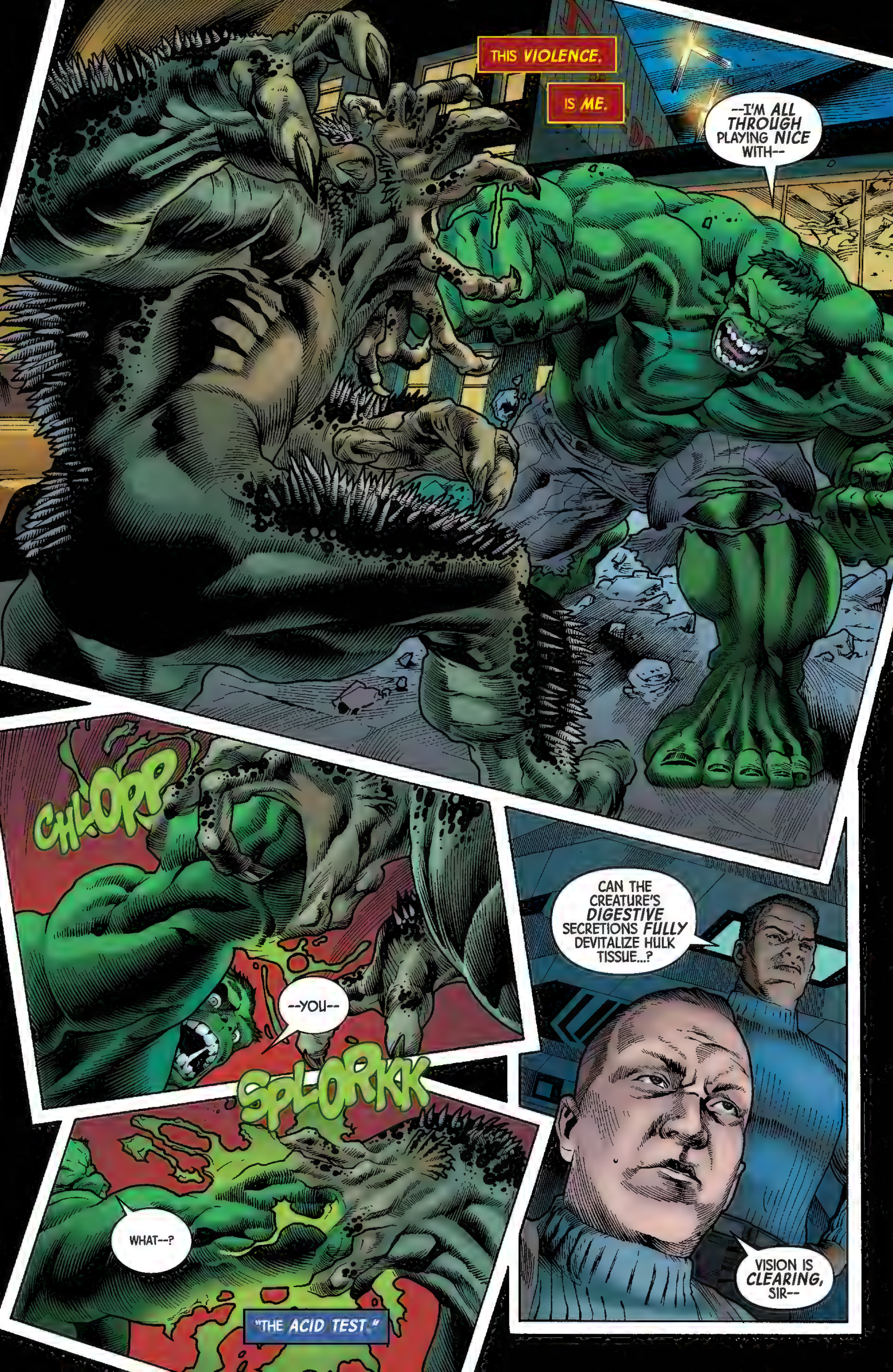
19

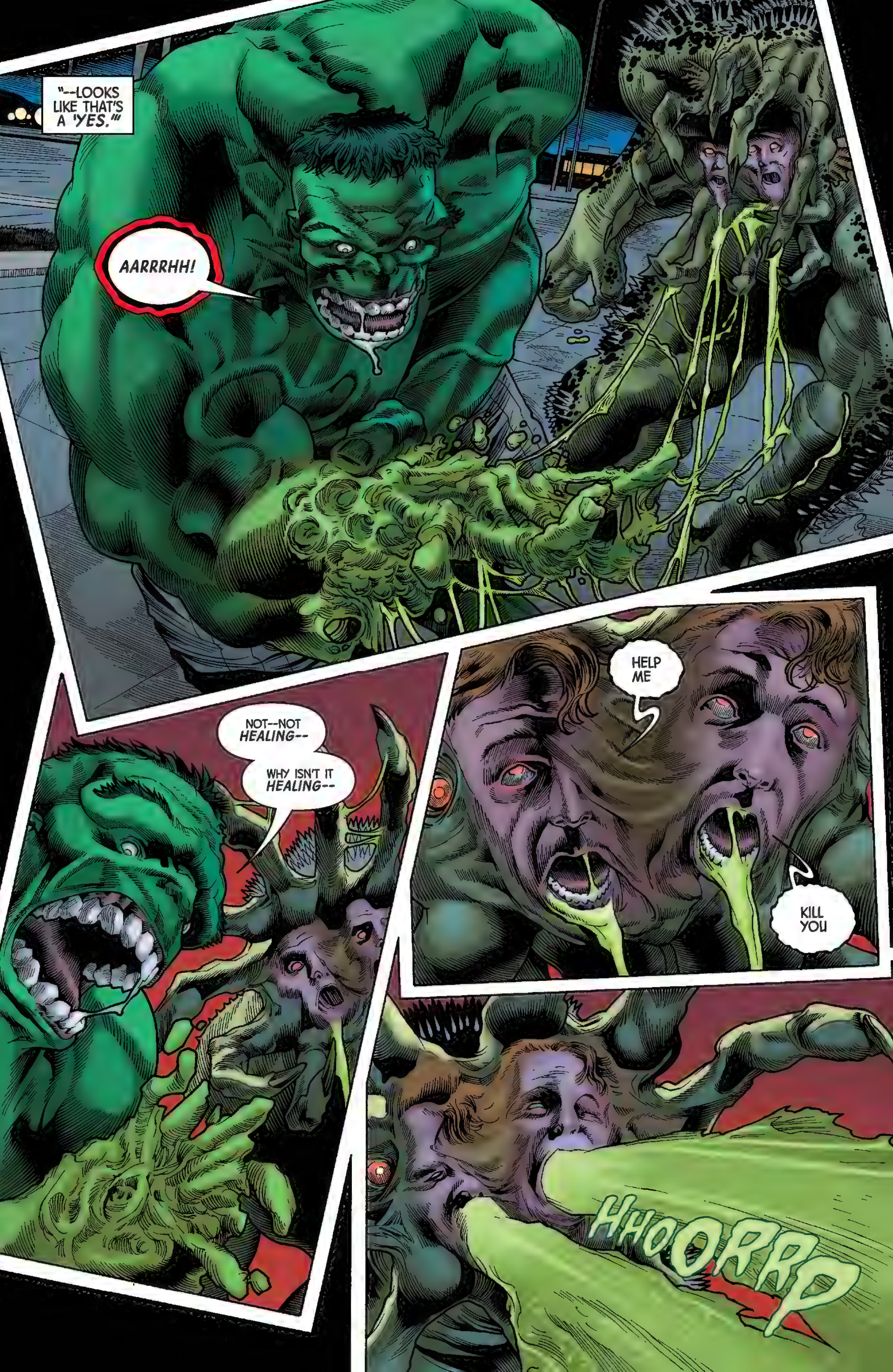
> "I WOULD EAT HIS HEART
> IN THE MARKETPLACE."
>
> – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
> *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*, ACT IV, SCENE I

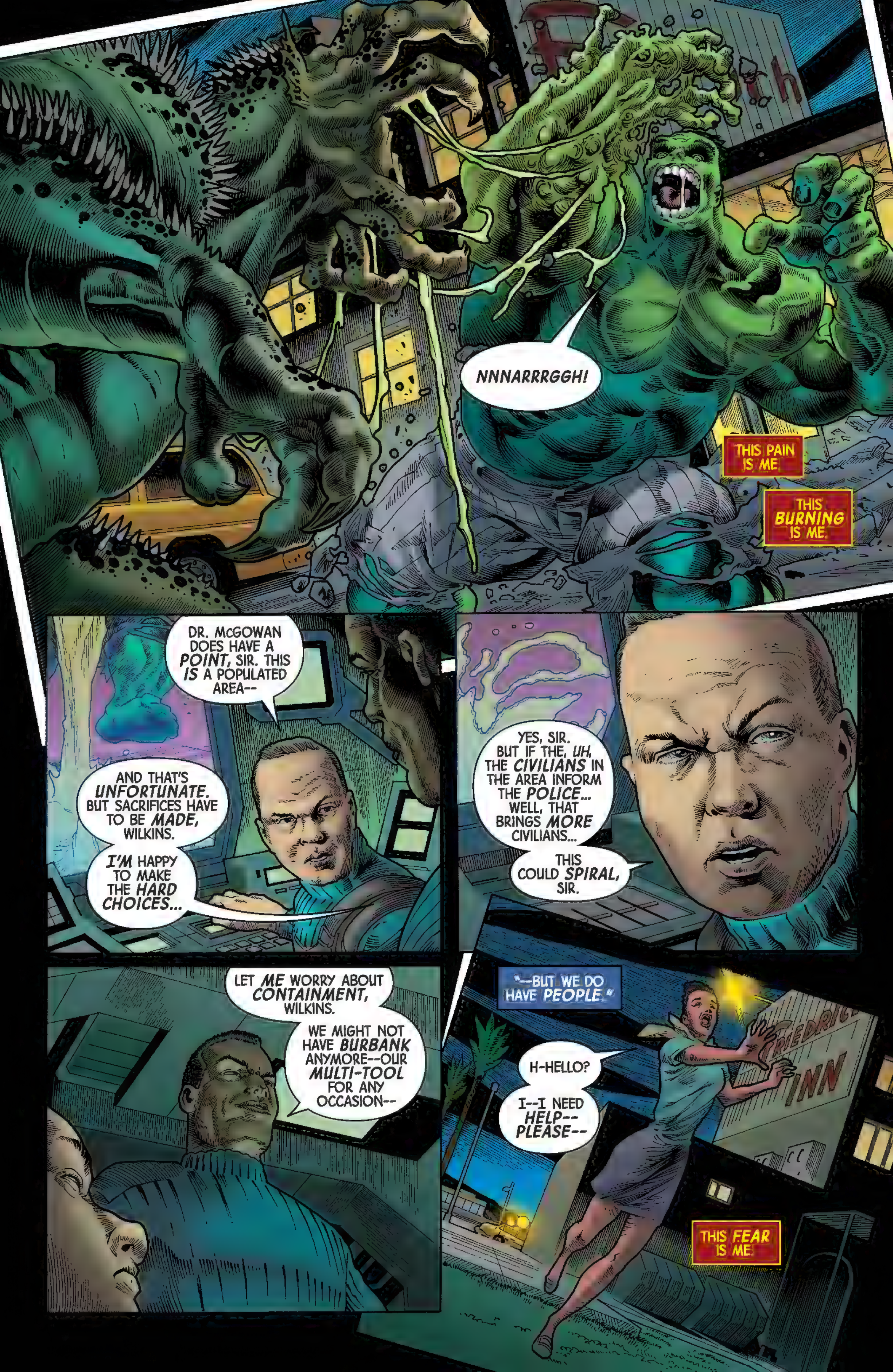

YEARS AGO.
THIS IS ME.
WHAT'LL *HAPPEN* TO IT?
WELL, SPIDERS EAT INSECTS. A BUTTERFLY IS JUST ANOTHER KIND OF INSECT.
SO THE SPIDER'S JUST GOING TO *EAT* IT?
UGH, THAT'S *HORRIBLE*--
BUT *QUICK*, AT LEAST--THE SPIDER WILL WANT IT GONE FAST.
IT DOESN'T WANT THOSE BIG, LOUD *WINGS* SCARING OFF THE *FLIES*.
PLUS, THE BUTTERFLY CAN'T GET *FREE* WITHOUT BREAKING THE *WEB*...
FORTEAN
GOOD. I HOPE IT *DOES.*
HEH. NO, YOU DON'T.
...
EXCUSE ME?

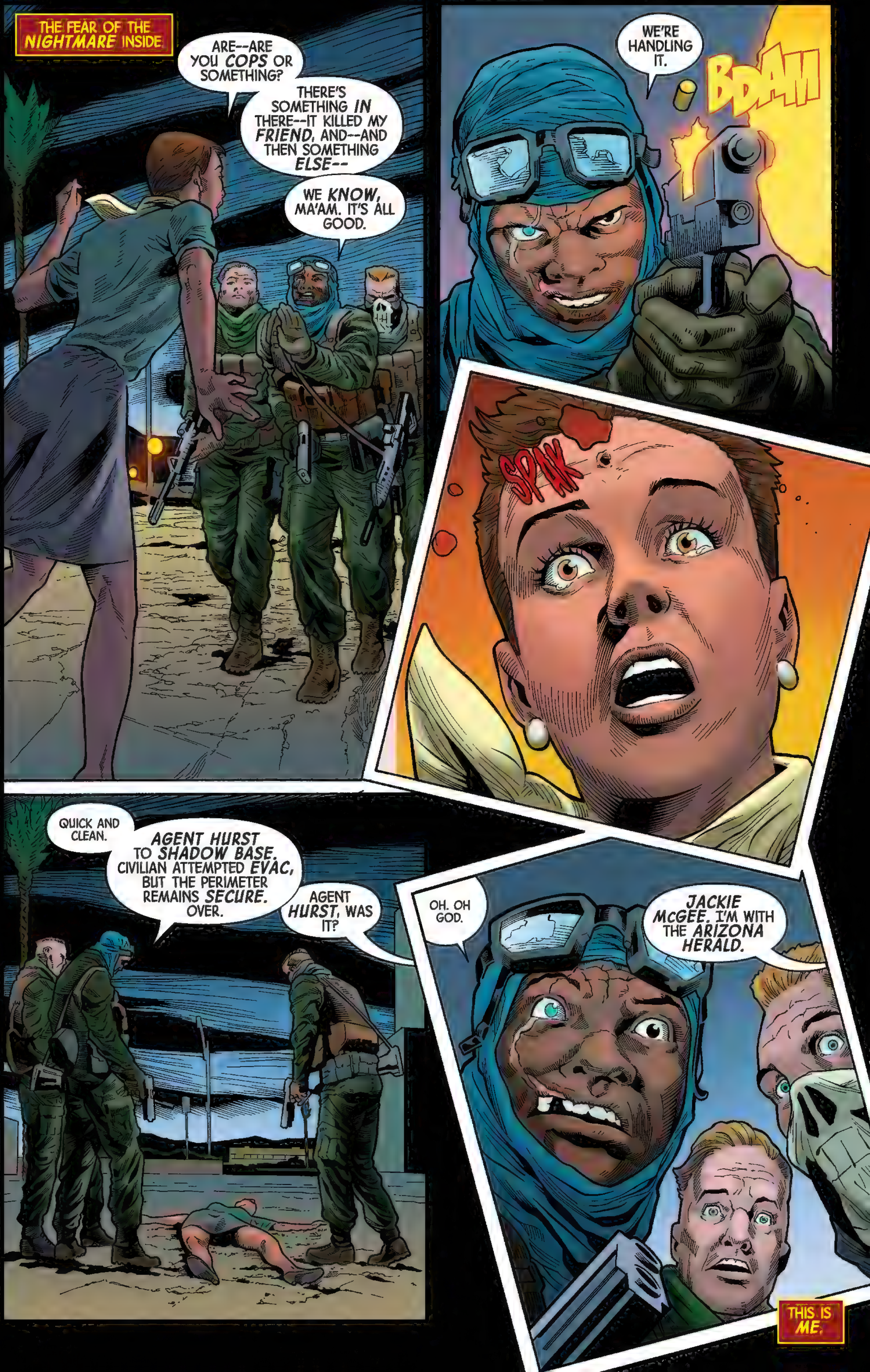

YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE THEM, BUT SPIDERS DO A JOB. SO DO THEIR WEBS.
WITHOUT THEM, THE INSECT POPULATION WOULD GET OUT OF CONTROL. WE'D BE DROWNING IN THEM. IT'D BE CHAOS.
SO IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS, THE WEB IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE BUTTERFLY.
IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GREATER GOOD--RIGHT, GENERAL ROSS?
FRANKLY, ANYTHING THAT KEEPS THE INSECTS DOWN IS FINE BY ME--
HRRMPH.
METS SLAMMING THE DOOR SHUT!
LIMA 2
FINAL DAILY BU
RAINFORES THREATENE
A WORD OF ADVICE, CAPTAIN FORTEAN. TRYING TO IMPRESS MY DAUGHTER WON'T IMPRESS ME.
NOW, I'VE GOT SOME MILKSOP SCIENTIST TO MEET--CAN WE PICK UP THE PACE HERE?
YES, SIR, WE CAN.
WE'RE JUST WAITING FOR THE GREEN LIGHT.
FORT
THIS IS ME.

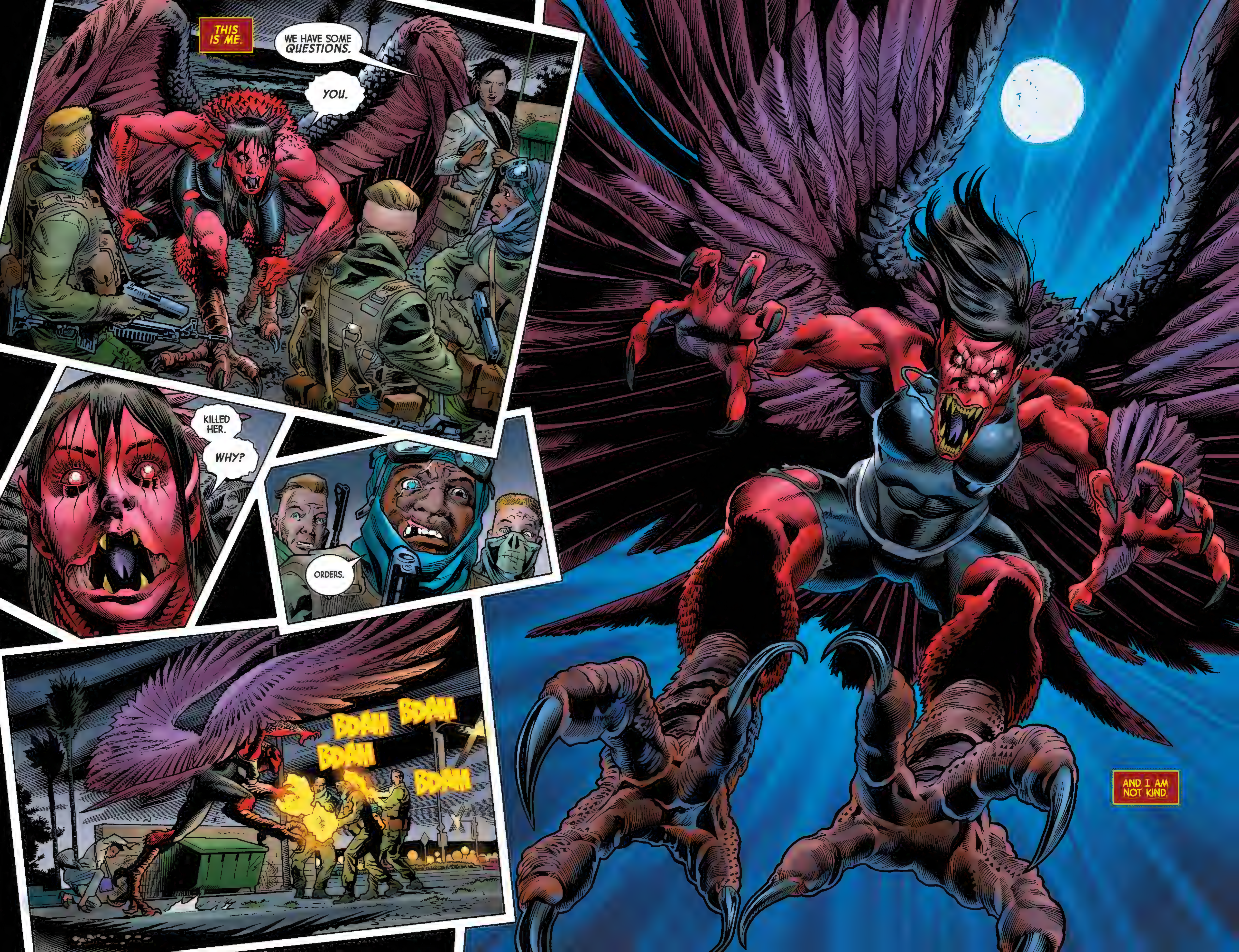

NOW.
THIS ANGER IS ME.
FORTEAN!
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?
WHY AM I FINDING OUT FROM MONITOR STATION THAT YOUR ABOMINATION MURDERED TWO CIVILIANS?
YOUR ABOMINATION, DR. McGOWAN.
GOOD WORK, BY THE WAY. DR. CLIVE WOULD BE PROUD.
I TOLD YOU, GENERAL--SUBJECT B CANNOT BE USED IN POPULATED AREAS!
THERE'S NOTHING HUMAN THERE! NOT JONES, NOT BLONSKY! AND WHATEVER IS DRIVING THAT BUS--
--ALL IT DOES IS KILL!
GENERAL!
THIS RAGE IS ME.
OKAY.
JONES OR NO JONES--

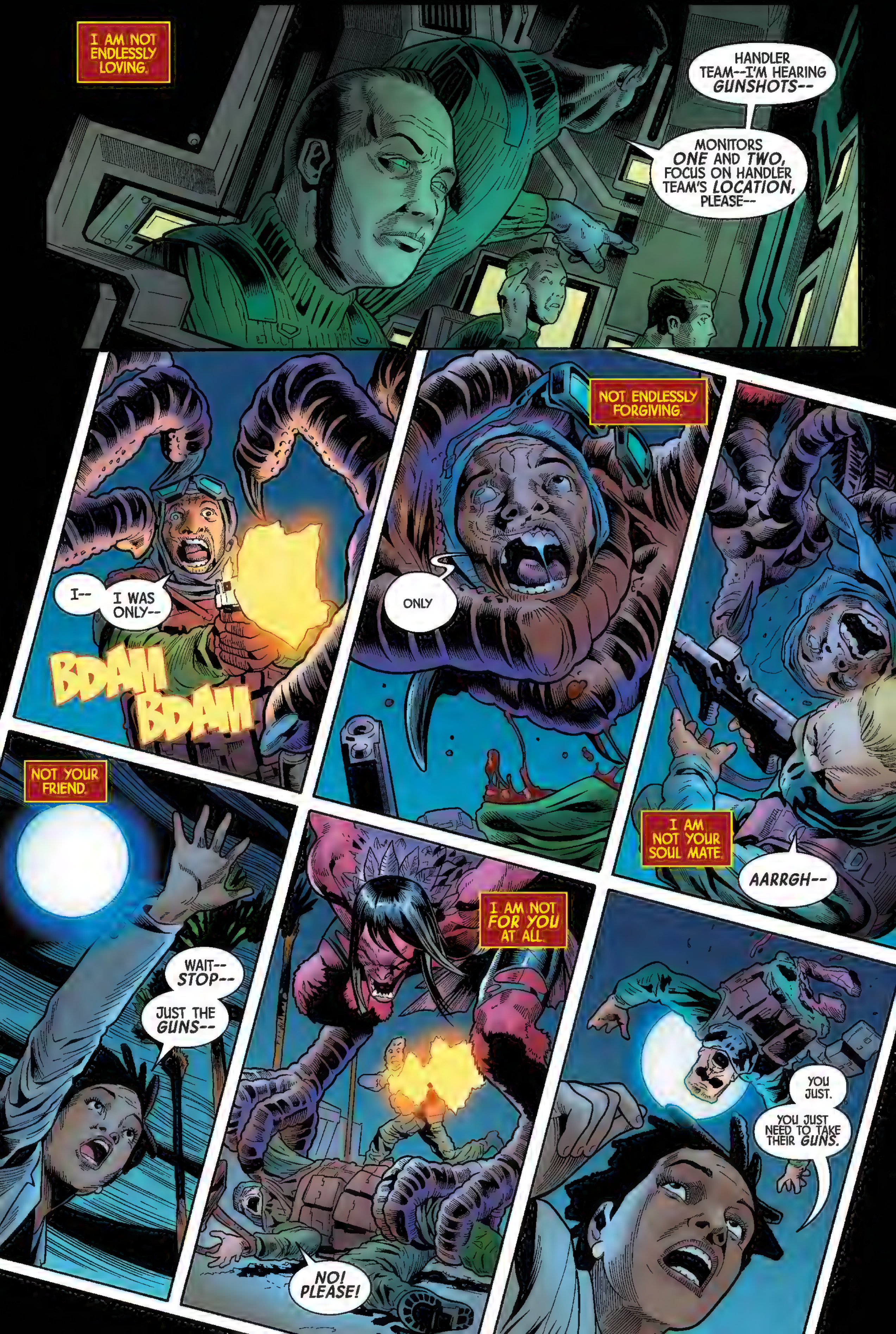

THIS *VIOLENCE.*
IS *ME.*
--I'M *ALL THROUGH* PLAYING *NICE* WITH--
CHLORP
--YOU--
SPLORKK
WHAT--?
"THE *ACID TEST.*"
CAN THE CREATURE'S *DIGESTIVE* SECRETIONS *FULLY* DEVITALIZE HULK TISSUE...?
VISION IS *CLEARING,* SIR--

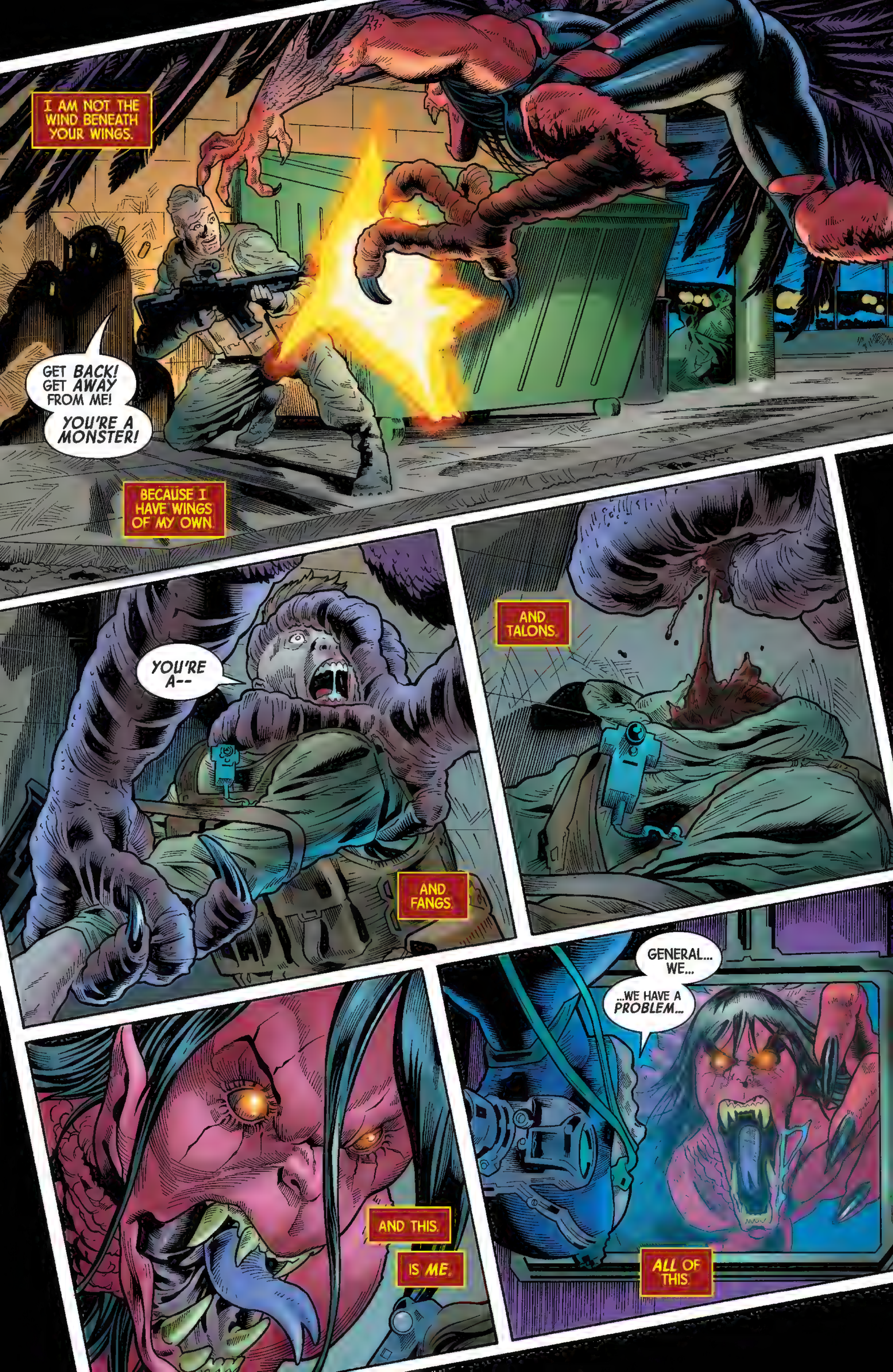

"--LOOKS LIKE THAT'S A 'YES.'"
AARRRHH!
NOT--NOT HEALING--
WHY ISN'T IT HEALING--
HELP ME
KILL YOU
HHOORRP

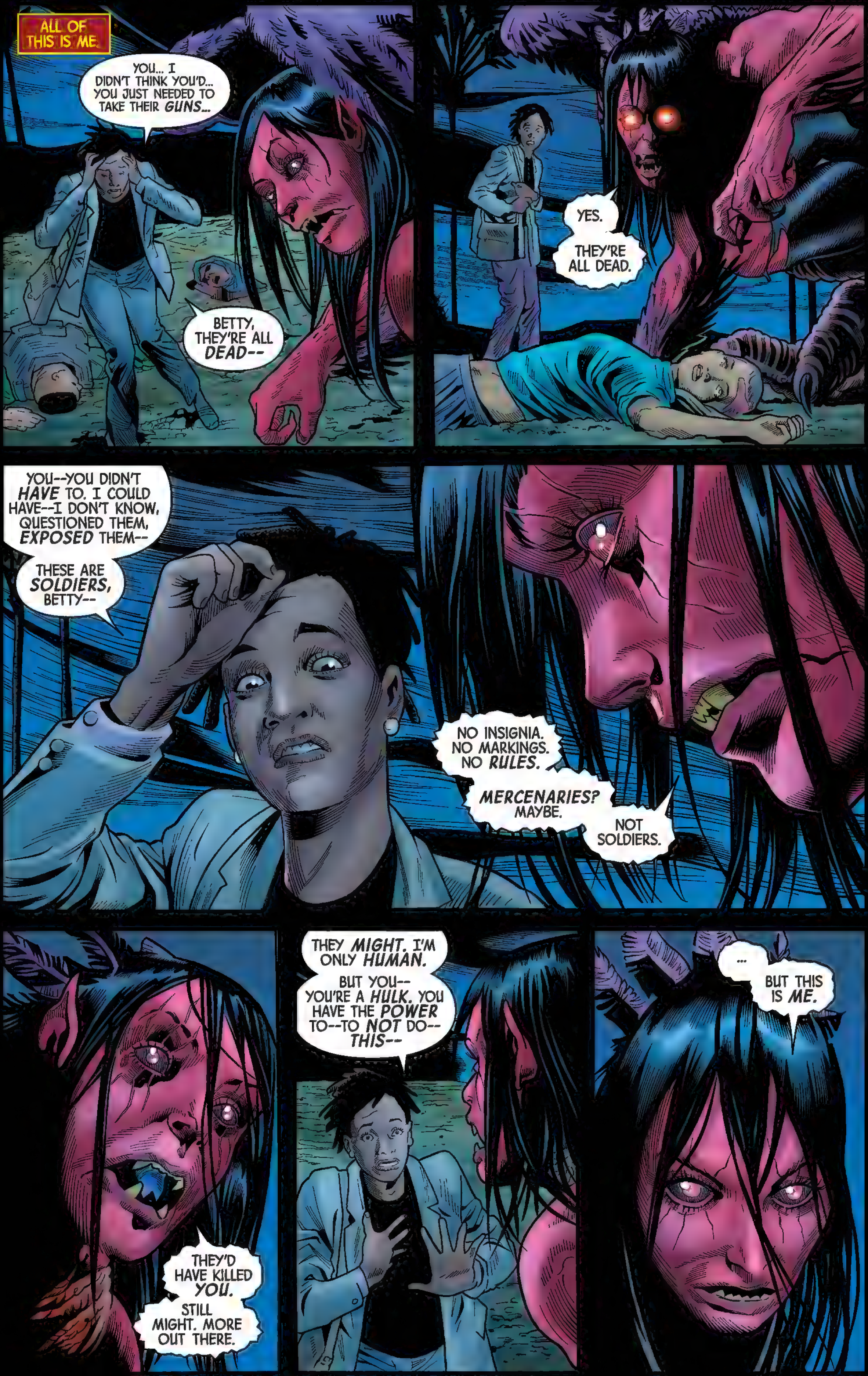

NNNARRRGGH!
THIS PAIN IS ME.
THIS BURNING IS ME.
DR. McGOWAN DOES HAVE A POINT, SIR. THIS IS A POPULATED AREA--
AND THAT'S UNFORTUNATE. BUT SACRIFICES HAVE TO BE MADE, WILKINS.
I'M HAPPY TO MAKE THE HARD CHOICES...
YES, SIR. BUT IF THE, UH, THE CIVILIANS IN THE AREA INFORM THE POLICE... WELL, THAT BRINGS MORE CIVILIANS...
THIS COULD SPIRAL, SIR.
LET ME WORRY ABOUT CONTAINMENT, WILKINS.
WE MIGHT NOT HAVE BURBANK ANYMORE--OUR MULTI-TOOL FOR ANY OCCASION--
"--BUT WE DO HAVE PEOPLE."
H-HELLO?
I--I NEED HELP--PLEASE--
FRIEDRICH INN
THIS FEAR IS ME.

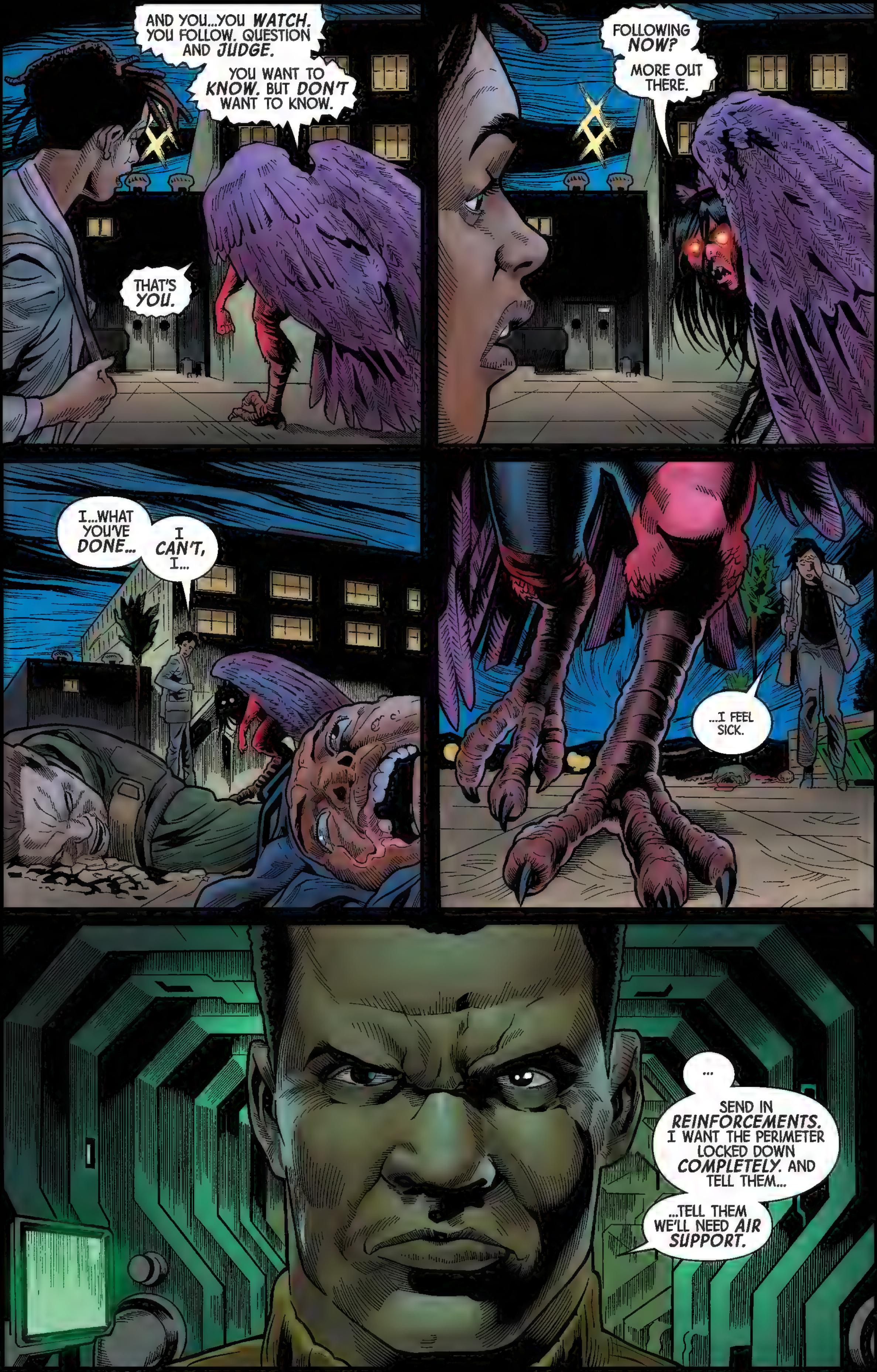

THE FEAR OF THE NIGHTMARE INSIDE
ARE--ARE YOU COPS OR SOMETHING?
THERE'S SOMETHING IN THERE--IT KILLED MY FRIEND, AND--AND THEN SOMETHING ELSE--
WE KNOW, MA'AM. IT'S ALL GOOD.
WE'RE HANDLING IT.
BDAM
SPAK
QUICK AND CLEAN.
AGENT HURST TO SHADOW BASE. CIVILIAN ATTEMPTED EVAC, BUT THE PERIMETER REMAINS SECURE. OVER.
AGENT HURST, WAS IT?
OH. OH GOD.
JACKIE McGEE. I'M WITH THE ARIZONA HERALD.
THIS IS ME.

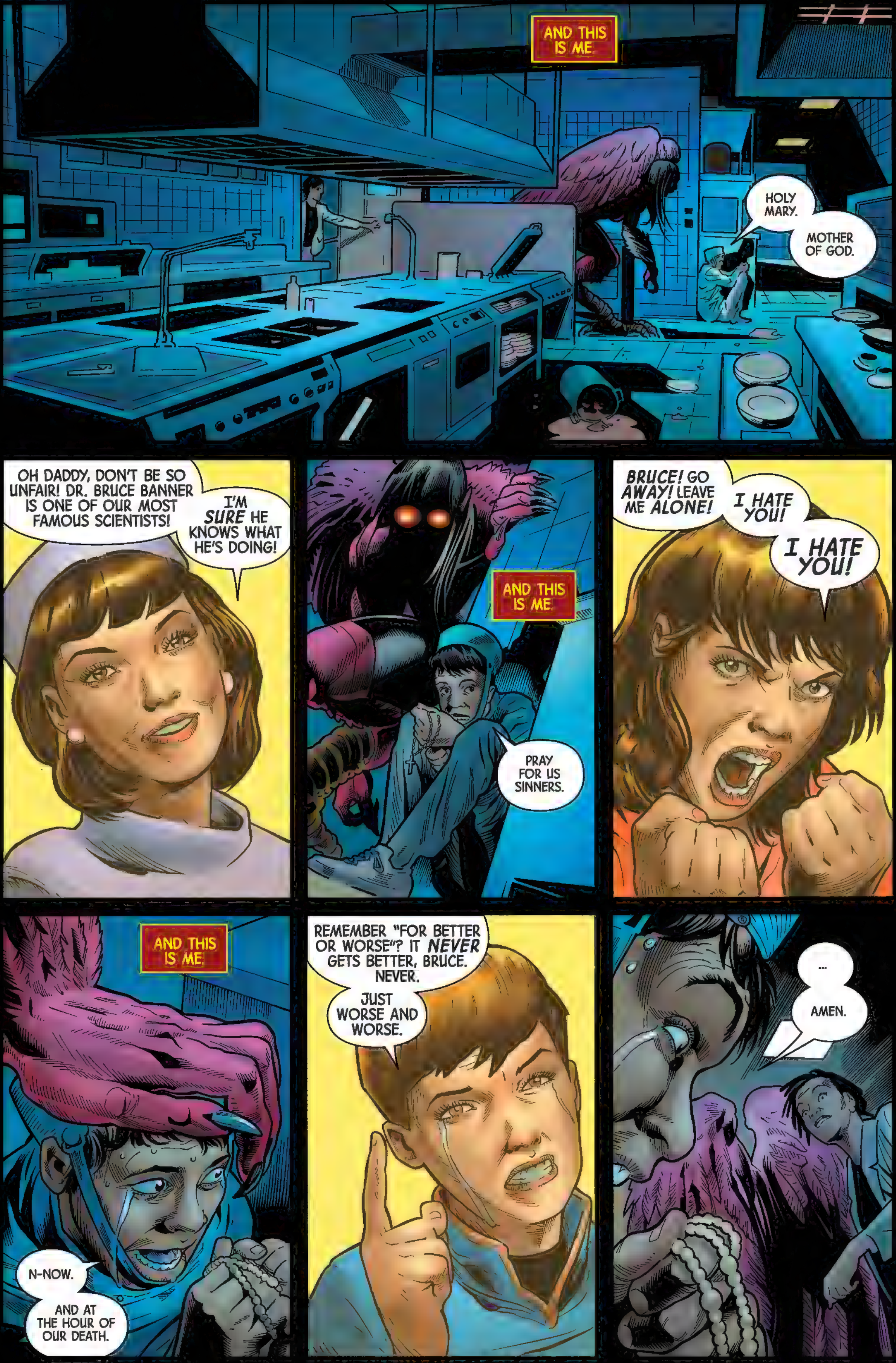

THIS IS ME.
WE HAVE SOME QUESTIONS.
YOU.
KILLED HER.
WHY?
ORDERS.
BDAM
BDAM
BDAM
BDAM
AND I AM NOT KIND.

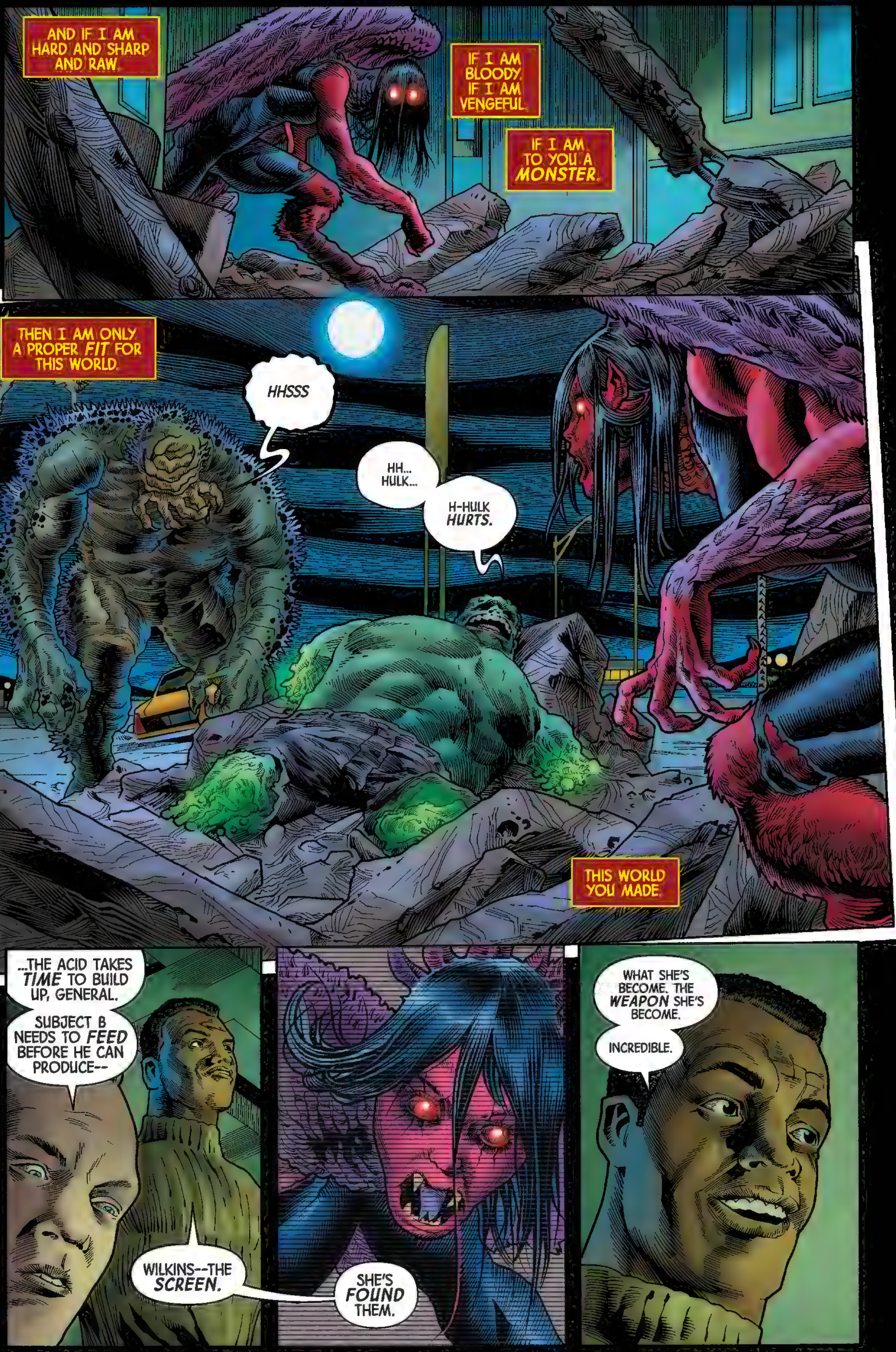

I AM NOT ENDLESSLY LOVING.
HANDLER TEAM--I'M HEARING *GUNSHOTS*--
MONITORS *ONE* AND *TWO*, FOCUS ON HANDLER TEAM'S *LOCATION*, PLEASE--
I--
I WAS ONLY--
BDAM BDAM
NOT ENDLESSLY FORGIVING.
ONLY
I AM NOT YOUR SOUL MATE.
AARRGH--
NOT YOUR FRIEND.
WAIT-- *STOP--*
JUST THE *GUNS--*
I AM NOT *FOR YOU* AT ALL.
NO! PLEASE!
YOU JUST.
YOU JUST NEED TO TAKE THEIR *GUNS*.

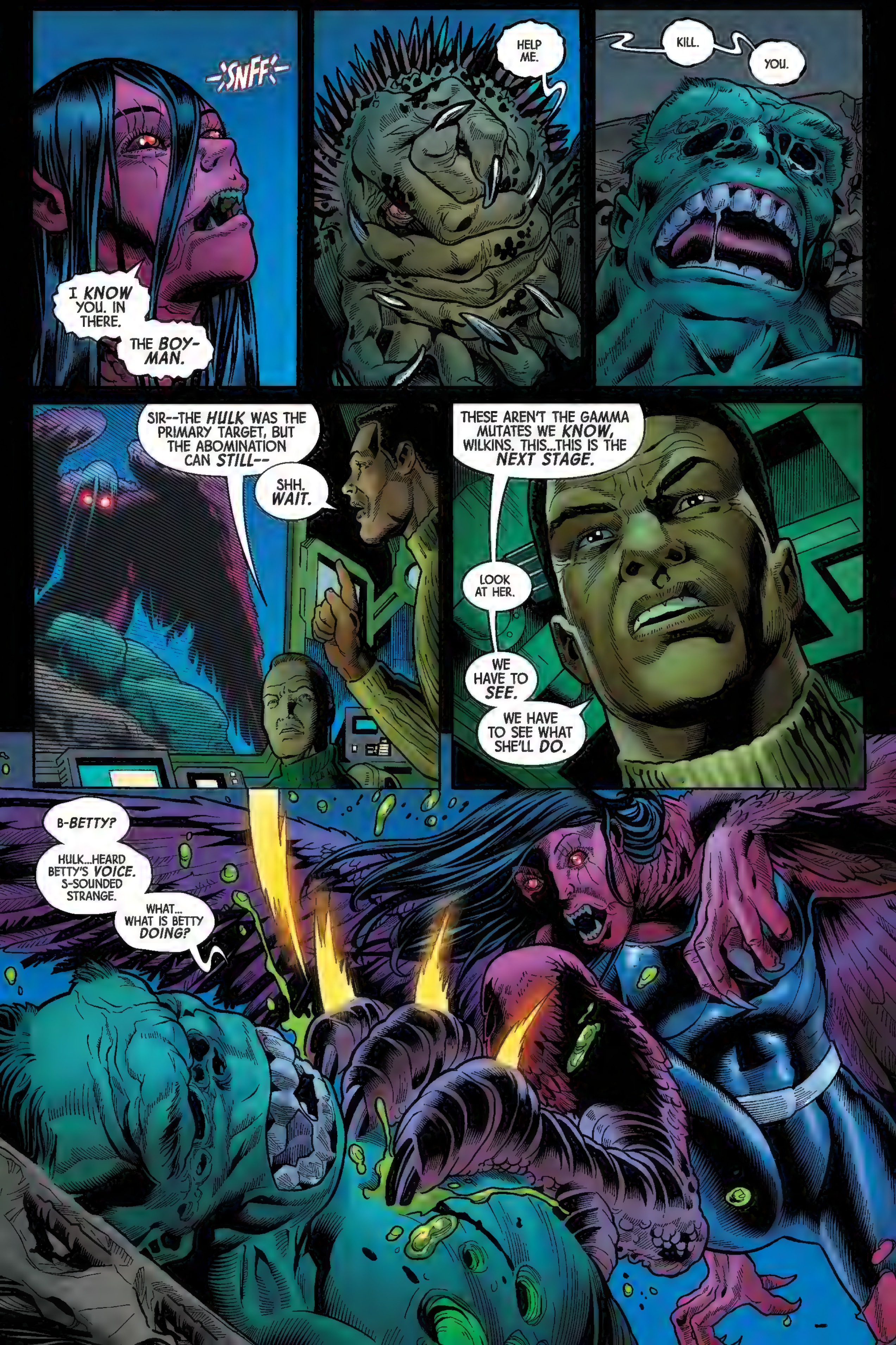

I AM NOT THE WIND BENEATH YOUR WINGS.
GET *BACK!* GET *AWAY* FROM ME!
YOU'RE A MONSTER!
BECAUSE I HAVE WINGS OF MY OWN.
YOU'RE A--
AND FANGS.
AND TALONS.
AND THIS.
IS *ME.*
GENERAL... WE...
...WE HAVE A *PROBLEM...*
ALL OF THIS.

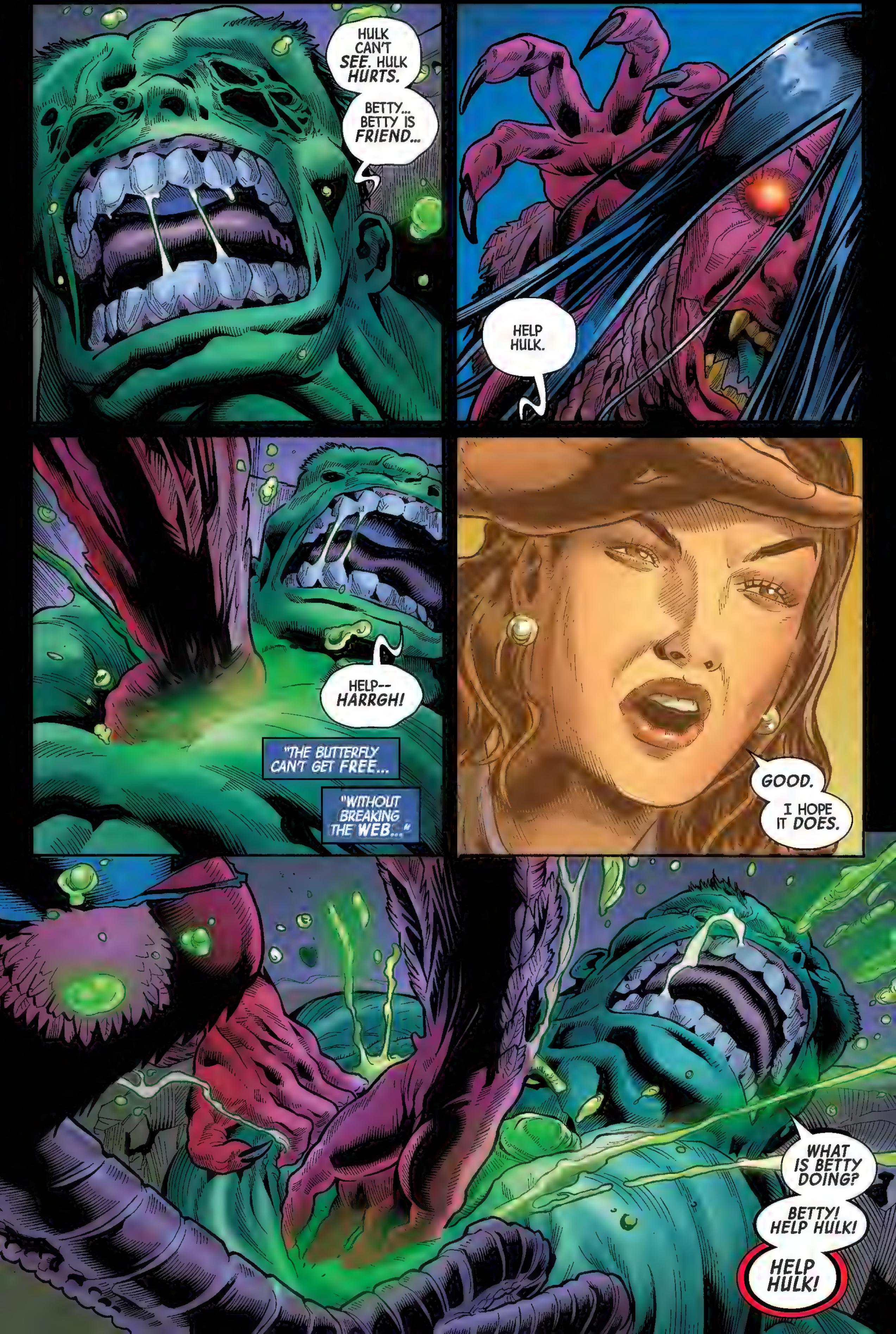

ALL OF THIS IS ME.
YOU... I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D... YOU JUST NEEDED TO TAKE THEIR GUNS...
BETTY, THEY'RE ALL DEAD--
YES.
THEY'RE ALL DEAD.
YOU--YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO. I COULD HAVE--I DON'T KNOW, QUESTIONED THEM, EXPOSED THEM--
THESE ARE SOLDIERS, BETTY--
NO INSIGNIA. NO MARKINGS. NO RULES.
MERCENARIES? MAYBE.
NOT SOLDIERS.
THEY'D HAVE KILLED YOU.
STILL MIGHT. MORE OUT THERE.
THEY MIGHT. I'M ONLY HUMAN.
BUT YOU-- YOU'RE A HULK. YOU HAVE THE POWER TO--TO NOT DO-- THIS--
...
BUT THIS IS ME.

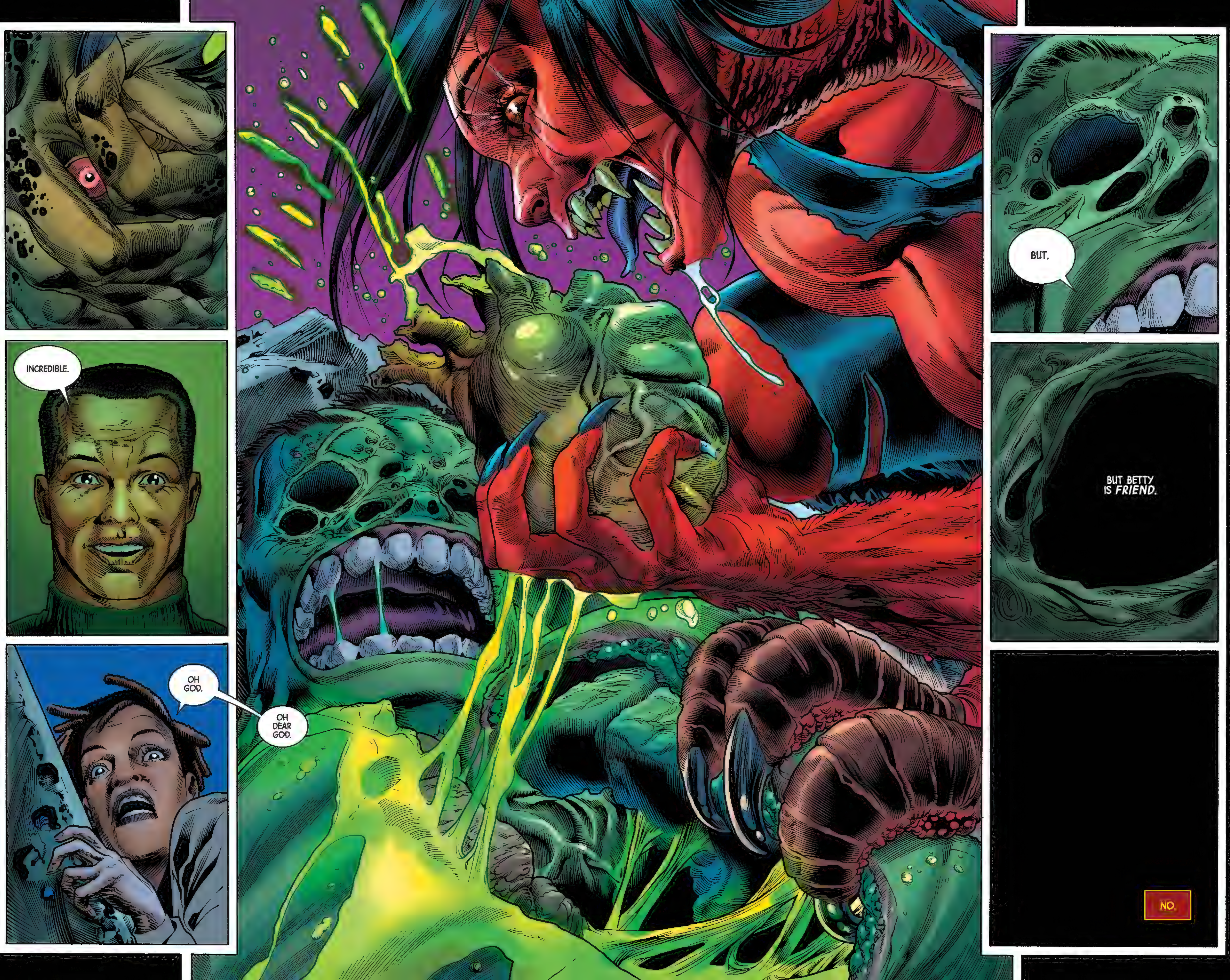

AND YOU...YOU WATCH. YOU FOLLOW. QUESTION AND JUDGE.
YOU WANT TO KNOW. BUT DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
THAT'S YOU.
FOLLOWING NOW?
MORE OUT THERE.
I...WHAT YOU'VE DONE...
I CAN'T, I...
...I FEEL SICK.
...
SEND IN REINFORCEMENTS. I WANT THE PERIMETER LOCKED DOWN COMPLETELY. AND TELL THEM...
...TELL THEM WE'LL NEED AIR SUPPORT.

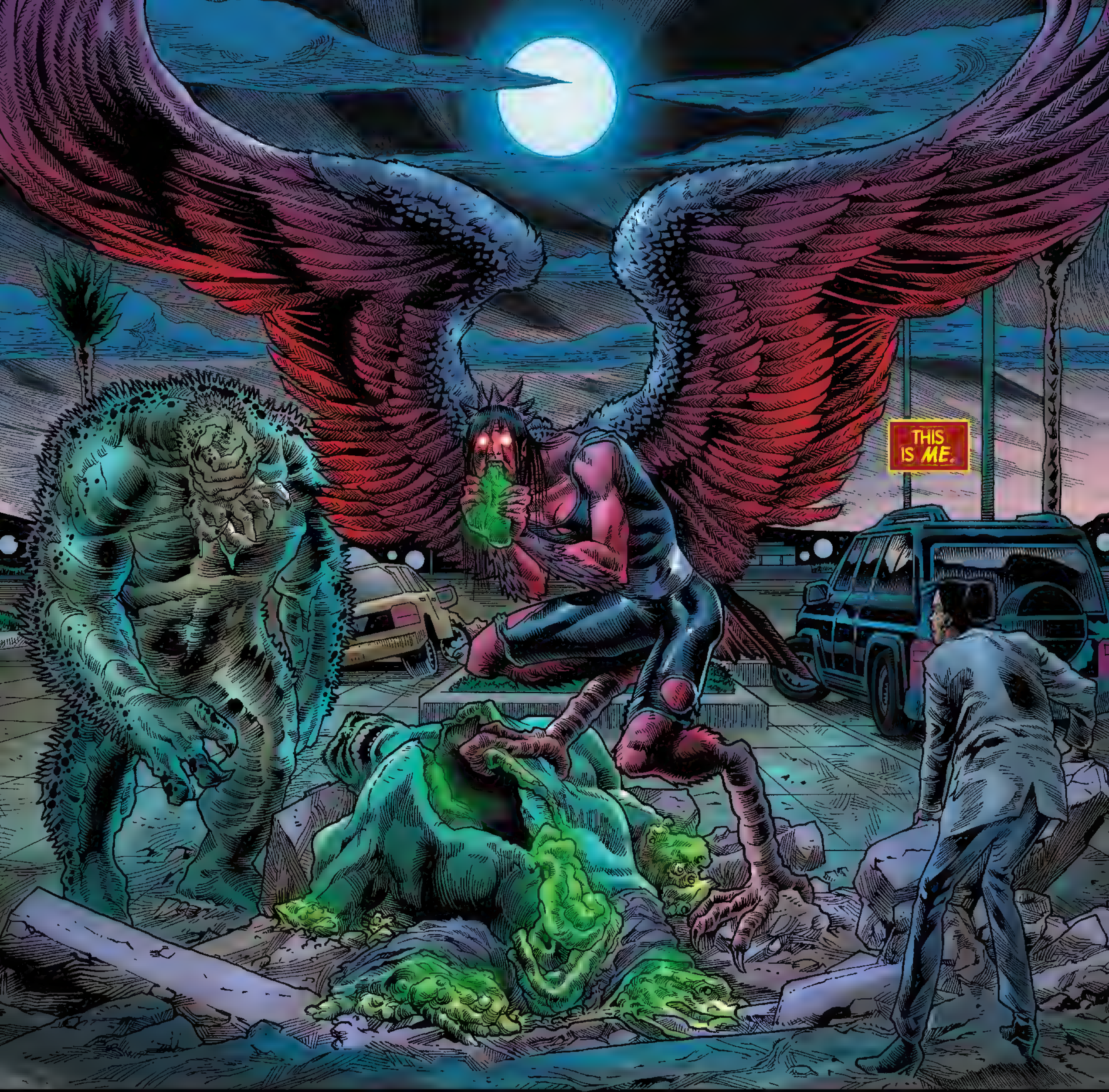

AND THIS IS ME.
HOLY MARY.
MOTHER OF GOD.
OH DADDY, DON'T BE SO UNFAIR! DR. BRUCE BANNER IS ONE OF OUR MOST FAMOUS SCIENTISTS!
I'M *SURE* HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!
AND THIS IS ME.
PRAY FOR US SINNERS.
BRUCE! GO *AWAY!* LEAVE ME *ALONE!*
I HATE YOU!
I HATE YOU!
AND THIS IS ME.
N-NOW.
AND AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH.
REMEMBER "FOR BETTER OR WORSE"? IT *NEVER* GETS BETTER, BRUCE. NEVER.
JUST WORSE AND WORSE.
...
AMEN.


AND IF I AM HARD AND SHARP AND RAW.
IF I AM BLOODY. IF I AM VENGEFUL.
IF I AM TO YOU A *MONSTER*.
THEN I AM ONLY A PROPER *FIT* FOR THIS WORLD.
HHSSS
HH... HULK...
H-HULK *HURTS*.
THIS WORLD YOU MADE.
...THE ACID TAKES *TIME* TO BUILD UP, GENERAL.
SUBJECT B NEEDS TO *FEED* BEFORE HE CAN PRODUCE--
WILKINS--THE *SCREEN*.
SHE'S *FOUND* THEM.
WHAT SHE'S BECOME. THE *WEAPON* SHE'S BECOME.
INCREDIBLE.


-SNFF-
I KNOW YOU. IN THERE.
THE BOY-MAN.
HELP ME.
KILL.
YOU.
SIR--THE HULK WAS THE PRIMARY TARGET, BUT THE ABOMINATION CAN STILL--
SHH. WAIT.
THESE AREN'T THE GAMMA MUTATES WE KNOW, WILKINS. THIS...THIS IS THE NEXT STAGE.
LOOK AT HER.
WE HAVE TO SEE.
WE HAVE TO SEE WHAT SHE'LL DO.
B-BETTY?
HULK...HEARD BETTY'S VOICE. S-SOUNDED STRANGE.
WHAT... WHAT IS BETTY DOING?


HULK CAN'T SEE. HULK HURTS.
BETTY... BETTY IS FRIEND...
HELP HULK.
HELP-- HARRGH!
"THE BUTTERFLY CAN'T GET FREE...
"WITHOUT BREAKING THE WEB..."
GOOD.
I HOPE IT DOES.
WHAT IS BETTY DOING?
BETTY! HELP HULK!
HELP HULK!


INCREDIBLE.
OH GOD.
OH DEAR GOD.
BUT.
BUT BETTY IS *FRIEND*.
NO.

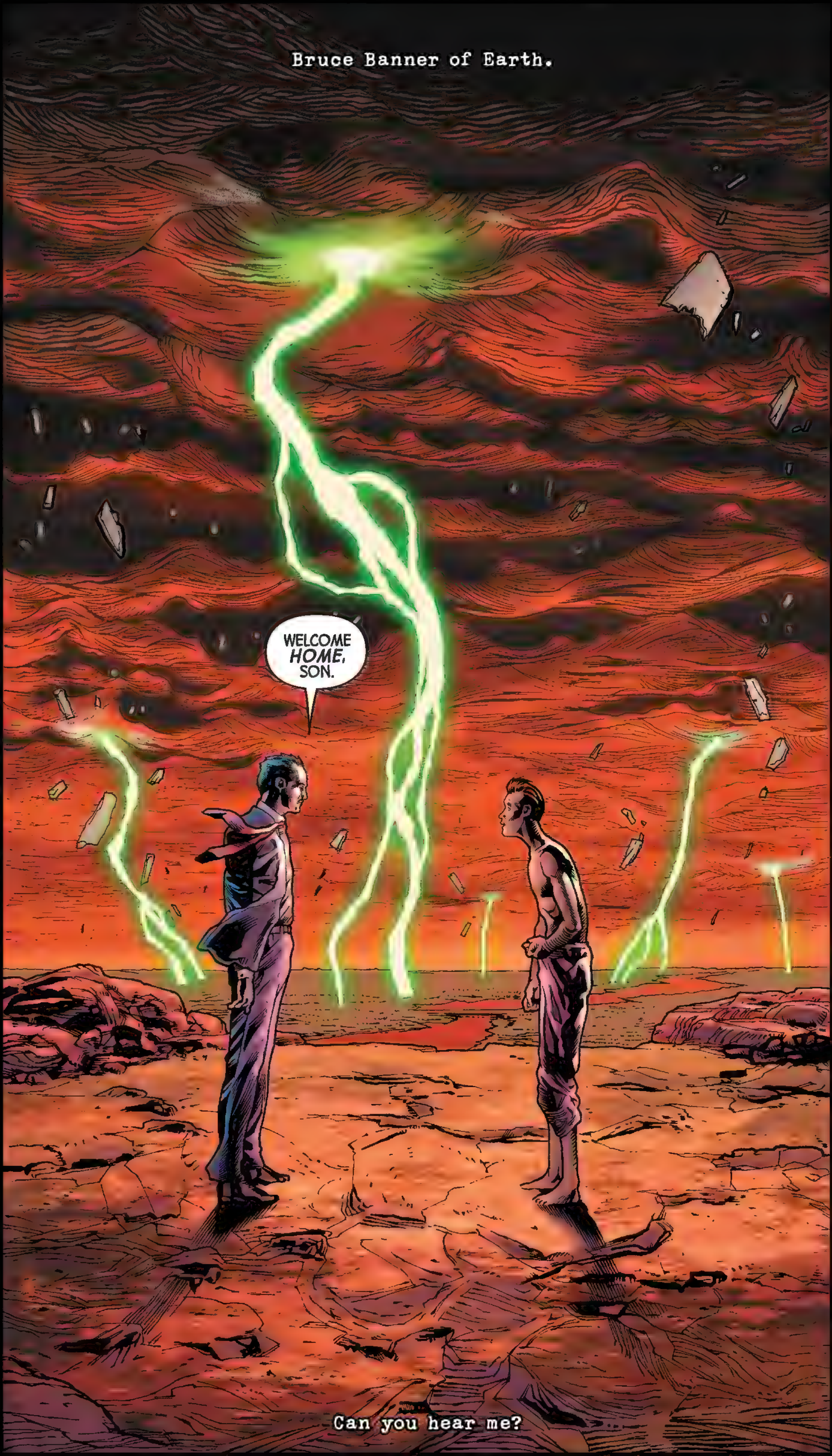


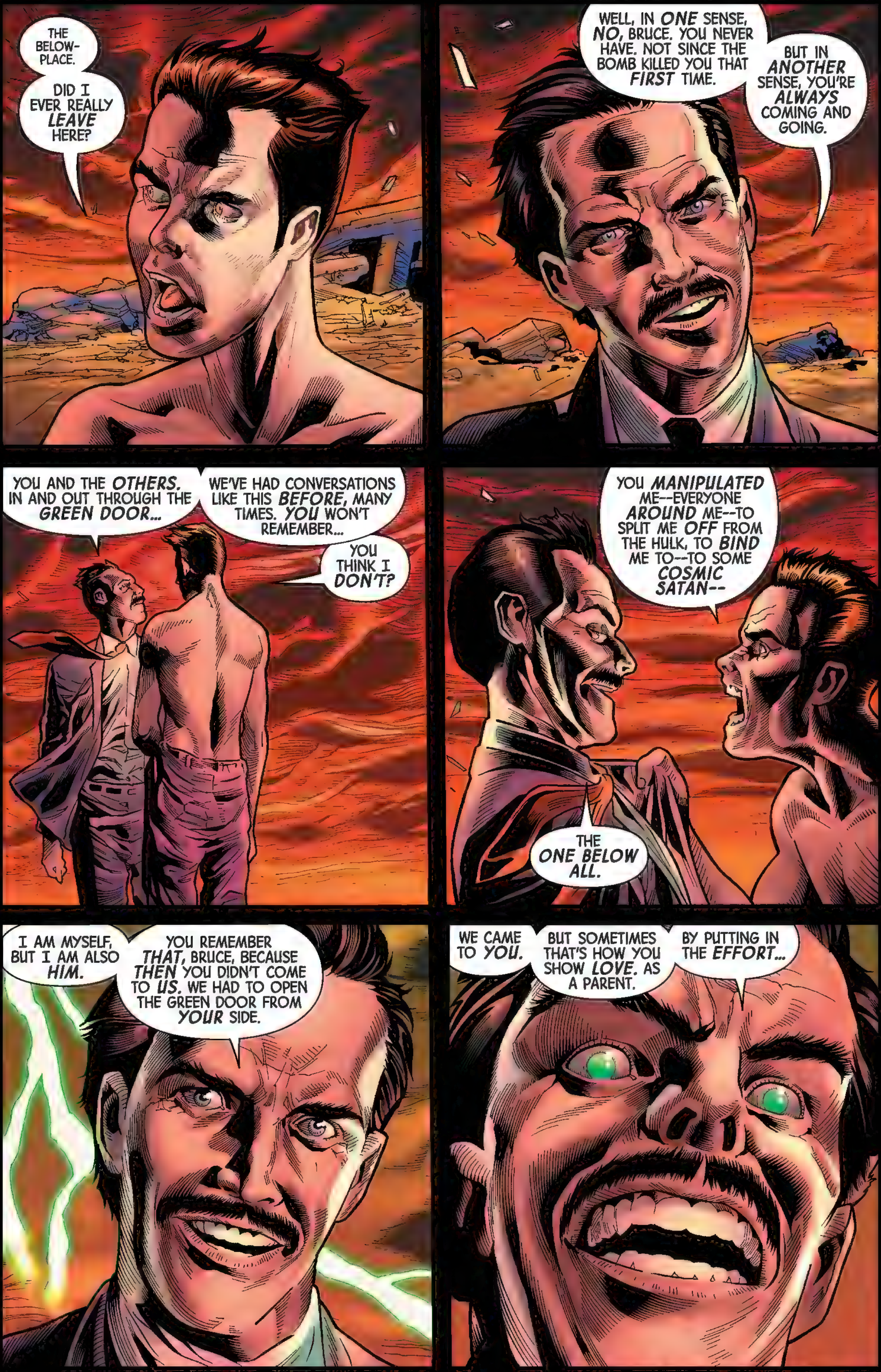
BUTTERFLY

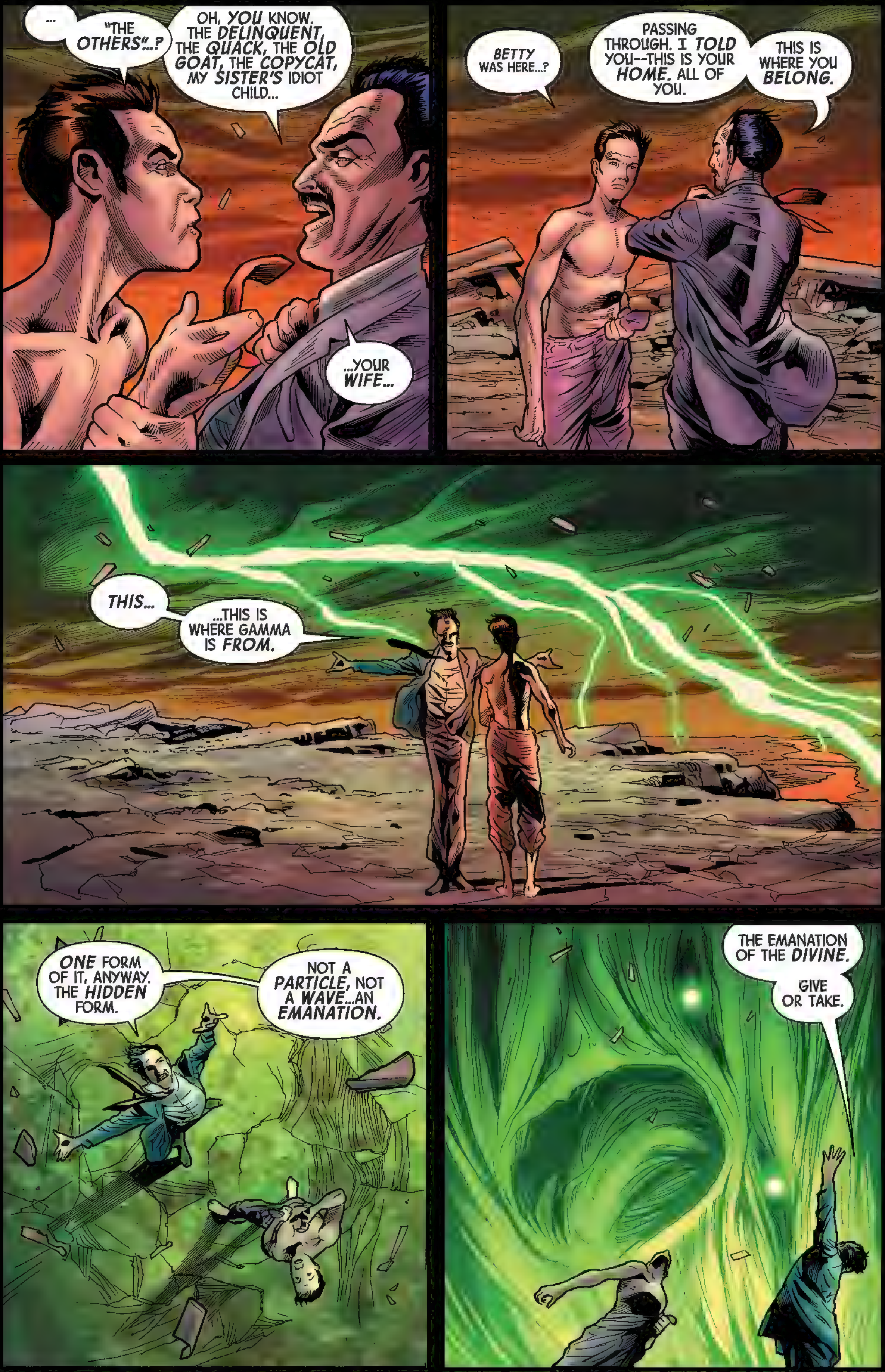
20

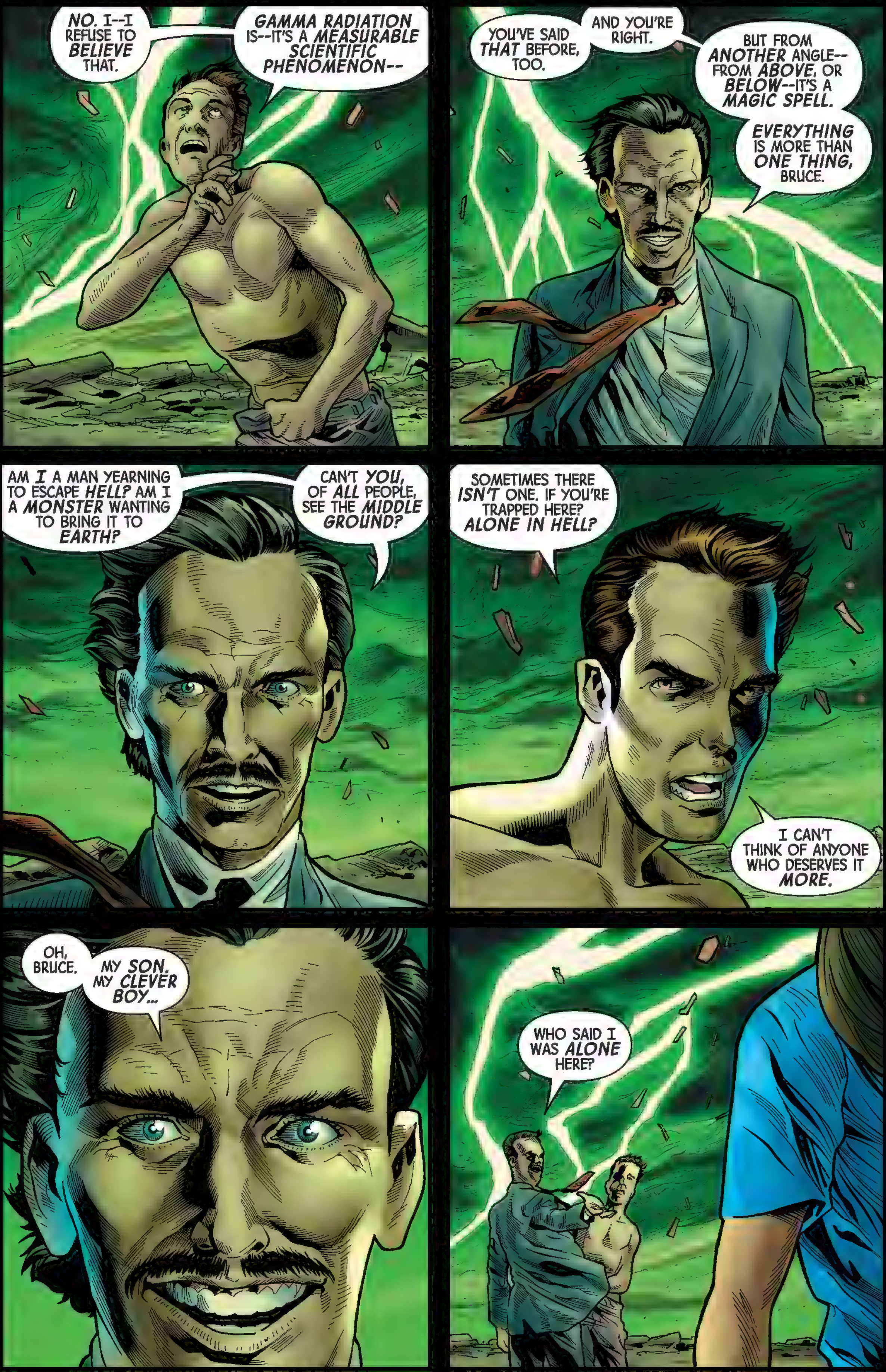
"THIS IS NOW THE HOUR OF DEATH AND REBIRTH."

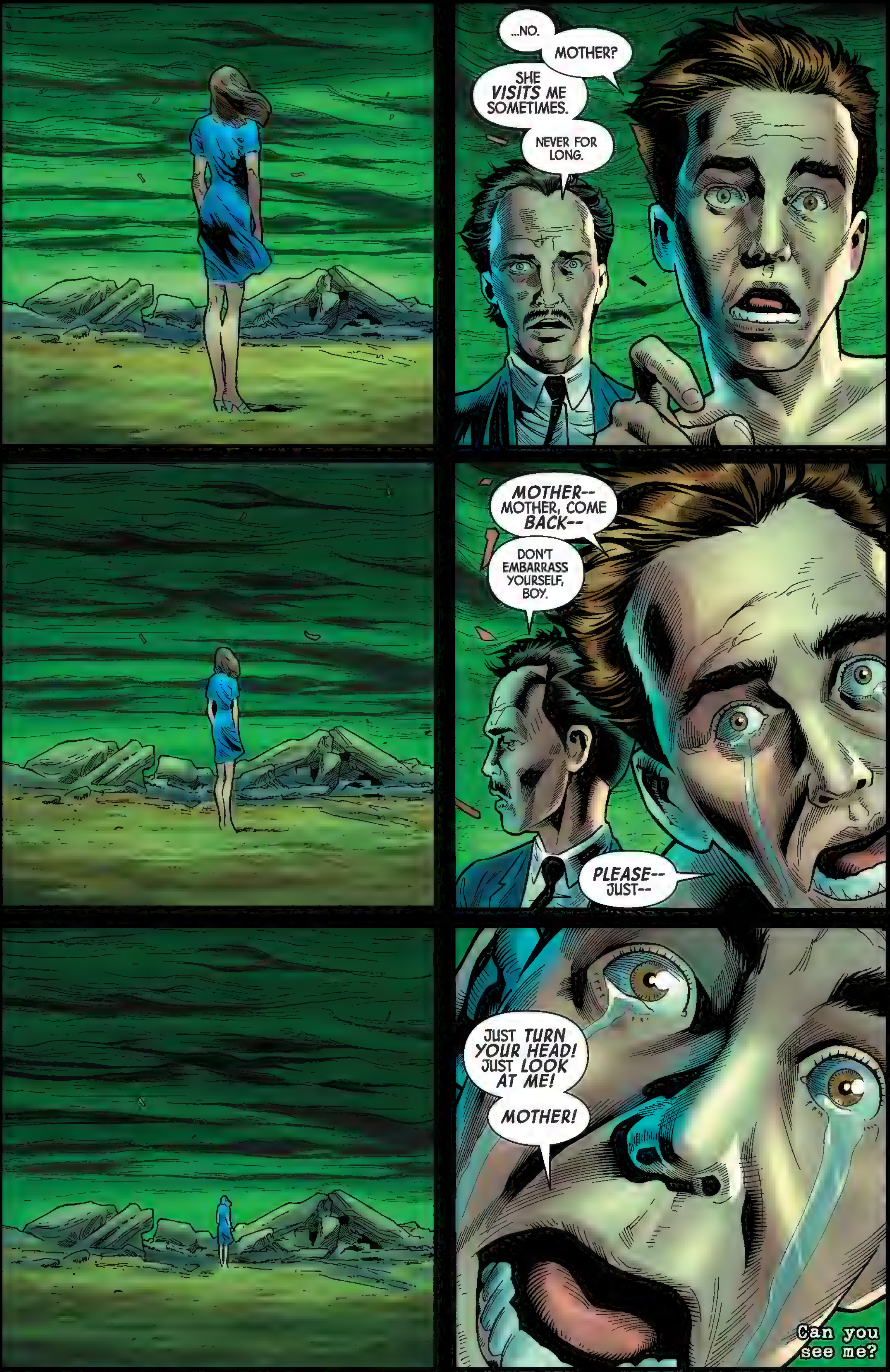
– TIMOTHY LEARY
THE PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCE

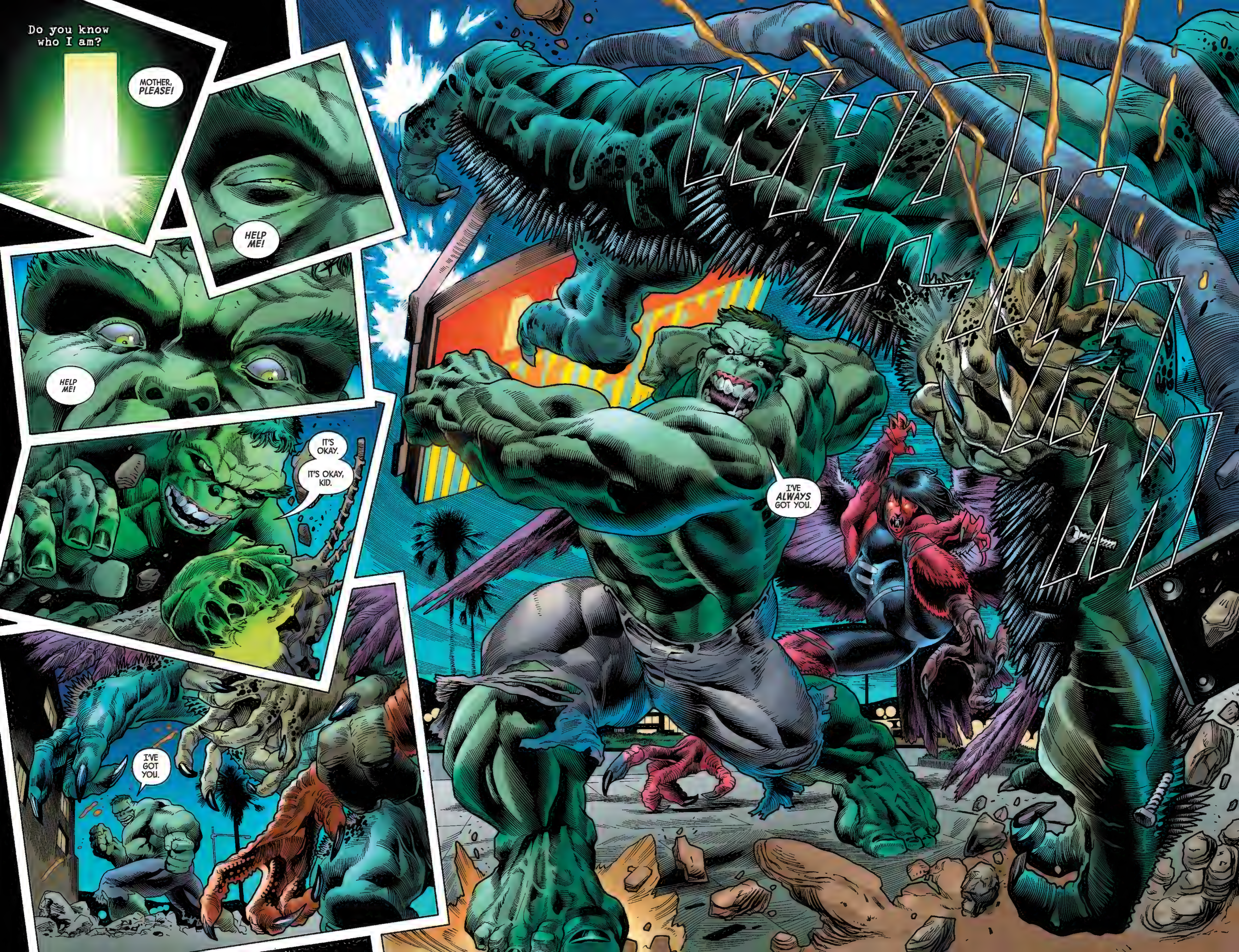

Bruce Banner of Earth.
WELCOME *HOME*, SON.
Can you hear me?

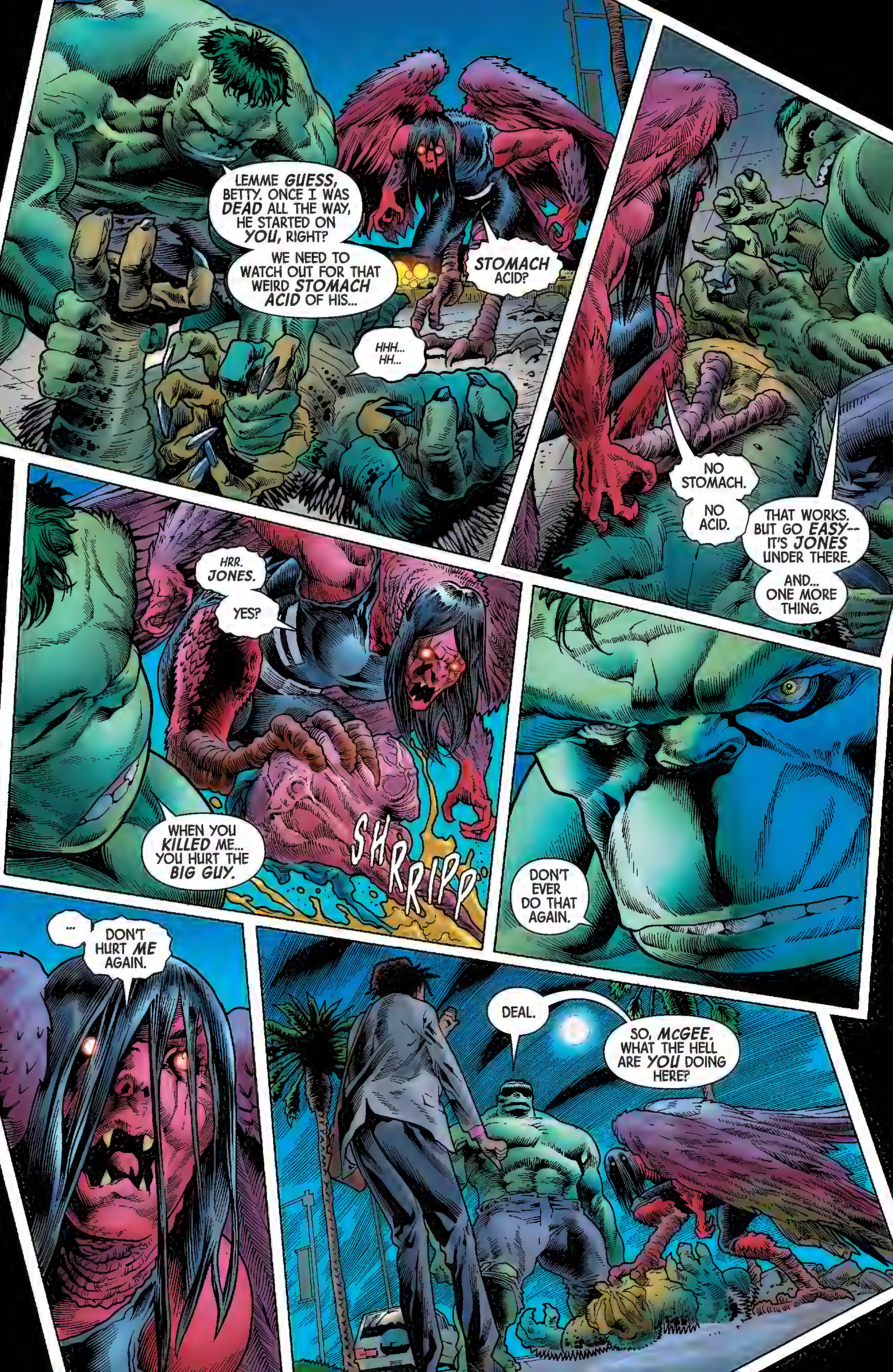

THE BELOW-PLACE.
DID I EVER REALLY *LEAVE* HERE?
WELL, IN *ONE* SENSE, *NO,* BRUCE. YOU NEVER HAVE. NOT SINCE THE BOMB KILLED YOU THAT *FIRST* TIME.
BUT IN *ANOTHER* SENSE, YOU'RE *ALWAYS* COMING AND GOING.
YOU AND THE *OTHERS.* IN AND OUT THROUGH THE *GREEN DOOR...*
WE'VE HAD CONVERSATIONS LIKE THIS *BEFORE,* MANY TIMES. *YOU* WON'T REMEMBER...
YOU THINK I *DON'T?*
YOU *MANIPULATED* ME--EVERYONE *AROUND* ME--TO SPLIT ME *OFF* FROM THE HULK, TO *BIND* ME TO--TO SOME *COSMIC SATAN--*
THE *ONE BELOW ALL.*
I AM MYSELF, BUT I AM ALSO *HIM.*
YOU REMEMBER *THAT,* BRUCE, BECAUSE *THEN* YOU DIDN'T COME TO *US.* WE HAD TO OPEN THE GREEN DOOR FROM *YOUR* SIDE.
WE CAME TO *YOU.*
BUT SOMETIMES THAT'S HOW YOU SHOW *LOVE.* AS A PARENT.
BY PUTTING IN THE *EFFORT...*]

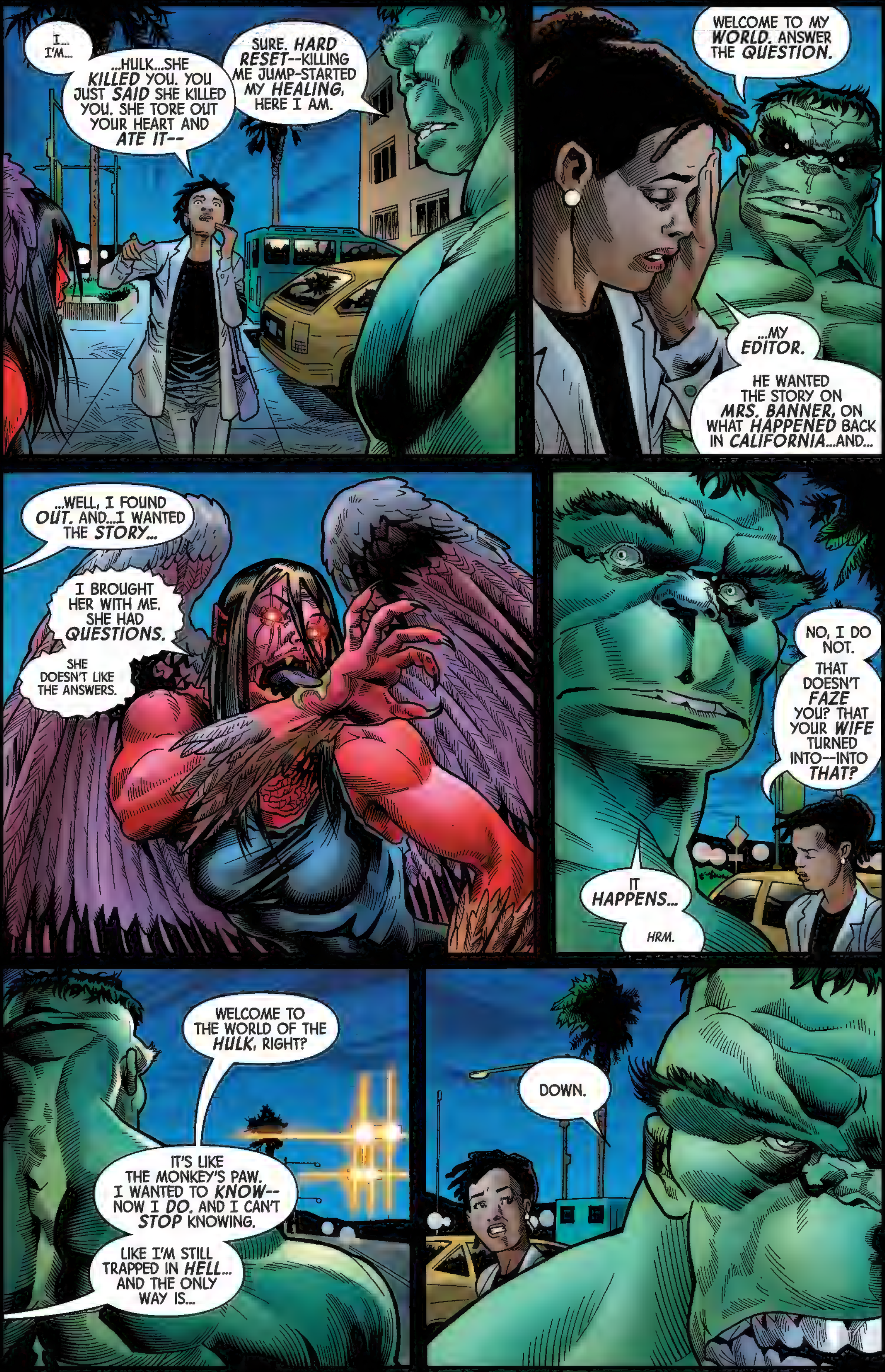

...
"THE OTHERS"...?
OH, YOU KNOW. THE DELINQUENT, THE QUACK, THE OLD GOAT, THE COPYCAT, MY SISTER'S IDIOT CHILD...
...YOUR WIFE...
BETTY WAS HERE...?
PASSING THROUGH. I TOLD YOU--THIS IS YOUR HOME. ALL OF YOU.
THIS IS WHERE YOU BELONG.
THIS...
...THIS IS WHERE GAMMA IS FROM.
ONE FORM OF IT, ANYWAY. THE HIDDEN FORM.
NOT A PARTICLE, NOT A WAVE...AN EMANATION.
THE EMANATION OF THE DIVINE.
GIVE OR TAKE.

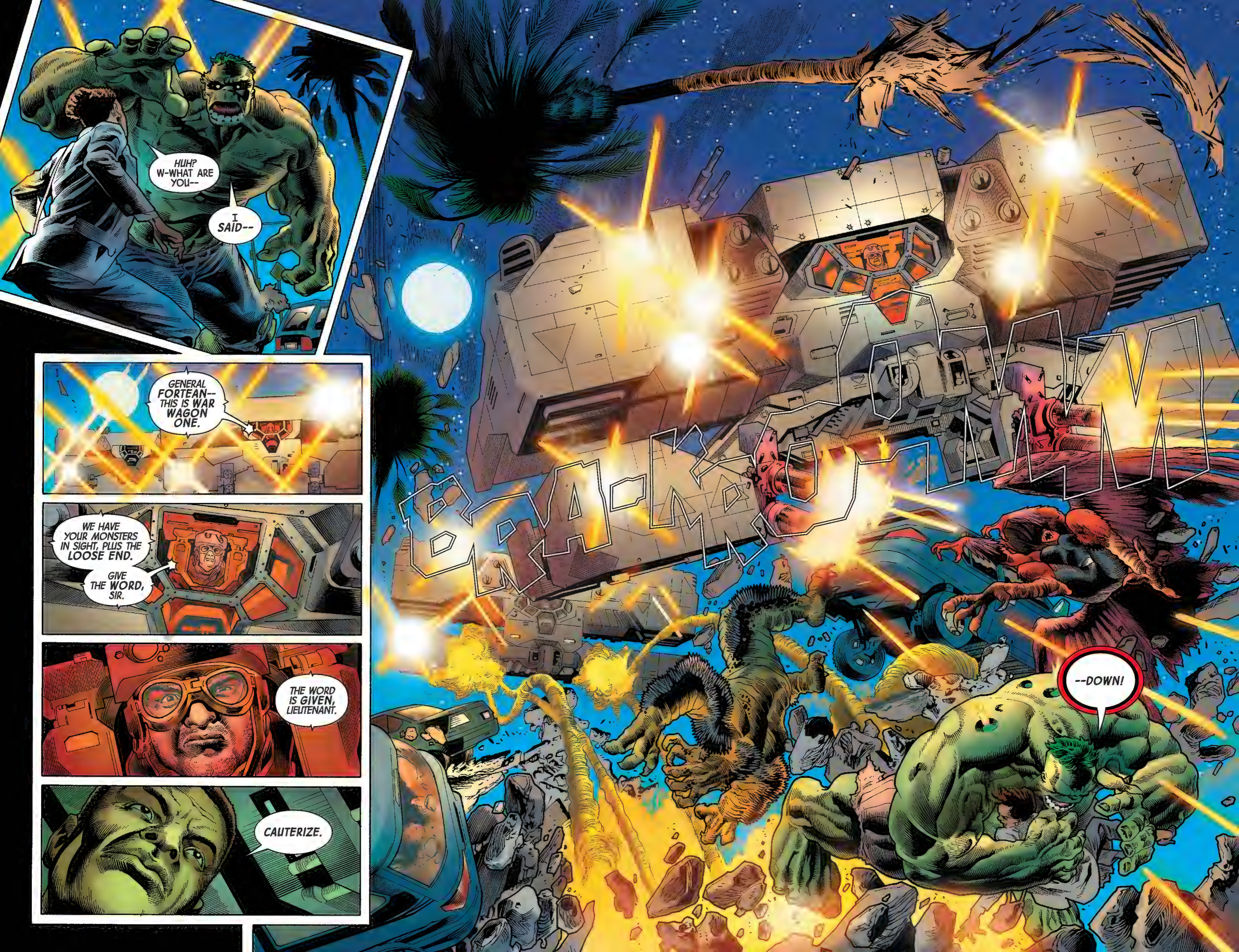

NO. I--I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT.
GAMMA RADIATION IS--IT'S A MEASURABLE SCIENTIFIC PHENOMENON--
YOU'VE SAID THAT BEFORE, TOO.
AND YOU'RE RIGHT.
BUT FROM ANOTHER ANGLE--FROM ABOVE, OR BELOW--IT'S A MAGIC SPELL.
EVERYTHING IS MORE THAN ONE THING, BRUCE.
AM I A MAN YEARNING TO ESCAPE HELL? AM I A MONSTER WANTING TO BRING IT TO EARTH?
CAN'T YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, SEE THE MIDDLE GROUND?
SOMETIMES THERE ISN'T ONE. IF YOU'RE TRAPPED HERE? ALONE IN HELL?
I CAN'T THINK OF ANYONE WHO DESERVES IT MORE.
OH, BRUCE.
MY SON. MY CLEVER BOY...
WHO SAID I WAS ALONE HERE?

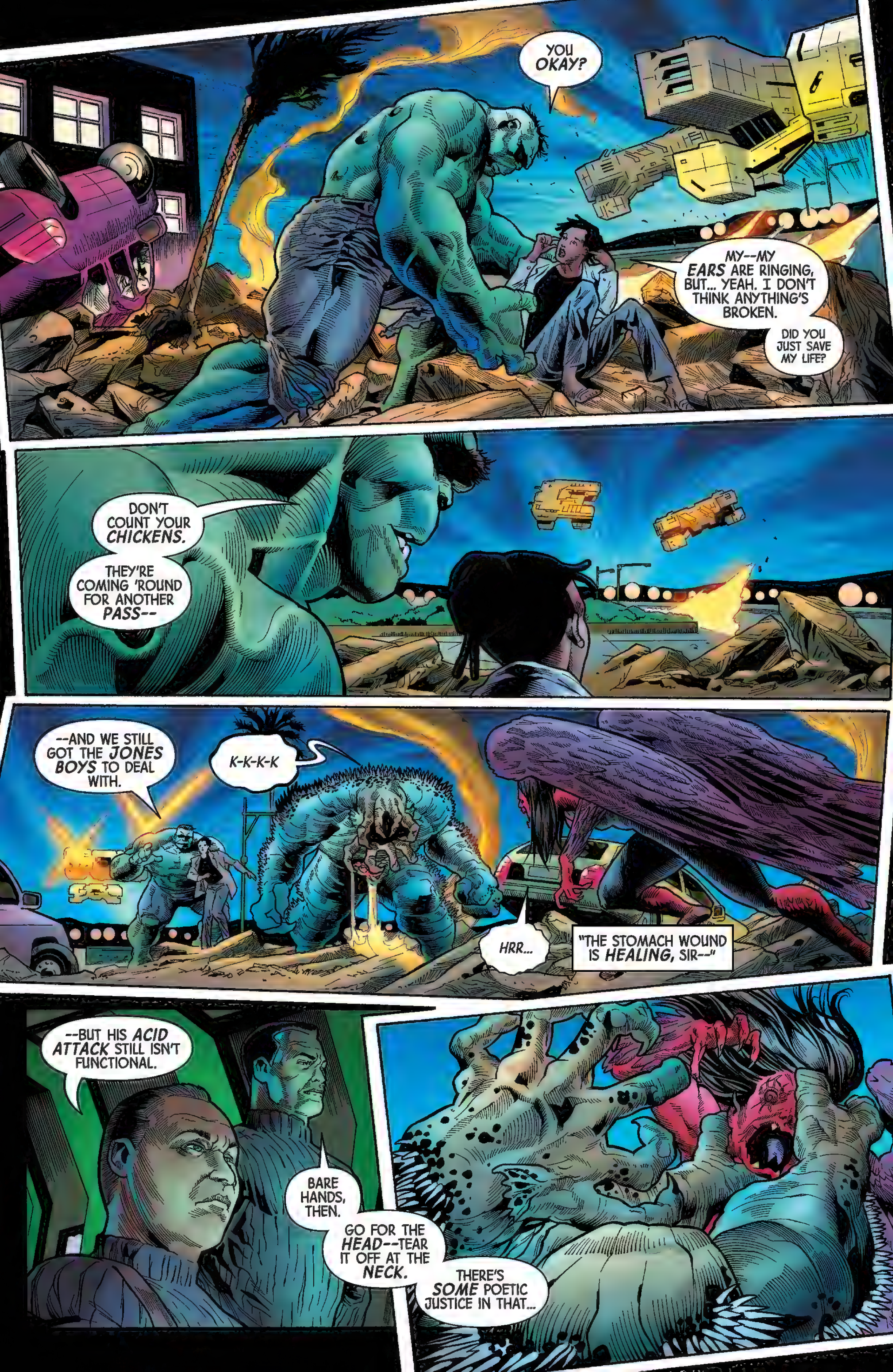

...NO.
MOTHER?
SHE *VISITS* ME SOMETIMES.
NEVER FOR LONG.
MOTHER-- MOTHER, COME *BACK--*
DON'T EMBARRASS YOURSELF, BOY.
PLEASE-- JUST--
JUST *TURN YOUR HEAD!* JUST *LOOK AT ME!*
MOTHER!
Can you see me?

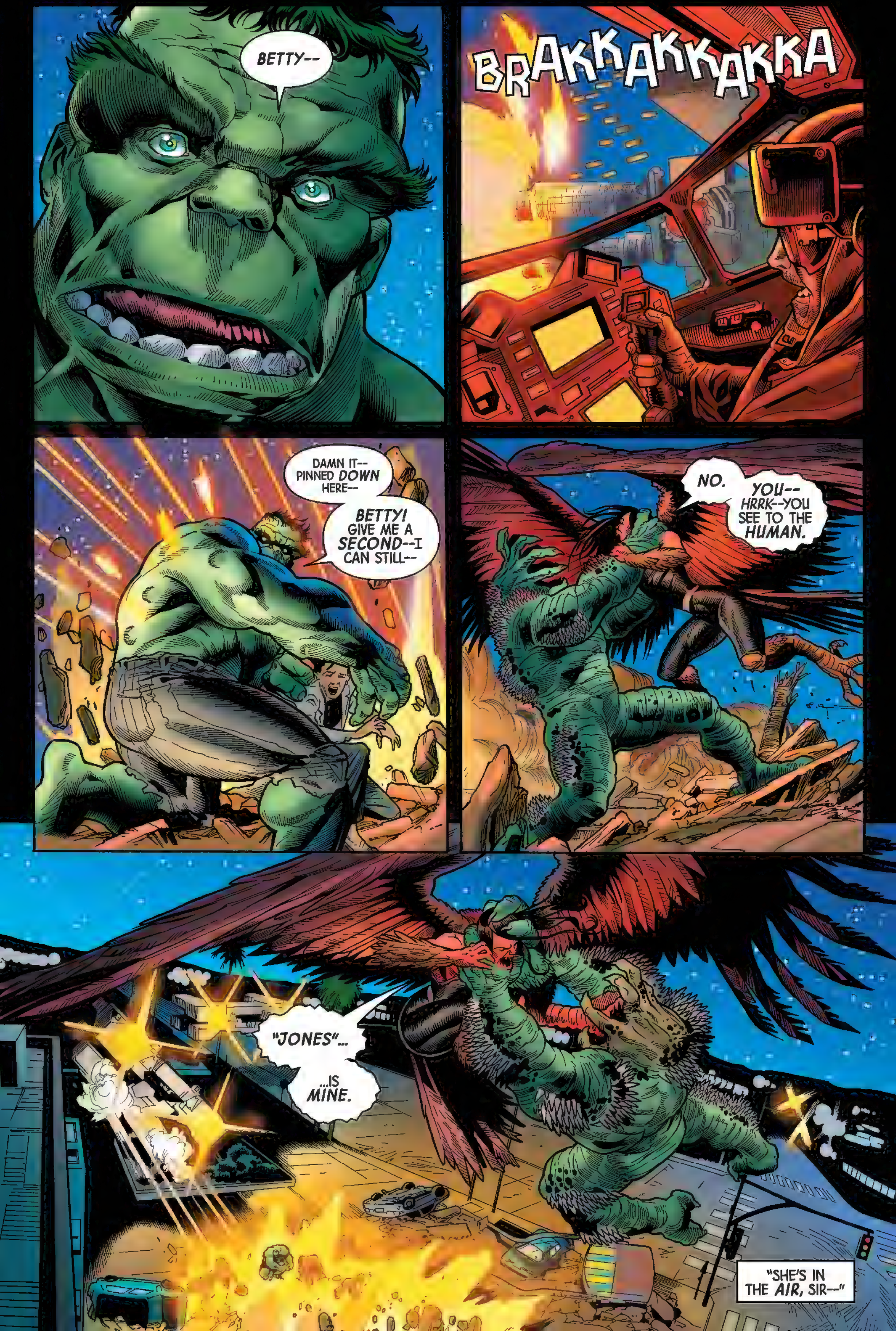

Do you know who I am?
MOTHER, *PLEASE!*
HELP ME!
HELP ME!
IT'S OKAY.
IT'S OKAY, KID.
I'VE GOT YOU.
WHAMMM
I'VE *ALWAYS* GOT YOU.

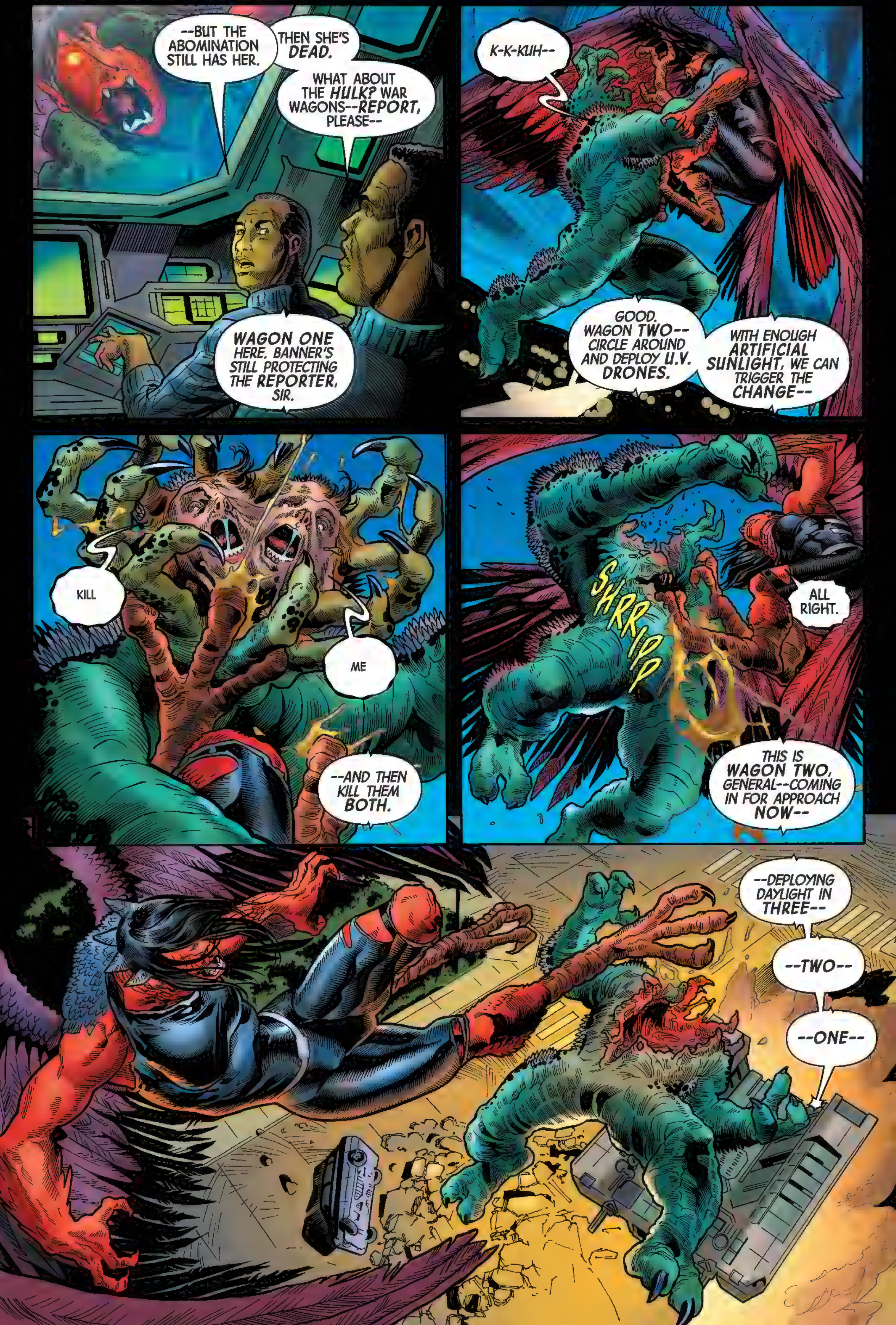

LEMME *GUESS*, BETTY. ONCE I WAS *DEAD* ALL THE WAY, HE STARTED ON *YOU*, RIGHT?
WE NEED TO WATCH OUT FOR THAT WEIRD *STOMACH ACID* OF HIS...
STOMACH ACID?
HHH... HH...
NO STOMACH.
NO ACID.
THAT WORKS. BUT GO *EASY*-- IT'S *JONES* UNDER THERE.
AND... ONE MORE THING.
HRR. *JONES*.
YES?
WHEN YOU... *KILLED* ME... YOU HURT THE *BIG GUY*.
SHRRIPP
DON'T EVER DO THAT AGAIN.
...
DON'T HURT *ME* AGAIN.
DEAL.
SO, *McGEE*. WHAT THE HELL ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?

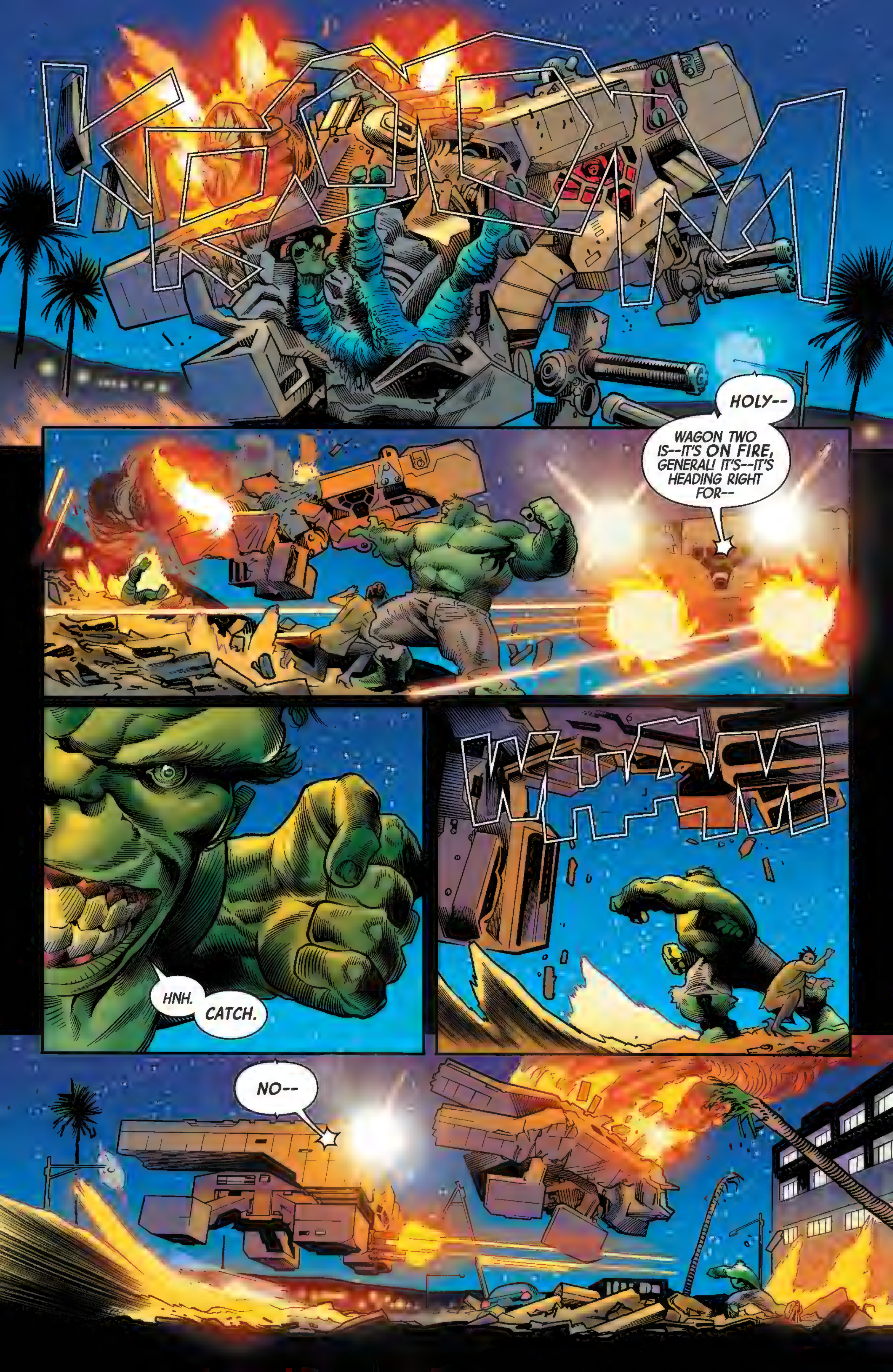

I... I'M...
...HULK...SHE KILLED YOU. YOU JUST SAID SHE KILLED YOU. SHE TORE OUT YOUR HEART AND ATE IT--
SURE. HARD RESET--KILLING ME JUMP-STARTED MY HEALING. HERE I AM.
WELCOME TO MY WORLD. ANSWER THE QUESTION.
...MY EDITOR.
HE WANTED THE STORY ON MRS. BANNER, ON WHAT HAPPENED BACK IN CALIFORNIA...AND...
...WELL, I FOUND OUT. AND...I WANTED THE STORY...
I BROUGHT HER WITH ME. SHE HAD QUESTIONS.
SHE DOESN'T LIKE THE ANSWERS.
NO, I DO NOT.
THAT DOESN'T FAZE YOU? THAT YOUR WIFE TURNED INTO--INTO THAT?
IT HAPPENS...
HRM.
WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THE HULK, RIGHT?
IT'S LIKE THE MONKEY'S PAW. I WANTED TO KNOW--NOW I DO, AND I CAN'T STOP KNOWING.
LIKE I'M STILL TRAPPED IN HELL... AND THE ONLY WAY IS...
DOWN.

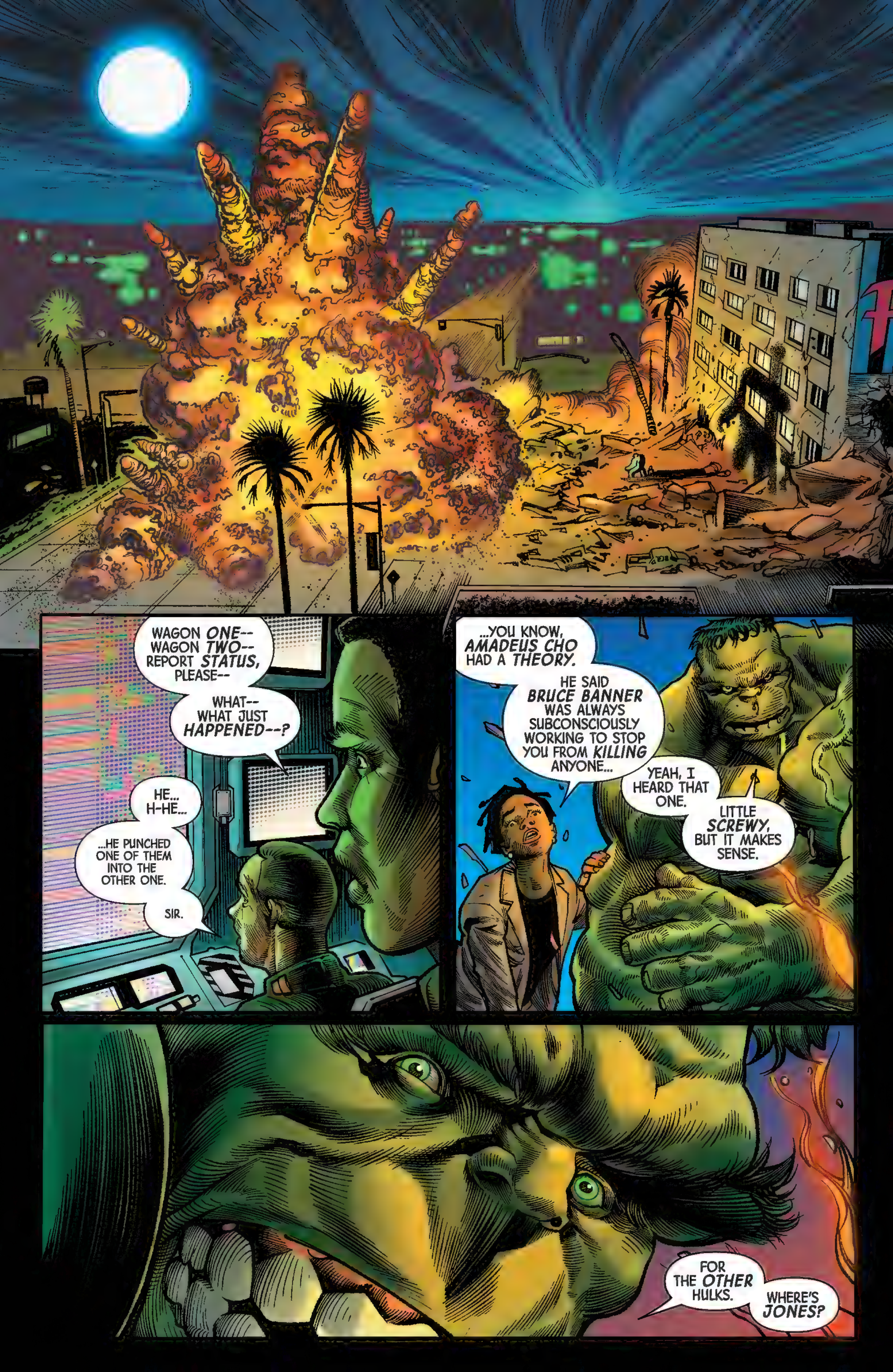

HUH? W-WHAT ARE YOU--
I SAID--
GENERAL FORTEAN-- THIS IS WAR WAGON ONE.
WE HAVE YOUR MONSTERS IN SIGHT, PLUS THE LOOSE END.
GIVE THE WORD, SIR.
THE WORD IS GIVEN, LIEUTENANT.
CAUTERIZE.
BRA-KROOMMM
--DOWN!

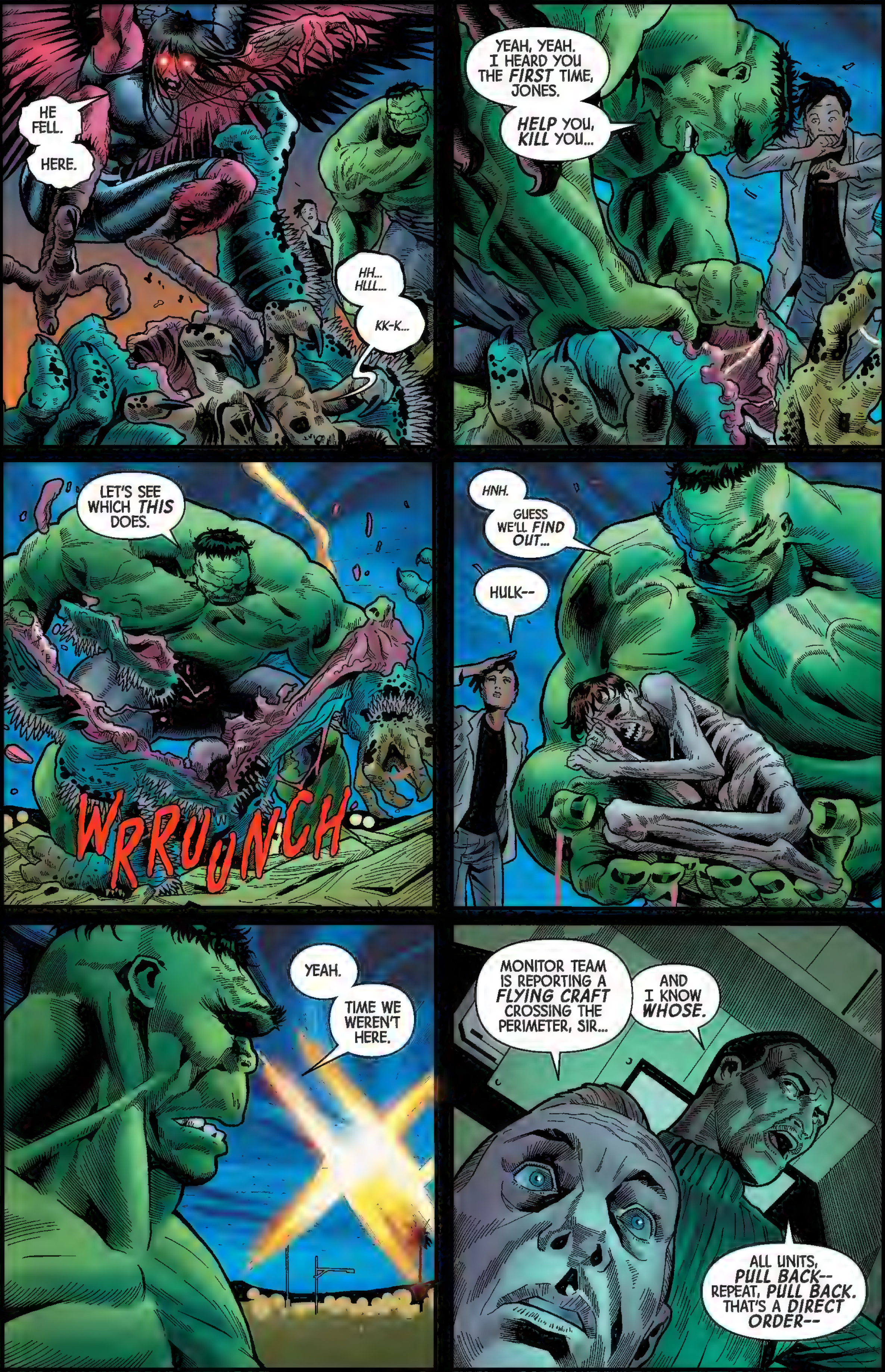

YOU OKAY?
MY--MY EARS ARE RINGING, BUT... YEAH. I DON'T THINK ANYTHING'S BROKEN.
DID YOU JUST SAVE MY LIFE?
DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS.
THEY'RE COMING 'ROUND FOR ANOTHER PASS--
--AND WE STILL GOT THE JONES BOYS TO DEAL WITH.
K-K-K-K
HRR...
"THE STOMACH WOUND IS HEALING, SIR--"
--BUT HIS ACID ATTACK STILL ISN'T FUNCTIONAL.
BARE HANDS, THEN.
GO FOR THE HEAD--TEAR IT OFF AT THE NECK.
THERE'S SOME POETIC JUSTICE IN THAT...

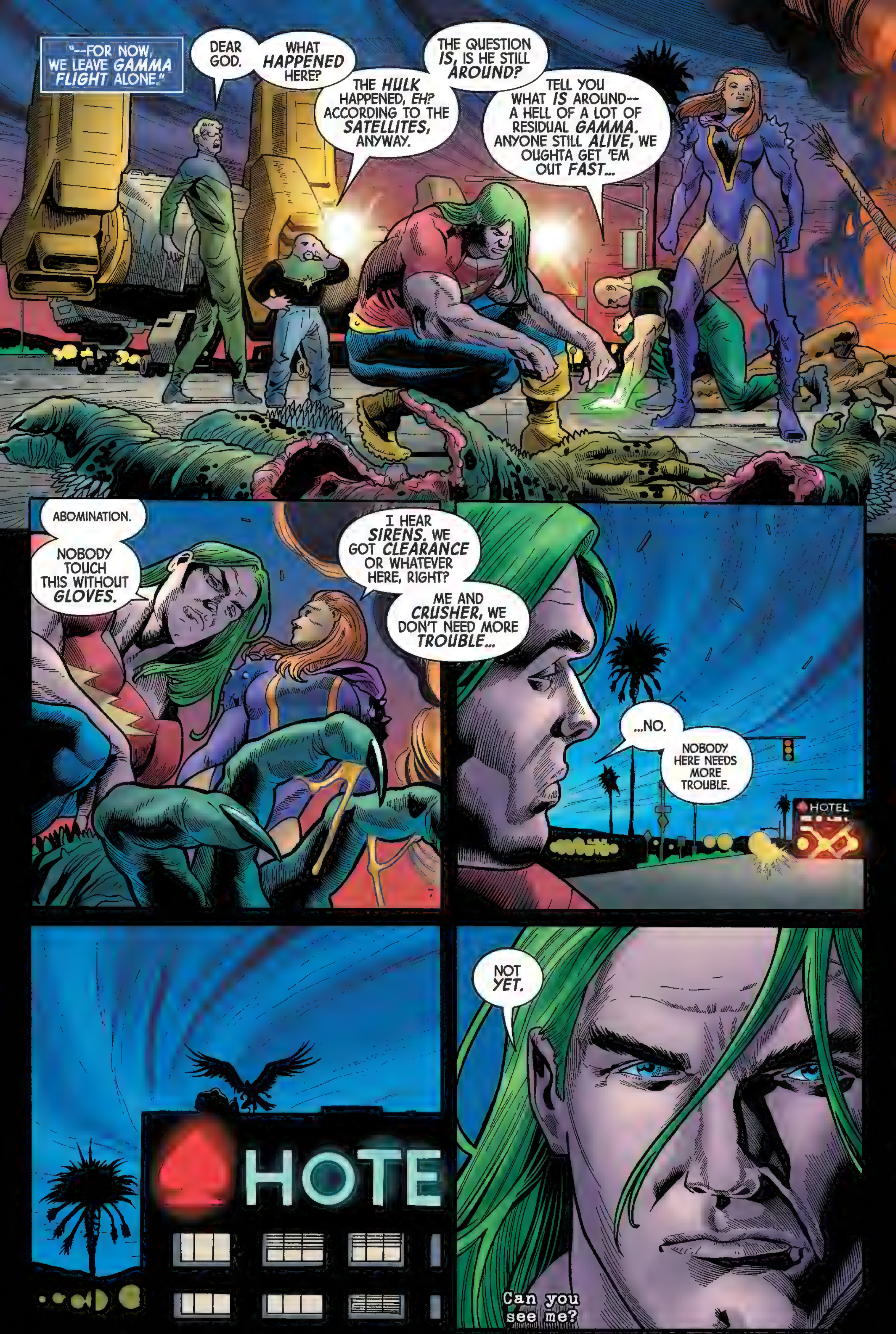

BETTY--
BRAKKAKKAKKA
DAMN IT-- PINNED DOWN HERE--
BETTY! GIVE ME A SECOND--I CAN STILL--
NO.
YOU-- HRRK--YOU SEE TO THE HUMAN.
"JONES"...
...IS MINE.
"SHE'S IN THE AIR, SIR--"

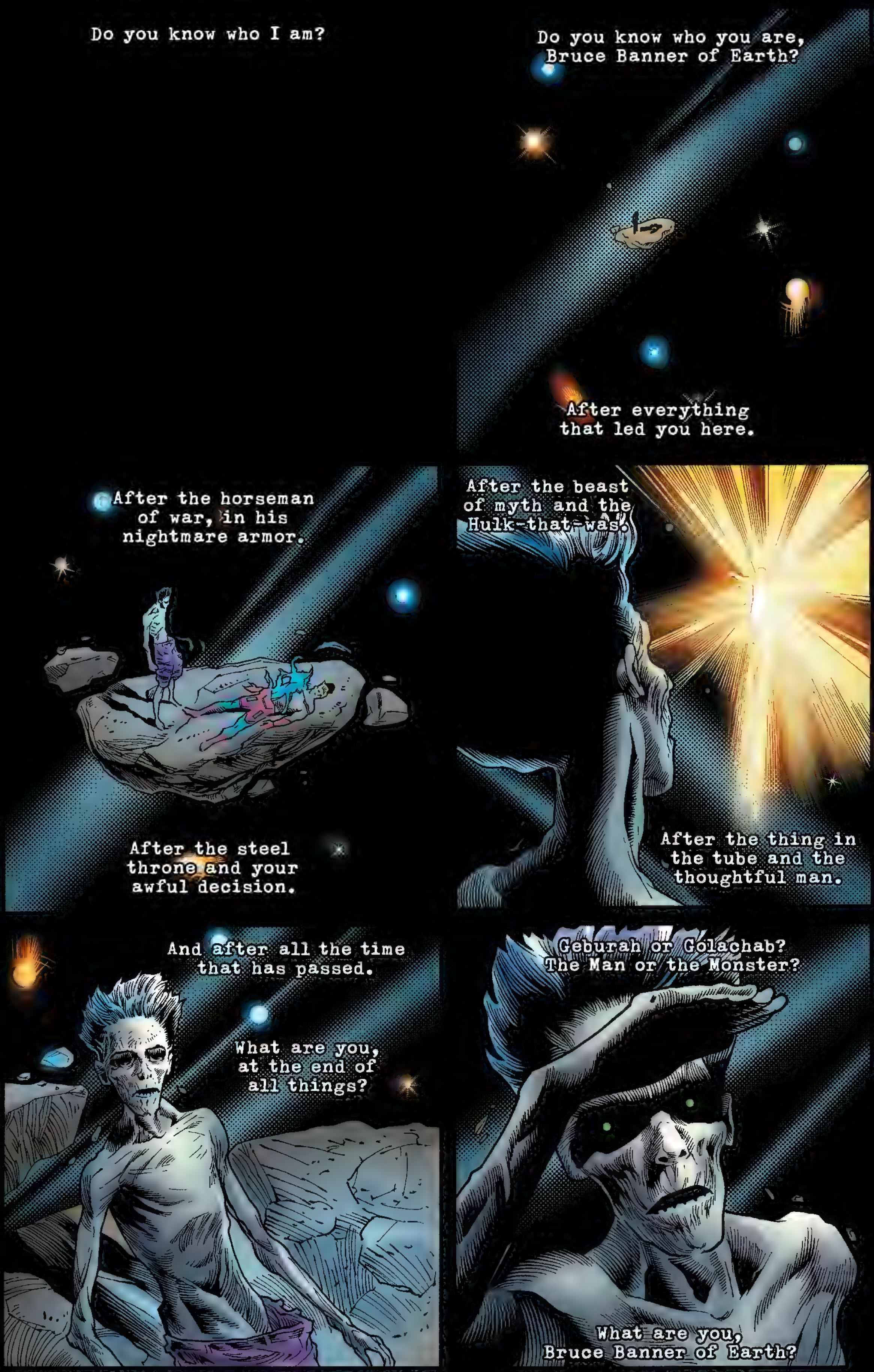

--BUT THE ABOMINATION STILL HAS HER.
THEN SHE'S *DEAD.*
WHAT ABOUT THE *HULK?* WAR WAGONS--*REPORT,* PLEASE--
WAGON ONE HERE. BANNER'S STILL PROTECTING THE REPORTER, SIR.
K-K-KUH--
GOOD. WAGON TWO--CIRCLE AROUND AND DEPLOY U.V. DRONES.
WITH ENOUGH ARTIFICIAL SUNLIGHT, WE CAN TRIGGER THE CHANGE--
KILL
ME
--AND THEN KILL THEM BOTH.
SHRRIPP
ALL RIGHT.
THIS IS WAGON TWO, GENERAL--COMING IN FOR APPROACH NOW--
--DEPLOYING DAYLIGHT IN THREE--
--TWO--
--ONE--

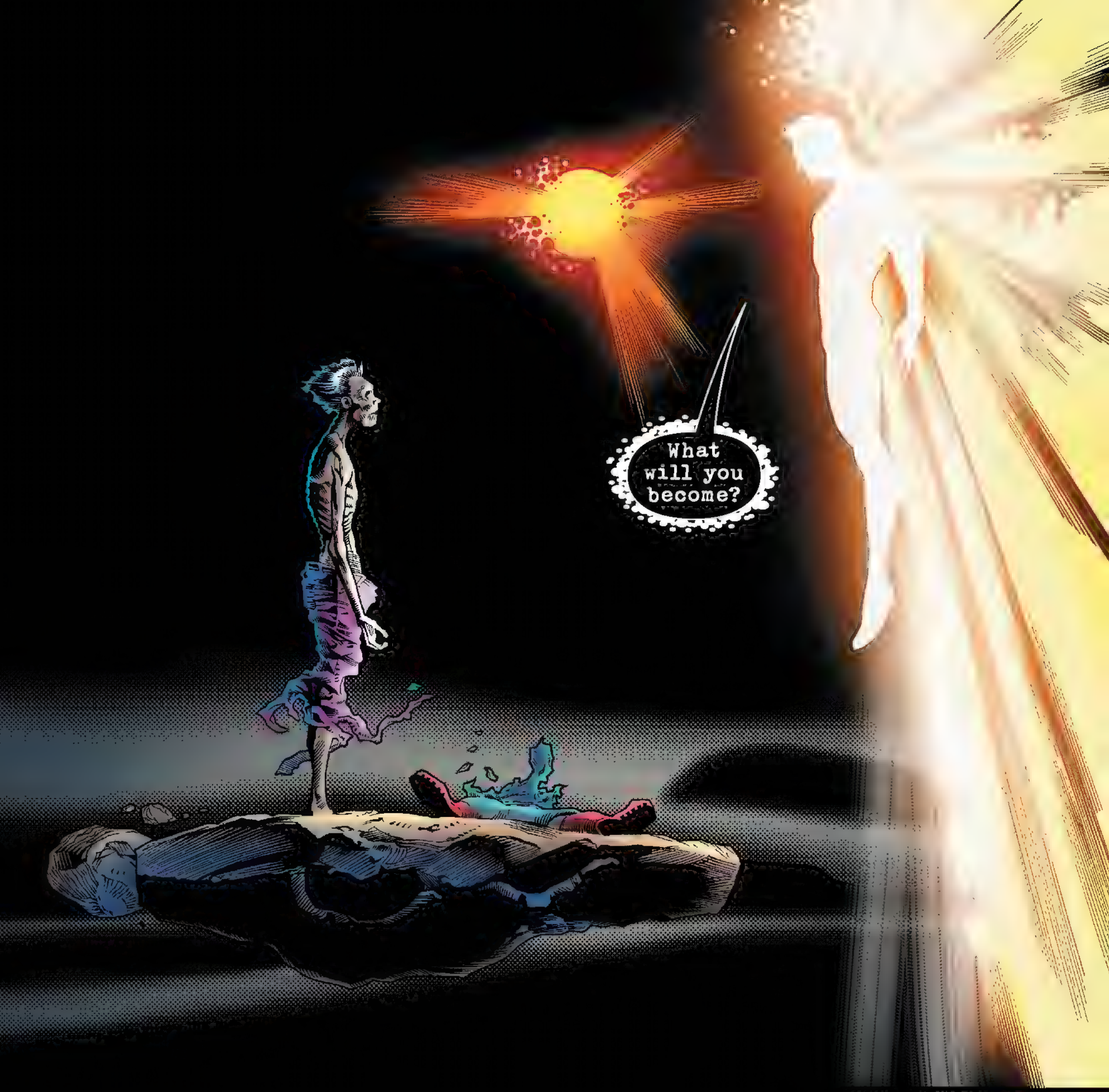

KROOM
HOLY--
WAGON TWO IS--IT'S ON FIRE, GENERAL! IT'S--IT'S HEADING RIGHT FOR--
HNH.
CATCH.
WHAM
NO--


WAGON *ONE*-- WAGON *TWO*-- REPORT *STATUS*, PLEASE--
WHAT-- WHAT JUST *HAPPENED--?*
HE... H-HE...
...HE PUNCHED ONE OF THEM INTO THE OTHER ONE.
SIR.
...YOU KNOW, *AMADEUS CHO* HAD A *THEORY.*
HE SAID *BRUCE BANNER* WAS ALWAYS SUBCONSCIOUSLY WORKING TO STOP YOU FROM *KILLING* ANYONE...
YEAH, I HEARD THAT ONE.
LITTLE *SCREWY,* BUT IT MAKES SENSE.
FOR THE *OTHER* HULKS.
WHERE'S *JONES?*


HE FELL.
HERE.
HH... HLLL...
KK-K...
YEAH, YEAH. I HEARD YOU THE *FIRST* TIME, JONES.
HELP YOU, *KILL* YOU...
LET'S SEE WHICH *THIS* DOES.
WRRUUNCH
HNH.
GUESS WE'LL *FIND OUT*...
HULK--
YEAH.
TIME WE WEREN'T HERE.
MONITOR TEAM IS REPORTING A *FLYING CRAFT* CROSSING THE PERIMETER, SIR...
AND I KNOW *WHOSE.*
ALL UNITS, *PULL BACK*-- REPEAT, *PULL BACK.* THAT'S A *DIRECT ORDER*--


"--FOR NOW, WE LEAVE GAMMA FLIGHT ALONE."
DEAR GOD.
WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
THE HULK HAPPENED, EH? ACCORDING TO THE SATELLITES, ANYWAY.
THE QUESTION IS, IS HE STILL AROUND?
TELL YOU WHAT IS AROUND-- A HELL OF A LOT OF RESIDUAL GAMMA. ANYONE STILL ALIVE, WE OUGHTA GET 'EM OUT FAST...
ABOMINATION.
NOBODY TOUCH THIS WITHOUT GLOVES.
I HEAR SIRENS. WE GOT CLEARANCE OR WHATEVER HERE, RIGHT?
ME AND CRUSHER, WE DON'T NEED MORE TROUBLE...
...NO.
NOBODY HERE NEEDS MORE TROUBLE.
HOTEL
HOTE
NOT YET.
Can you see me?


Do you know who I am?
Do you know who you are, Bruce Banner of Earth?
After everything that led you here.
After the horseman of war, in his nightmare armor.
After the steel throne and your awful decision.
After the beast of myth and the Hulk-that-was.
After the thing in the tube and the thoughtful man.
And after all the time that has passed.
What are you, at the end of all things?
Geburah or Golachab? The Man or the Monster?
What are you, Bruce Banner of Earth?

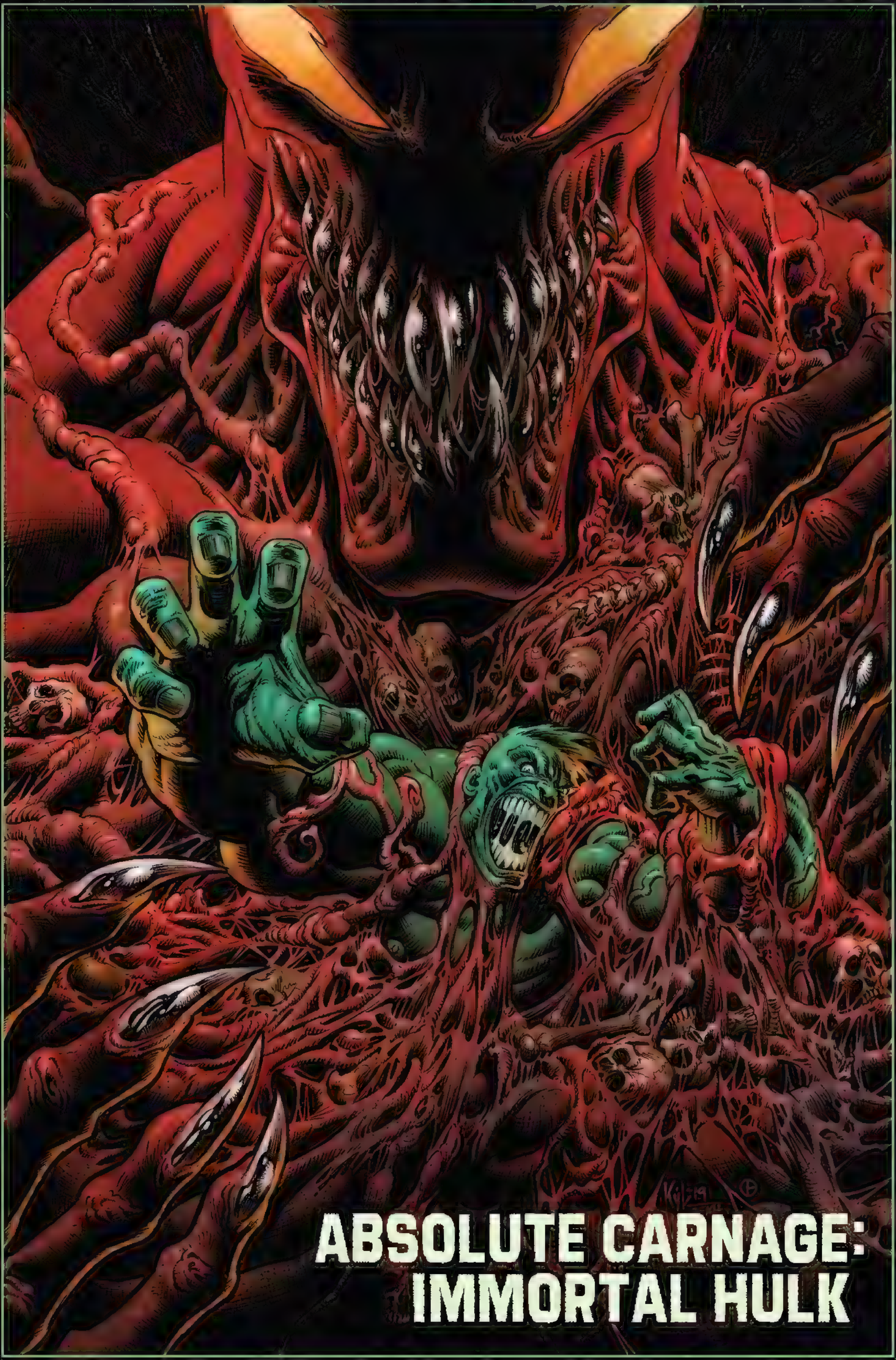

What will you become?

Metatron

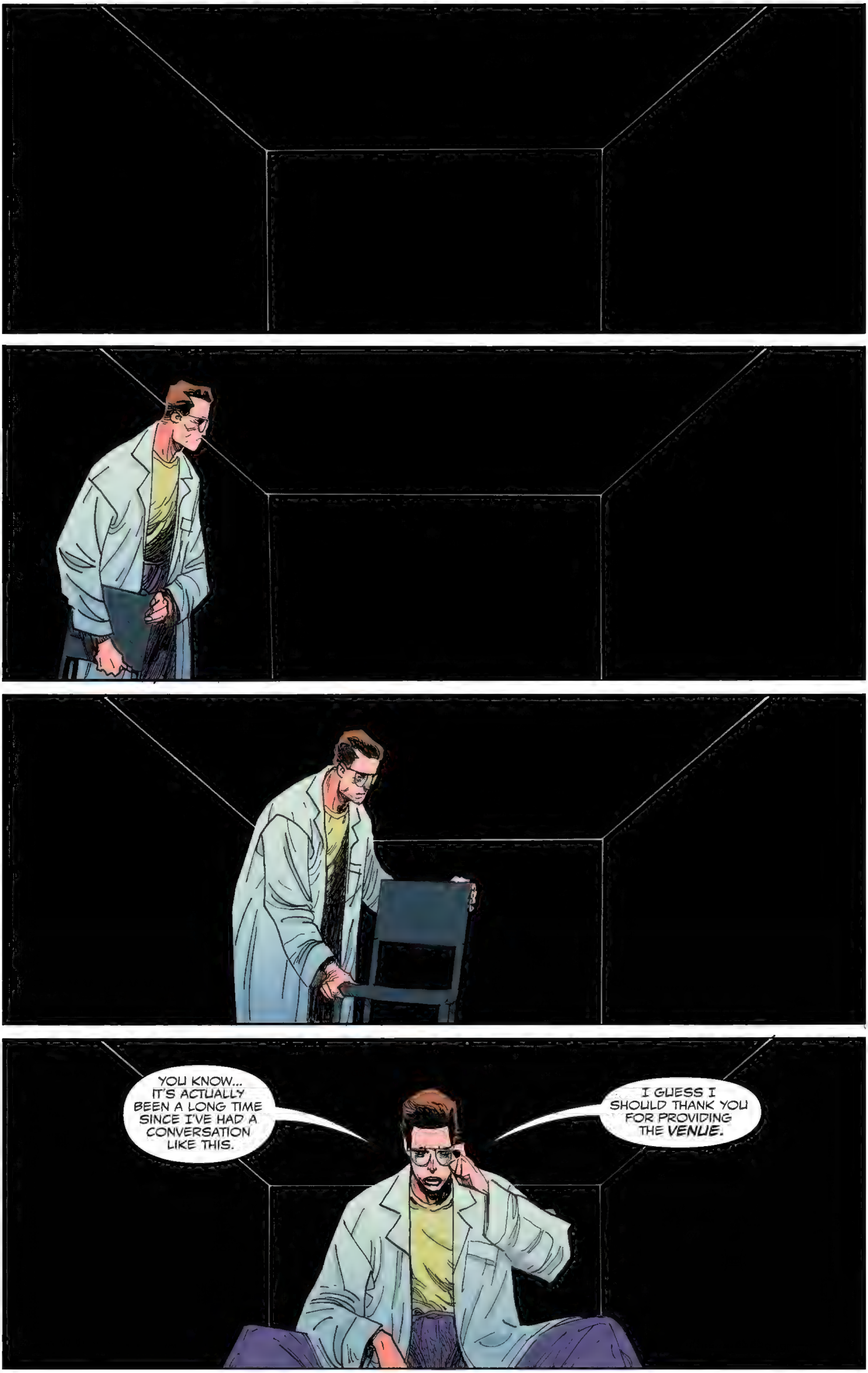
KEOWN
JASON

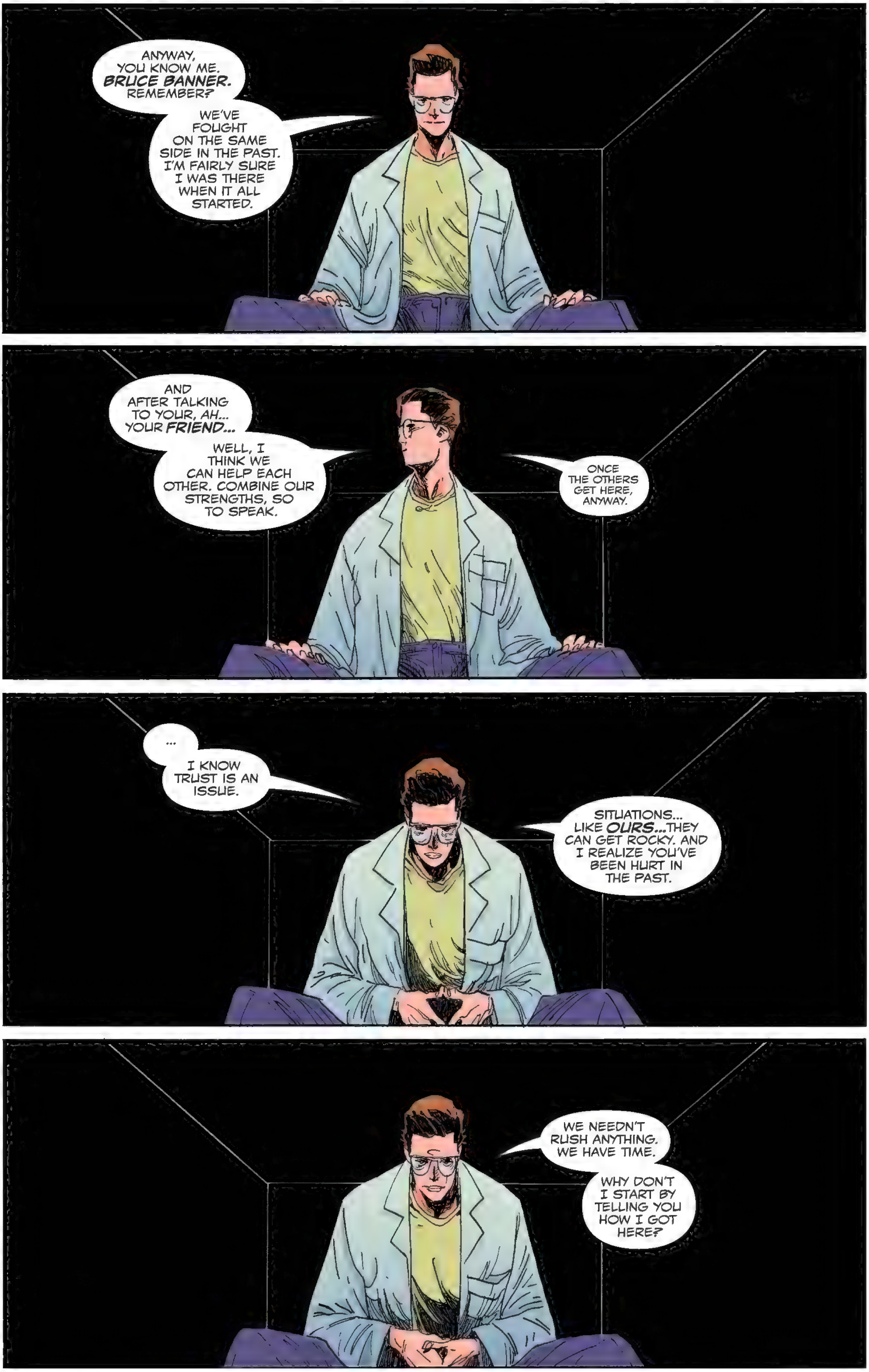
#1 VARIANT BY DALE KEOWN & JASON KEITH

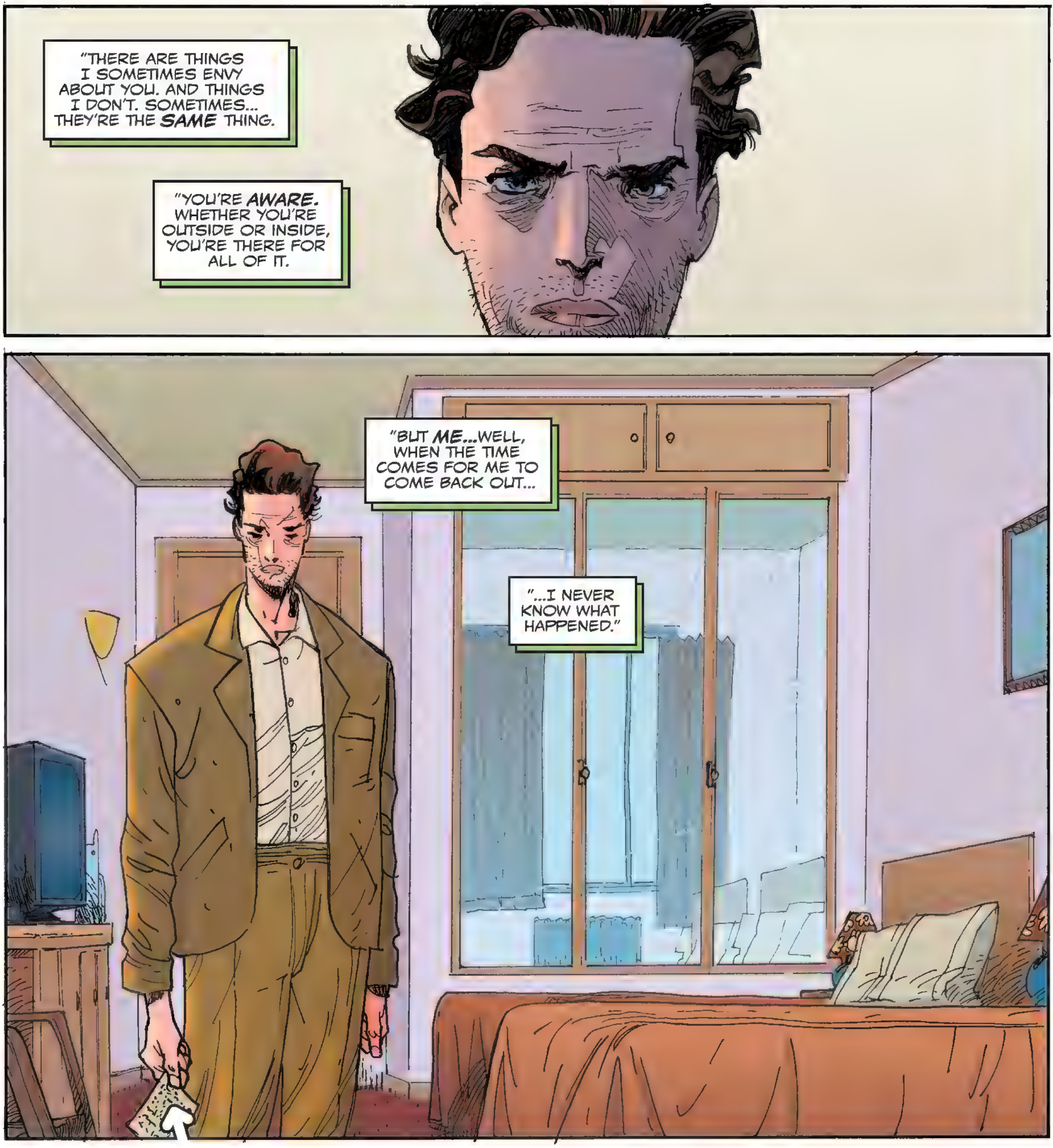
CLETUS KASADY, THE SERIAL KILLER BONDED TO THE **CARNAGE SYMBIOTE**, IS ON THE HUNT FOR SMALL PIECES OF GENETIC MATERIAL — CALLED "CODICES" — LEFT IN THE SPINE OF ANY BEING WHO HAS BONDED WITH A SYMBIOTE. CARNAGE DOES THIS IN AN ATTEMPT TO FREE HIS GOD, KNULL, AND BRING CHAOS TO EARTH. BUT THE HULK HAS NEVER BEEN BONDED TO A SYMBIOTE . . .



ABSOLUTE CARNAGE: IMMORTAL HULK

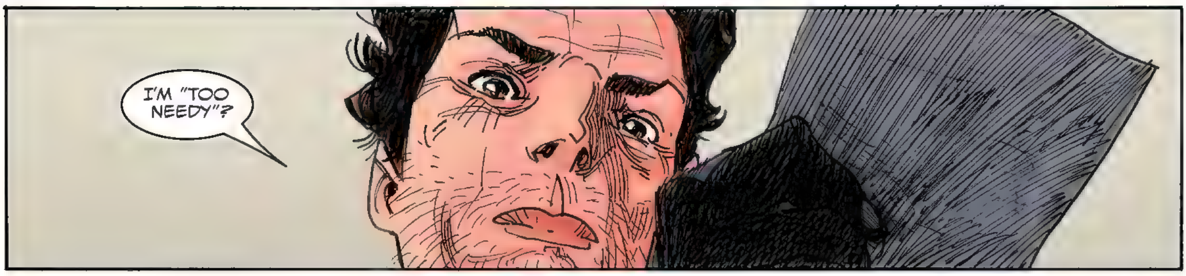

YOU KNOW... IT'S ACTUALLY BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE HAD A CONVERSATION LIKE THIS.
I GUESS I SHOULD THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING THE ***VENUE.***

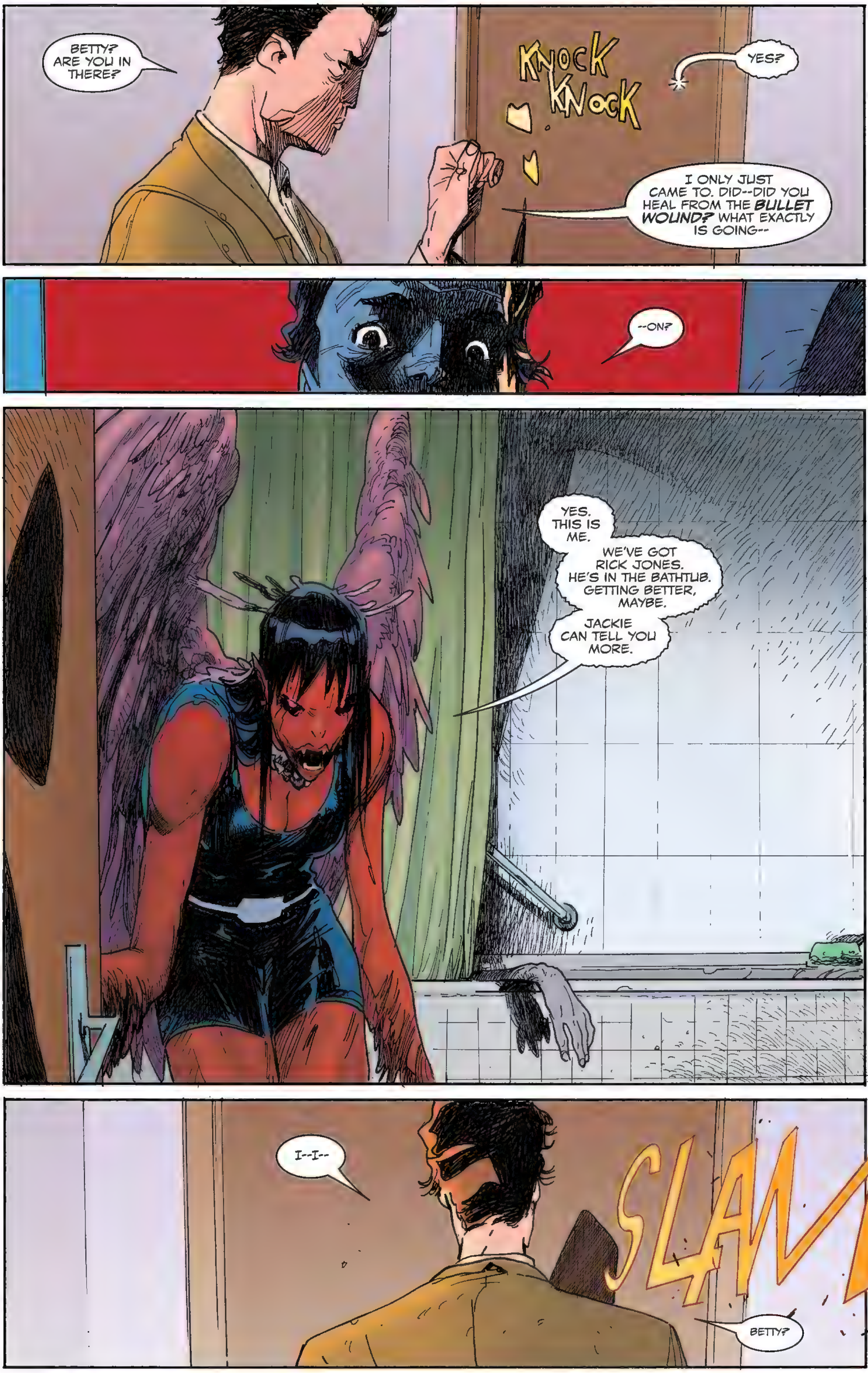

ANYWAY, YOU KNOW ME. **BRUCE BANNER.** REMEMBER?
WE'VE FOUGHT ON THE SAME SIDE IN THE PAST. I'M FAIRLY SURE I WAS THERE WHEN IT ALL STARTED.
AND AFTER TALKING TO YOUR, AH... YOUR ***FRIEND...***
WELL, I THINK WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER. COMBINE OUR STRENGTHS, SO TO SPEAK.
ONCE THE OTHERS GET HERE, ANYWAY.
...
I KNOW TRUST IS AN ISSUE.
SITUATIONS... LIKE ***OURS...*** THEY CAN GET ROCKY. AND I REALIZE YOU'VE BEEN HURT IN THE PAST.
WE NEEDN'T RUSH ANYTHING. WE HAVE TIME.
WHY DON'T I START BY TELLING YOU HOW I GOT HERE?

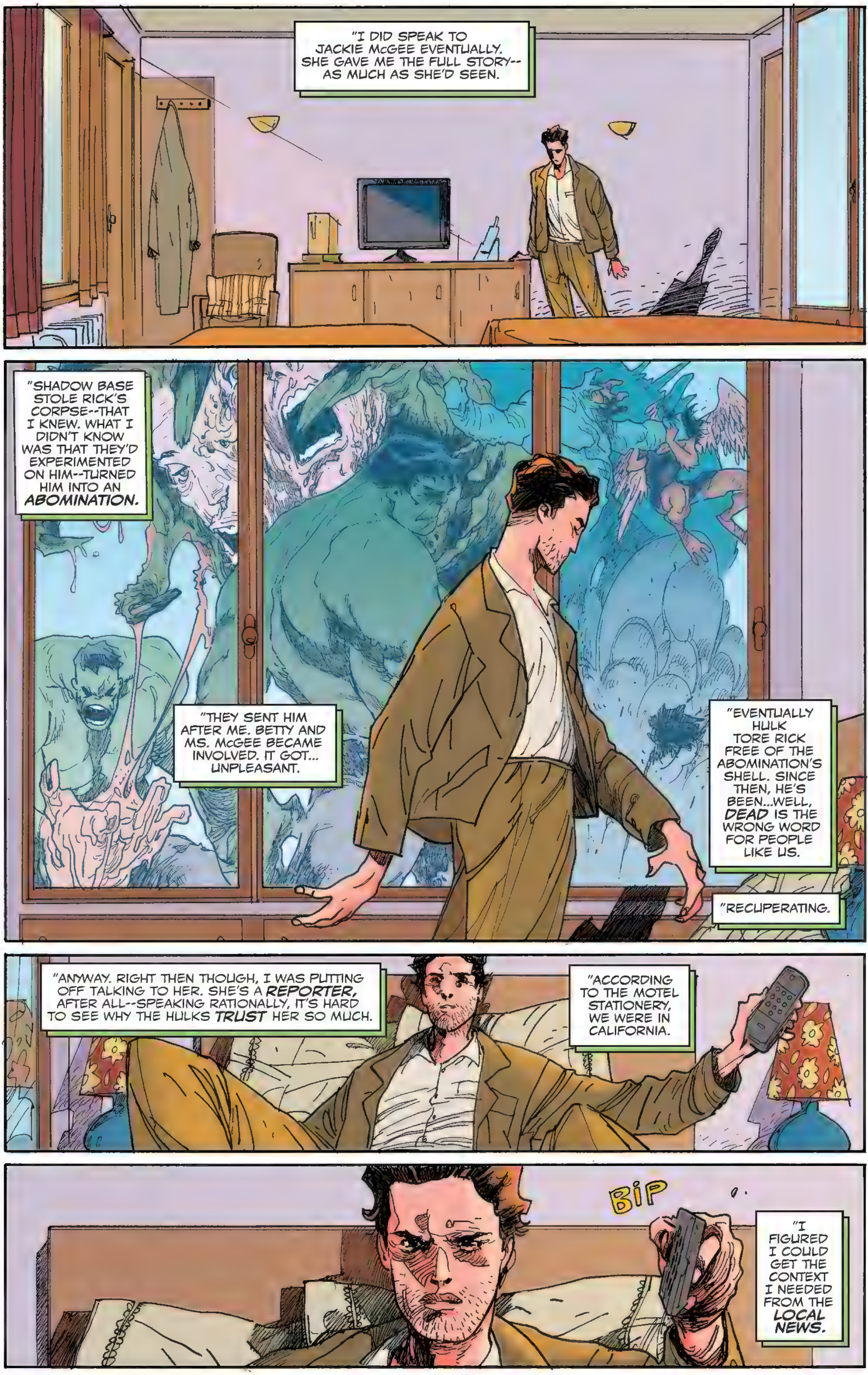

"THERE ARE THINGS I SOMETIMES ENVY ABOUT YOU. AND THINGS I DON'T. SOMETIMES... THEY'RE THE *SAME* THING.
"YOU'RE *AWARE.* WHETHER YOU'RE OUTSIDE OR INSIDE, YOU'RE THERE FOR ALL OF IT.
"BUT *ME*...WELL, WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR ME TO COME BACK OUT...
"...I NEVER KNOW WHAT HAPPENED."

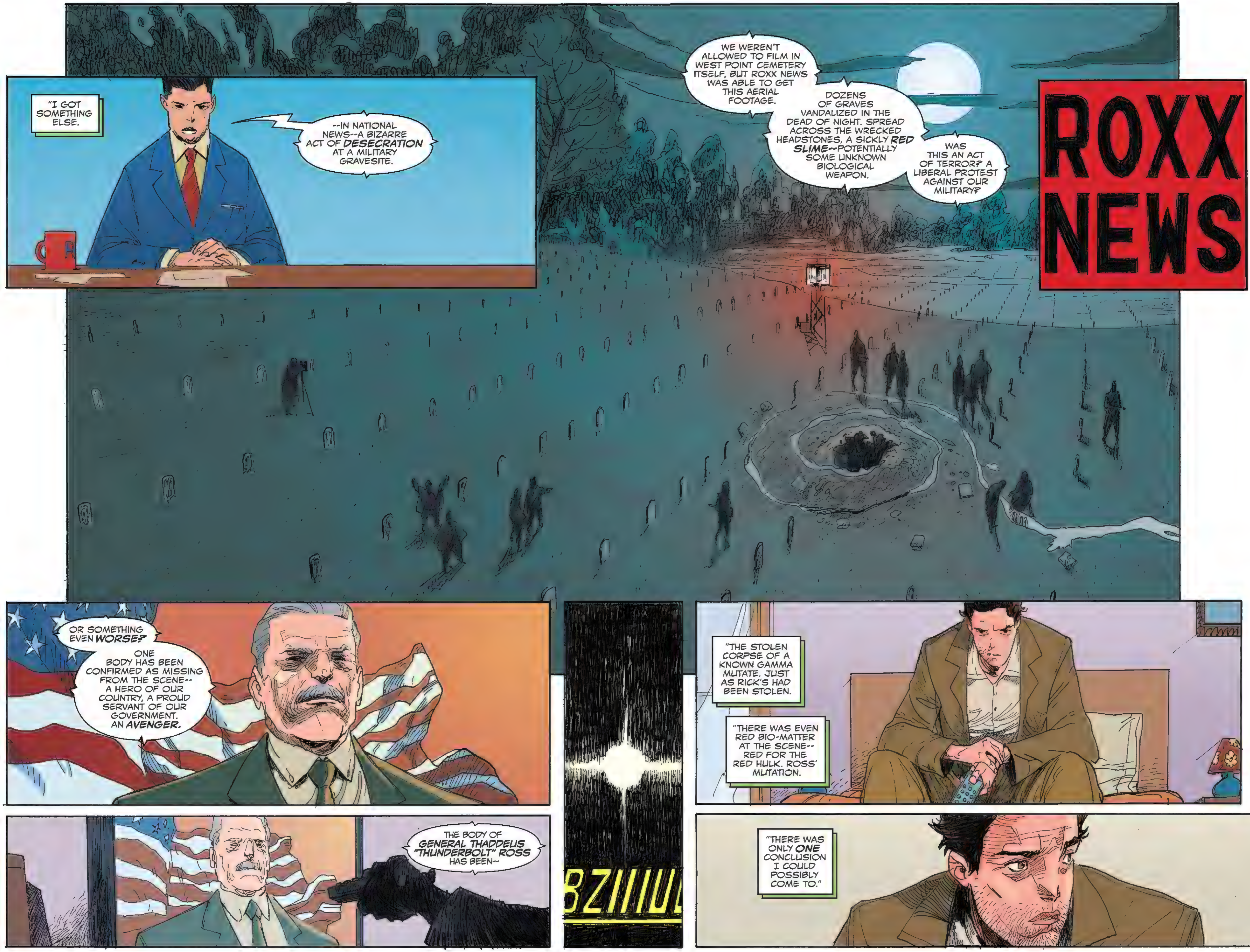
BANNER - ROOM'S PAID FOR. MCGEE NEXT DOOR. DON'T BUG HER. BETTY + JONES IN BATHROOM. DON'T BUG THEM. YOU'RE TOO NEEDY. CLOTHES ARE YOUR SIZE, DON'T MESS'EM UP. MORE IN WARDROBE, INCLUDING PRE-TORN. DEVIL SAYS LAY LOW FOR NOW. I'LL BE BACK IN 2 DAYS TO SWITCH MOTELS UNLESS JONES WAKES UP.

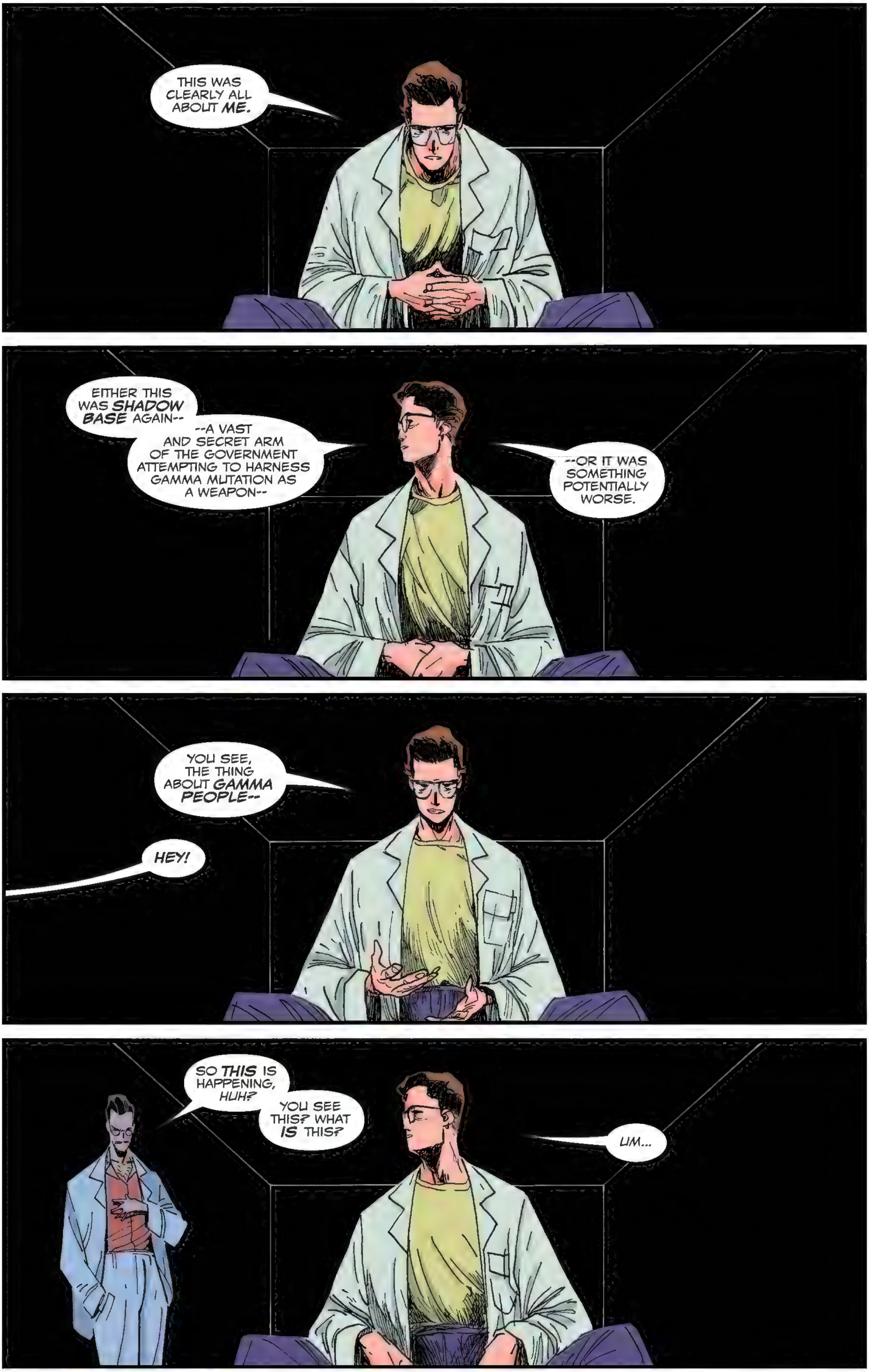
JOE.

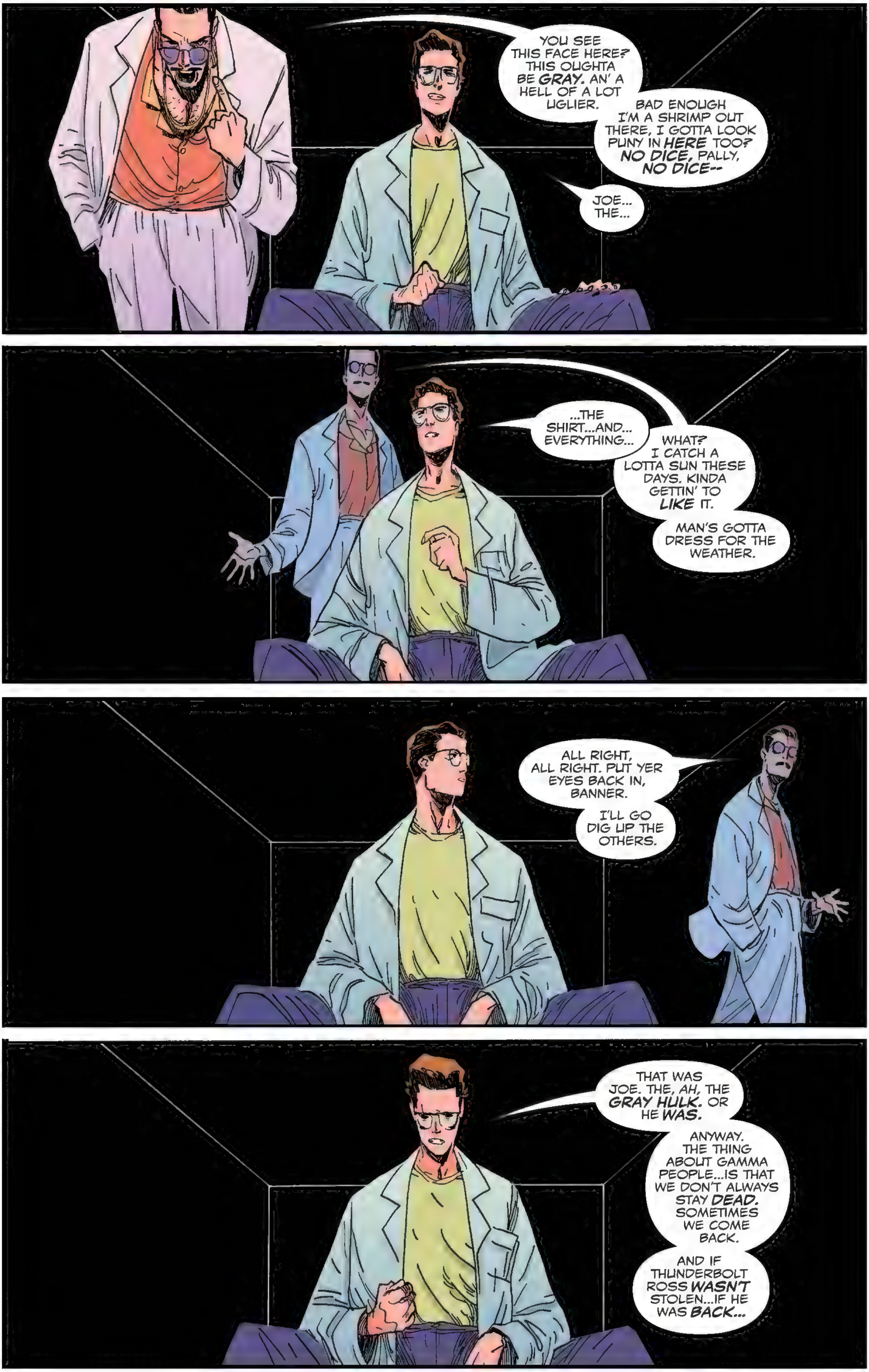

I'M "TOO NEEDY"?

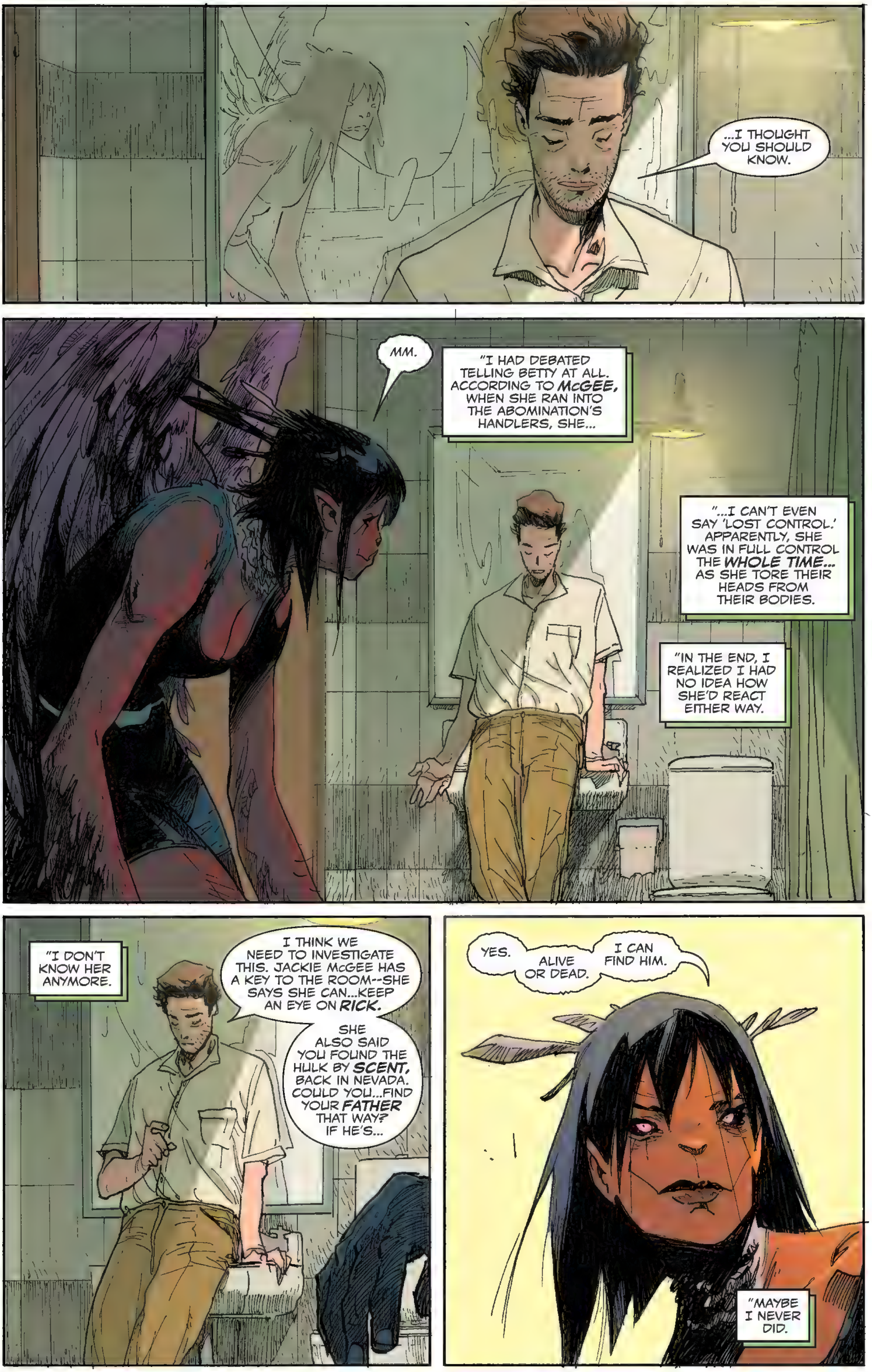

BETTY? ARE YOU IN THERE?
KNOCK KNOCK
YES?
I ONLY JUST CAME TO. DID--DID YOU HEAL FROM THE ***BULLET WOUND?*** WHAT EXACTLY IS GOING--
--ON?
YES. THIS IS ME.
WE'VE GOT RICK JONES. HE'S IN THE BATHTUB. GETTING BETTER, MAYBE.
JACKIE CAN TELL YOU MORE.
I--I--
SLAM
BETTY?

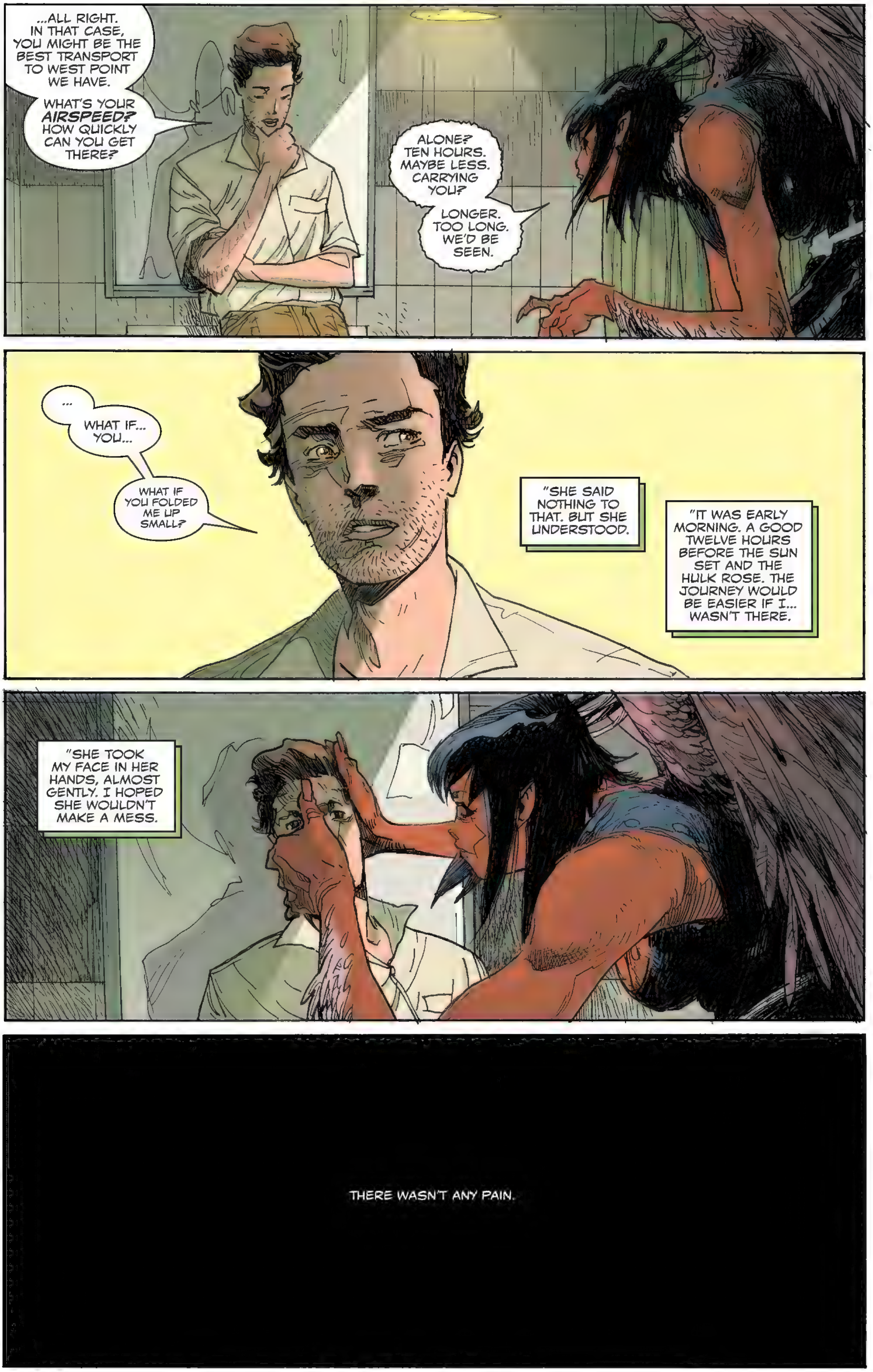

"I DID SPEAK TO JACKIE McGEE EVENTUALLY. SHE GAVE ME THE FULL STORY-- AS MUCH AS SHE'D SEEN.
"SHADOW BASE STOLE RICK'S CORPSE--THAT I KNEW. WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW WAS THAT THEY'D EXPERIMENTED ON HIM--TURNED HIM INTO AN ***ABOMINATION.***
"THEY SENT HIM AFTER ME. BETTY AND MS. McGEE BECAME INVOLVED. IT GOT... UNPLEASANT.
"EVENTUALLY HULK TORE RICK FREE OF THE ABOMINATION'S SHELL. SINCE THEN, HE'S BEEN...WELL, ***DEAD*** IS THE WRONG WORD FOR PEOPLE LIKE US.
"RECUPERATING.
"ANYWAY. RIGHT THEN THOUGH, I WAS PUTTING OFF TALKING TO HER. SHE'S A ***REPORTER,*** AFTER ALL--SPEAKING RATIONALLY, IT'S HARD TO SEE WHY THE HULKS ***TRUST*** HER SO MUCH.
"ACCORDING TO THE MOTEL STATIONERY, WE WERE IN CALIFORNIA.
BIP
"I FIGURED I COULD GET THE CONTEXT I NEEDED FROM THE ***LOCAL NEWS.***

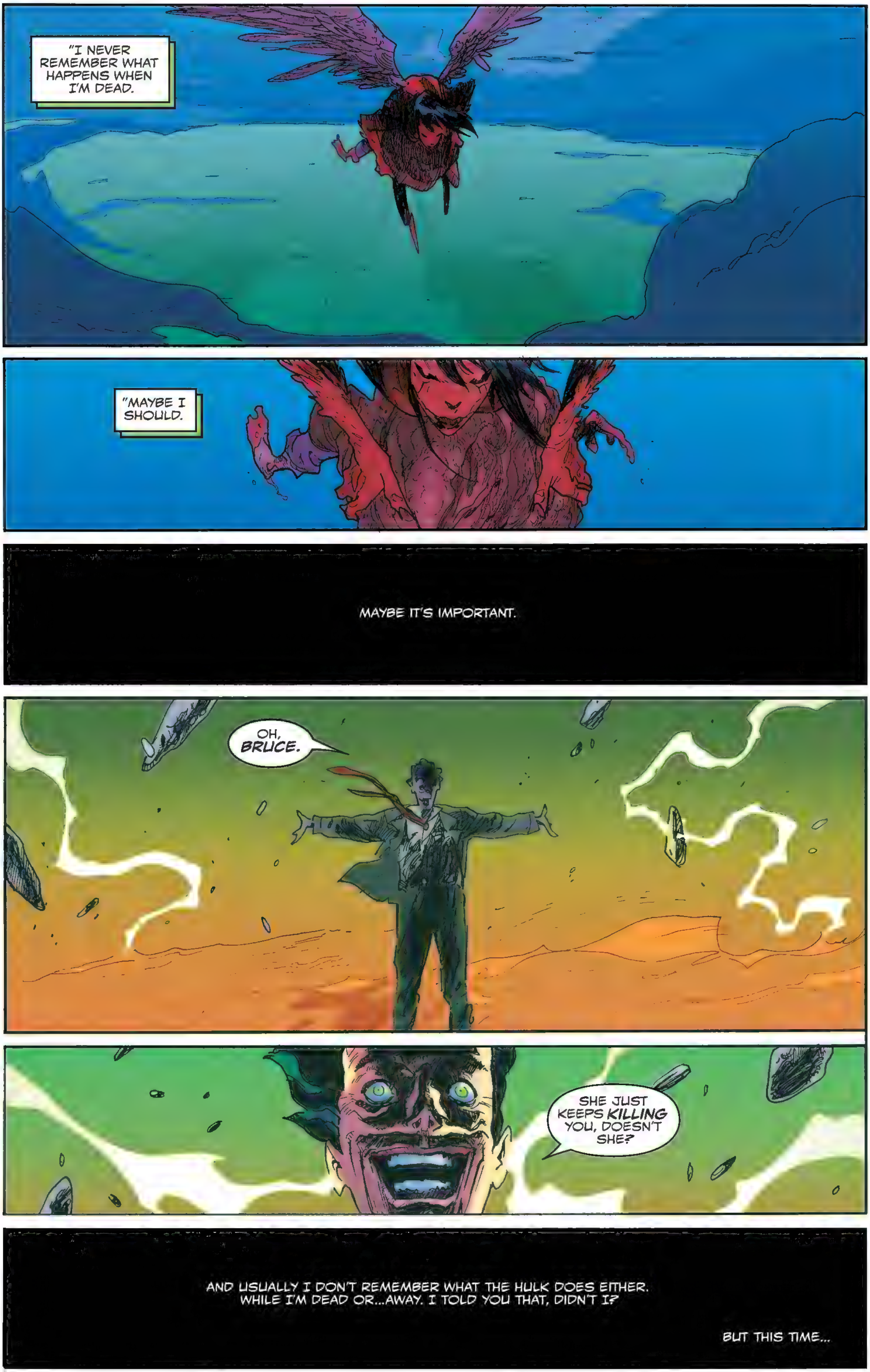

"I GOT SOMETHING ELSE.
--IN NATIONAL NEWS--A BIZARRE ACT OF DESECRATION AT A MILITARY GRAVESITE.
WE WEREN'T ALLOWED TO FILM IN WEST POINT CEMETERY ITSELF, BUT ROXX NEWS WAS ABLE TO GET THIS AERIAL FOOTAGE.
DOZENS OF GRAVES VANDALIZED IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT. SPREAD ACROSS THE WRECKED HEADSTONES, A SICKLY RED SLIME--POTENTIALLY SOME UNKNOWN BIOLOGICAL WEAPON.
WAS THIS AN ACT OF TERROR? A LIBERAL PROTEST AGAINST OUR MILITARY?
ROXX NEWS
OR SOMETHING EVEN WORSE?
ONE BODY HAS BEEN CONFIRMED AS MISSING FROM THE SCENE--A HERO OF OUR COUNTRY, A PROUD SERVANT OF OUR GOVERNMENT. AN AVENGER.
THE BODY OF GENERAL THADDEUS "THUNDERBOLT" ROSS HAS BEEN--
BZIIIUL
"THE STOLEN CORPSE OF A KNOWN GAMMA MUTATE. JUST AS RICK'S HAD BEEN STOLEN.
"THERE WAS EVEN RED BIO-MATTER AT THE SCENE--RED FOR THE RED HULK. ROSS' MUTATION.
"THERE WAS ONLY ONE CONCLUSION I COULD POSSIBLY COME TO."

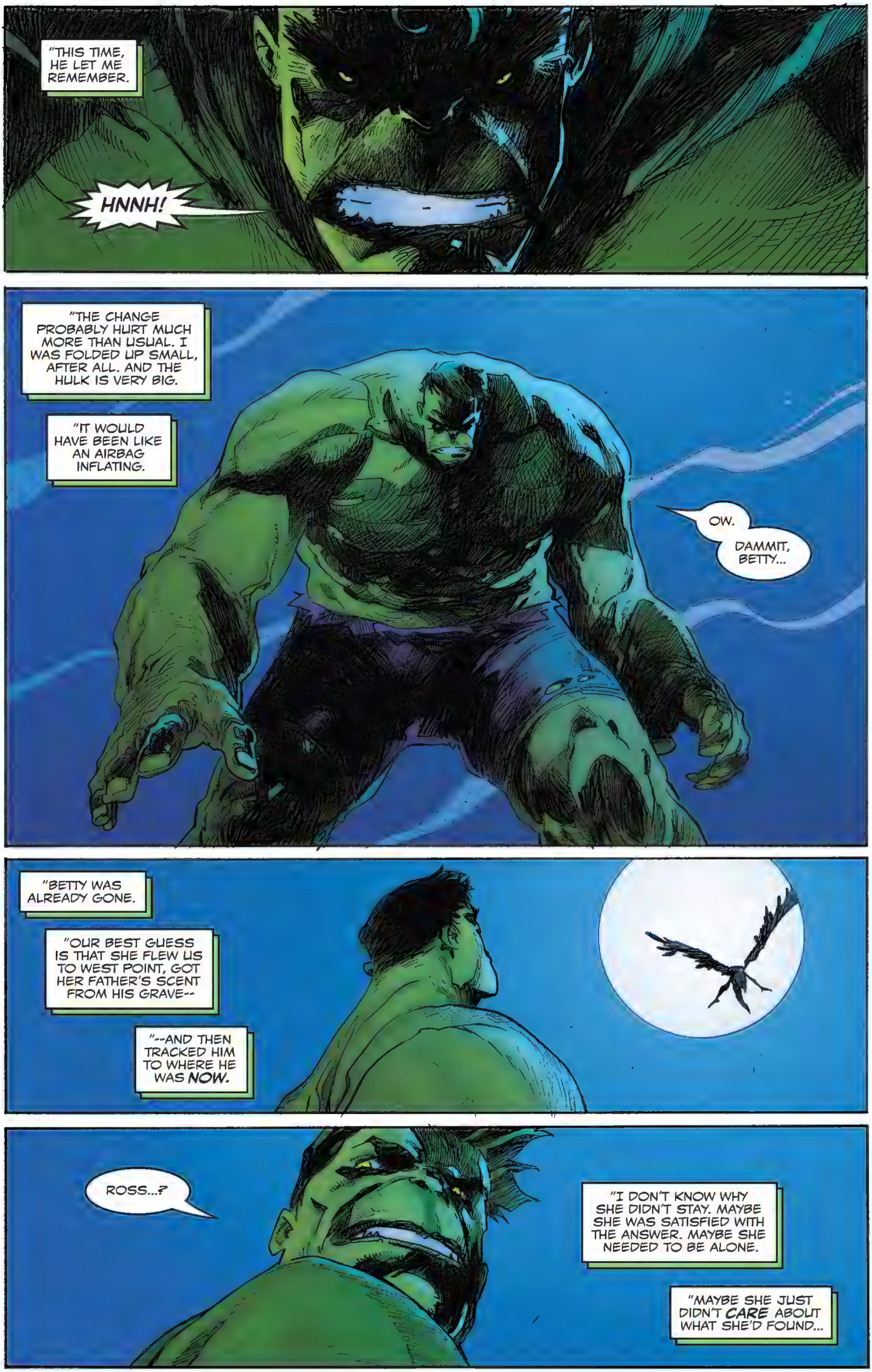

THIS WAS CLEARLY ALL ABOUT *ME.*
EITHER THIS WAS *SHADOW BASE* AGAIN--
--A VAST AND SECRET ARM OF THE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTING TO HARNESS GAMMA MUTATION AS A WEAPON--
--OR IT WAS SOMETHING POTENTIALLY WORSE.
YOU SEE, THE THING ABOUT *GAMMA PEOPLE*--
HEY!
SO *THIS* IS HAPPENING, HUH?
YOU SEE THIS? WHAT *IS* THIS?
UM...

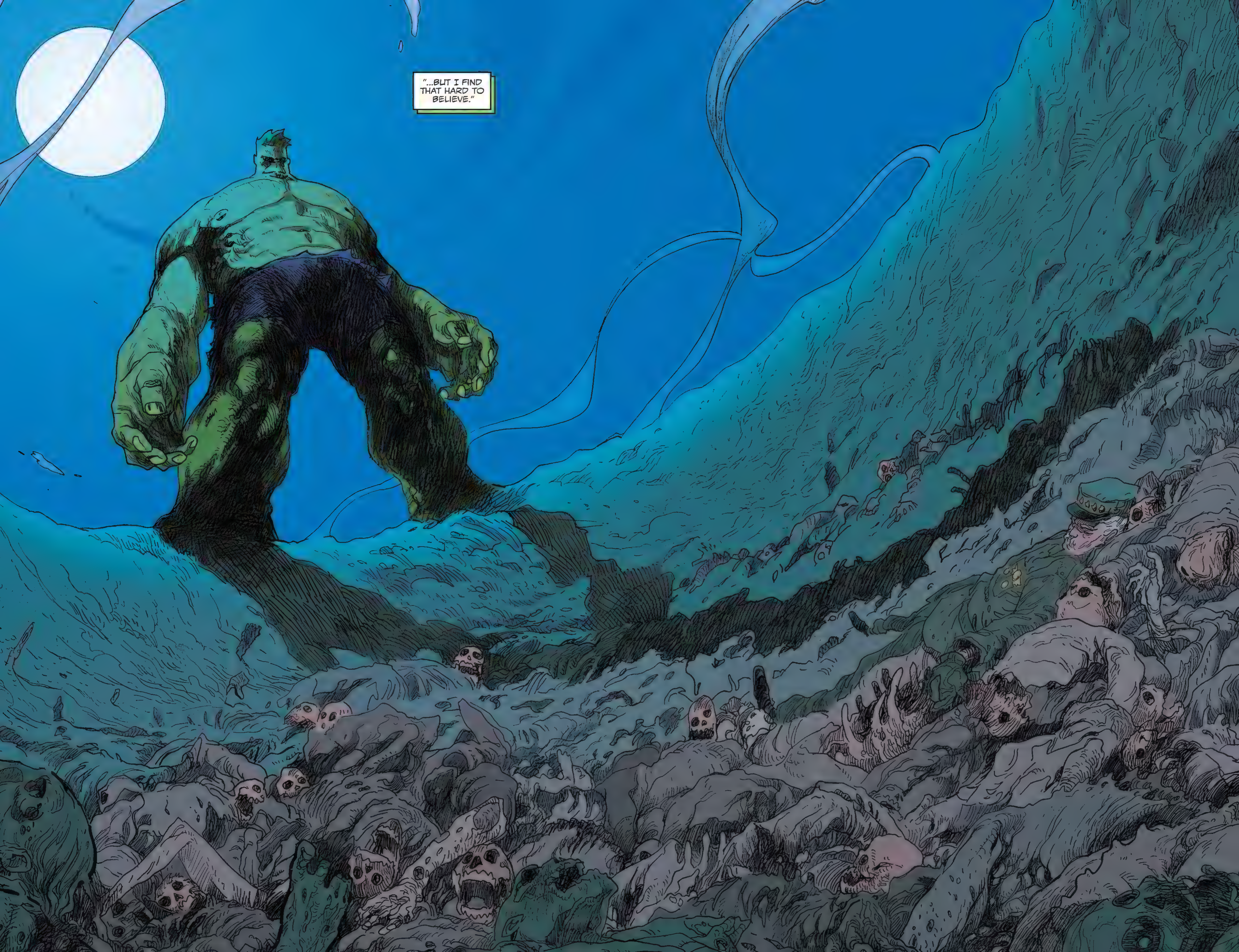

YOU SEE THIS FACE HERE? THIS OUGHTA BE GRAY. AN' A HELL OF A LOT UGLIER.
BAD ENOUGH I'M A SHRIMP OUT THERE, I GOTTA LOOK PUNY IN HERE TOO? NO DICE, PALLY, NO DICE--
JOE... THE...
...THE SHIRT...AND... EVERYTHING...
WHAT? I CATCH A LOTTA SUN THESE DAYS. KINDA GETTIN' TO LIKE IT.
MAN'S GOTTA DRESS FOR THE WEATHER.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. PUT YER EYES BACK IN, BANNER.
I'LL GO DIG UP THE OTHERS.
THAT WAS JOE. THE, AH, THE GRAY HULK. OR HE WAS.
ANYWAY. THE THING ABOUT GAMMA PEOPLE...IS THAT WE DON'T ALWAYS STAY DEAD. SOMETIMES WE COME BACK.
AND IF THUNDERBOLT ROSS WASN'T STOLEN...IF HE WAS BACK...

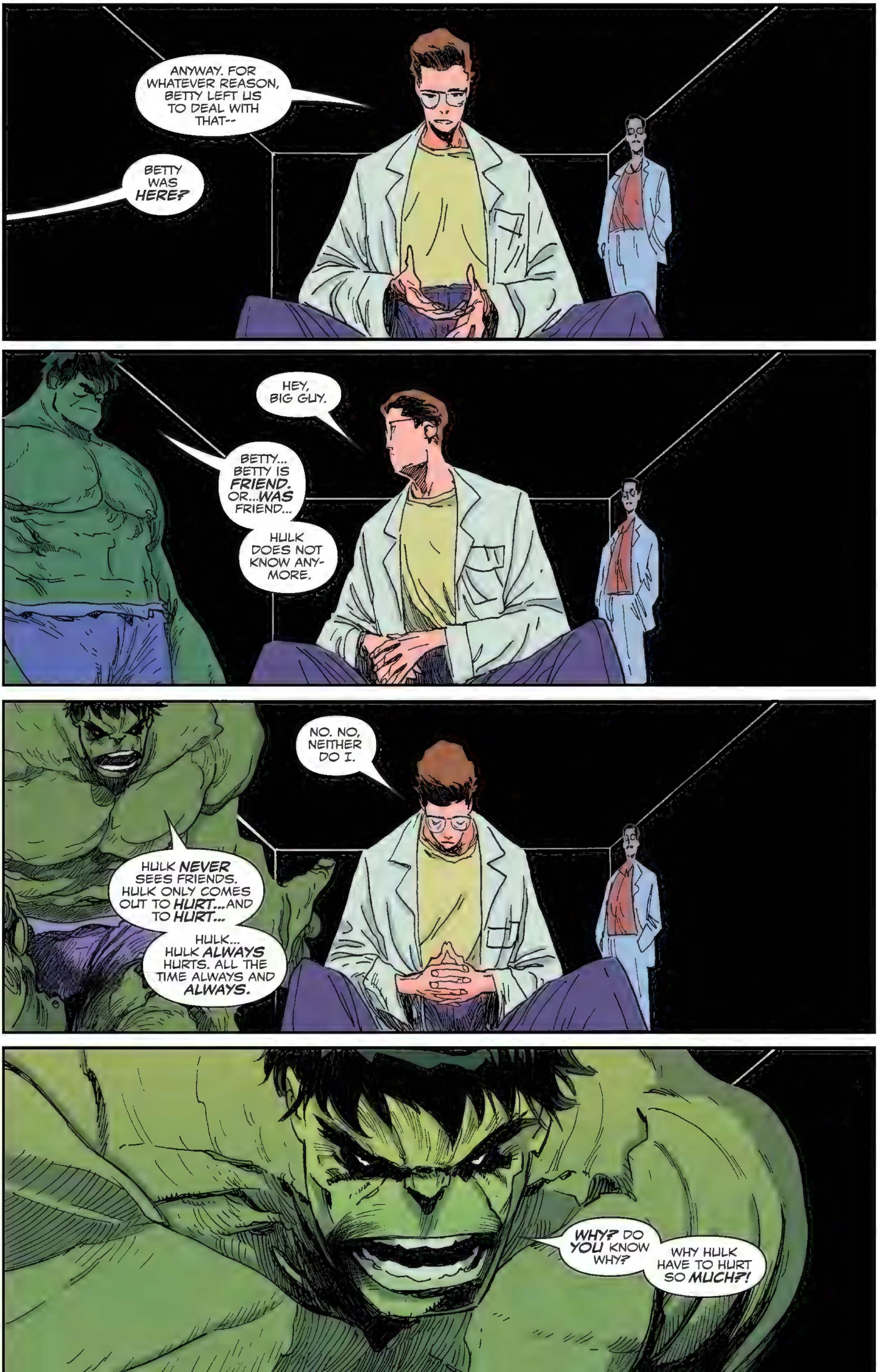

...I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW.
MM.
"I HAD DEBATED TELLING BETTY AT ALL. ACCORDING TO **McGEE,** WHEN SHE RAN INTO THE ABOMINATION'S HANDLERS, SHE...
"...I CAN'T EVEN SAY 'LOST CONTROL.' APPARENTLY, SHE WAS IN FULL CONTROL THE **WHOLE TIME...** AS SHE TORE THEIR HEADS FROM THEIR BODIES.
"IN THE END, I REALIZED I HAD NO IDEA HOW SHE'D REACT EITHER WAY.
"I DON'T KNOW HER ANYMORE.
I THINK WE NEED TO INVESTIGATE THIS. JACKIE McGEE HAS A KEY TO THE ROOM--SHE SAYS SHE CAN...KEEP AN EYE ON **RICK.**
SHE ALSO SAID YOU FOUND THE HULK BY **SCENT,** BACK IN NEVADA. COULD YOU...FIND YOUR **FATHER** THAT WAY? IF HE'S...
YES.
ALIVE OR DEAD.
I CAN FIND HIM.
"MAYBE I NEVER DID.

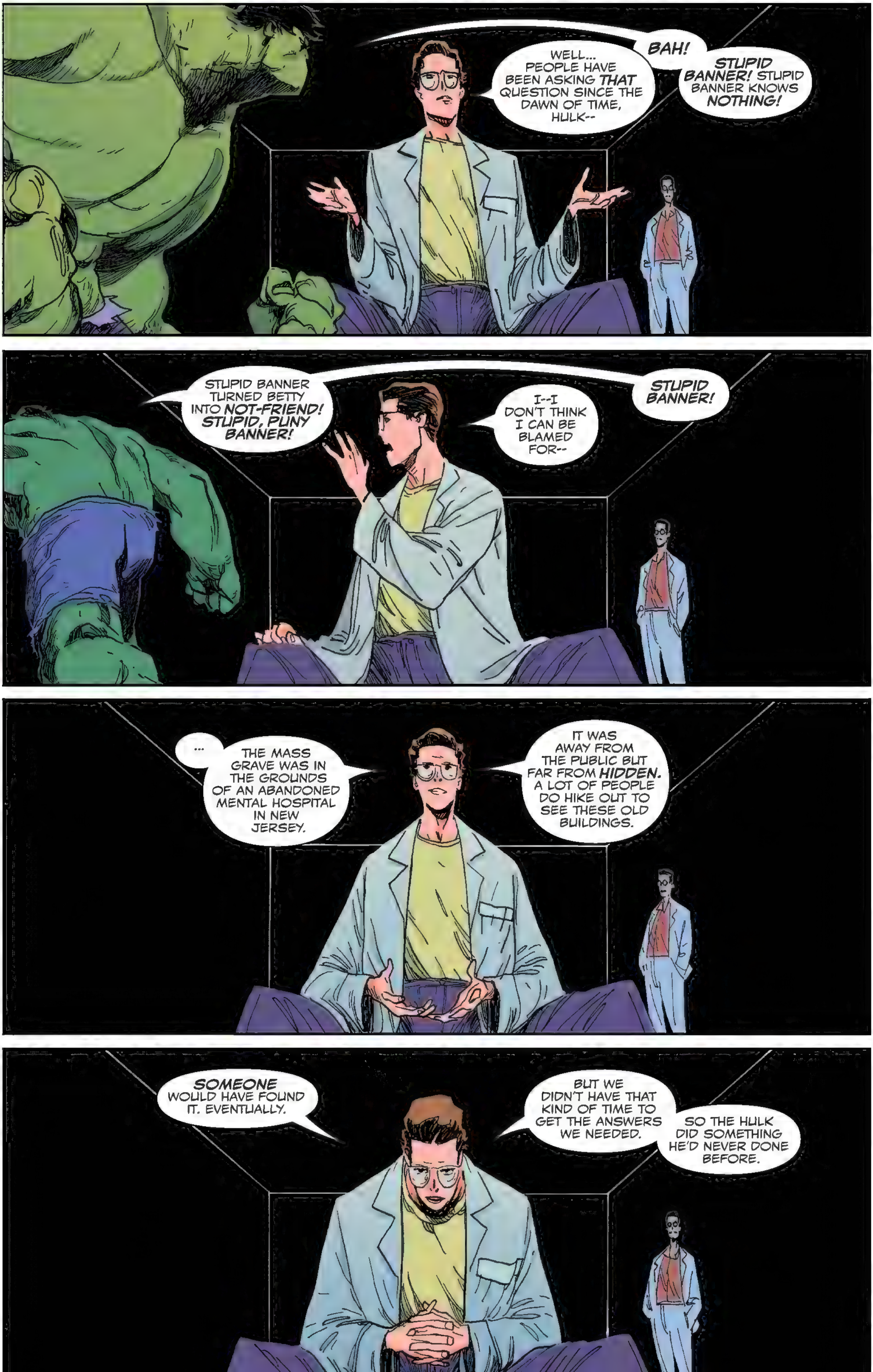

...ALL RIGHT. IN THAT CASE, YOU MIGHT BE THE BEST TRANSPORT TO WEST POINT WE HAVE.
WHAT'S YOUR *AIRSPEED?* HOW QUICKLY CAN YOU GET THERE?
ALONE? TEN HOURS. MAYBE LESS. CARRYING YOU?
LONGER. TOO LONG. WE'D BE SEEN.
...
WHAT IF... YOU...
WHAT IF YOU FOLDED ME UP SMALL?
"SHE SAID NOTHING TO THAT. BUT SHE UNDERSTOOD.
"IT WAS EARLY MORNING. A GOOD TWELVE HOURS BEFORE THE SUN SET AND THE HULK ROSE. THE JOURNEY WOULD BE EASIER IF I... WASN'T THERE.
"SHE TOOK MY FACE IN HER HANDS, ALMOST GENTLY. I HOPED SHE WOULDN'T MAKE A MESS.
THERE WASN'T ANY PAIN.

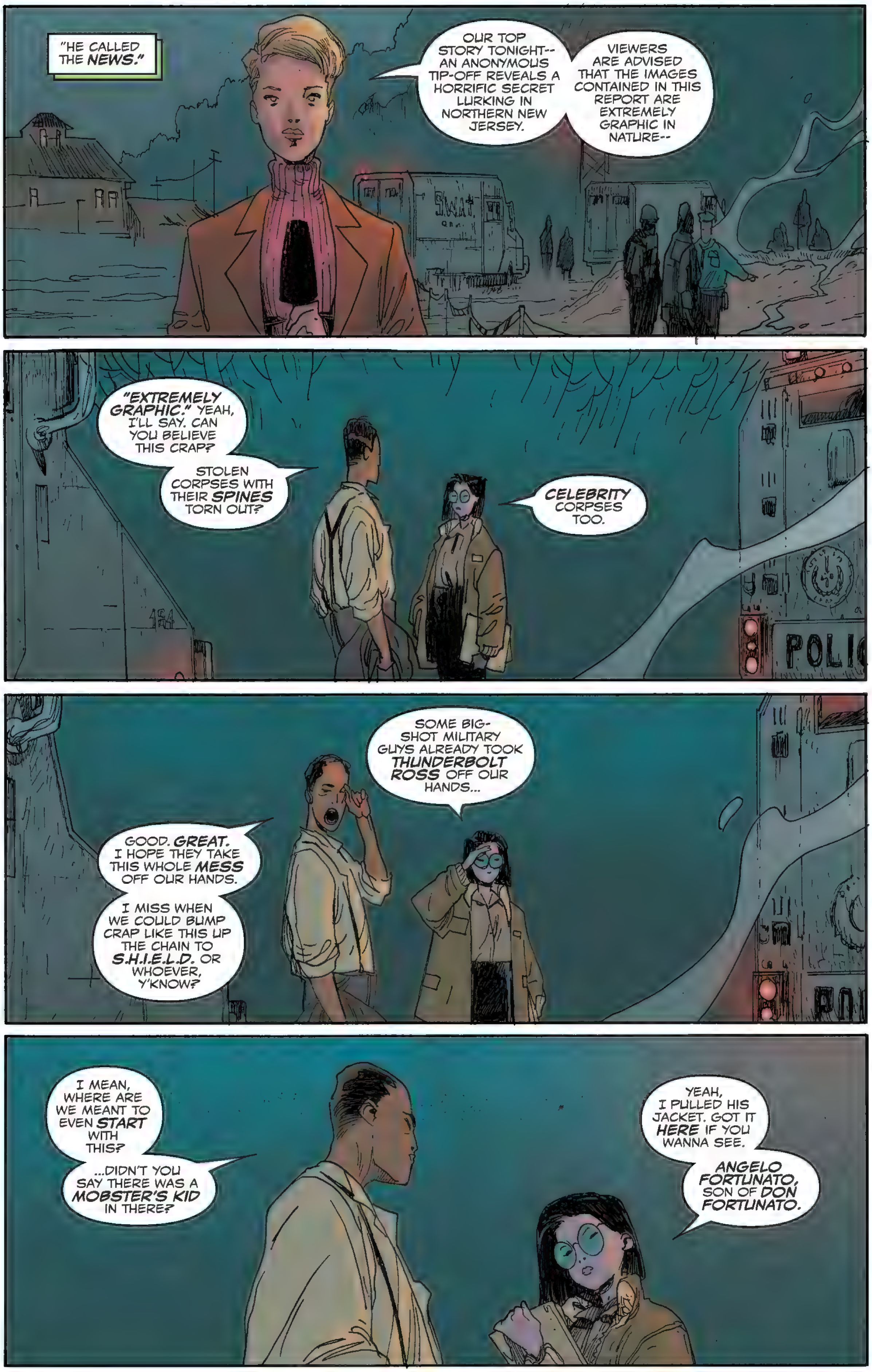

"I NEVER REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I'M DEAD.
"MAYBE I SHOULD.
MAYBE IT'S IMPORTANT.
OH, **BRUCE.**
SHE JUST KEEPS **KILLING** YOU, DOESN'T SHE?
AND USUALLY I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT THE HULK DOES EITHER. WHILE I'M DEAD OR...AWAY. I TOLD YOU THAT, DIDN'T I?
BUT THIS TIME...

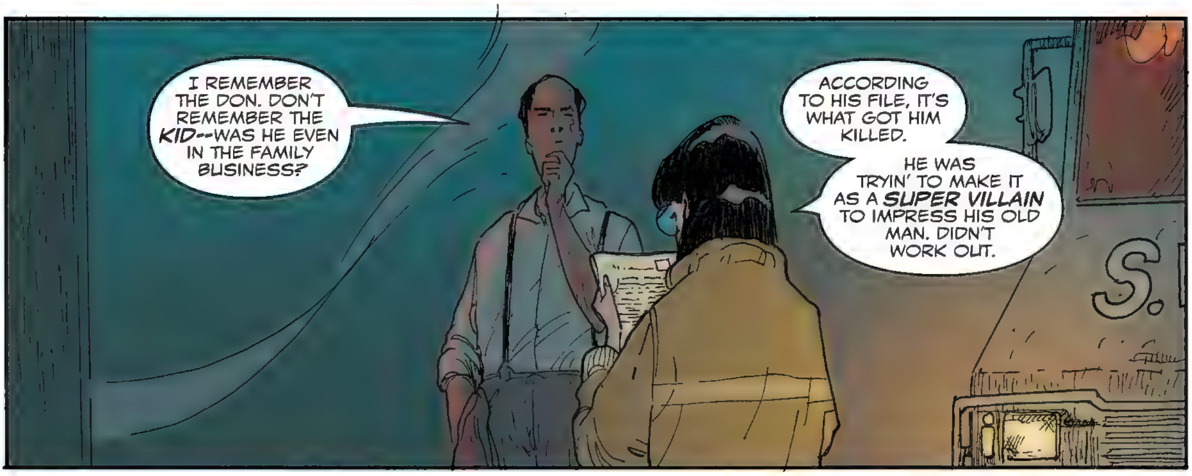

"THIS TIME, HE LET ME REMEMBER.
HNNH!
"THE CHANGE PROBABLY HURT MUCH MORE THAN USUAL. I WAS FOLDED UP SMALL, AFTER ALL. AND THE HULK IS VERY BIG.
"IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE AN AIRBAG INFLATING.
OW.
DAMMIT, BETTY...
"BETTY WAS ALREADY GONE.
"OUR BEST GUESS IS THAT SHE FLEW US TO WEST POINT, GOT HER FATHER'S SCENT FROM HIS GRAVE--
"--AND THEN TRACKED HIM TO WHERE HE WAS NOW.
ROSS...?
"I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE DIDN'T STAY. MAYBE SHE WAS SATISFIED WITH THE ANSWER. MAYBE SHE NEEDED TO BE ALONE.
"MAYBE SHE JUST DIDN'T CARE ABOUT WHAT SHE'D FOUND...

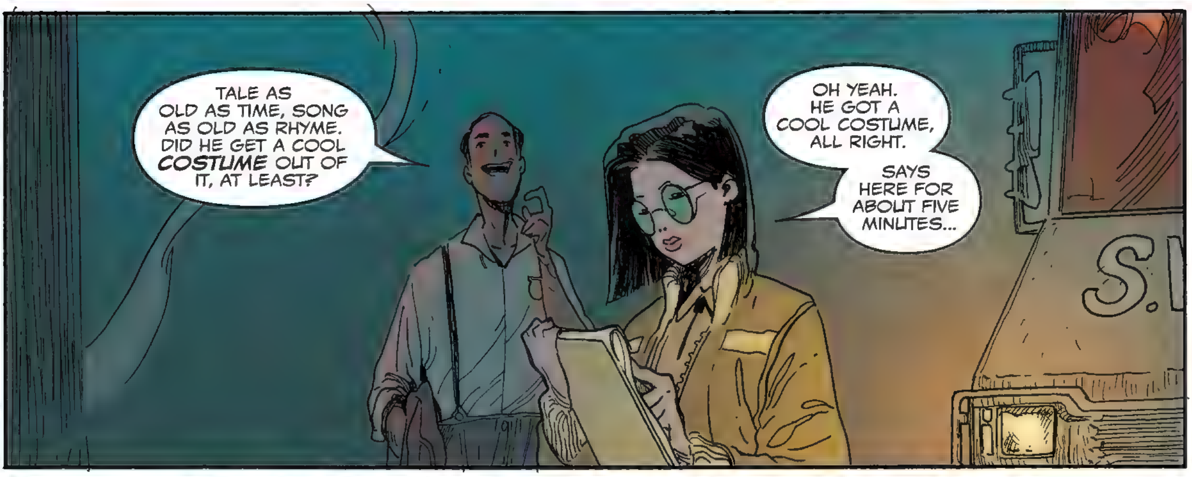

"...BUT I FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE."

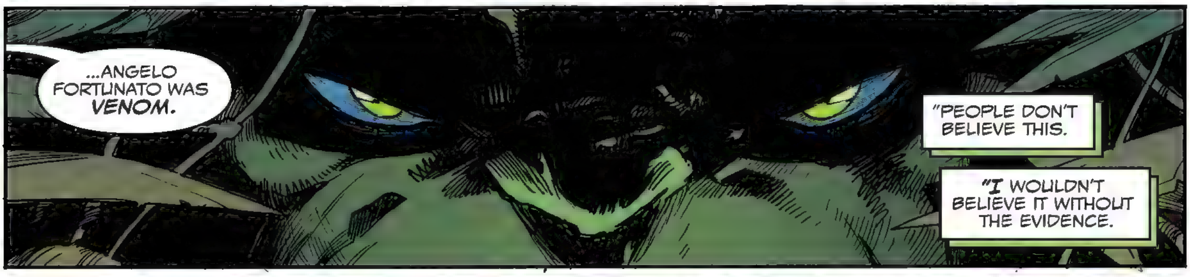

ANYWAY. FOR WHATEVER REASON, BETTY LEFT US TO DEAL WITH THAT--
BETTY WAS *HERE?*
HEY, BIG GUY.
BETTY... BETTY IS *FRIEND.* OR...*WAS* FRIEND...
HULK DOES NOT KNOW ANY-MORE.
NO. NO, NEITHER DO I.
HULK *NEVER* SEES FRIENDS. HULK ONLY COMES OUT TO *HURT*...AND TO *HURT*...
HULK... HULK *ALWAYS* HURTS. ALL THE TIME ALWAYS AND *ALWAYS.*
WHY? DO *YOU* KNOW WHY?
WHY HULK HAVE TO HURT SO *MUCH?!*

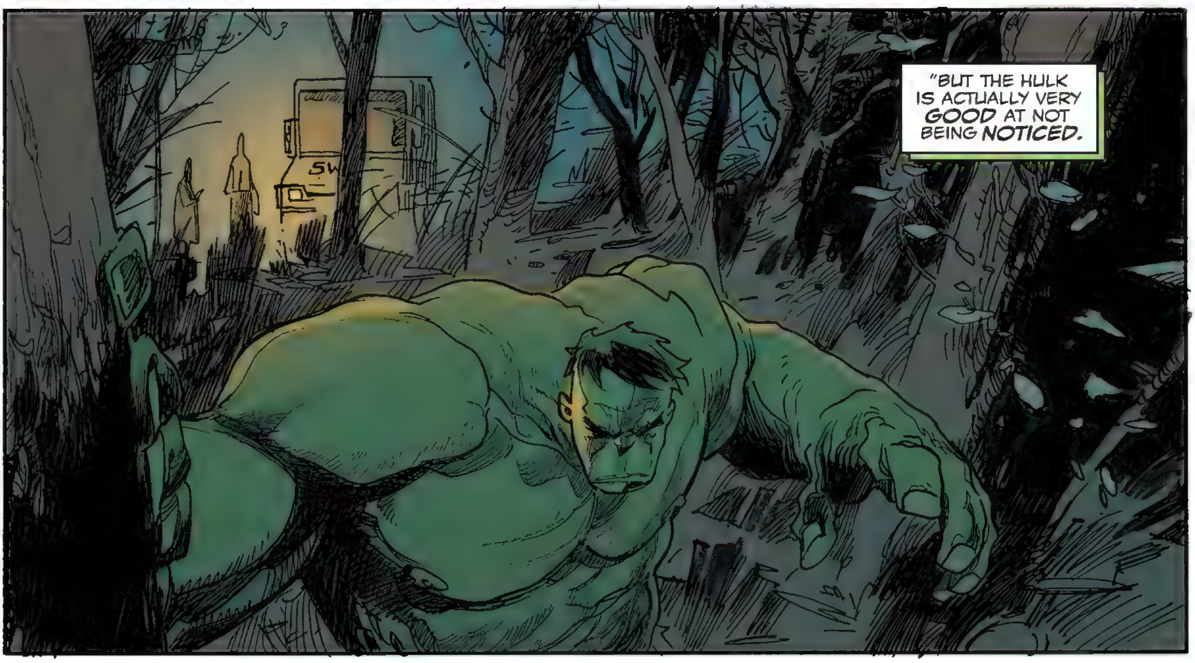

WELL... PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ASKING *THAT* QUESTION SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME, HULK--
BAH!
STUPID BANNER! STUPID BANNER KNOWS *NOTHING!*
STUPID BANNER TURNED BETTY INTO *NOT-FRIEND! STUPID, PUNY BANNER!*
I--I DON'T THINK I CAN BE BLAMED FOR--
STUPID BANNER!
...
THE MASS GRAVE WAS IN THE GROUNDS OF AN ABANDONED MENTAL HOSPITAL IN NEW JERSEY.
IT WAS AWAY FROM THE PUBLIC BUT FAR FROM *HIDDEN.* A LOT OF PEOPLE DO HIKE OUT TO SEE THESE OLD BUILDINGS.
SOMEONE WOULD HAVE FOUND IT. EVENTUALLY.
BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE THAT KIND OF TIME TO GET THE ANSWERS WE NEEDED.
SO THE HULK DID SOMETHING HE'D NEVER DONE BEFORE.

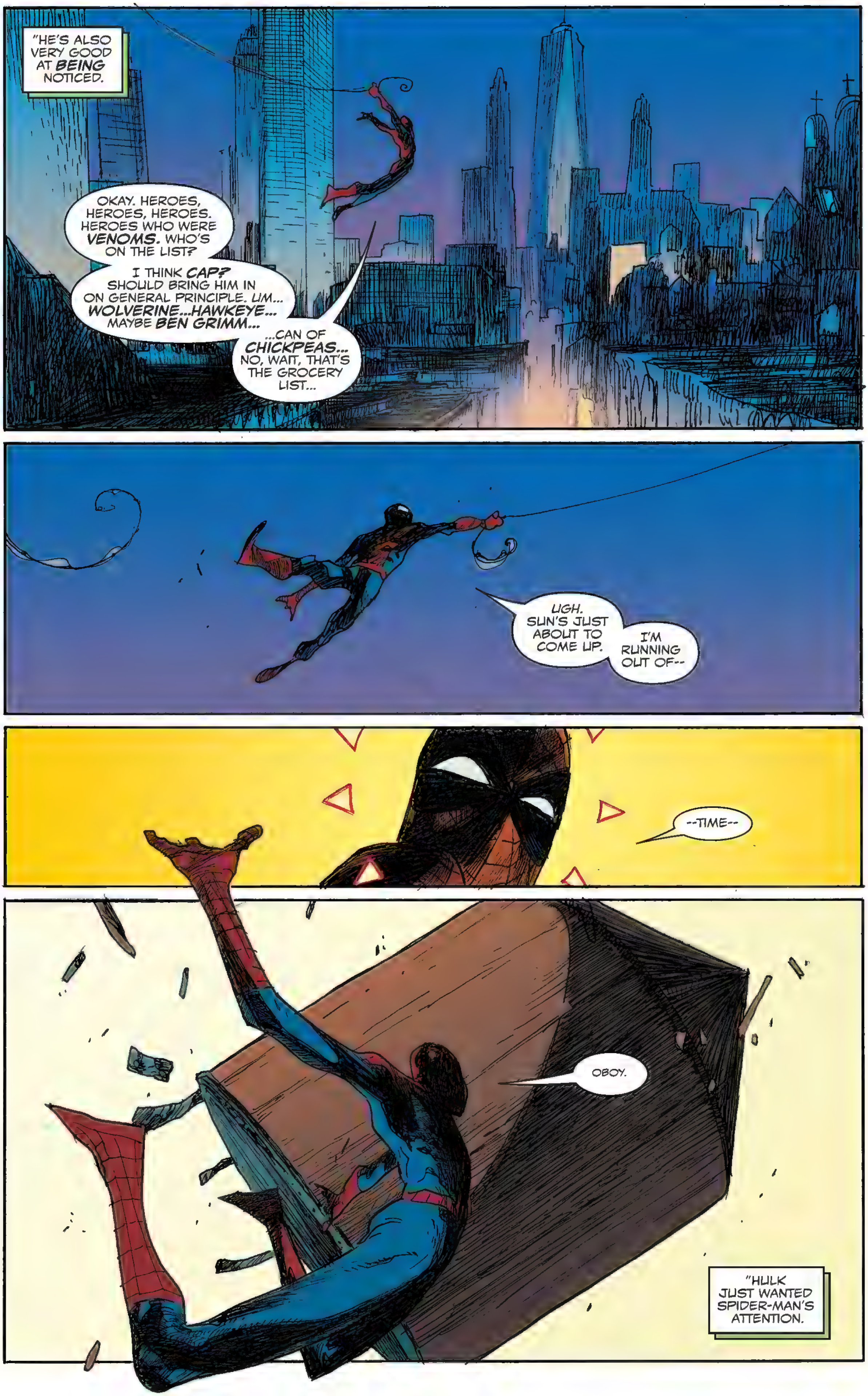

"HE CALLED THE **NEWS.**"
OUR TOP STORY TONIGHT-- AN ANONYMOUS TIP-OFF REVEALS A HORRIFIC SECRET LURKING IN NORTHERN NEW JERSEY.
VIEWERS ARE ADVISED THAT THE IMAGES CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT ARE EXTREMELY GRAPHIC IN NATURE--
S.W.A.T.
"EXTREMELY GRAPHIC." YEAH, I'LL SAY. CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS CRAP?
STOLEN CORPSES WITH THEIR **SPINES** TORN OUT?
CELEBRITY CORPSES TOO.
POLIC
SOME BIG-SHOT MILITARY GUYS ALREADY TOOK **THUNDERBOLT ROSS** OFF OUR HANDS...
GOOD. **GREAT.** I HOPE THEY TAKE THIS WHOLE **MESS** OFF OUR HANDS.
I MISS WHEN WE COULD BUMP CRAP LIKE THIS UP THE CHAIN TO **S.H.I.E.L.D.** OR WHOEVER, Y'KNOW?
I MEAN, WHERE ARE WE MEANT TO EVEN **START** WITH THIS?
...DIDN'T YOU SAY THERE WAS A **MOBSTER'S KID** IN THERE?
YEAH, I PULLED HIS JACKET. GOT IT **HERE** IF YOU WANNA SEE.
ANGELO FORTUNATO, SON OF **DON FORTUNATO.**

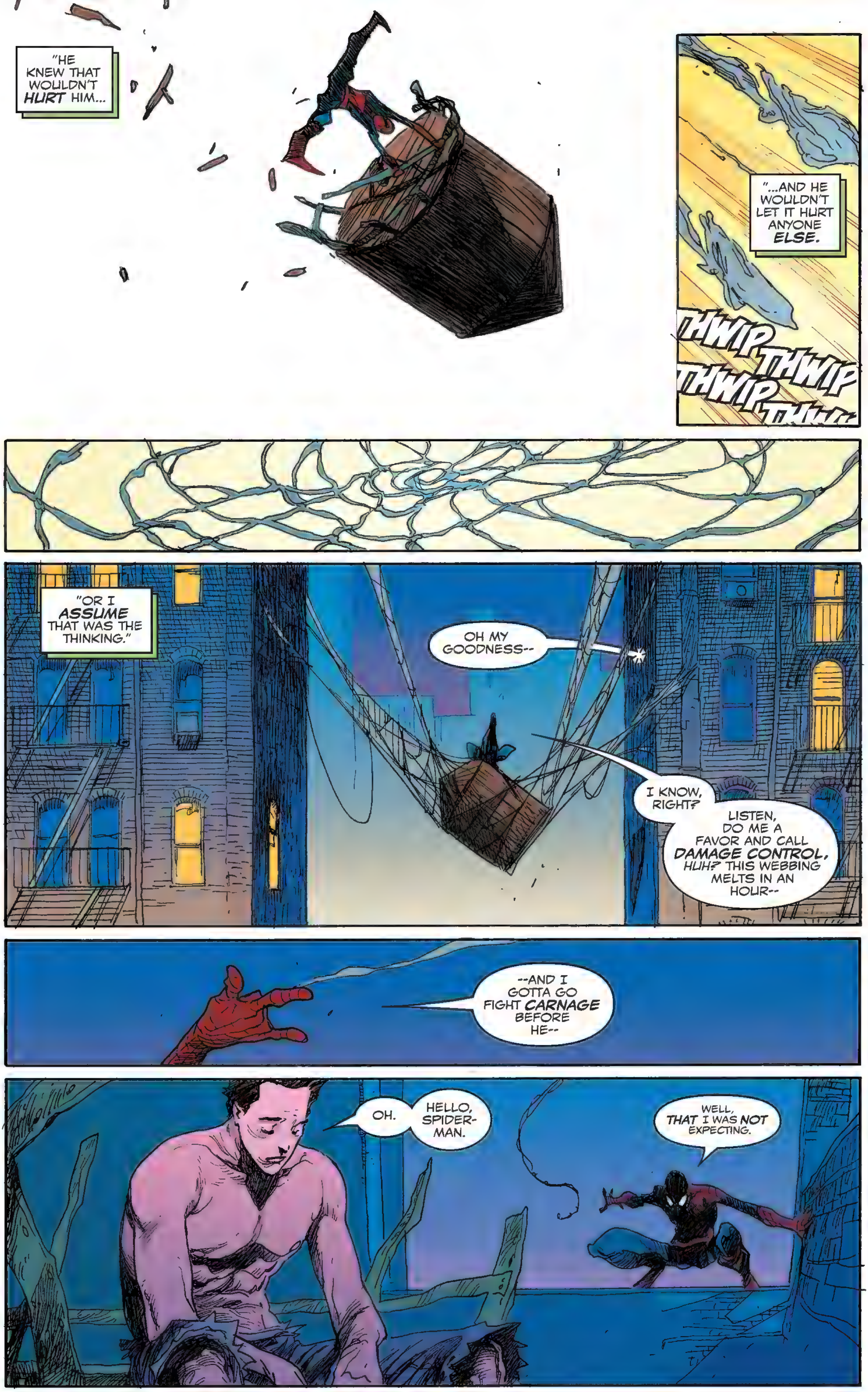

I REMEMBER THE DON. DON'T REMEMBER THE *KID*--WAS HE EVEN IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS?
ACCORDING TO HIS FILE, IT'S WHAT GOT HIM KILLED.
HE WAS TRYIN' TO MAKE IT AS A ***SUPER VILLAIN*** TO IMPRESS HIS OLD MAN. DIDN'T WORK OUT.
S.

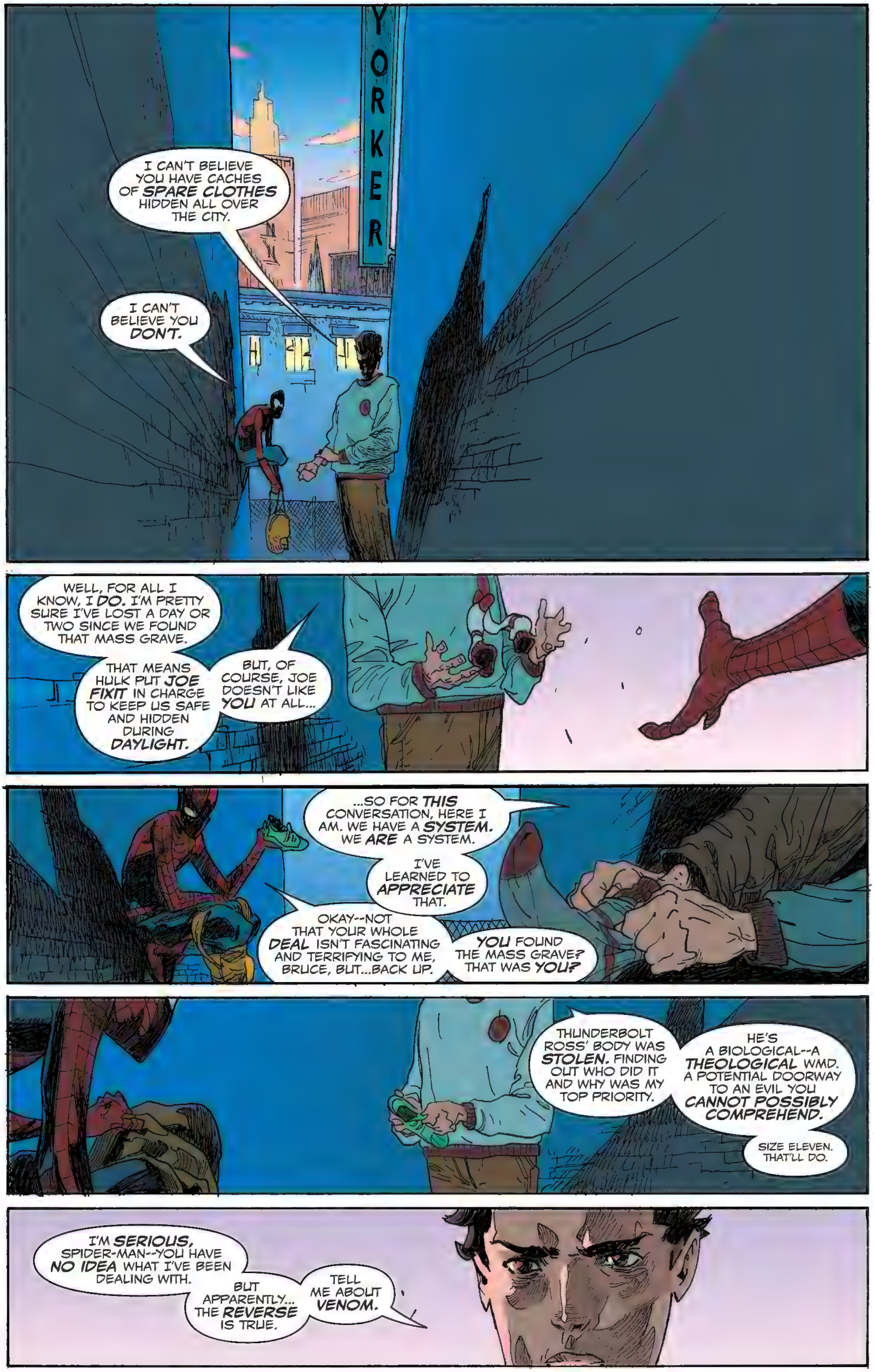

TALE AS OLD AS TIME, SONG AS OLD AS RHYME. DID HE GET A COOL ***COSTUME*** OUT OF IT, AT LEAST?
OH YEAH. HE GOT A COOL COSTUME, ALL RIGHT.
SAYS HERE FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES...
S.

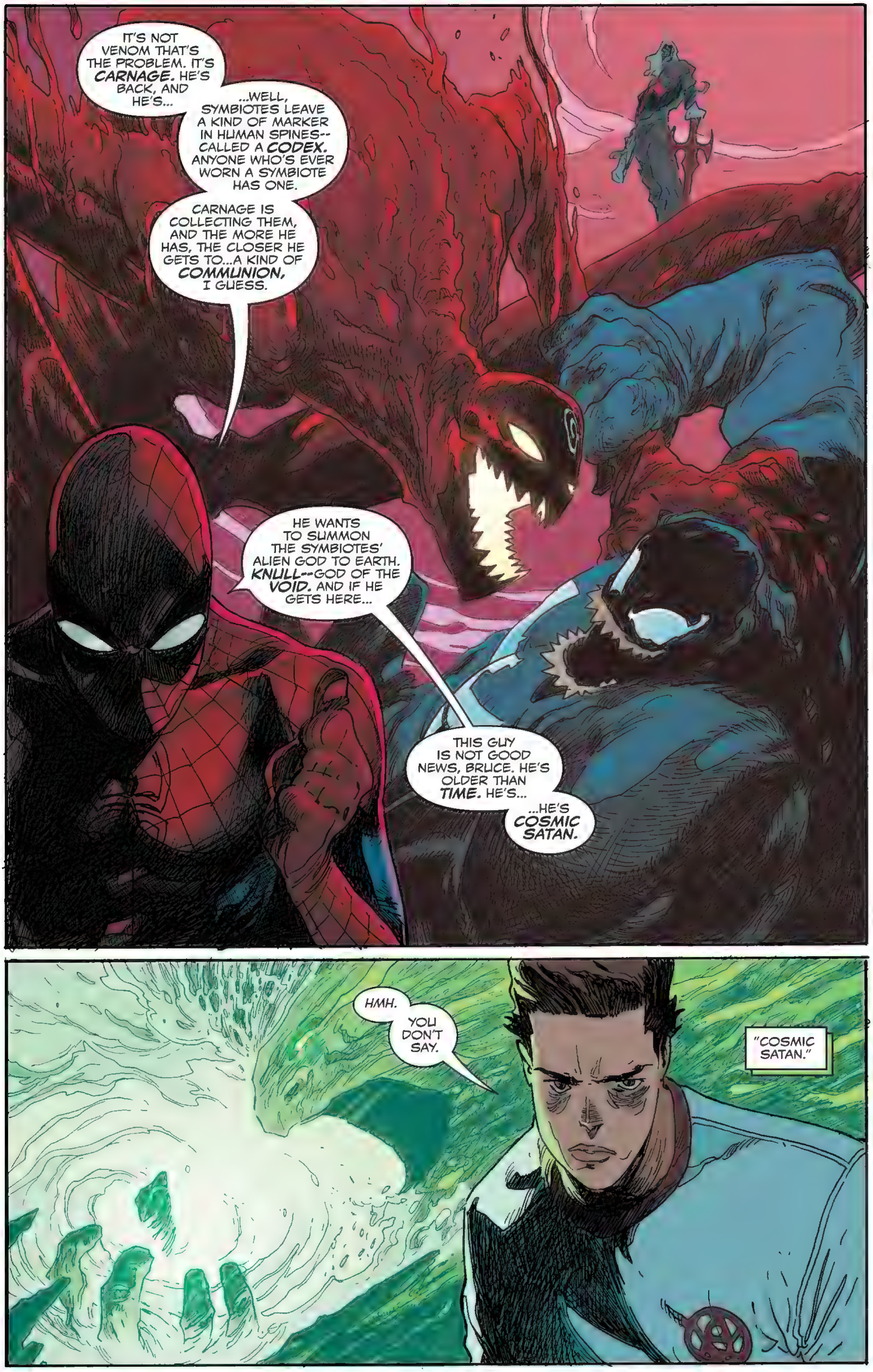

...ANGELO FORTUNATO WAS ***VENOM.***
"PEOPLE DON'T BELIEVE THIS.
"*I* WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT WITHOUT THE EVIDENCE.

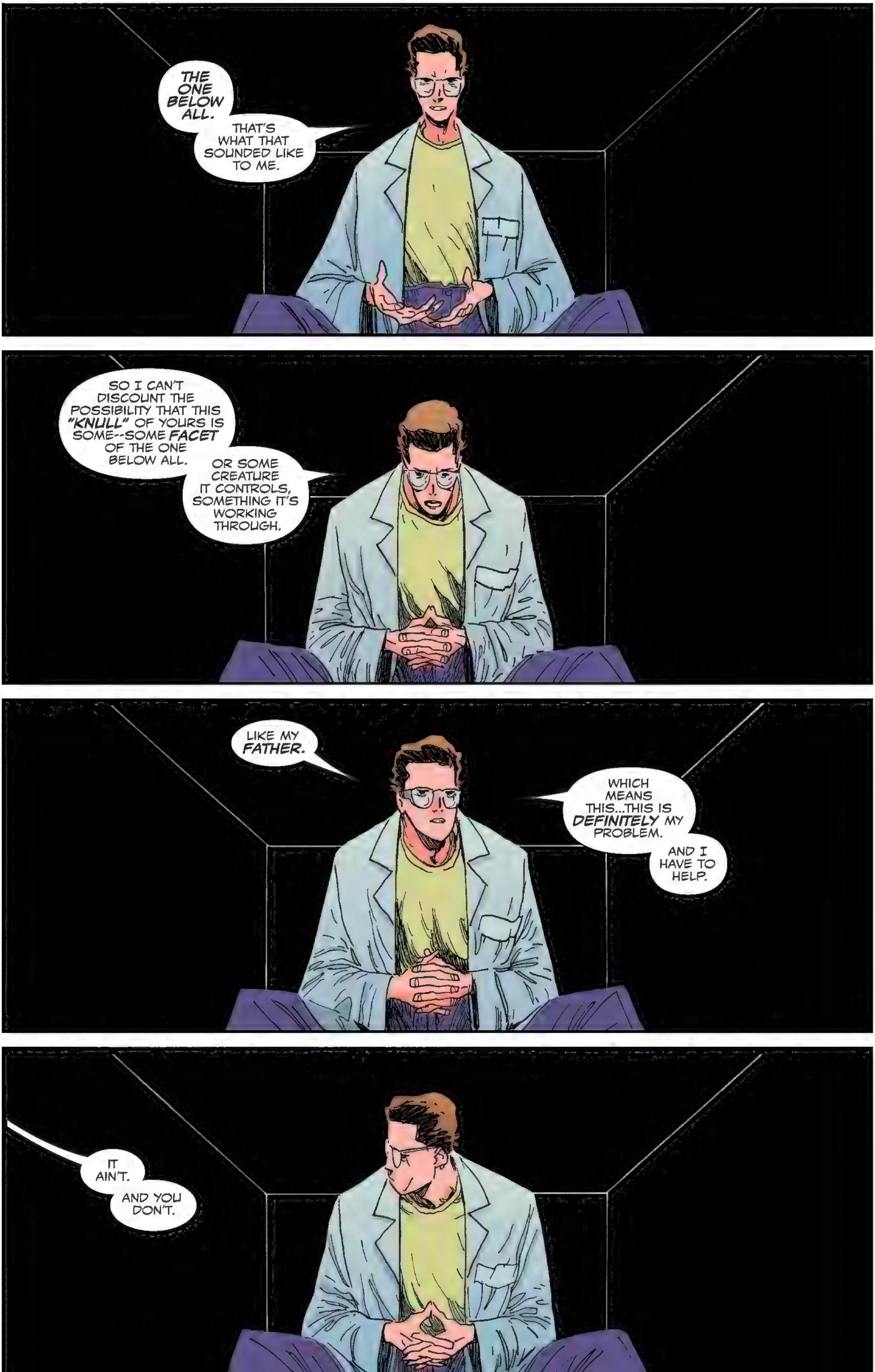

"BUT THE HULK IS ACTUALLY VERY ***GOOD*** AT NOT BEING ***NOTICED.***
SW

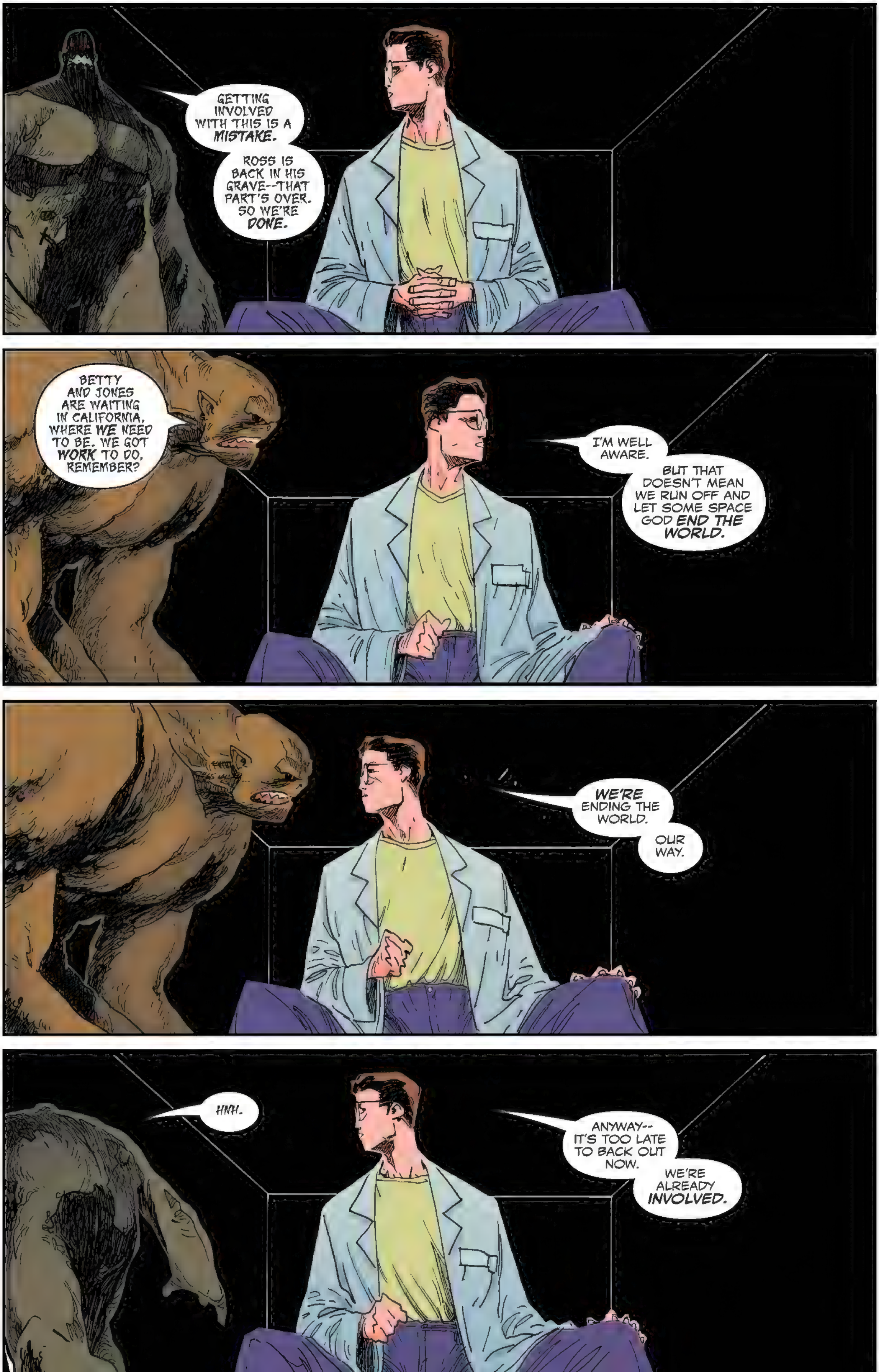

"HE'S ALSO VERY GOOD AT *BEING* NOTICED.
OKAY. HEROES, HEROES, HEROES. HEROES WHO WERE *VENOMS*. WHO'S ON THE LIST?
I THINK *CAP?* SHOULD BRING HIM IN ON GENERAL PRINCIPLE. UM... *WOLVERINE...HAWKEYE...* MAYBE *BEN GRIMM...*
...CAN OF *CHICKPEAS...* NO, WAIT, THAT'S THE GROCERY LIST...
UGH. SUN'S JUST ABOUT TO COME UP.
I'M RUNNING OUT OF--
--TIME--
OBOY.
"HULK JUST WANTED SPIDER-MAN'S ATTENTION.

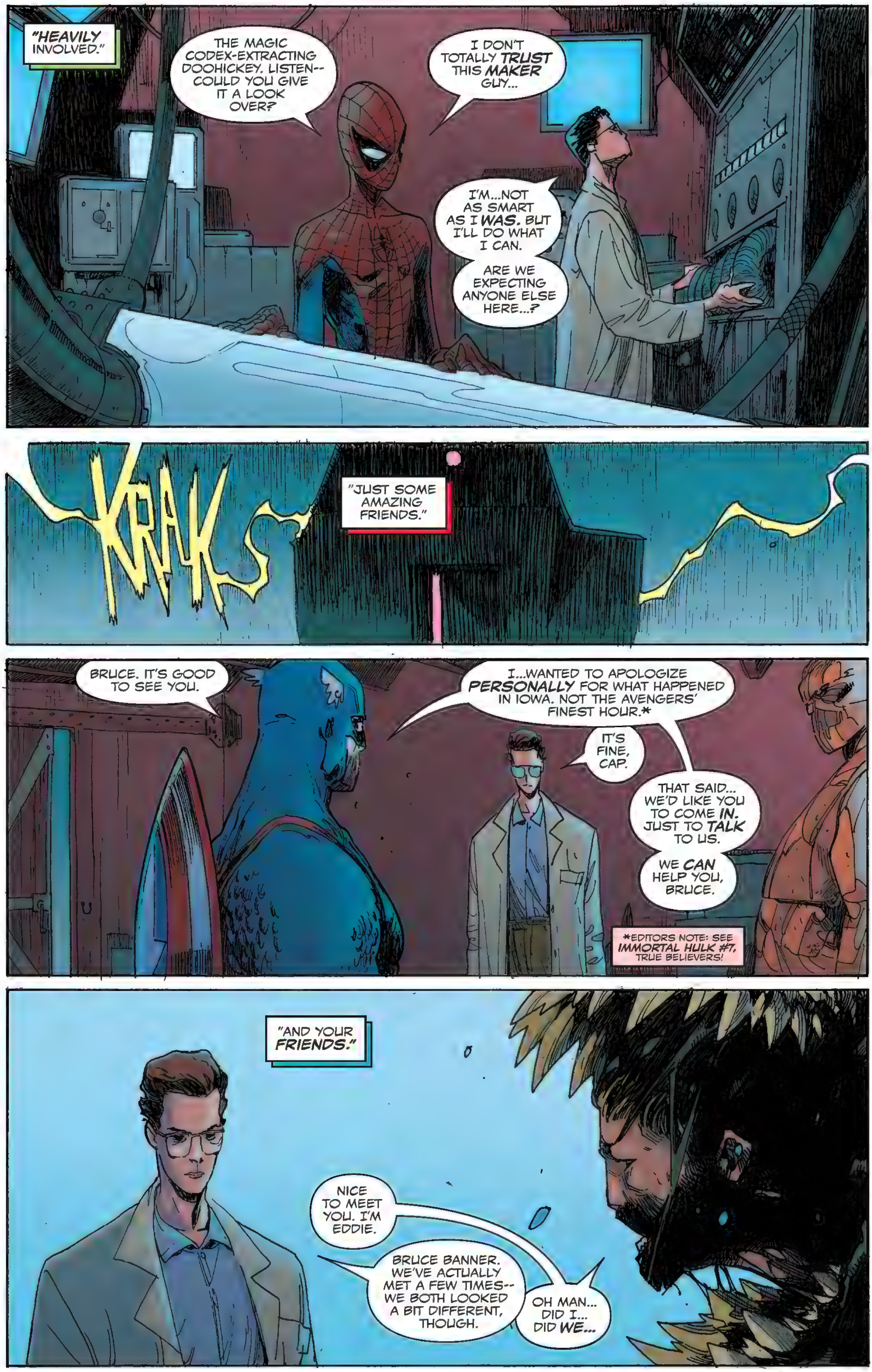

"HE KNEW THAT WOULDN'T *HURT* HIM...
"...AND HE WOULDN'T LET IT HURT ANYONE *ELSE.*
THWIP THWIP
THWIP
"OR I *ASSUME* THAT WAS THE THINKING."
OH MY GOODNESS--
I KNOW, RIGHT?
LISTEN, DO ME A FAVOR AND CALL *DAMAGE CONTROL,* HUH? THIS WEBBING MELTS IN AN HOUR--
--AND I GOTTA GO FIGHT *CARNAGE* BEFORE HE--
OH.
HELLO, SPIDER-MAN.
WELL, *THAT* I WAS *NOT* EXPECTING.

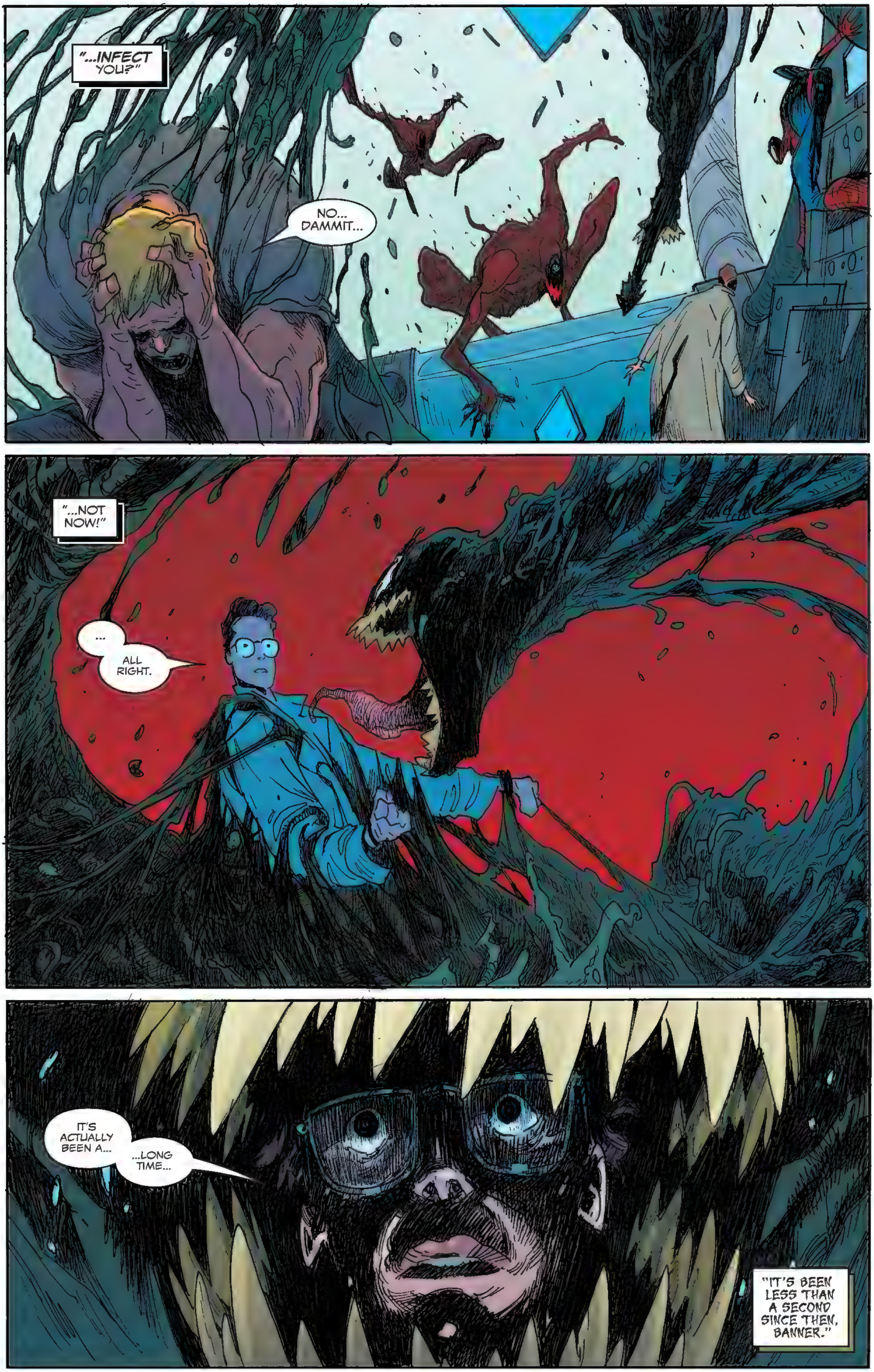

YORKER
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU HAVE CACHES OF *SPARE CLOTHES* HIDDEN ALL OVER THE CITY.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU *DON'T.*
WELL, FOR ALL I KNOW, I *DO.* I'M PRETTY SURE I'VE LOST A DAY OR TWO SINCE WE FOUND THAT MASS GRAVE.
THAT MEANS HULK PUT *JOE FIXIT* IN CHARGE TO KEEP US SAFE AND HIDDEN DURING *DAYLIGHT.*
BUT, OF COURSE, JOE DOESN'T LIKE *YOU* AT ALL...
...SO FOR *THIS* CONVERSATION, HERE I AM. WE HAVE A *SYSTEM.* WE *ARE* A SYSTEM.
I'VE LEARNED TO *APPRECIATE* THAT.
OKAY--NOT THAT YOUR WHOLE *DEAL* ISN'T FASCINATING AND TERRIFYING TO ME, BRUCE, BUT...BACK UP.
YOU FOUND THE MASS GRAVE? THAT WAS *YOU?*
THUNDERBOLT ROSS' BODY WAS *STOLEN.* FINDING OUT WHO DID IT AND WHY WAS MY TOP PRIORITY.
HE'S A BIOLOGICAL--A *THEOLOGICAL* WMD. A POTENTIAL DOORWAY TO AN EVIL YOU *CANNOT POSSIBLY COMPREHEND.*
SIZE ELEVEN. THAT'LL DO.
I'M *SERIOUS,* SPIDER-MAN--YOU HAVE *NO IDEA* WHAT I'VE BEEN DEALING WITH.
BUT APPARENTLY... THE *REVERSE* IS TRUE.
TELL ME ABOUT *VENOM.*

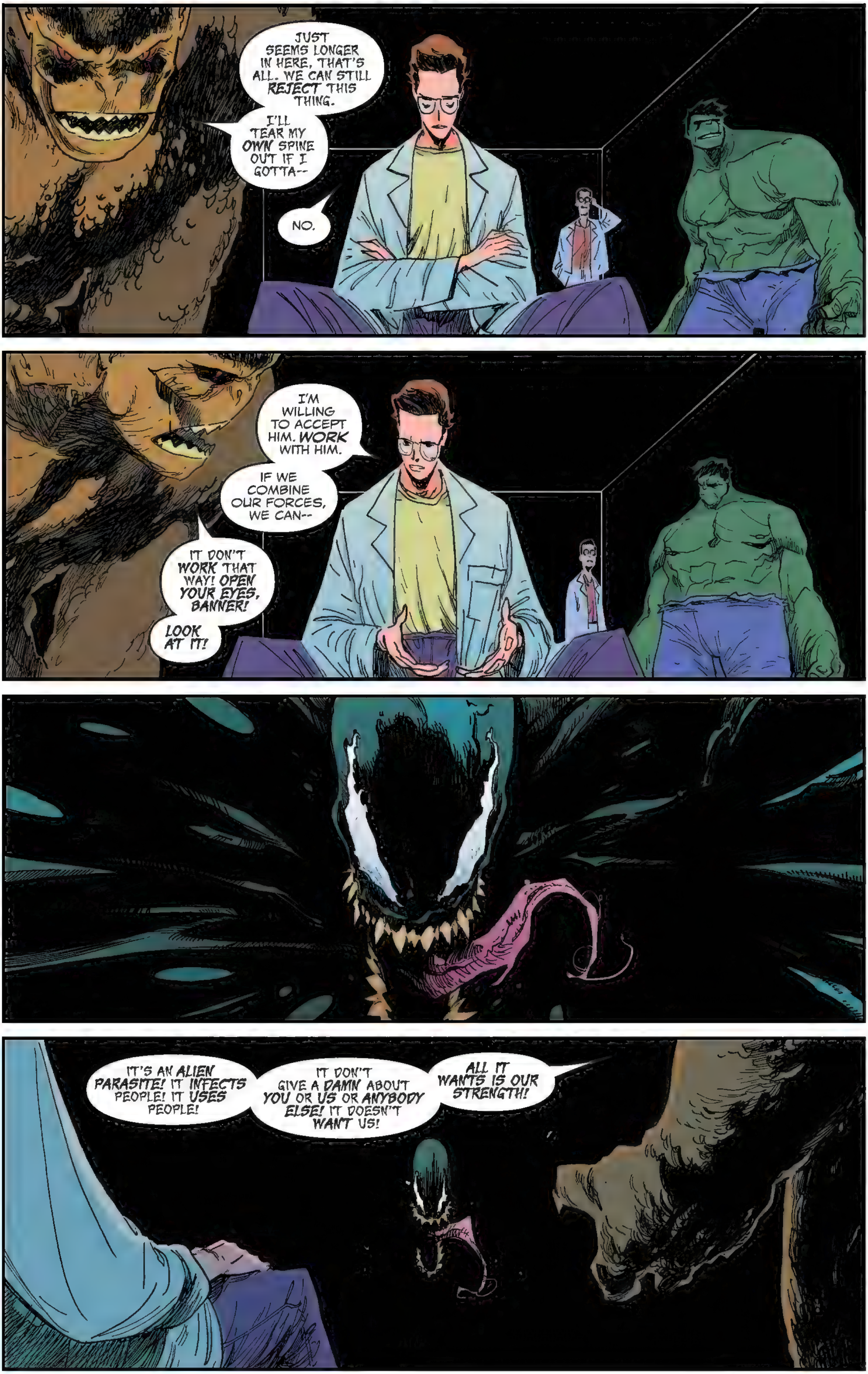

IT'S NOT VENOM THAT'S THE PROBLEM. IT'S **CARNAGE.** HE'S BACK, AND HE'S...
...WELL, SYMBIOTES LEAVE A KIND OF MARKER IN HUMAN SPINES--CALLED A **CODEX.** ANYONE WHO'S EVER WORN A SYMBIOTE HAS ONE.
CARNAGE IS COLLECTING THEM, AND THE MORE HE HAS, THE CLOSER HE GETS TO...A KIND OF **COMMUNION,** I GUESS.
HE WANTS TO SUMMON THE SYMBIOTES' ALIEN GOD TO EARTH. **KNULL--**GOD OF THE **VOID.** AND IF HE GETS HERE...
THIS GUY IS NOT GOOD NEWS, BRUCE. HE'S OLDER THAN **TIME.** HE'S...
...HE'S **COSMIC SATAN.**
HMH.
YOU DON'T SAY.
"COSMIC SATAN."

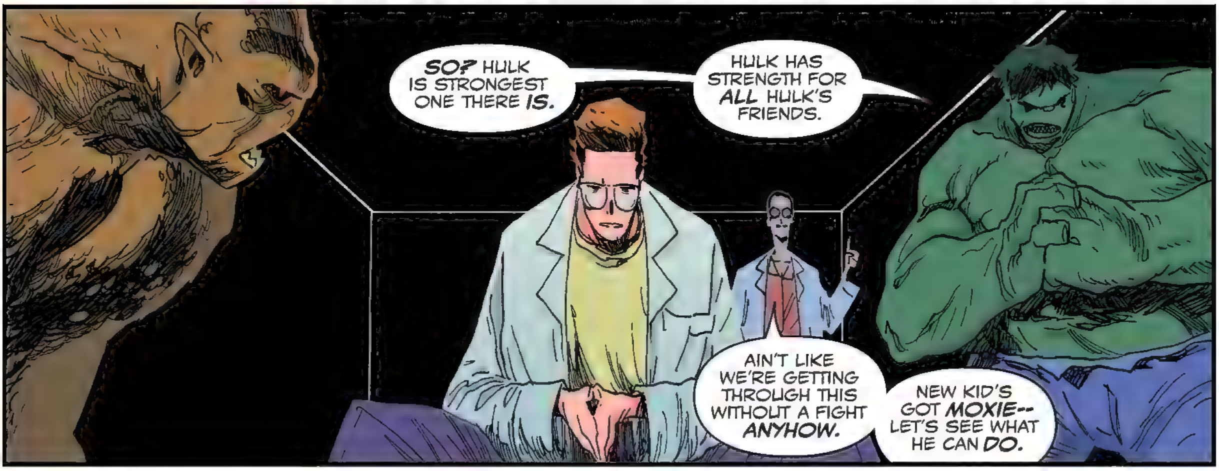

THE ONE BELOW ALL.
THAT'S WHAT THAT SOUNDED LIKE TO ME.
SO I CAN'T DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS "KNULL" OF YOURS IS SOME--SOME FACET OF THE ONE BELOW ALL.
OR SOME CREATURE IT CONTROLS, SOMETHING IT'S WORKING THROUGH.
LIKE MY FATHER.
WHICH MEANS THIS...THIS IS DEFINITELY MY PROBLEM.
AND I HAVE TO HELP.
IT AIN'T.
AND YOU DON'T.

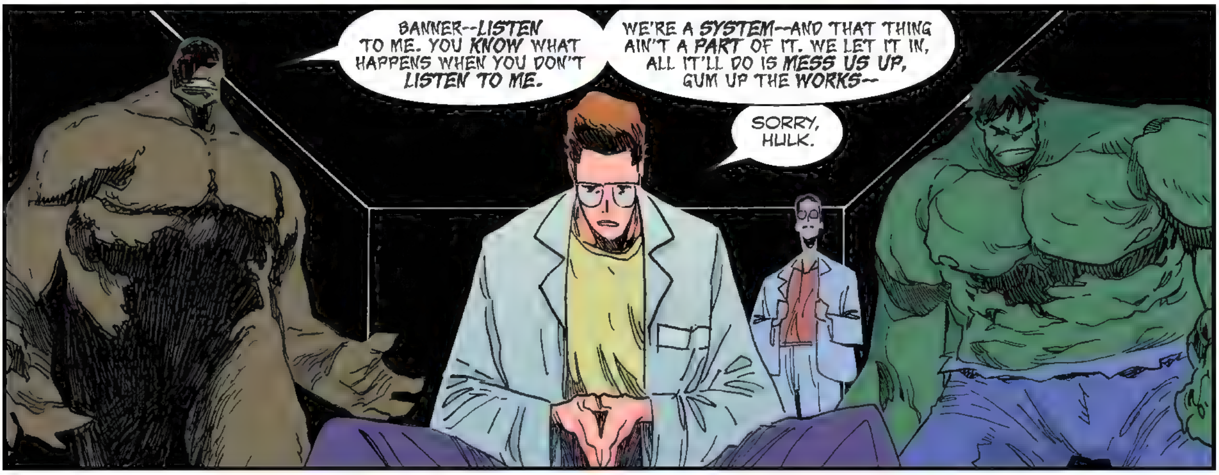

GETTING INVOLVED WITH THIS IS A *MISTAKE.*
ROSS IS BACK IN HIS GRAVE--THAT PART'S OVER. SO WE'RE *DONE.*
BETTY AND JONES ARE WAITING IN CALIFORNIA, WHERE *WE* NEED TO BE. WE GOT *WORK* TO DO, REMEMBER?
I'M WELL AWARE.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE RUN OFF AND LET SOME SPACE GOD *END THE WORLD.*
WE'RE ENDING THE WORLD.
OUR WAY.
HNH.
ANYWAY-- IT'S TOO LATE TO BACK OUT NOW.
WE'RE ALREADY *INVOLVED.*

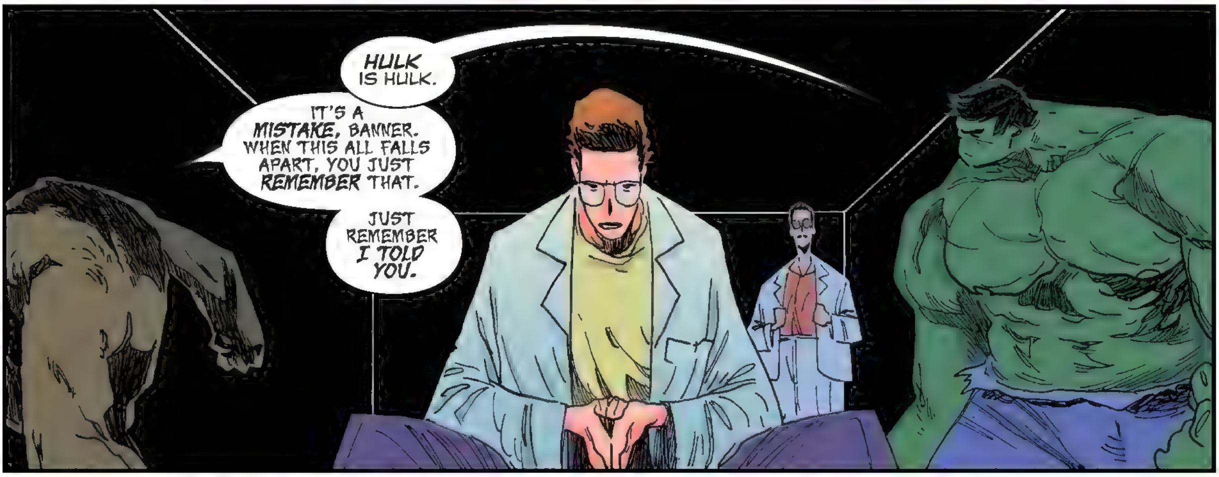

"HEAVILY INVOLVED."
THE MAGIC CODEX-EXTRACTING DOOHICKEY. LISTEN-- COULD YOU GIVE IT A LOOK OVER?
I DON'T TOTALLY TRUST THIS MAKER GUY...
I'M...NOT AS SMART AS I WAS. BUT I'LL DO WHAT I CAN.
ARE WE EXPECTING ANYONE ELSE HERE...?
KRAK
"JUST SOME AMAZING FRIENDS."
BRUCE. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.
I...WANTED TO APOLOGIZE PERSONALLY FOR WHAT HAPPENED IN IOWA. NOT THE AVENGERS' FINEST HOUR.*
IT'S FINE, CAP.
THAT SAID... WE'D LIKE YOU TO COME IN. JUST TO TALK TO US.
WE CAN HELP YOU, BRUCE.
*EDITORS NOTE: SEE IMMORTAL HULK #7, TRUE BELIEVERS!
"AND YOUR FRIENDS."
NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M EDDIE.
BRUCE BANNER. WE'VE ACTUALLY MET A FEW TIMES-- WE BOTH LOOKED A BIT DIFFERENT, THOUGH.
OH MAN... DID I... DID WE...

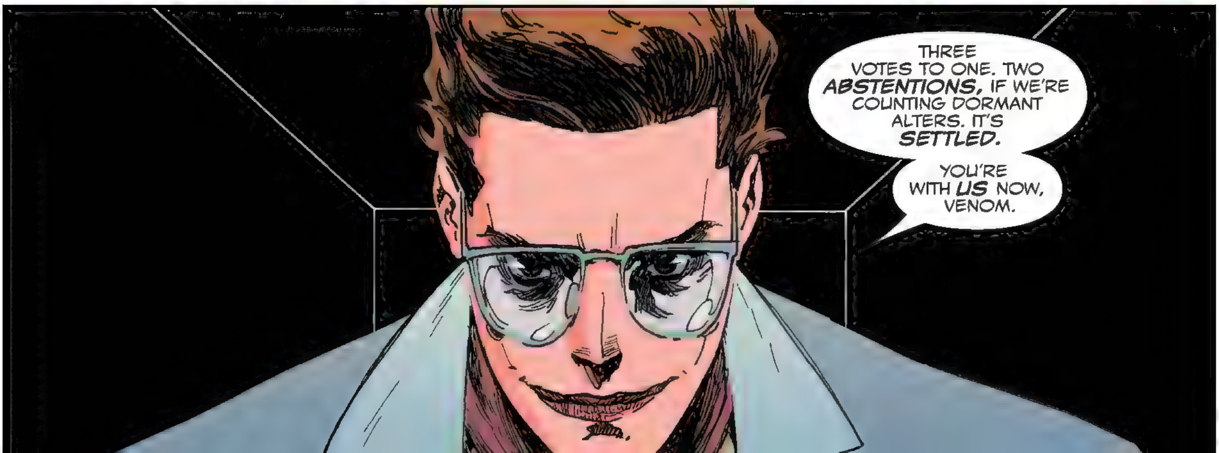

"...INFECT YOU?"
NO... DAMMIT...
"...NOT NOW!"
... ALL RIGHT.
IT'S ACTUALLY BEEN A... ...LONG TIME...
"IT'S BEEN LESS THAN A SECOND SINCE THEN, BANNER."

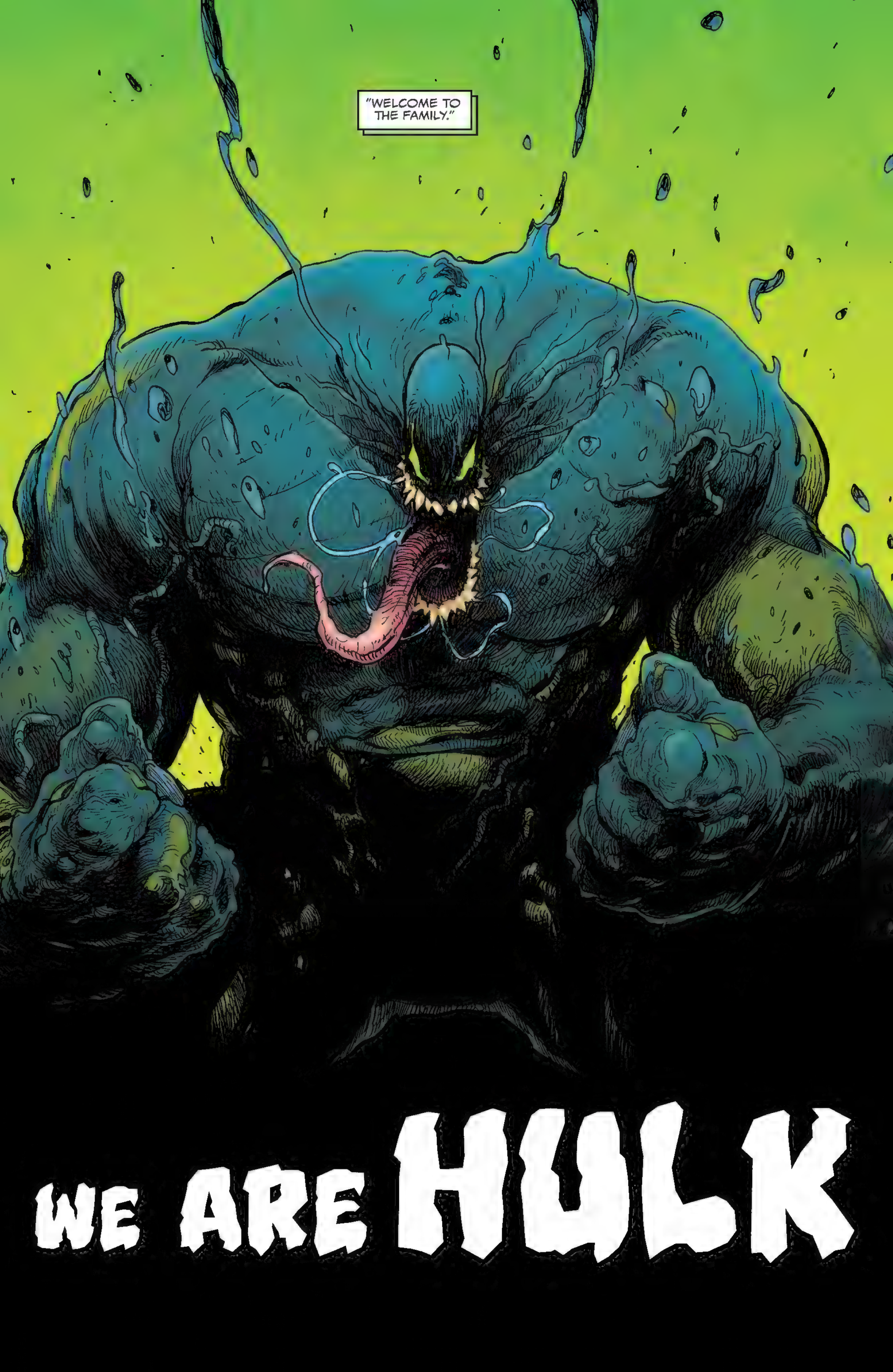

JUST SEEMS LONGER IN HERE, THAT'S ALL. WE CAN STILL *REJECT* THIS THING.
I'LL TEAR MY *OWN* SPINE OUT IF I GOTTA--
NO.
I'M WILLING TO ACCEPT HIM. *WORK* WITH HIM.
IF WE COMBINE OUR FORCES, WE CAN--
IT DON'T *WORK* THAT WAY! *OPEN YOUR EYES, BANNER!*
LOOK AT IT!
IT'S AN *ALIEN PARASITE!* IT *INFECTS* PEOPLE! IT *USES* PEOPLE!
IT DON'T GIVE A *DAMN* ABOUT *YOU* OR *US* OR *ANYBODY ELSE!* IT DOESN'T *WANT* US!
ALL IT WANTS IS OUR STRENGTH!


SO? HULK IS STRONGEST ONE THERE IS.
HULK HAS STRENGTH FOR ALL HULK'S FRIENDS.
AIN'T LIKE WE'RE GETTING THROUGH THIS WITHOUT A FIGHT ANYHOW.
NEW KID'S GOT MOXIE-- LET'S SEE WHAT HE CAN DO.


BANNER--LISTEN TO ME. YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T LISTEN TO ME.
WE'RE A SYSTEM--AND THAT THING AIN'T A PART OF IT. WE LET IT IN, ALL IT'LL DO IS MESS US UP, GUM UP THE WORKS--
SORRY, HULK.


HULK IS HULK.
IT'S A MISTAKE, BANNER. WHEN THIS ALL FALLS APART, YOU JUST REMEMBER THAT.
JUST REMEMBER I TOLD YOU.

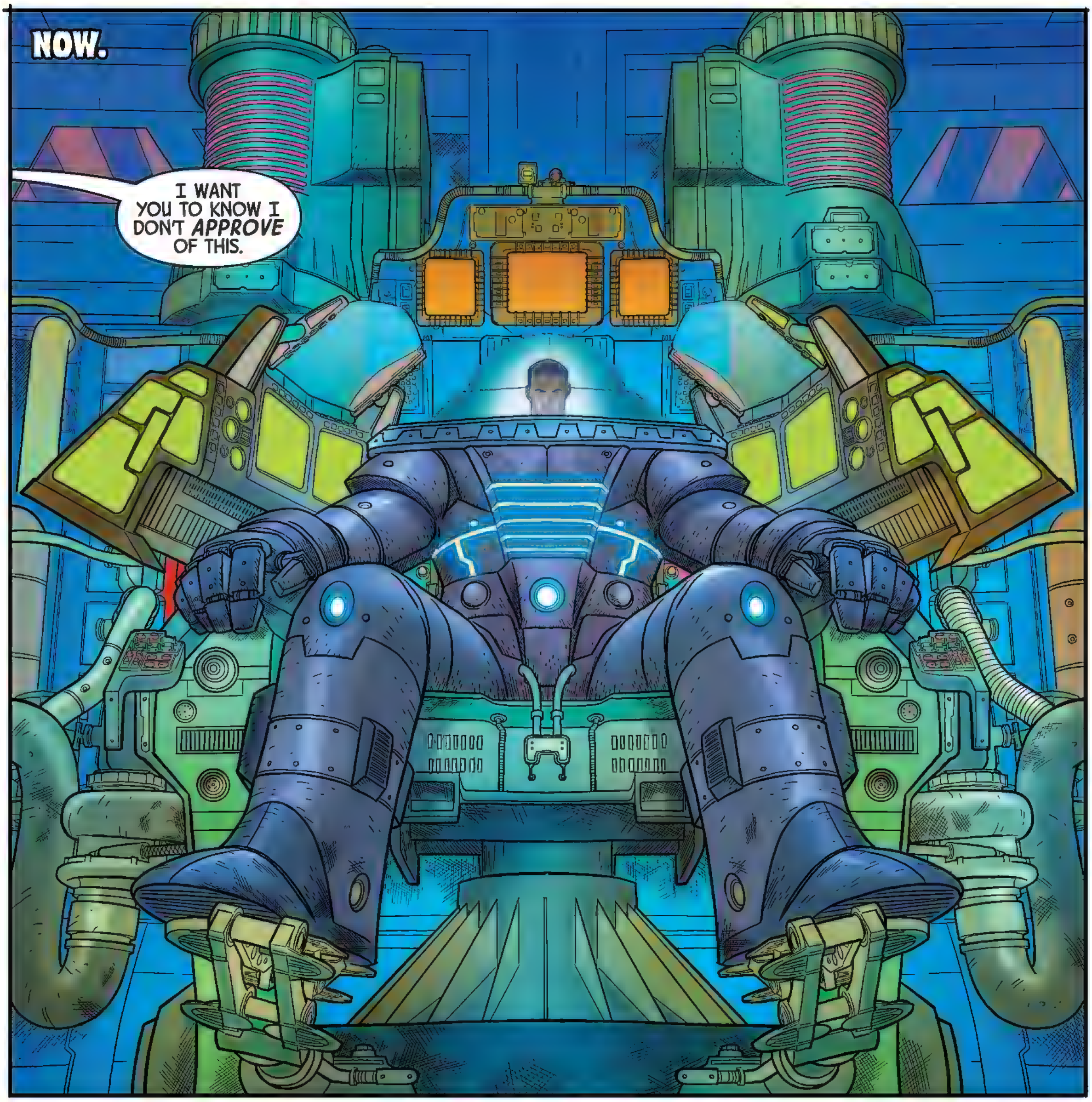

THREE VOTES TO ONE. TWO ABSTENTIONS, IF WE'RE COUNTING DORMANT ALTERS. IT'S SETTLED.
YOU'RE WITH US NOW, VENOM.


"WELCOME TO THE FAMILY."
WE ARE HULK

21

"...IN ALL CHAOS THERE IS A
COSMOS, IN ALL DISORDER
A SECRET ORDER..."

– CARL JUNG
ARCHETYPES AND THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

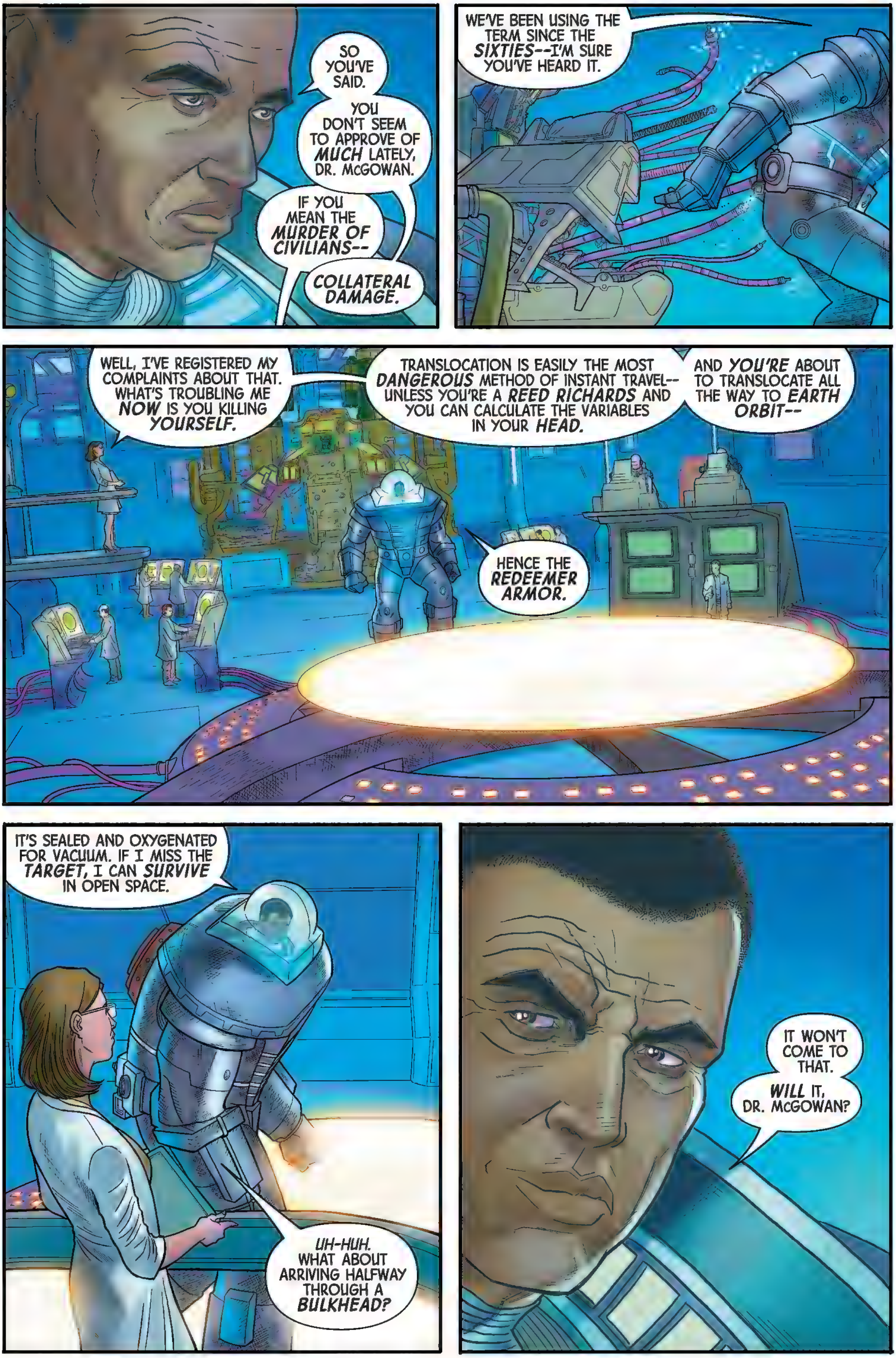

NOW.
I WANT YOU TO KNOW I DON'T *APPROVE* OF THIS.

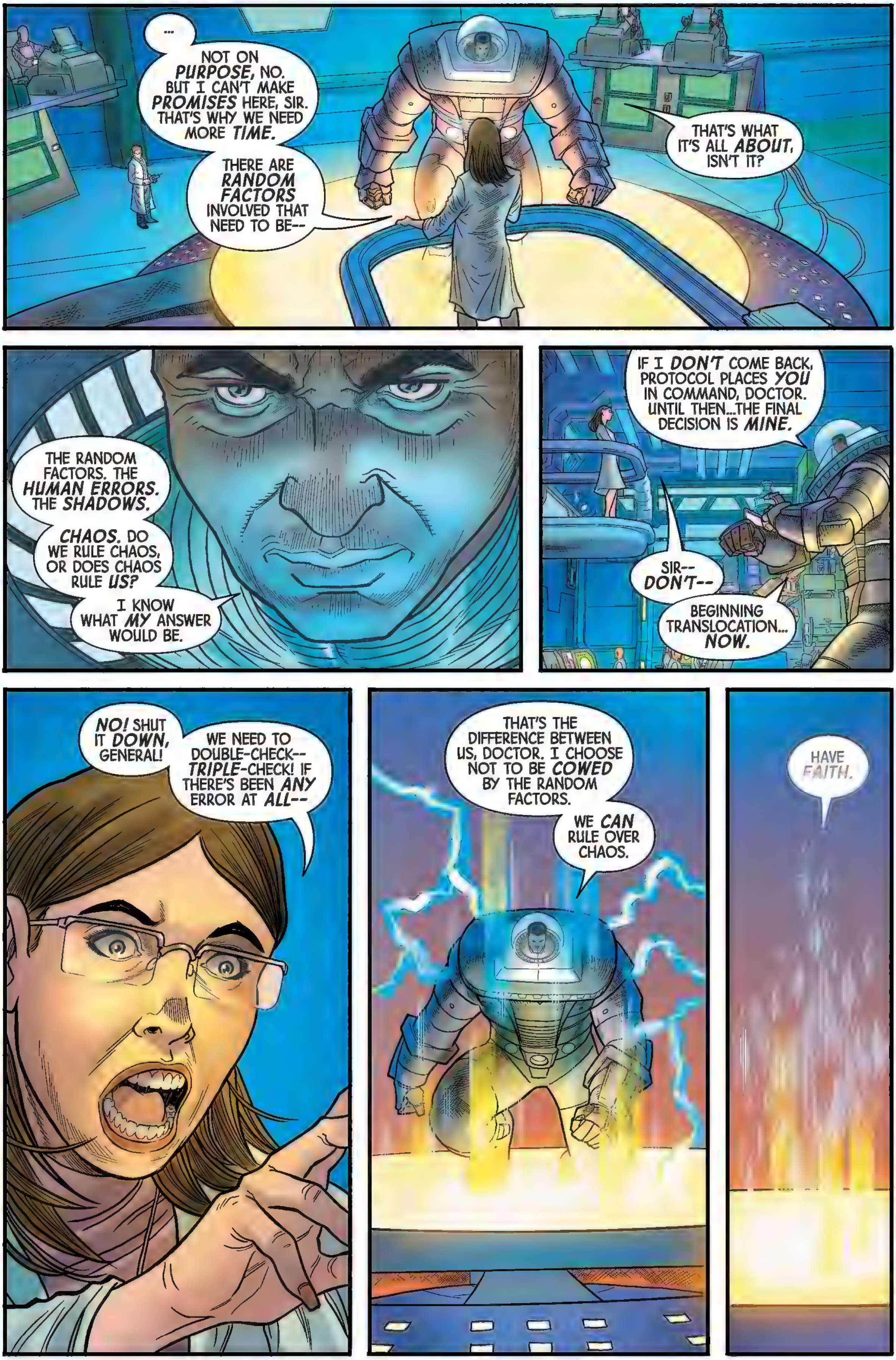
MY NAME IS REGINALD JAMES FORTEAN.
I'M 42 YEARS OLD.
I WAS ONCE A MAJOR GENERAL IN
THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE.

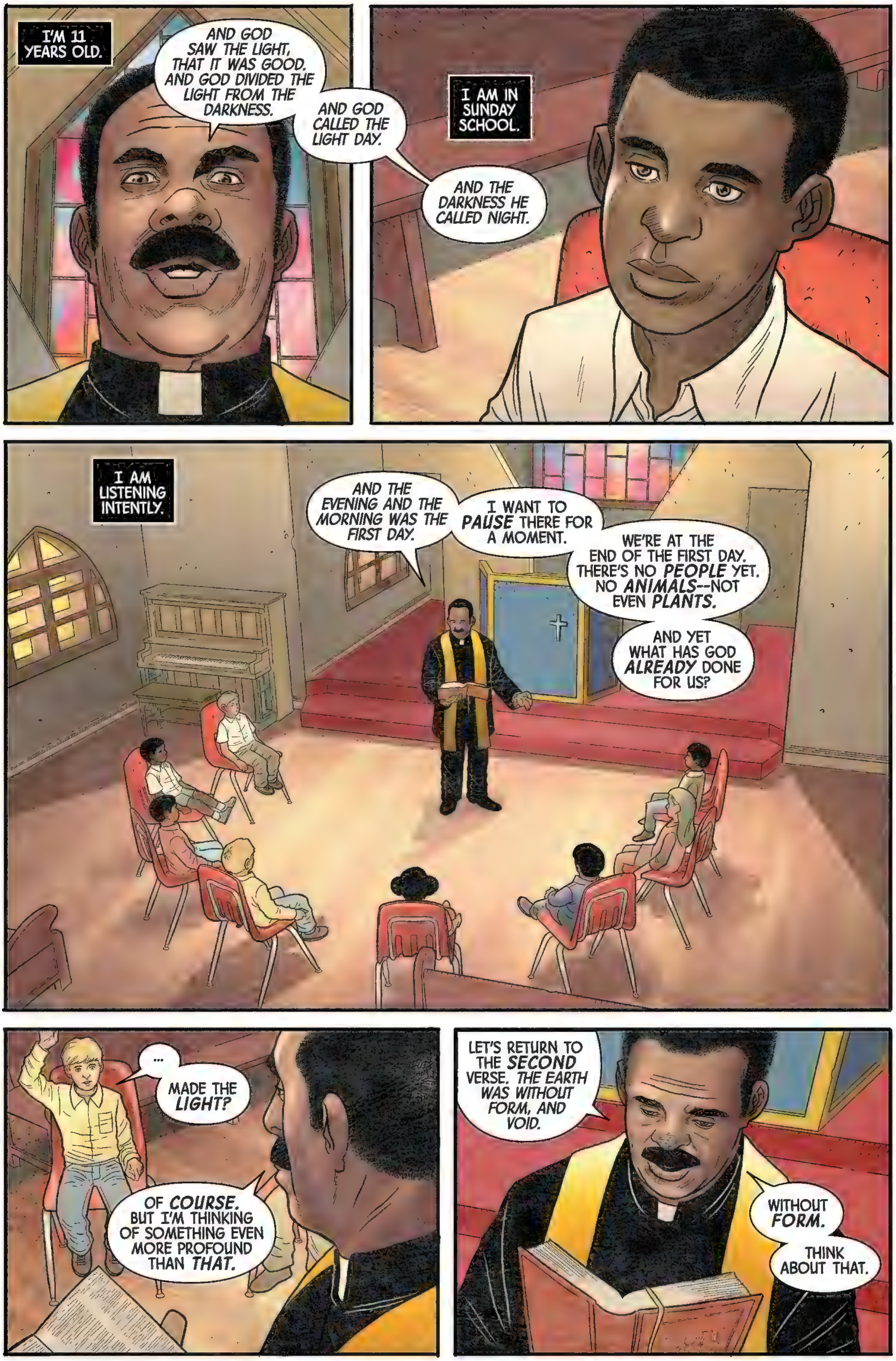
FOR MY COUNTRY,
I HAVE BECOME SOMETHING ELSE--
SOMETHING DIVORCED FROM ALL
CONVENTIONAL MILITARY STRUCTURE.
A COMMANDER OF SHADOWS.

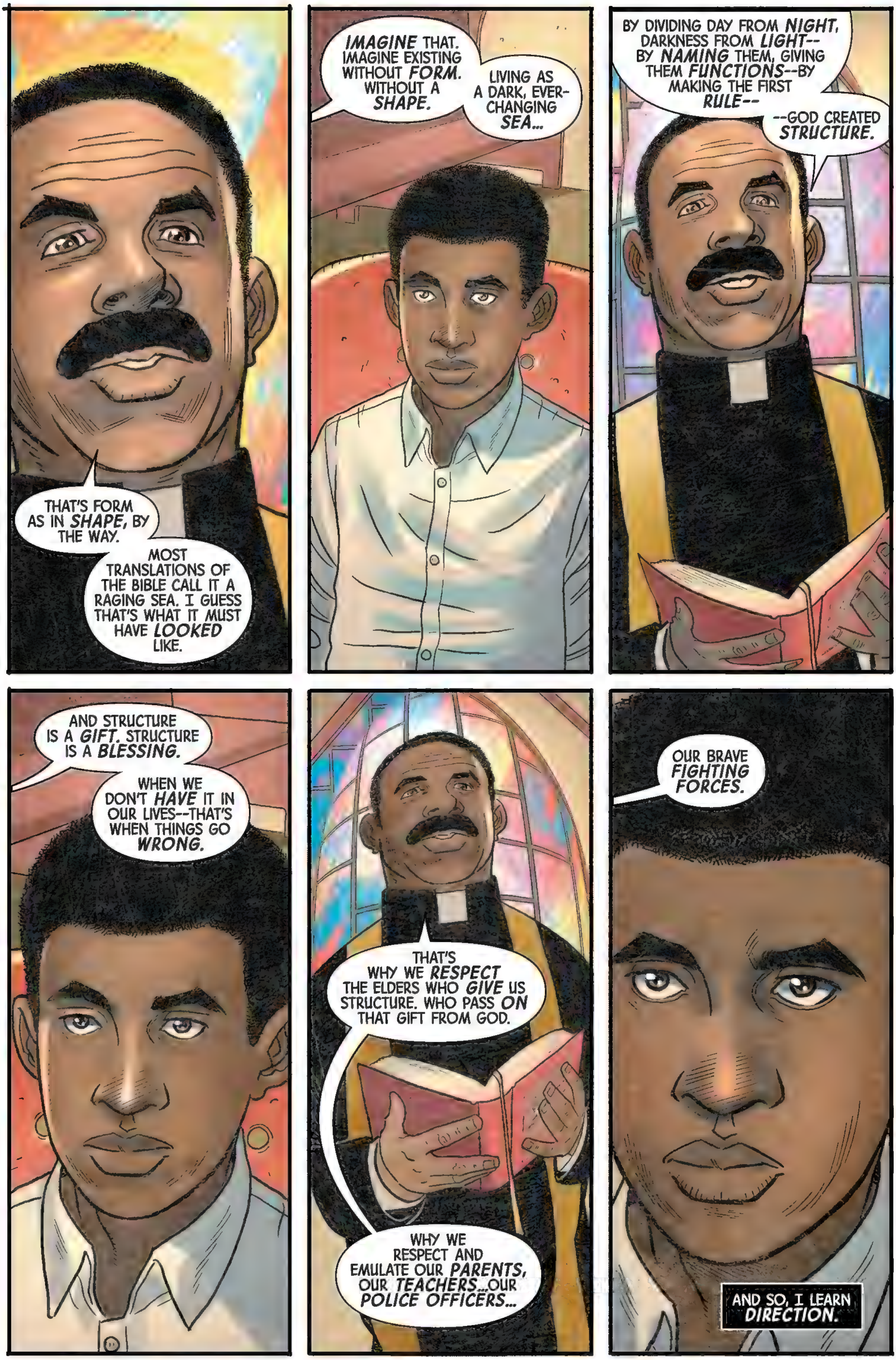
BUT EVEN IN THE SHADOWS,
THERE MUST BE AN ORDER.

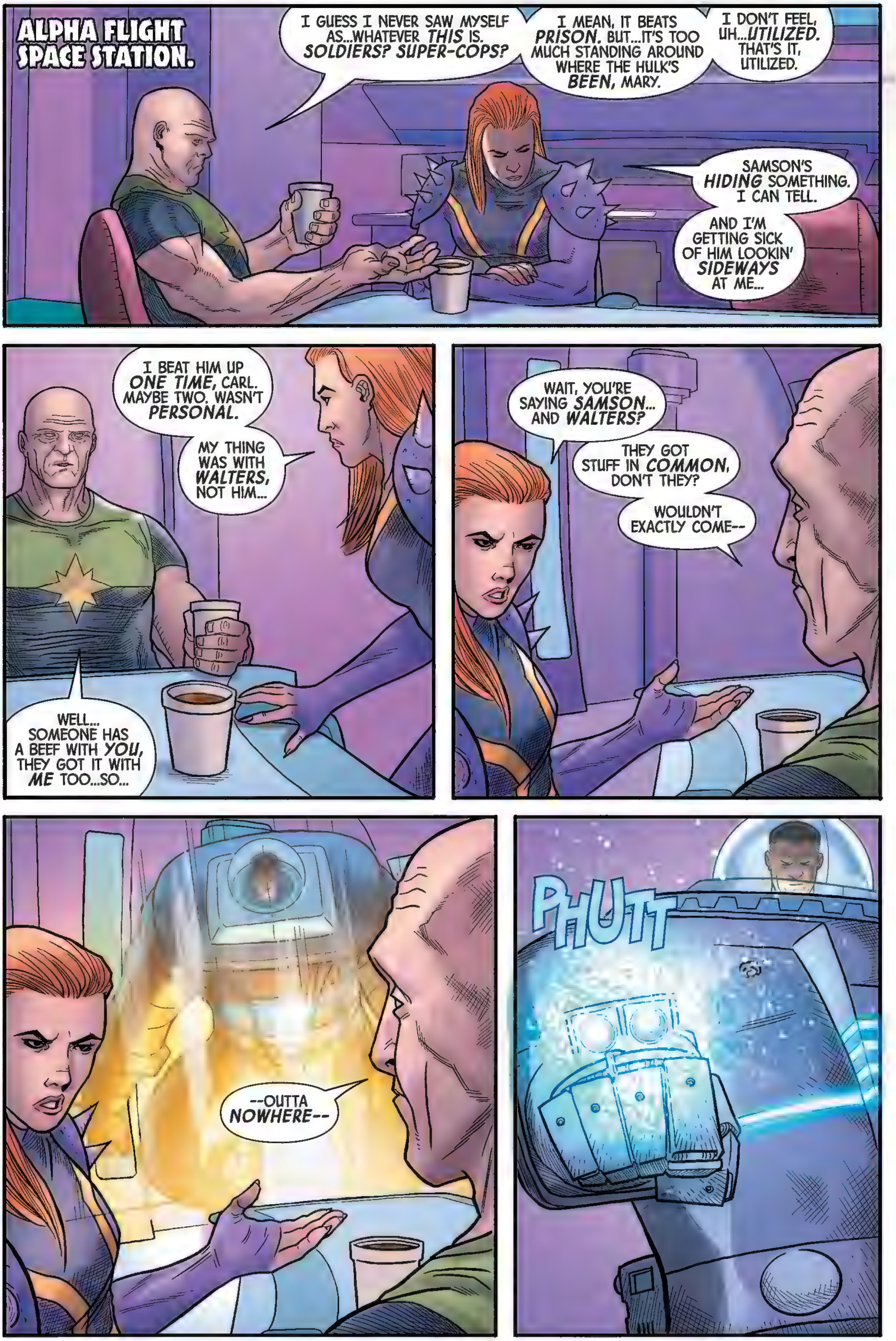
I *AM* THAT ORDER.

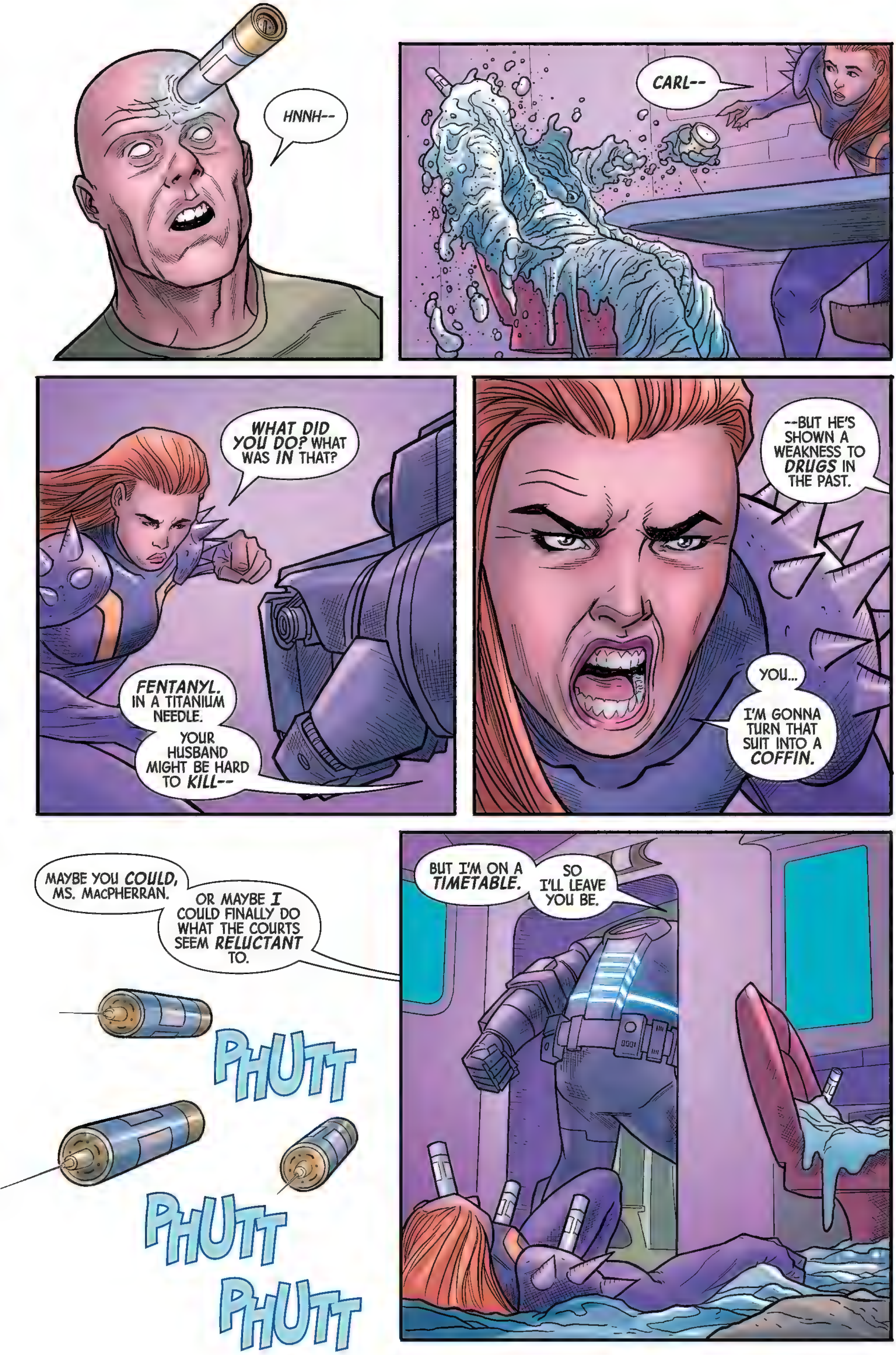

SO YOU'VE SAID.
YOU DON'T SEEM TO APPROVE OF *MUCH* LATELY, DR. McGOWAN.
IF YOU MEAN THE *MURDER OF CIVILIANS--*
COLLATERAL DAMAGE.
WE'VE BEEN USING THE TERM SINCE THE *SIXTIES*--I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD IT.
WELL, I'VE REGISTERED MY COMPLAINTS ABOUT THAT. WHAT'S TROUBLING ME *NOW* IS YOU KILLING *YOURSELF.*
TRANSLOCATION IS EASILY THE MOST *DANGEROUS* METHOD OF INSTANT TRAVEL--UNLESS YOU'RE A *REED RICHARDS* AND YOU CAN CALCULATE THE VARIABLES IN YOUR *HEAD.*
AND *YOU'RE* ABOUT TO TRANSLOCATE ALL THE WAY TO *EARTH ORBIT--*
HENCE THE *REDEEMER ARMOR.*
IT'S SEALED AND OXYGENATED FOR VACUUM. IF I MISS THE *TARGET,* I CAN *SURVIVE* IN OPEN SPACE.
UH-HUH. WHAT ABOUT ARRIVING HALFWAY THROUGH A *BULKHEAD?*
IT WON'T COME TO THAT.
WILL IT, DR. McGOWAN?

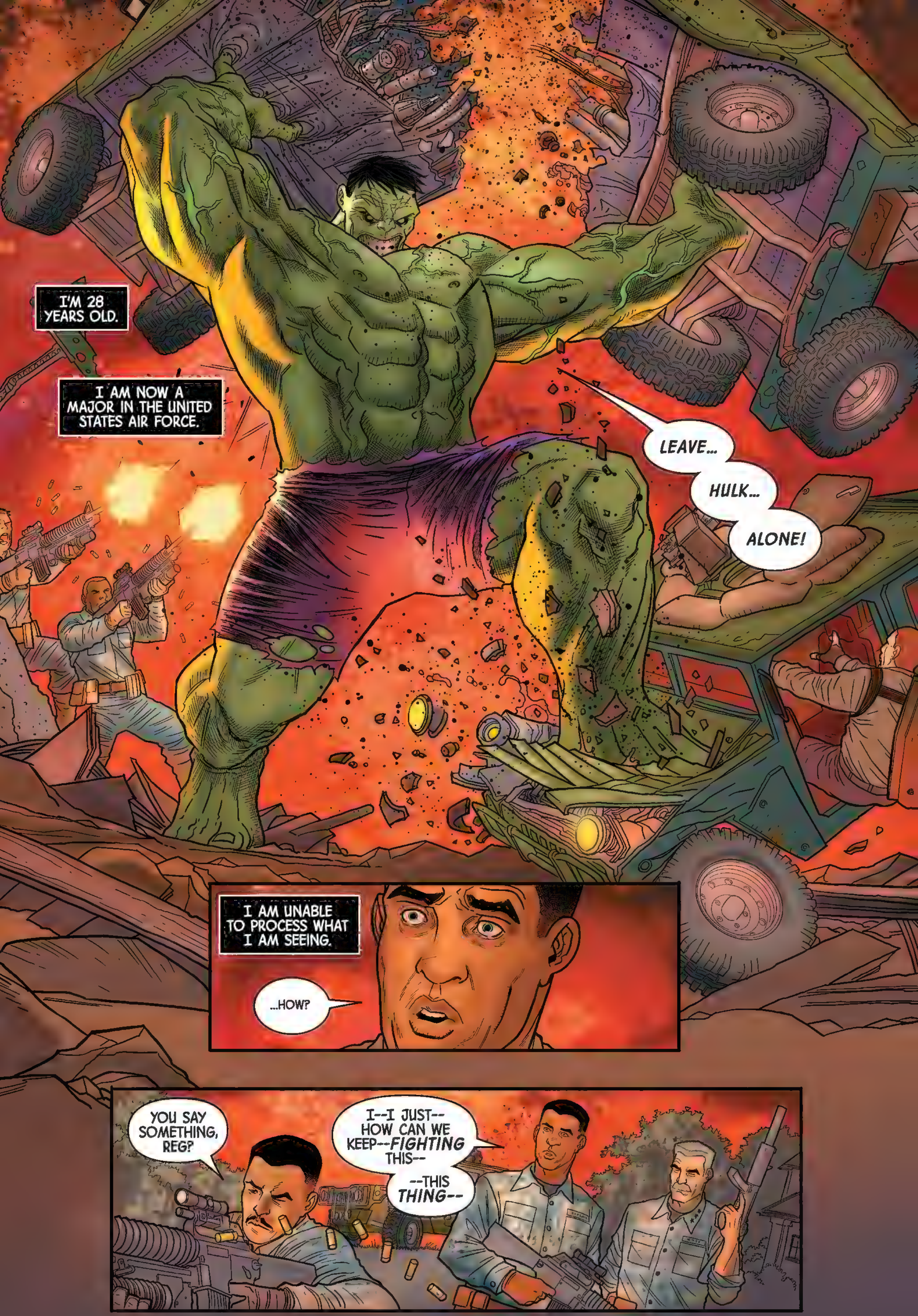

...
NOT ON *PURPOSE*, NO. BUT I CAN'T MAKE *PROMISES* HERE, SIR. THAT'S WHY WE NEED MORE *TIME*.
THERE ARE *RANDOM FACTORS* INVOLVED THAT NEED TO BE--
THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL *ABOUT*, ISN'T IT?
THE RANDOM FACTORS. THE *HUMAN ERRORS*. THE *SHADOWS*.
CHAOS. DO WE RULE CHAOS, OR DOES CHAOS RULE *US*?
I KNOW WHAT *MY* ANSWER WOULD BE.
IF I *DON'T* COME BACK, PROTOCOL PLACES *YOU* IN COMMAND, DOCTOR. UNTIL THEN...THE FINAL DECISION IS *MINE*.
SIR-- *DON'T--*
BEGINNING TRANSLOCATION... *NOW*.
NO! SHUT IT *DOWN*, GENERAL!
WE NEED TO DOUBLE-CHECK-- *TRIPLE*-CHECK! IF THERE'S BEEN *ANY* ERROR AT *ALL--*
THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US, DOCTOR. I CHOOSE NOT TO BE *COWED* BY THE RANDOM FACTORS.
WE *CAN* RULE OVER CHAOS.
HAVE *FAITH*.

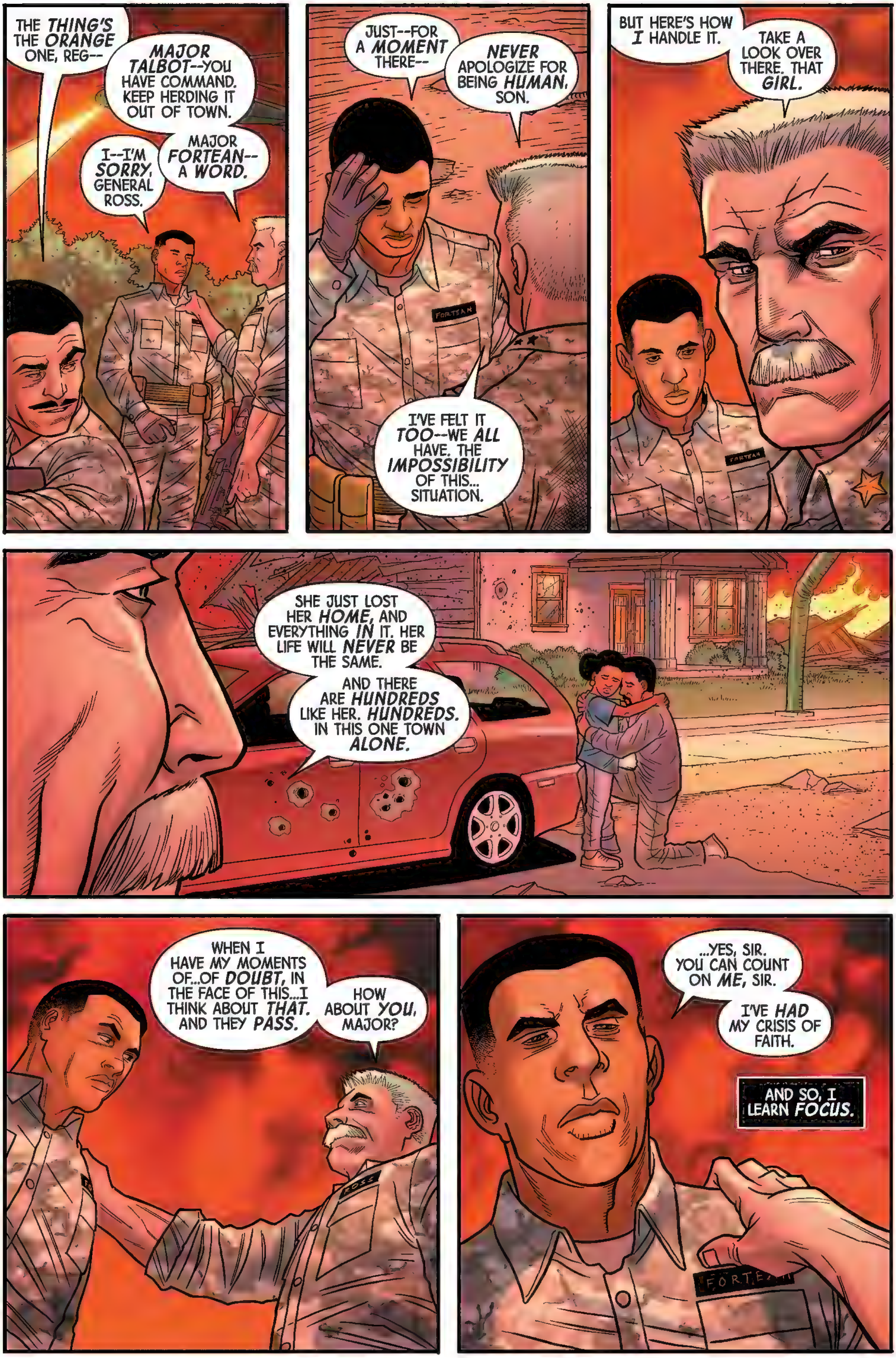

I'M 11 YEARS OLD.
AND GOD SAW THE LIGHT, THAT IT WAS GOOD. AND GOD DIVIDED THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS.
AND GOD CALLED THE LIGHT DAY.
I AM IN SUNDAY SCHOOL.
AND THE DARKNESS HE CALLED NIGHT.
I AM LISTENING INTENTLY.
AND THE EVENING AND THE MORNING WAS THE FIRST DAY.
I WANT TO **PAUSE** THERE FOR A MOMENT.
WE'RE AT THE END OF THE FIRST DAY. THERE'S NO **PEOPLE** YET. NO **ANIMALS**--NOT EVEN **PLANTS.**
AND YET WHAT HAS GOD **ALREADY** DONE FOR US?
...
MADE THE **LIGHT?**
OF **COURSE.** BUT I'M THINKING OF SOMETHING EVEN MORE PROFOUND THAN **THAT.**
LET'S RETURN TO THE **SECOND** VERSE. THE EARTH WAS WITHOUT FORM, AND VOID.
WITHOUT **FORM.**
THINK ABOUT THAT.

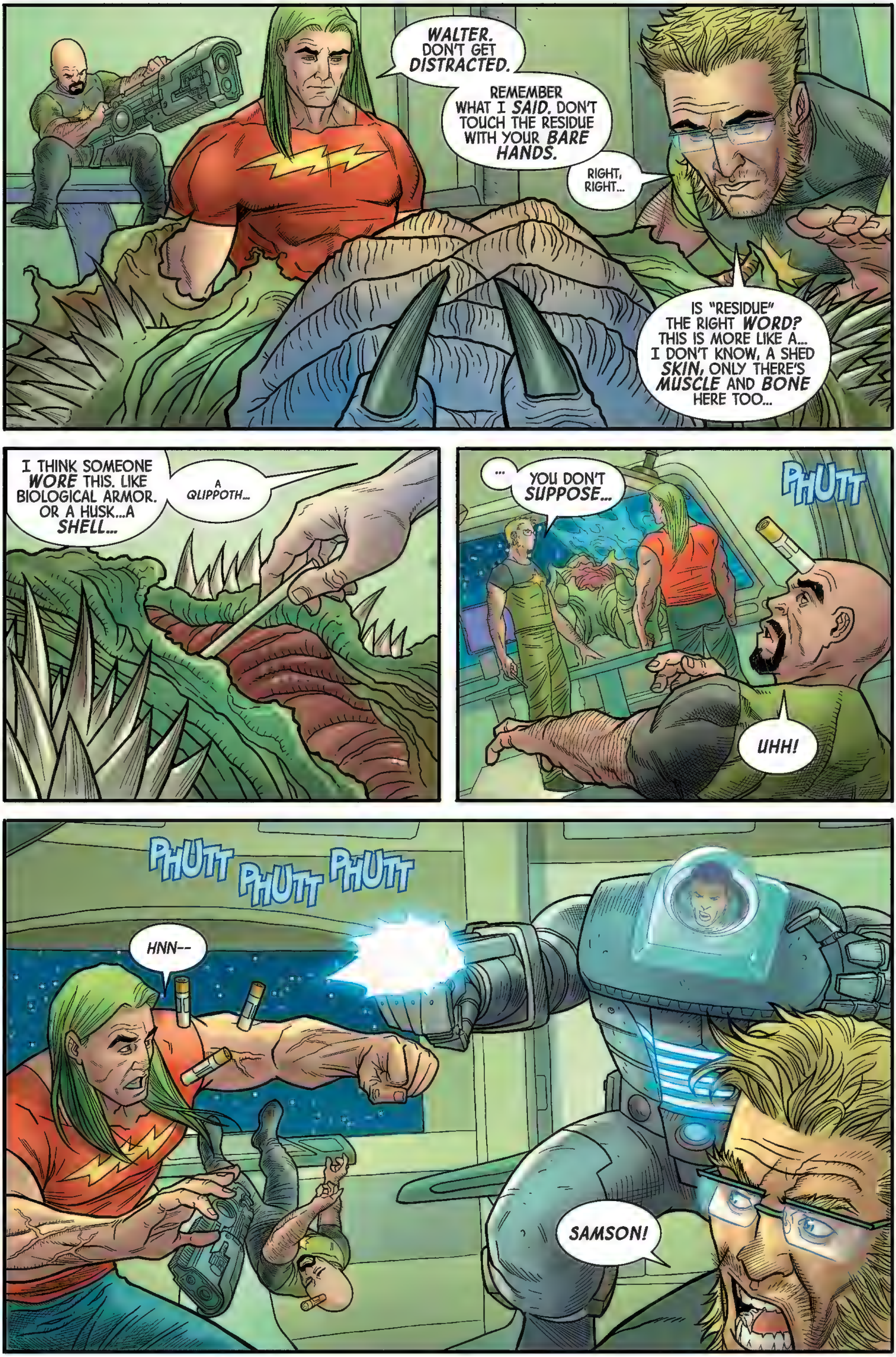

THAT'S FORM AS IN *SHAPE*, BY THE WAY.
MOST TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE CALL IT A RAGING SEA. I GUESS THAT'S WHAT IT MUST HAVE *LOOKED* LIKE.
IMAGINE THAT. IMAGINE EXISTING WITHOUT *FORM*. WITHOUT A *SHAPE*.
LIVING AS A DARK, EVER-CHANGING *SEA*...
BY DIVIDING DAY FROM *NIGHT*, DARKNESS FROM *LIGHT*-- BY *NAMING* THEM, GIVING THEM *FUNCTIONS*--BY MAKING THE FIRST *RULE*--
--GOD CREATED *STRUCTURE*.
AND STRUCTURE IS A *GIFT*. STRUCTURE IS A *BLESSING*.
WHEN WE DON'T *HAVE* IT IN OUR LIVES--THAT'S WHEN THINGS GO *WRONG*.
THAT'S WHY WE *RESPECT* THE ELDERS WHO *GIVE* US STRUCTURE. WHO PASS *ON* THAT GIFT FROM GOD.
WHY WE RESPECT AND EMULATE OUR *PARENTS*, OUR *TEACHERS*...OUR *POLICE OFFICERS*...
OUR BRAVE *FIGHTING FORCES*.
AND SO, I LEARN *DIRECTION*.

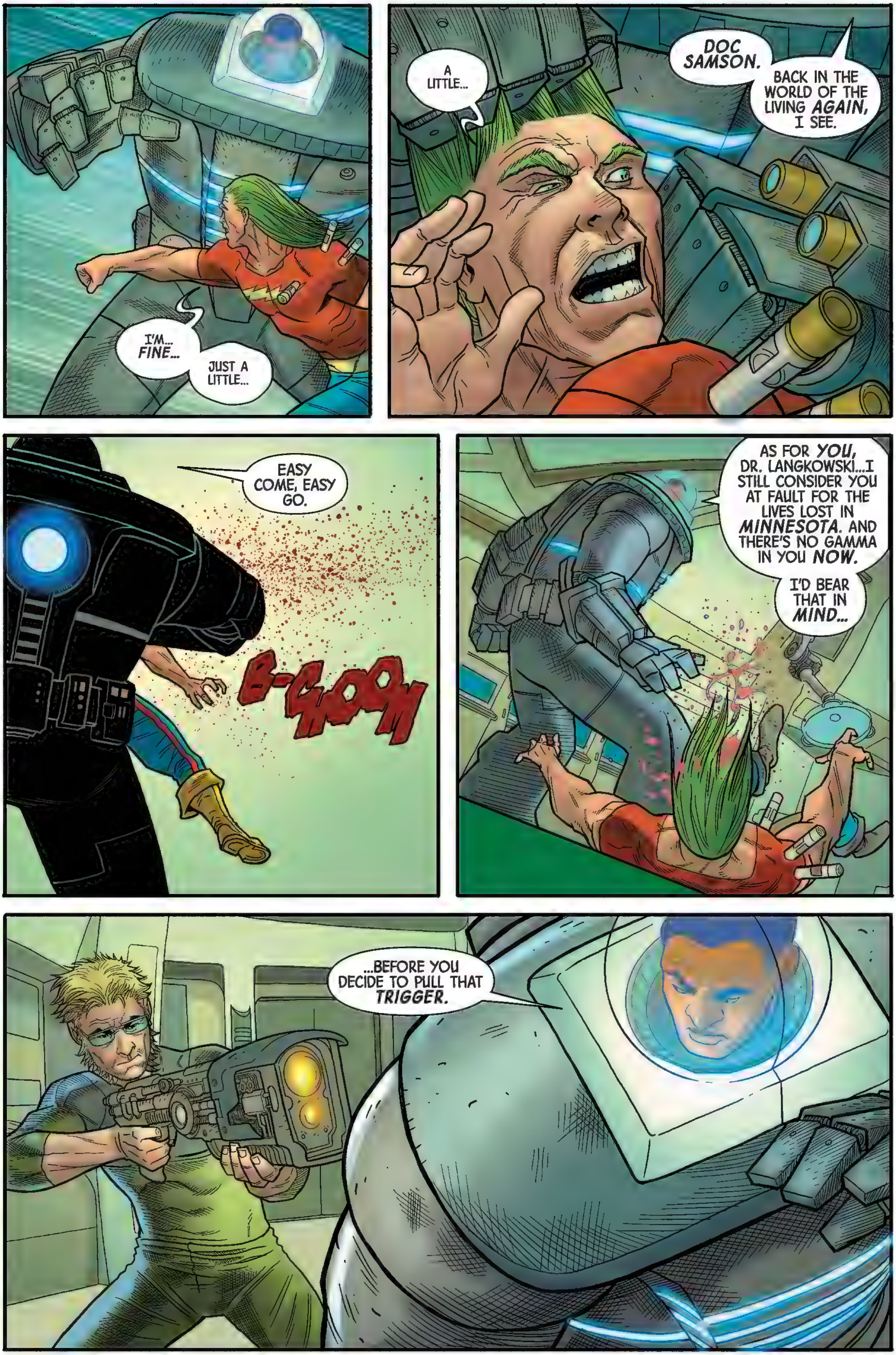

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
I GUESS I NEVER SAW MYSELF AS...WHATEVER THIS IS. SOLDIERS? SUPER-COPS?
I MEAN, IT BEATS PRISON. BUT...IT'S TOO MUCH STANDING AROUND WHERE THE HULK'S BEEN, MARY.
I DON'T FEEL, UH...UTILIZED. THAT'S IT, UTILIZED.
SAMSON'S HIDING SOMETHING. I CAN TELL.
AND I'M GETTING SICK OF HIM LOOKIN' SIDEWAYS AT ME...
I BEAT HIM UP ONE TIME, CARL. MAYBE TWO. WASN'T PERSONAL.
MY THING WAS WITH WALTERS, NOT HIM...
WELL... SOMEONE HAS A BEEF WITH YOU, THEY GOT IT WITH ME TOO...SO...
WAIT, YOU'RE SAYING SAMSON... AND WALTERS?
THEY GOT STUFF IN COMMON, DON'T THEY?
WOULDN'T EXACTLY COME--
--OUTTA NOWHERE--
PHUTT

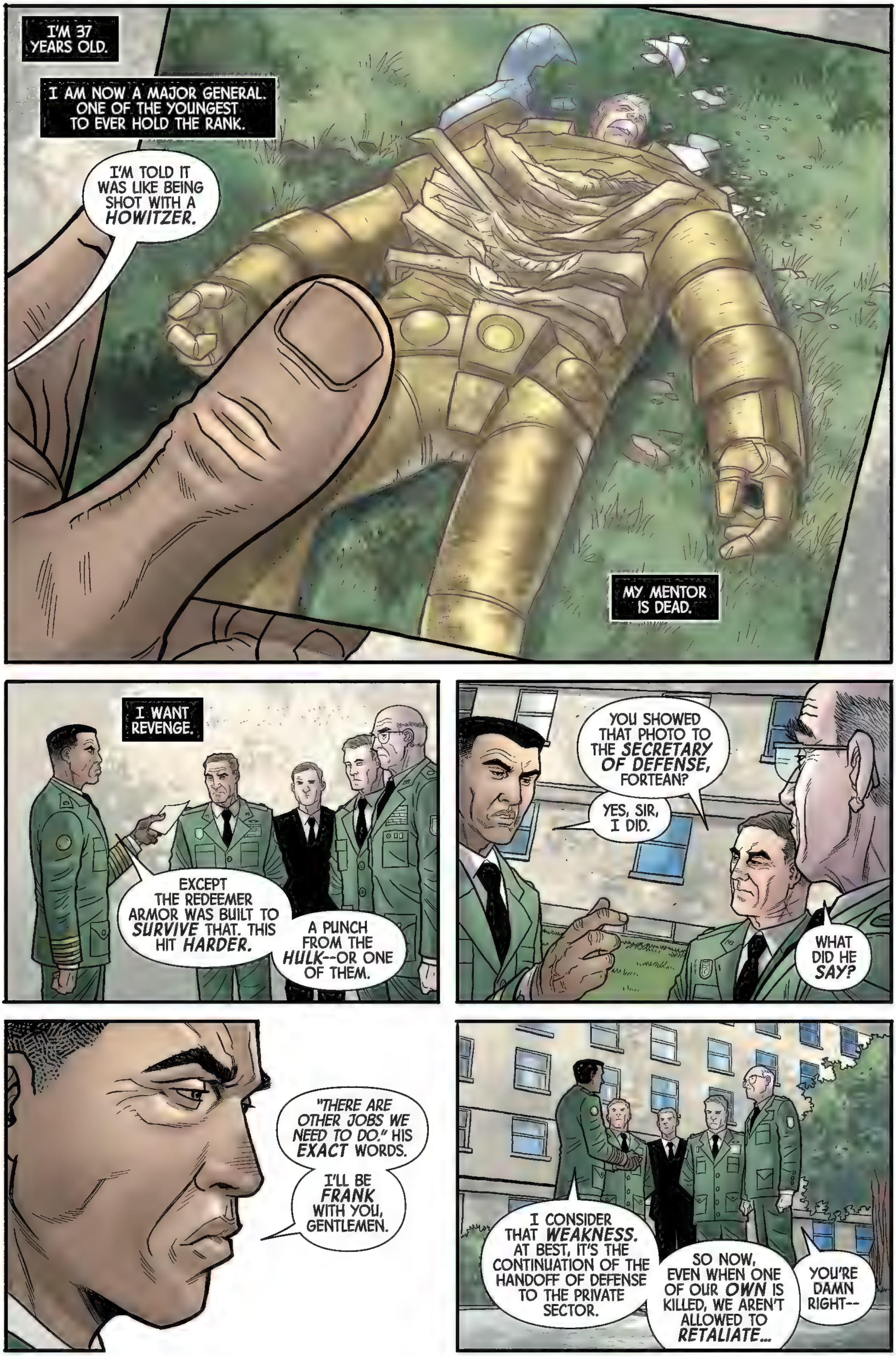

HNNH--
CARL--
WHAT DID YOU DO? WHAT WAS IN THAT?
FENTANYL. IN A TITANIUM NEEDLE.
YOUR HUSBAND MIGHT BE HARD TO KILL--
--BUT HE'S SHOWN A WEAKNESS TO DRUGS IN THE PAST.
YOU...
I'M GONNA TURN THAT SUIT INTO A COFFIN.
MAYBE YOU COULD, MS. MACPHERRAN.
OR MAYBE I COULD FINALLY DO WHAT THE COURTS SEEM RELUCTANT TO.
PHUTT
PHUTT
PHUTT
BUT I'M ON A TIMETABLE.
SO I'LL LEAVE YOU BE.

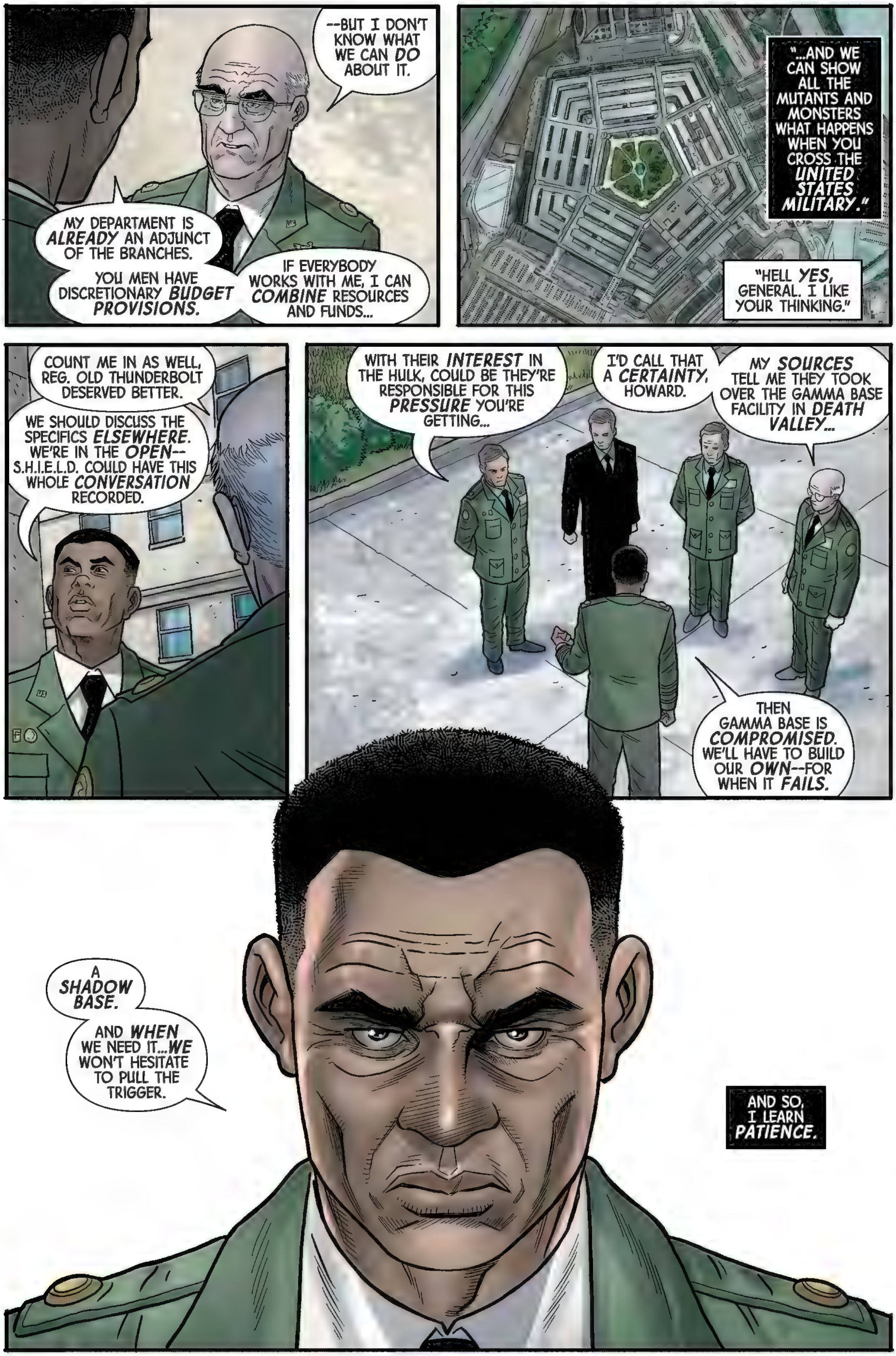

I'M 28 YEARS OLD.
I AM NOW A MAJOR IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE.
LEAVE... HULK... ALONE!
I AM UNABLE TO PROCESS WHAT I AM SEEING.
...HOW?
YOU SAY SOMETHING, REG?
I--I JUST-- HOW CAN WE KEEP--*FIGHTING* THIS--
--THIS *THING*--

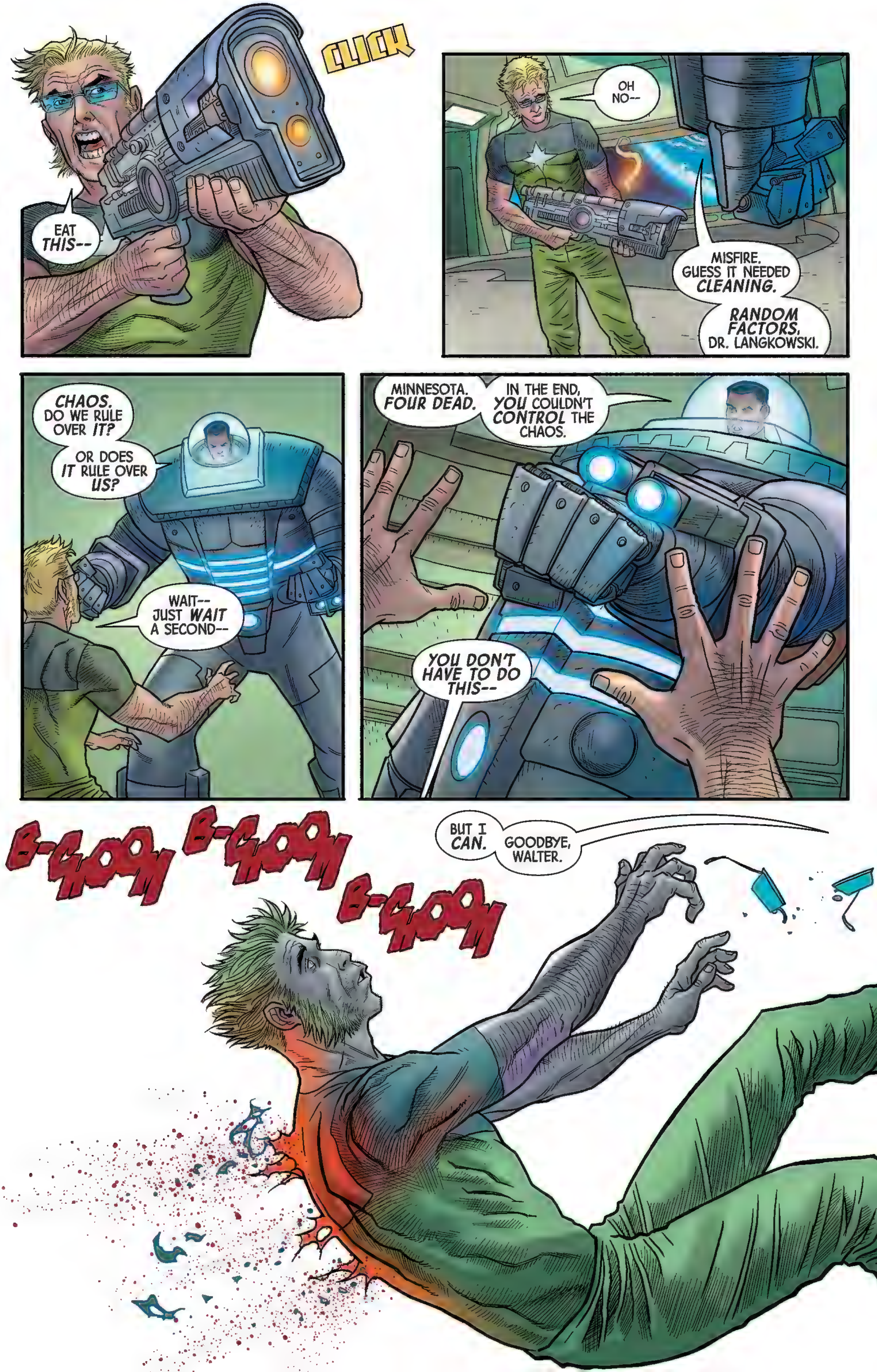

THE *THING'S* THE *ORANGE* ONE, REG--
MAJOR TALBOT--YOU HAVE COMMAND. KEEP HERDING IT OUT OF TOWN.
I--I'M *SORRY,* GENERAL ROSS.
MAJOR *FORTEAN*-- A *WORD.*
JUST--FOR A *MOMENT* THERE--
NEVER APOLOGIZE FOR BEING *HUMAN,* SON.
FORTEAN
I'VE FELT IT *TOO*--WE *ALL* HAVE. THE *IMPOSSIBILITY* OF THIS... SITUATION.
BUT HERE'S HOW *I* HANDLE IT.
TAKE A LOOK OVER THERE. THAT *GIRL.*
FORTEAN
SHE JUST LOST HER *HOME,* AND EVERYTHING *IN* IT. HER LIFE WILL *NEVER* BE THE SAME.
AND THERE ARE *HUNDREDS* LIKE HER. *HUNDREDS.* IN THIS ONE TOWN *ALONE.*
WHEN I HAVE *MY* MOMENTS OF...OF *DOUBT,* IN THE FACE OF THIS...I THINK ABOUT *THAT.* AND THEY *PASS.*
HOW ABOUT *YOU,* MAJOR?
ROSS
...YES, SIR. YOU CAN COUNT ON *ME,* SIR.
I'VE *HAD* MY CRISIS OF FAITH.
AND SO, I LEARN *FOCUS.*
FORTEAN

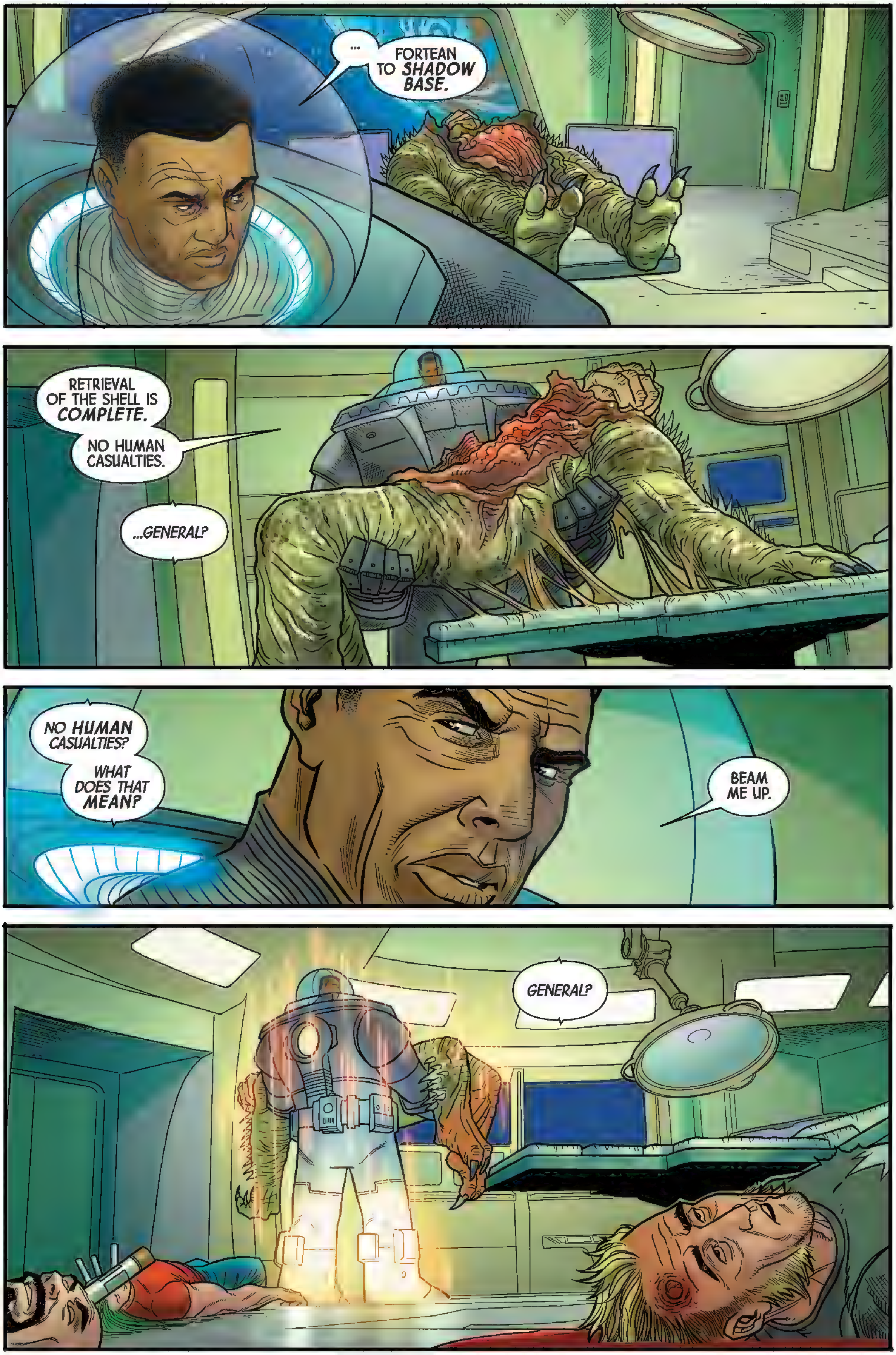

WALTER. DON'T GET DISTRACTED.
REMEMBER WHAT I SAID. DON'T TOUCH THE RESIDUE WITH YOUR BARE HANDS.
RIGHT, RIGHT...
IS "RESIDUE" THE RIGHT WORD? THIS IS MORE LIKE A... I DON'T KNOW, A SHED SKIN, ONLY THERE'S MUSCLE AND BONE HERE TOO...
I THINK SOMEONE WORE THIS. LIKE BIOLOGICAL ARMOR. OR A HUSK...A SHELL...
A QLIPPOTH...
...
YOU DON'T SUPPOSE...
PHUTT
UHH!
PHUTT PHUTT PHUTT
HNN--
SAMSON!

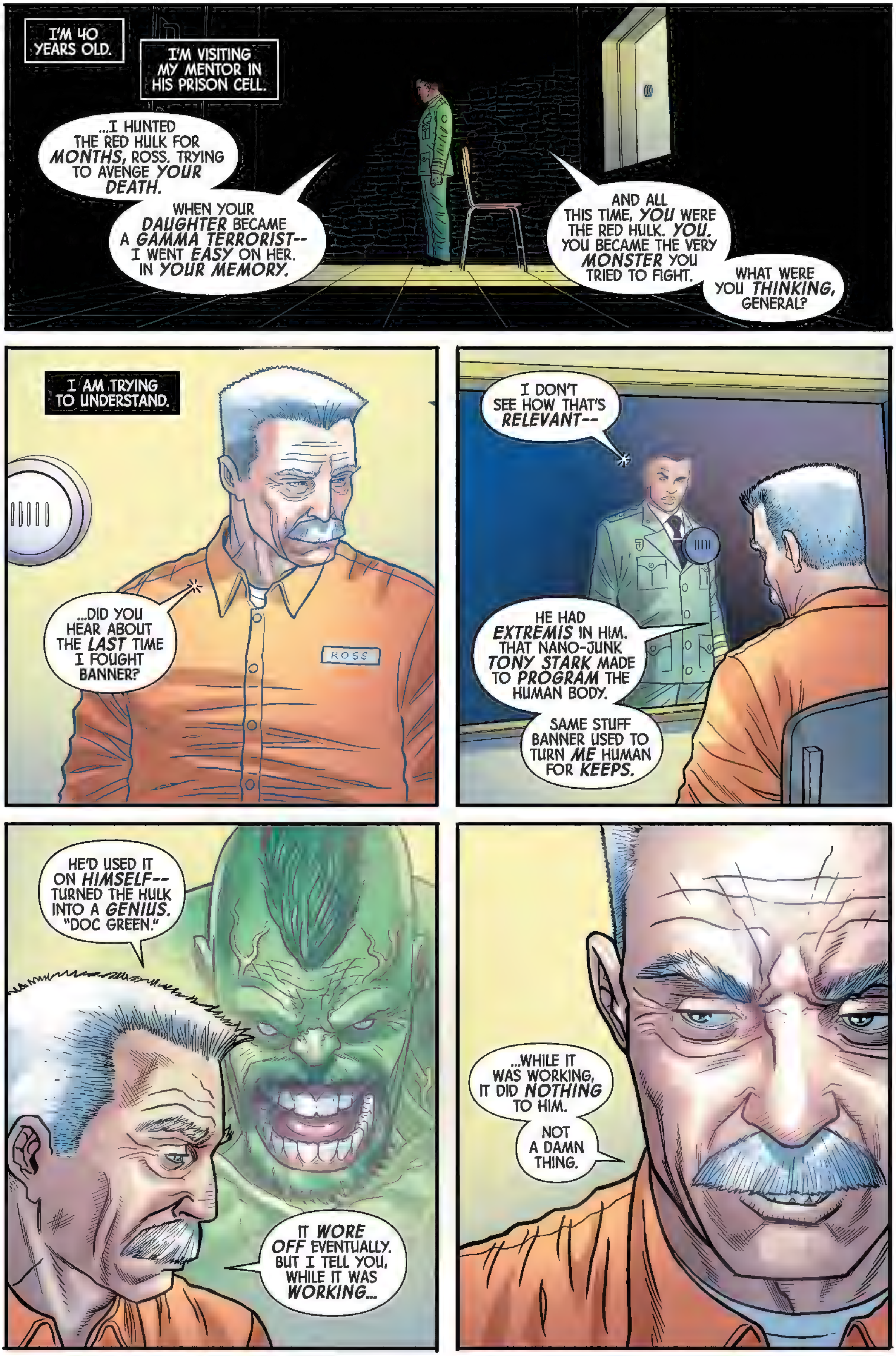

I'M... FINE...
JUST A LITTLE...
A LITTLE...
DOC SAMSON.
BACK IN THE WORLD OF THE LIVING AGAIN, I SEE.
EASY COME, EASY GO.
B-SHOOM
AS FOR YOU, DR. LANGKOWSKI...I STILL CONSIDER YOU AT FAULT FOR THE LIVES LOST IN MINNESOTA. AND THERE'S NO GAMMA IN YOU NOW.
I'D BEAR THAT IN MIND...
...BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO PULL THAT TRIGGER.

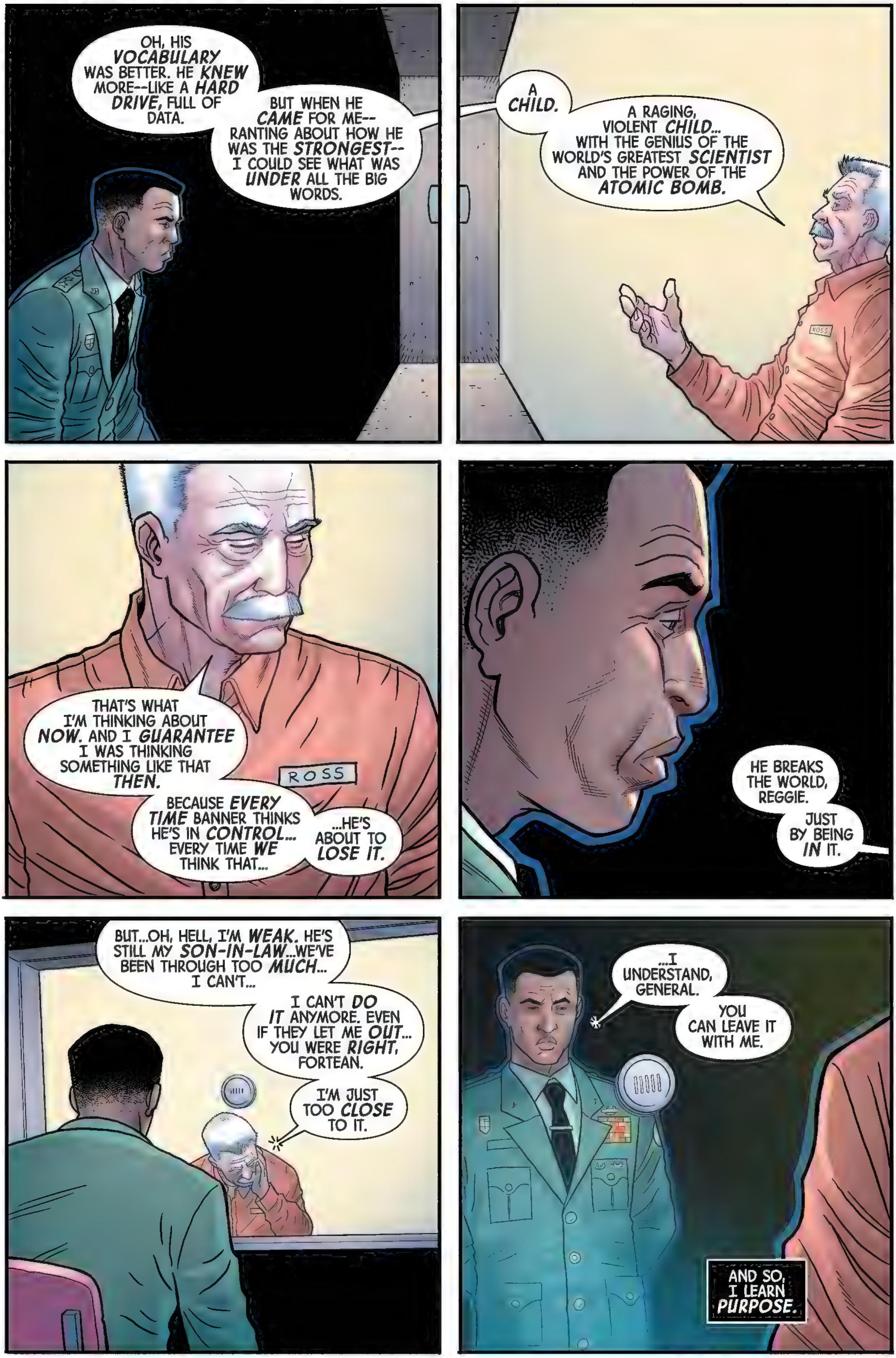

I'M 37 YEARS OLD.
I AM NOW A MAJOR GENERAL. ONE OF THE YOUNGEST TO EVER HOLD THE RANK.
I'M TOLD IT WAS LIKE BEING SHOT WITH A HOWITZER.
MY MENTOR IS DEAD.
I WANT REVENGE.
EXCEPT THE REDEEMER ARMOR WAS BUILT TO SURVIVE THAT. THIS HIT HARDER.
A PUNCH FROM THE HULK--OR ONE OF THEM.
YOU SHOWED THAT PHOTO TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, FORTEAN?
YES, SIR, I DID.
WHAT DID HE SAY?
"THERE ARE OTHER JOBS WE NEED TO DO." HIS EXACT WORDS.
I'LL BE FRANK WITH YOU, GENTLEMEN.
I CONSIDER THAT WEAKNESS. AT BEST, IT'S THE CONTINUATION OF THE HANDOFF OF DEFENSE TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR.
SO NOW, EVEN WHEN ONE OF OUR OWN IS KILLED, WE AREN'T ALLOWED TO RETALIATE...
YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT--

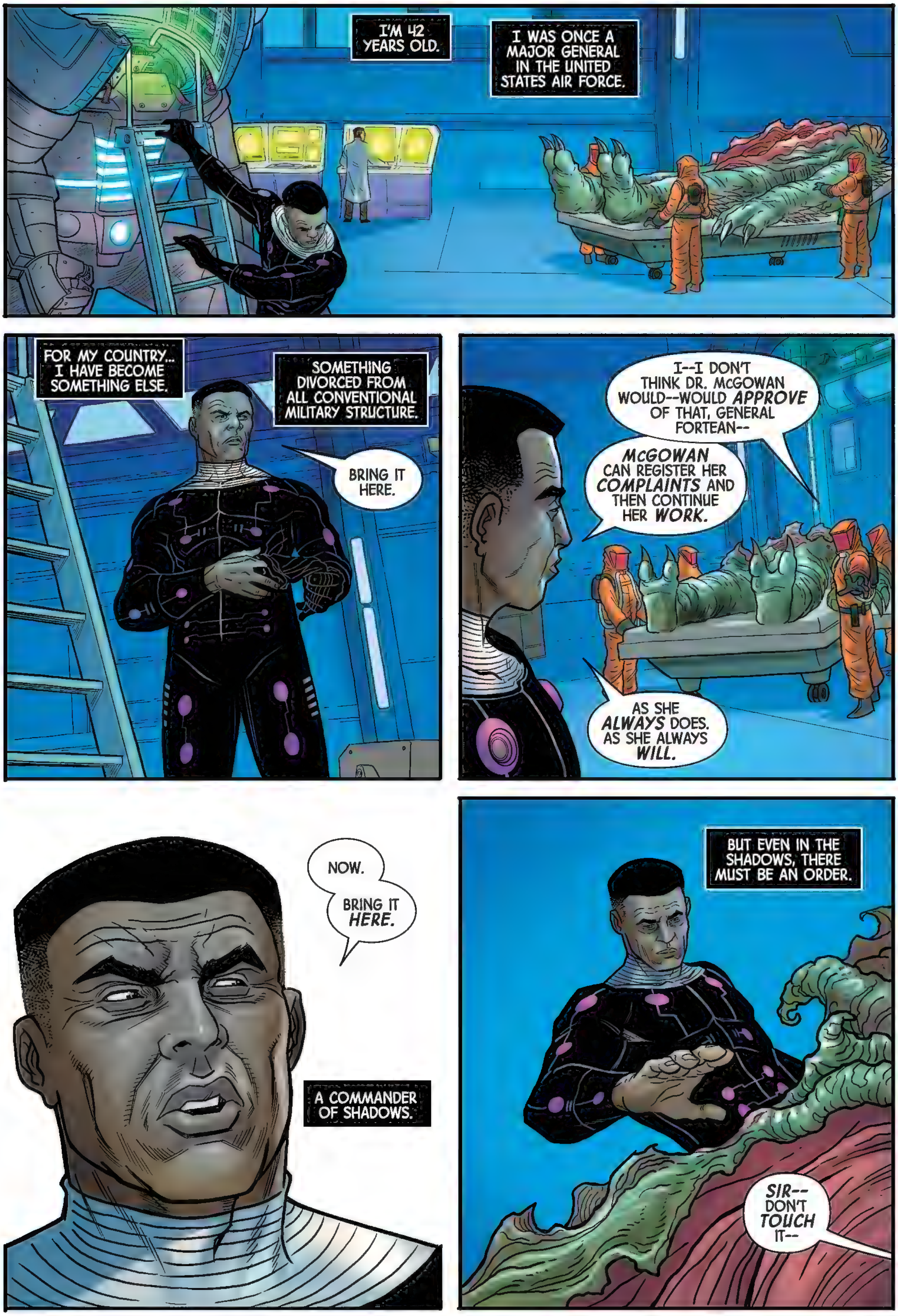

--BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE CAN *DO* ABOUT IT.
MY DEPARTMENT IS *ALREADY* AN ADJUNCT OF THE BRANCHES.
YOU MEN HAVE DISCRETIONARY *BUDGET PROVISIONS.*
IF EVERYBODY WORKS WITH ME, I CAN *COMBINE* RESOURCES AND FUNDS...
"...AND WE CAN SHOW ALL THE MUTANTS AND MONSTERS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CROSS THE *UNITED STATES MILITARY.*"
"HELL *YES,* GENERAL. I LIKE YOUR THINKING."
COUNT ME IN AS WELL, REG. OLD THUNDERBOLT DESERVED BETTER.
WE SHOULD DISCUSS THE SPECIFICS *ELSEWHERE.* WE'RE IN THE *OPEN*--S.H.I.E.L.D. COULD HAVE THIS WHOLE *CONVERSATION* RECORDED.
WITH THEIR *INTEREST* IN THE HULK, COULD BE THEY'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS *PRESSURE* YOU'RE GETTING...
I'D CALL THAT A *CERTAINTY,* HOWARD.
MY *SOURCES* TELL ME THEY TOOK OVER THE GAMMA BASE FACILITY IN *DEATH VALLEY...*
THEN GAMMA BASE IS *COMPROMISED.* WE'LL HAVE TO BUILD OUR *OWN*--FOR WHEN IT *FAILS.*
A *SHADOW BASE.*
AND *WHEN* WE NEED IT...*WE* WON'T HESITATE TO PULL THE TRIGGER.
AND SO, I LEARN *PATIENCE.*

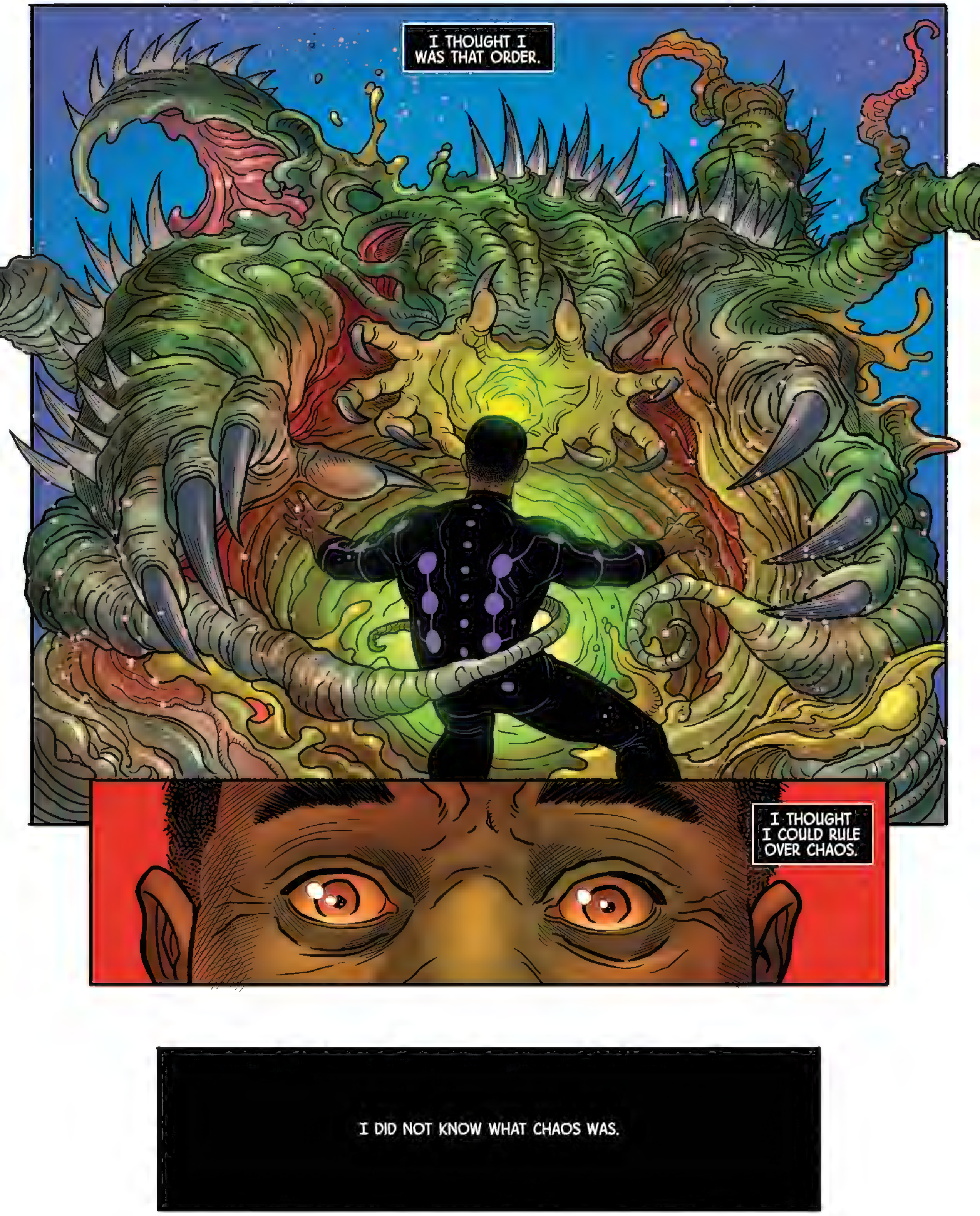

CLICK
EAT THIS--
OH NO--
MISFIRE. GUESS IT NEEDED CLEANING.
RANDOM FACTORS, DR. LANGKOWSKI.
CHAOS. DO WE RULE OVER IT?
OR DOES IT RULE OVER US?
WAIT-- JUST WAIT A SECOND--
MINNESOTA. FOUR DEAD.
IN THE END, YOU COULDN'T CONTROL THE CHAOS.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS--
B-GOOM B-GOOM B-GOOM
BUT I CAN.
GOODBYE, WALTER.

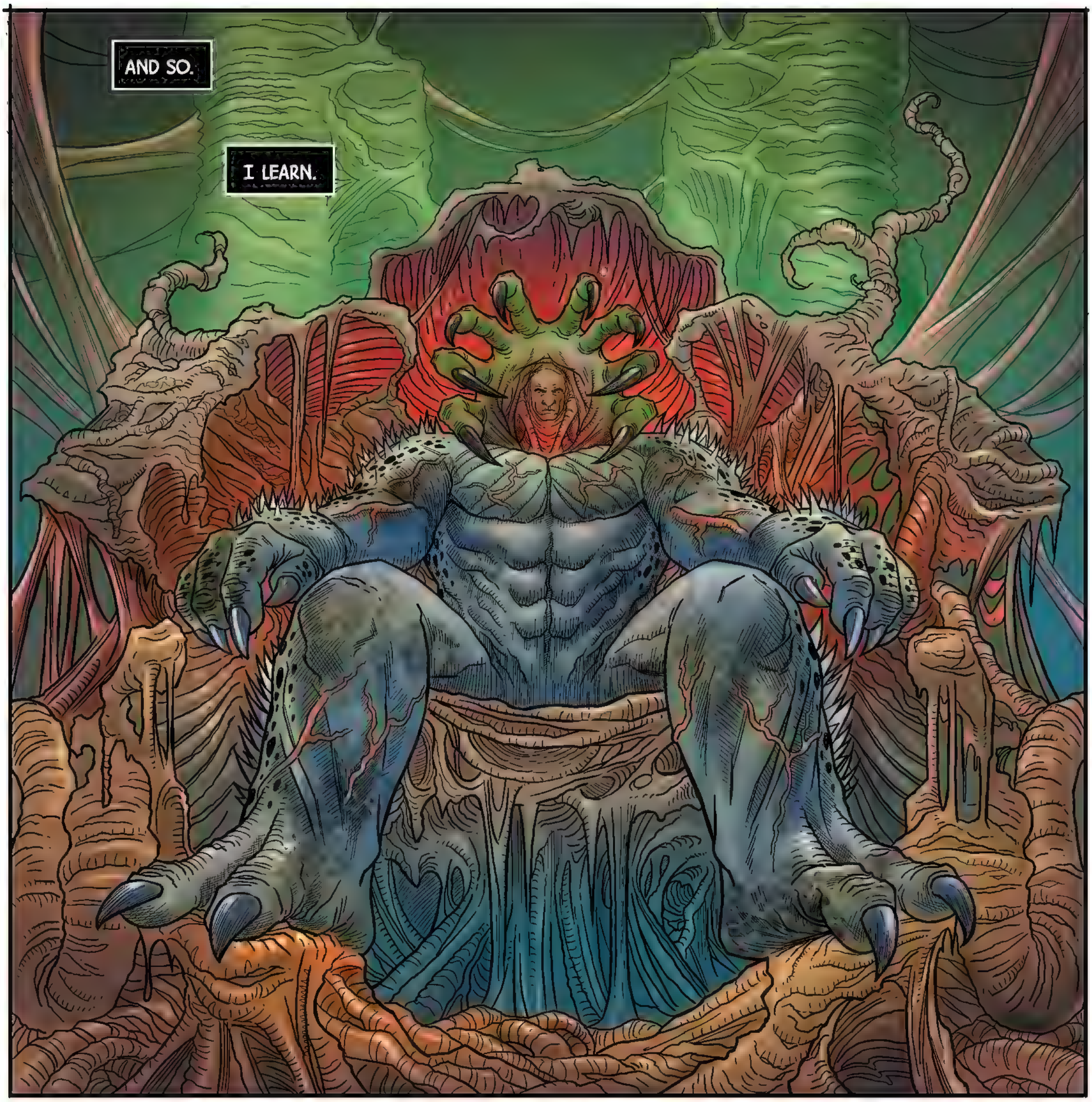

...
FORTEAN TO *SHADOW BASE.*
RETRIEVAL OF THE SHELL IS *COMPLETE.*
NO HUMAN CASUALTIES.
...GENERAL?
NO *HUMAN* CASUALTIES?
WHAT DOES THAT *MEAN?*
BEAM ME UP.
GENERAL?


I'M 40 YEARS OLD.
I'M VISITING MY MENTOR IN HIS PRISON CELL.
...I HUNTED THE RED HULK FOR MONTHS, ROSS. TRYING TO AVENGE YOUR DEATH.
WHEN YOUR DAUGHTER BECAME A GAMMA TERRORIST-- I WENT EASY ON HER. IN YOUR MEMORY.
AND ALL THIS TIME, YOU WERE THE RED HULK. YOU. YOU BECAME THE VERY MONSTER YOU TRIED TO FIGHT.
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, GENERAL?
I AM TRYING TO UNDERSTAND.
...DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE LAST TIME I FOUGHT BANNER?
ROSS
I DON'T SEE HOW THAT'S RELEVANT--
HE HAD EXTREMIS IN HIM. THAT NANO-JUNK TONY STARK MADE TO PROGRAM THE HUMAN BODY.
SAME STUFF BANNER USED TO TURN ME HUMAN FOR KEEPS.
HE'D USED IT ON HIMSELF-- TURNED THE HULK INTO A GENIUS. "DOC GREEN."
IT WORE OFF EVENTUALLY. BUT I TELL YOU, WHILE IT WAS WORKING...
...WHILE IT WAS WORKING, IT DID NOTHING TO HIM.
NOT A DAMN THING.


OH, HIS VOCABULARY WAS BETTER. HE KNEW MORE--LIKE A HARD DRIVE, FULL OF DATA.
BUT WHEN HE CAME FOR ME--RANTING ABOUT HOW HE WAS THE STRONGEST--I COULD SEE WHAT WAS UNDER ALL THE BIG WORDS.
A CHILD.
A RAGING, VIOLENT CHILD... WITH THE GENIUS OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST SCIENTIST AND THE POWER OF THE ATOMIC BOMB.
ROSS
ROSS
THAT'S WHAT I'M THINKING ABOUT NOW. AND I GUARANTEE I WAS THINKING SOMETHING LIKE THAT THEN.
BECAUSE EVERY TIME BANNER THINKS HE'S IN CONTROL... EVERY TIME WE THINK THAT...
...HE'S ABOUT TO LOSE IT.
HE BREAKS THE WORLD, REGGIE.
JUST BY BEING IN IT.
BUT...OH, HELL, I'M WEAK. HE'S STILL MY SON-IN-LAW...WE'VE BEEN THROUGH TOO MUCH... I CAN'T...
I CAN'T DO IT ANYMORE. EVEN IF THEY LET ME OUT... YOU WERE RIGHT, FORTEAN.
I'M JUST TOO CLOSE TO IT.
...I UNDERSTAND, GENERAL.
YOU CAN LEAVE IT WITH ME.
AND SO, I LEARN PURPOSE.


I'M 42 YEARS OLD.
I WAS ONCE A MAJOR GENERAL IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE.
FOR MY COUNTRY... I HAVE BECOME SOMETHING ELSE.
SOMETHING DIVORCED FROM ALL CONVENTIONAL MILITARY STRUCTURE.
BRING IT HERE.
I--I DON'T THINK DR. McGOWAN WOULD--WOULD APPROVE OF THAT, GENERAL FORTEAN--
McGOWAN CAN REGISTER HER COMPLAINTS AND THEN CONTINUE HER WORK.
AS SHE ALWAYS DOES. AS SHE ALWAYS WILL.
NOW.
BRING IT HERE.
A COMMANDER OF SHADOWS.
BUT EVEN IN THE SHADOWS, THERE MUST BE AN ORDER.
SIR--DON'T TOUCH IT--


I THOUGHT I WAS THAT ORDER.
I THOUGHT I COULD RULE OVER CHAOS.
I DID NOT KNOW WHAT CHAOS WAS.

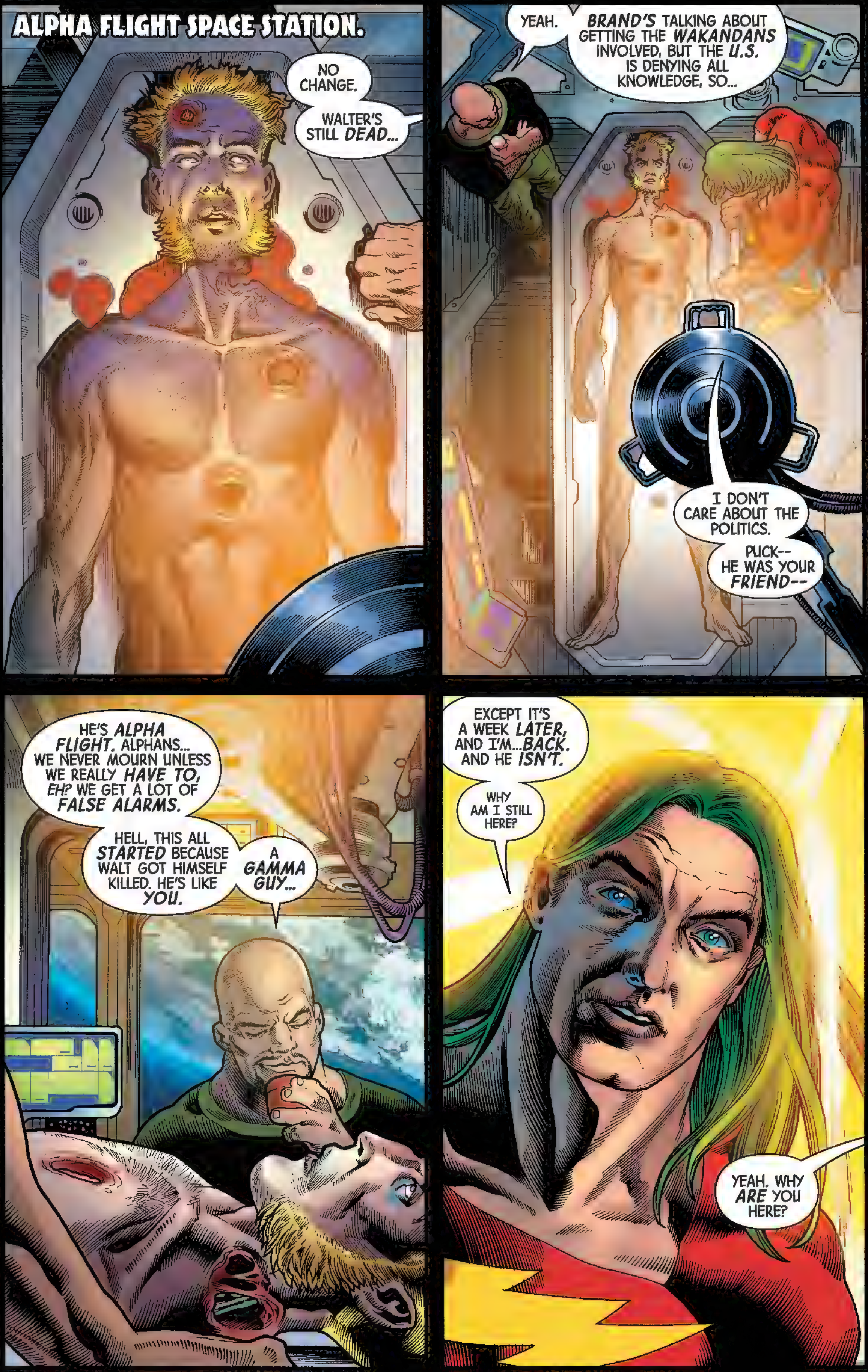

AND SO.
I LEARN.

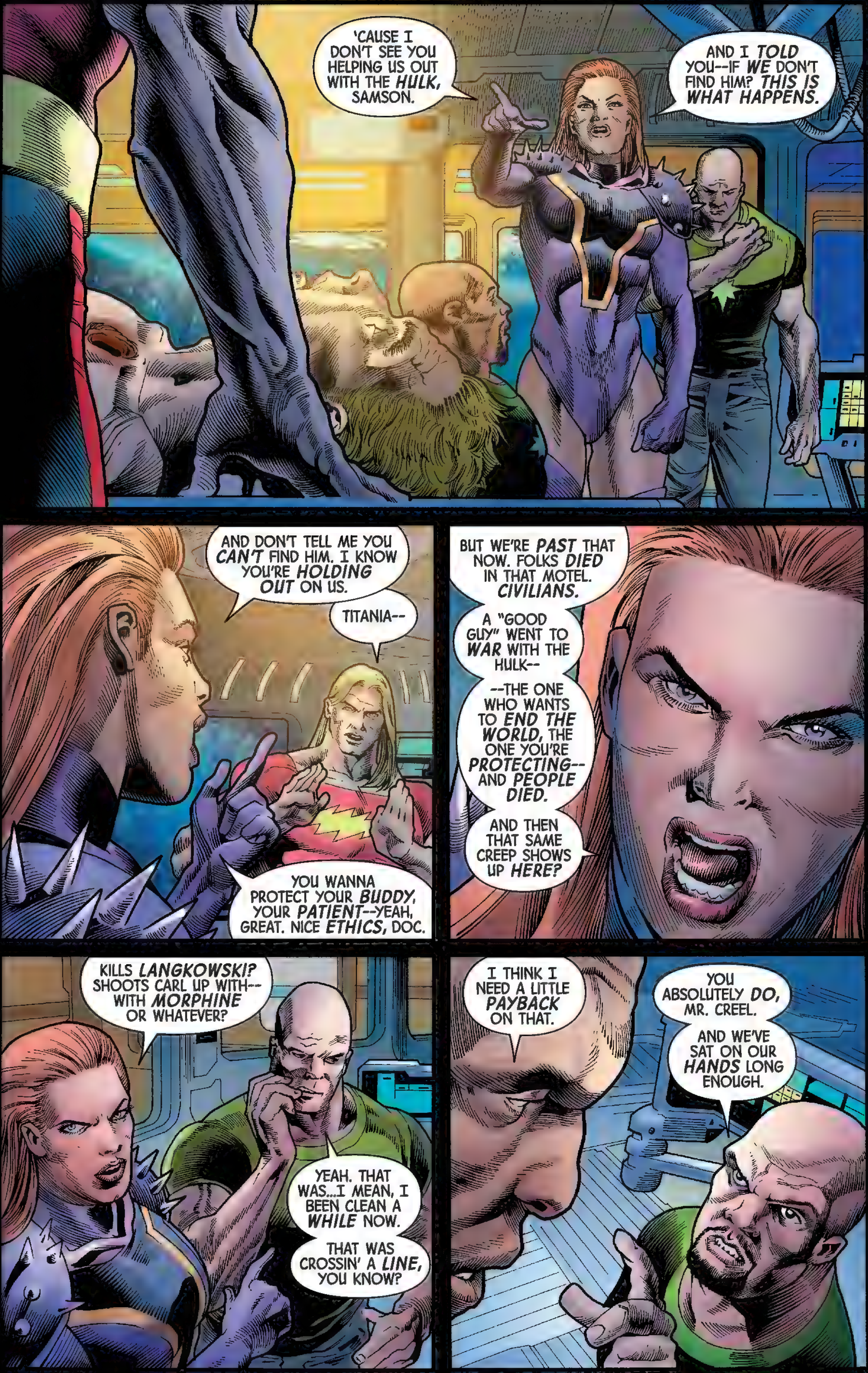
A SECRET ORDER

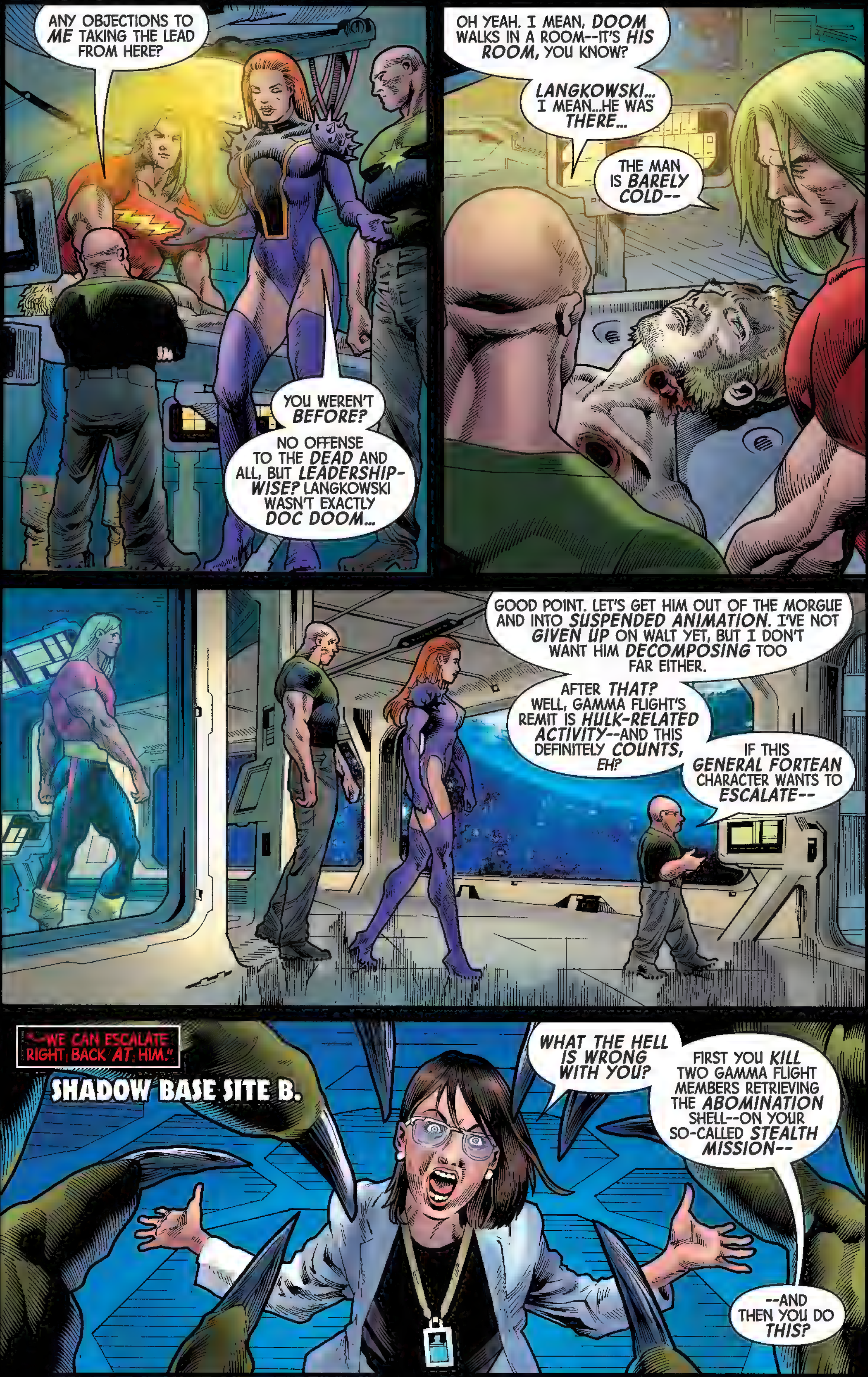
22

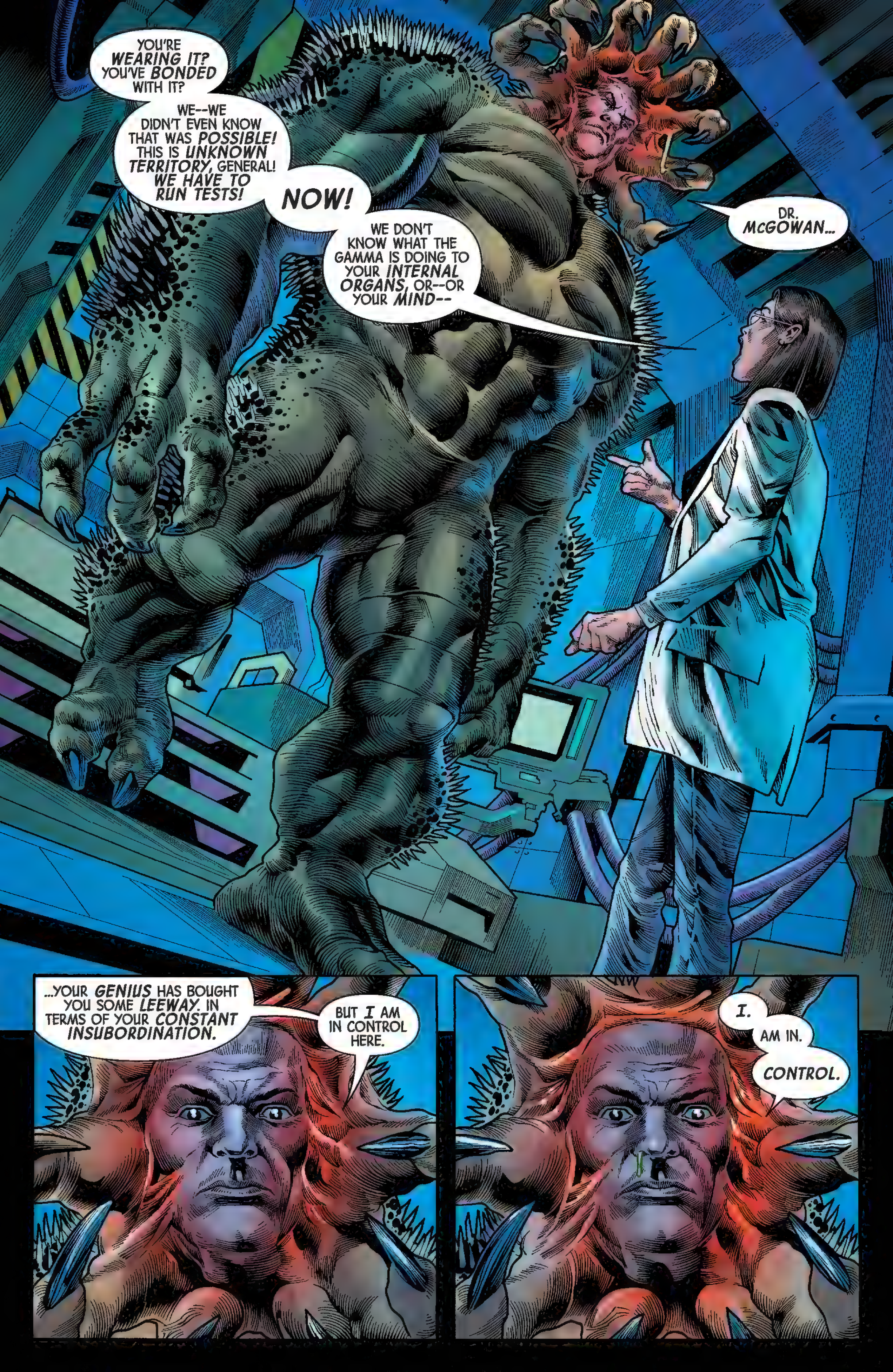
"HERE'S A KNOCKING INDEED! IF A MAN WERE PORTER OF HELL-GATE, HE SHOULD HAVE OLD TURNING THE KEY."

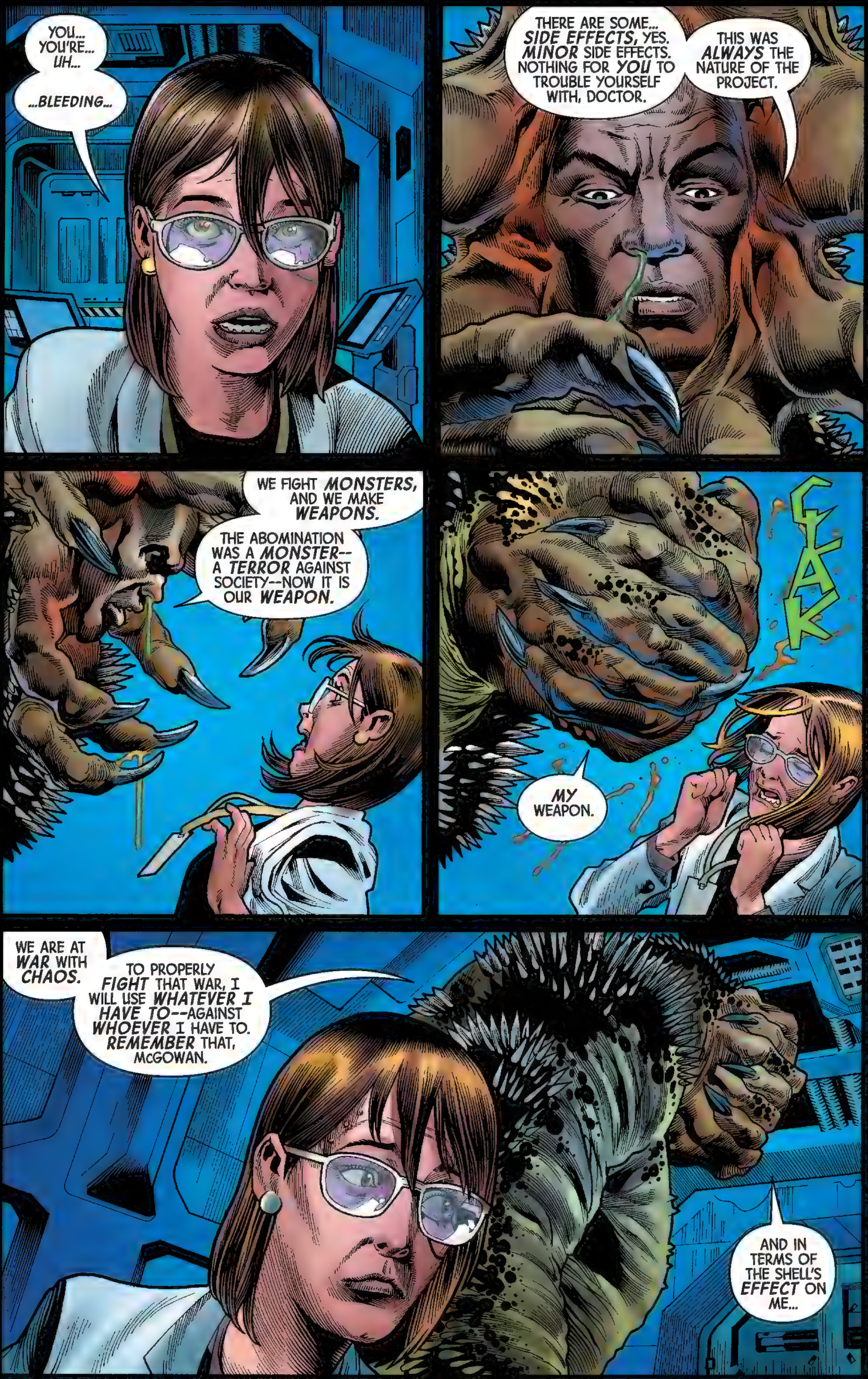
– WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
MACBETH, ACT II, SCENE 3

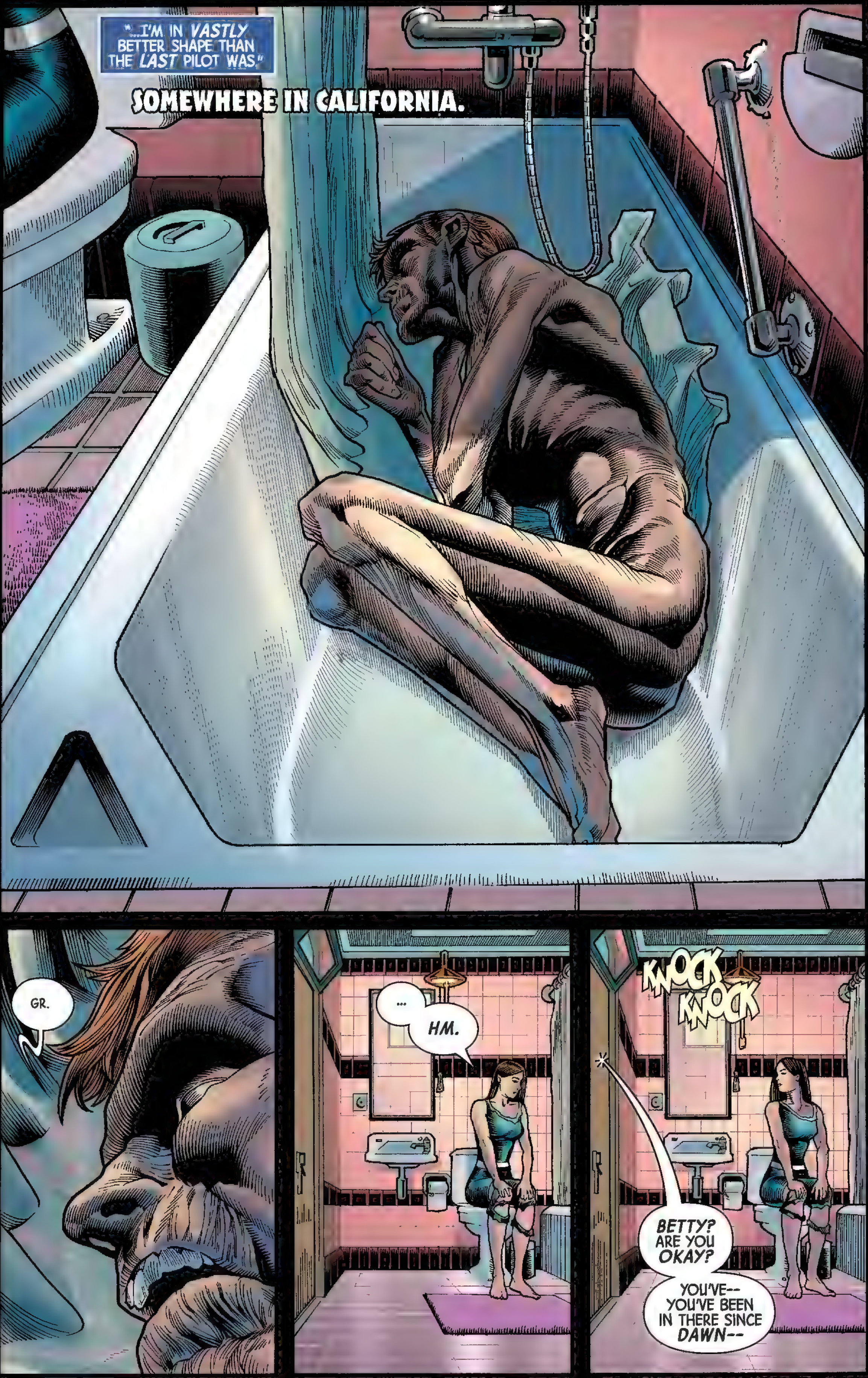

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
NO CHANGE.
WALTER'S STILL *DEAD...*
YEAH.
BRAND'S TALKING ABOUT GETTING THE *WAKANDANS* INVOLVED, BUT THE *U.S.* IS DENYING ALL KNOWLEDGE, SO...
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE POLITICS.
PUCK-- HE WAS YOUR *FRIEND--*
HE'S *ALPHA FLIGHT.* ALPHANS... WE NEVER MOURN UNLESS WE REALLY *HAVE TO,* EH? WE GET A LOT OF *FALSE ALARMS.*
HELL, THIS ALL *STARTED* BECAUSE WALT GOT HIMSELF KILLED. HE'S LIKE *YOU.*
A *GAMMA GUY...*
EXCEPT IT'S A WEEK *LATER,* AND I'M...*BACK.* AND HE *ISN'T.*
WHY AM I STILL HERE?
YEAH. WHY *ARE* YOU HERE?

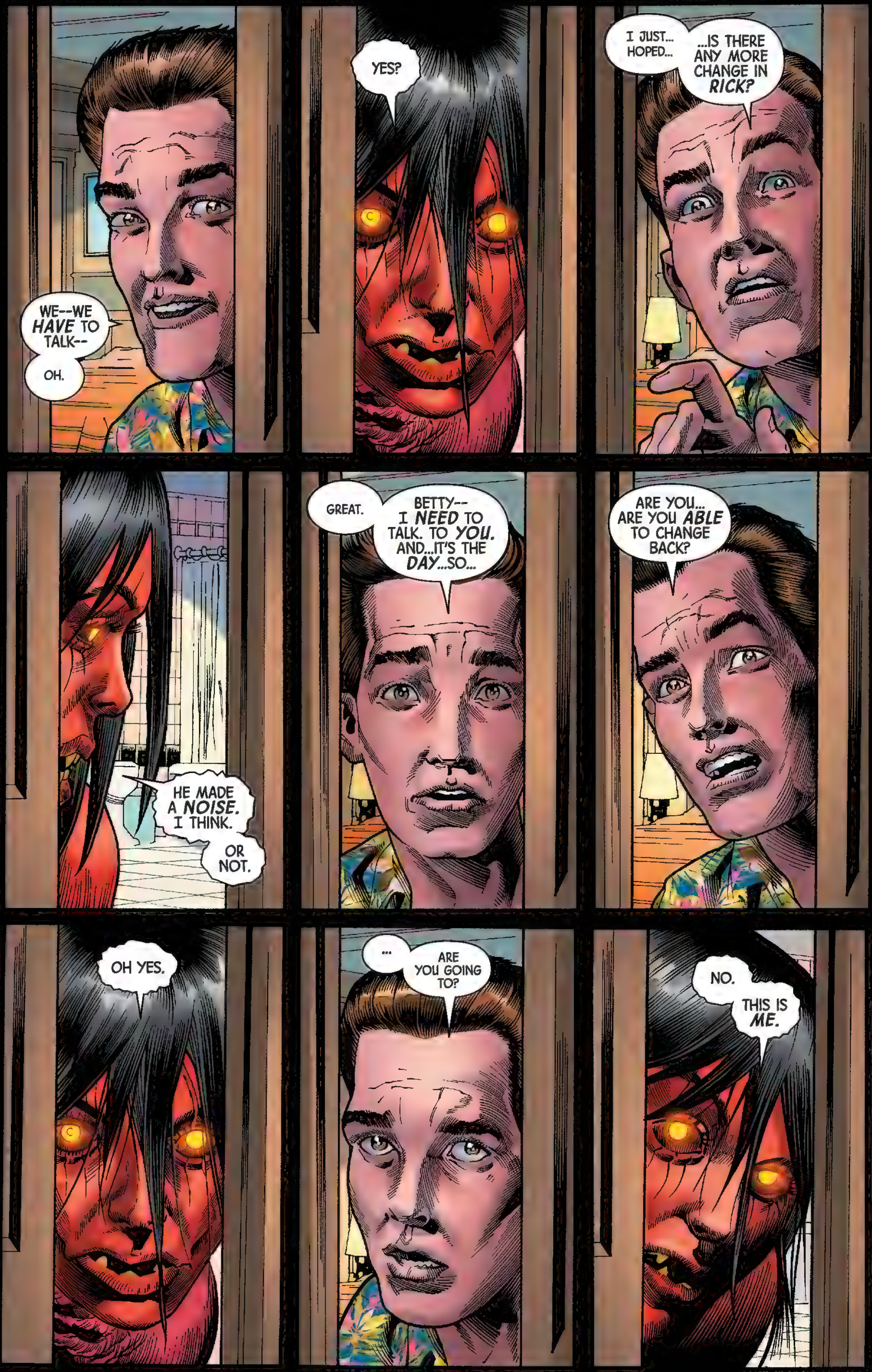

'CAUSE I DON'T SEE YOU HELPING US OUT WITH THE *HULK,* SAMSON.
AND I *TOLD* YOU--IF *WE* DON'T FIND HIM? *THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS.*
AND DON'T TELL ME YOU *CAN'T* FIND HIM. I KNOW YOU'RE *HOLDING OUT* ON US.
TITANIA--
YOU WANNA PROTECT YOUR *BUDDY,* YOUR *PATIENT*--YEAH, GREAT. NICE *ETHICS,* DOC.
BUT WE'RE *PAST* THAT NOW. FOLKS *DIED* IN THAT MOTEL. *CIVILIANS.*
A "GOOD GUY" WENT TO *WAR* WITH THE HULK--
--THE ONE WHO WANTS TO *END THE WORLD,* THE ONE YOU'RE *PROTECTING*--AND *PEOPLE DIED.*
AND THEN THAT SAME CREEP SHOWS UP *HERE?*
KILLS *LANGKOWSKI?* SHOOTS CARL UP WITH--WITH *MORPHINE* OR WHATEVER?
YEAH. THAT WAS...I MEAN, I BEEN CLEAN A *WHILE* NOW.
THAT WAS CROSSIN' A *LINE,* YOU KNOW?
I THINK I NEED A LITTLE *PAYBACK* ON THAT.
YOU ABSOLUTELY *DO,* MR. CREEL.
AND WE'VE SAT ON OUR *HANDS* LONG ENOUGH.

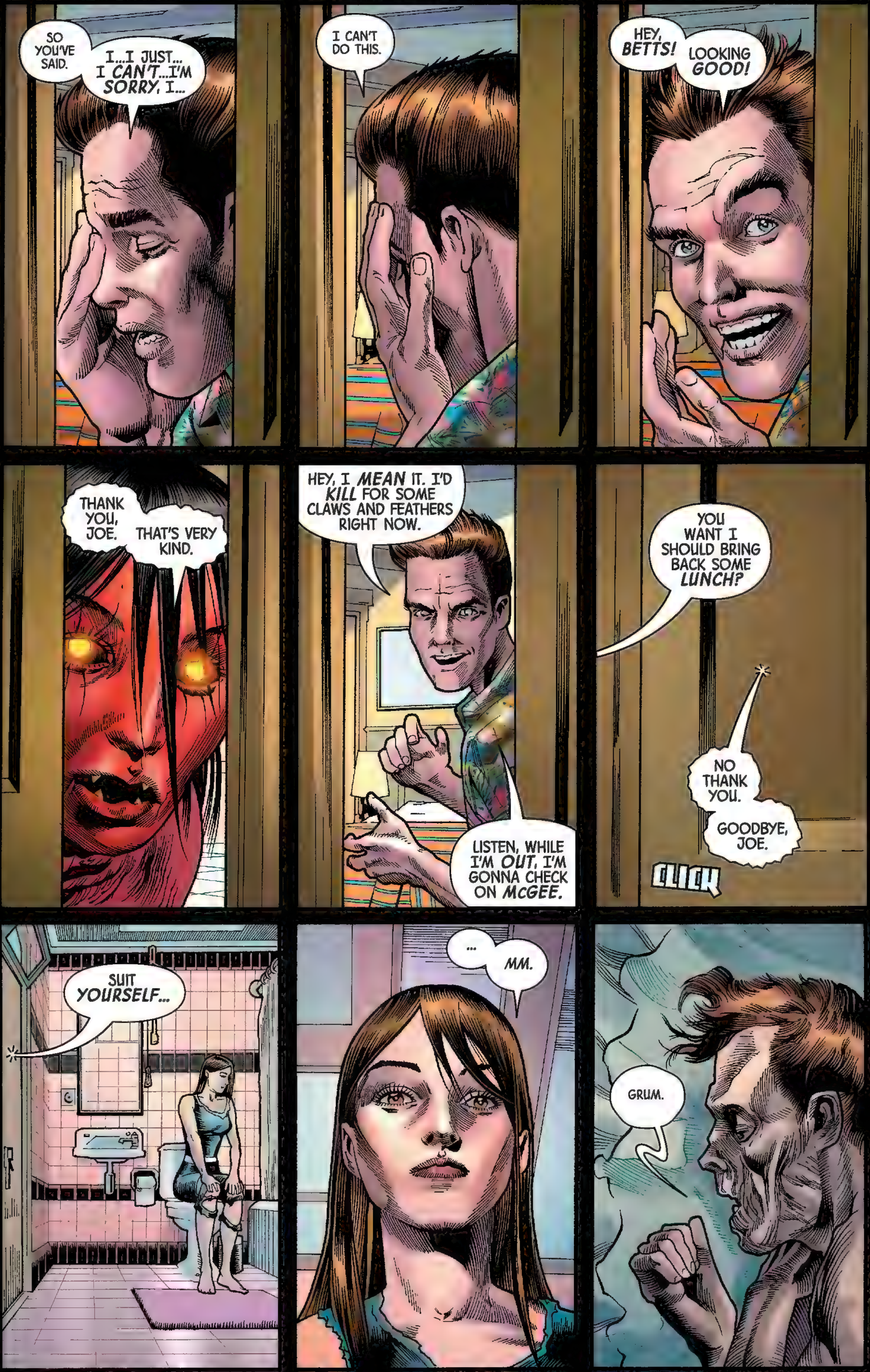

ANY OBJECTIONS TO *ME* TAKING THE LEAD FROM HERE?
YOU WEREN'T *BEFORE?*
NO OFFENSE TO THE *DEAD* AND ALL, BUT *LEADERSHIP-WISE?* LANGKOWSKI WASN'T EXACTLY *DOC DOOM...*
OH YEAH. I MEAN, *DOOM* WALKS IN A ROOM--IT'S *HIS ROOM,* YOU KNOW?
LANGKOWSKI... I MEAN...HE WAS *THERE...*
THE MAN IS *BARELY COLD--*
GOOD POINT. LET'S GET HIM OUT OF THE MORGUE AND INTO *SUSPENDED ANIMATION.* I'VE NOT *GIVEN UP* ON WALT YET, BUT I DON'T WANT HIM *DECOMPOSING* TOO FAR EITHER.
AFTER *THAT?* WELL, GAMMA FLIGHT'S REMIT IS *HULK-RELATED ACTIVITY*--AND THIS DEFINITELY *COUNTS,* EH?
IF THIS *GENERAL FORTEAN* CHARACTER WANTS TO *ESCALATE--*
"--WE CAN ESCALATE RIGHT BACK *AT* HIM."
SHADOW BASE SITE B.
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?
FIRST YOU *KILL* TWO GAMMA FLIGHT MEMBERS RETRIEVING THE *ABOMINATION* SHELL--ON YOUR SO-CALLED *STEALTH MISSION--*
--AND THEN YOU DO *THIS?*

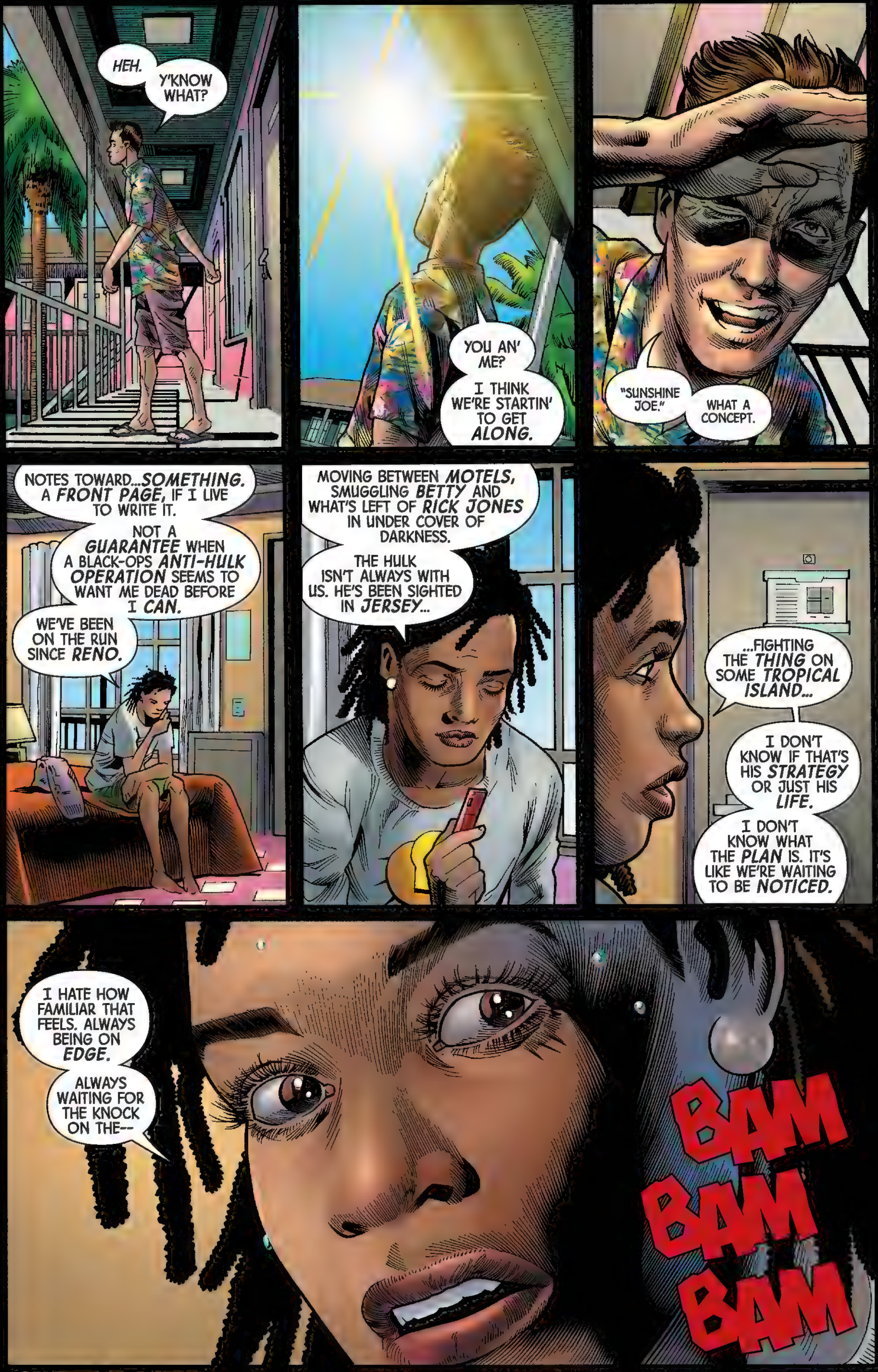

YOU'RE *WEARING IT?* YOU'VE *BONDED* WITH IT?
WE--WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT WAS *POSSIBLE!* THIS IS *UNKNOWN TERRITORY,* GENERAL! *WE HAVE TO RUN TESTS!*
NOW!
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE GAMMA IS DOING TO YOUR *INTERNAL ORGANS,* OR--OR YOUR *MIND--*
DR. *McGOWAN...*
...YOUR *GENIUS* HAS BOUGHT YOU SOME *LEEWAY.* IN TERMS OF YOUR *CONSTANT INSUBORDINATION.*
BUT *I* AM IN CONTROL HERE.
I.
AM IN.
CONTROL.

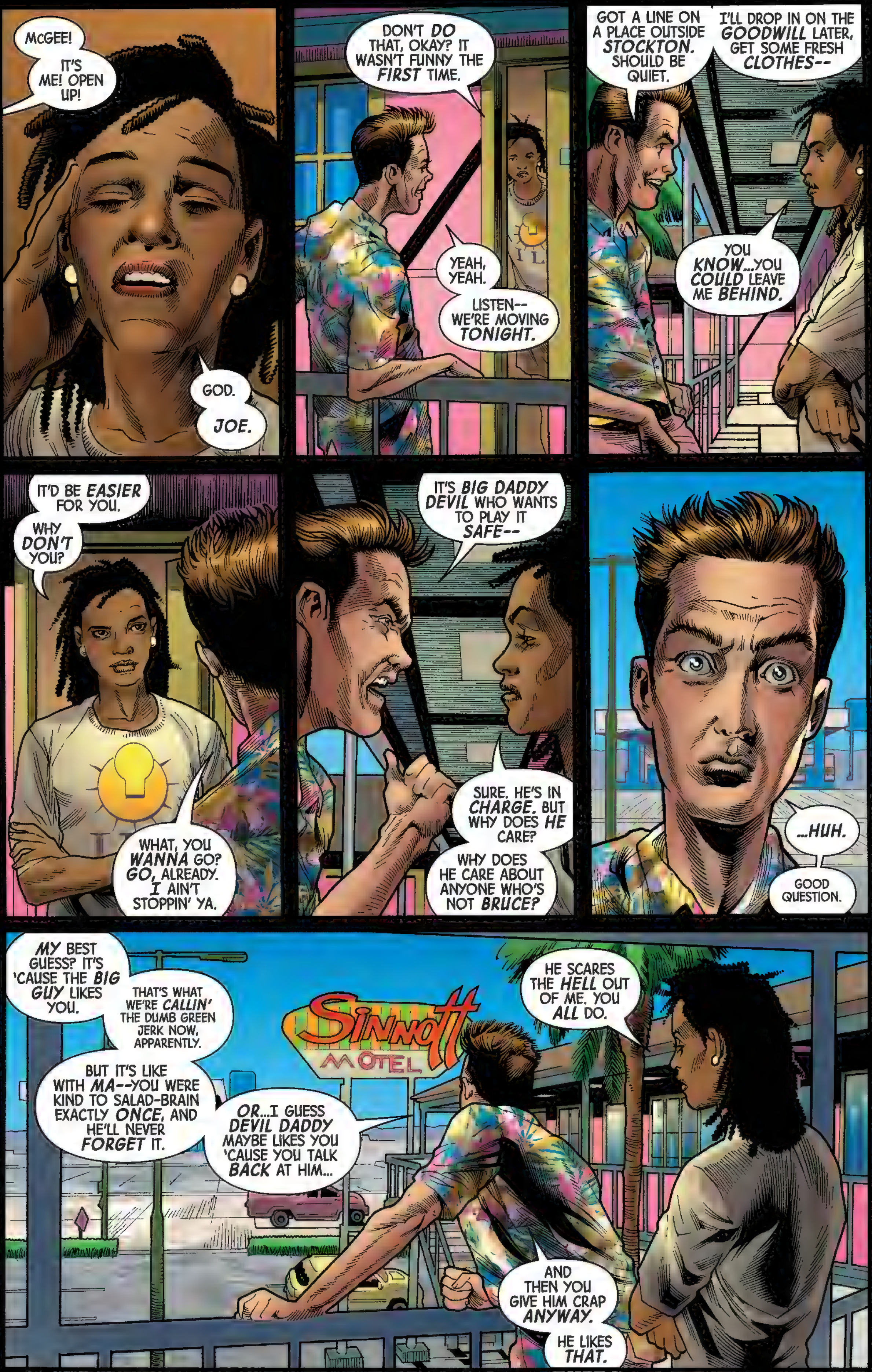

YOU... YOU'RE... UH...
...BLEEDING...
THERE ARE SOME... SIDE EFFECTS, YES. MINOR SIDE EFFECTS. NOTHING FOR YOU TO TROUBLE YOURSELF WITH, DOCTOR.
THIS WAS ALWAYS THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT.
WE FIGHT MONSTERS, AND WE MAKE WEAPONS.
THE ABOMINATION WAS A MONSTER--A TERROR AGAINST SOCIETY--NOW IT IS OUR WEAPON.
GAK
MY WEAPON.
WE ARE AT WAR WITH CHAOS.
TO PROPERLY FIGHT THAT WAR, I WILL USE WHATEVER I HAVE TO--AGAINST WHOEVER I HAVE TO. REMEMBER THAT, McGOWAN.
AND IN TERMS OF THE SHELL'S EFFECT ON ME...

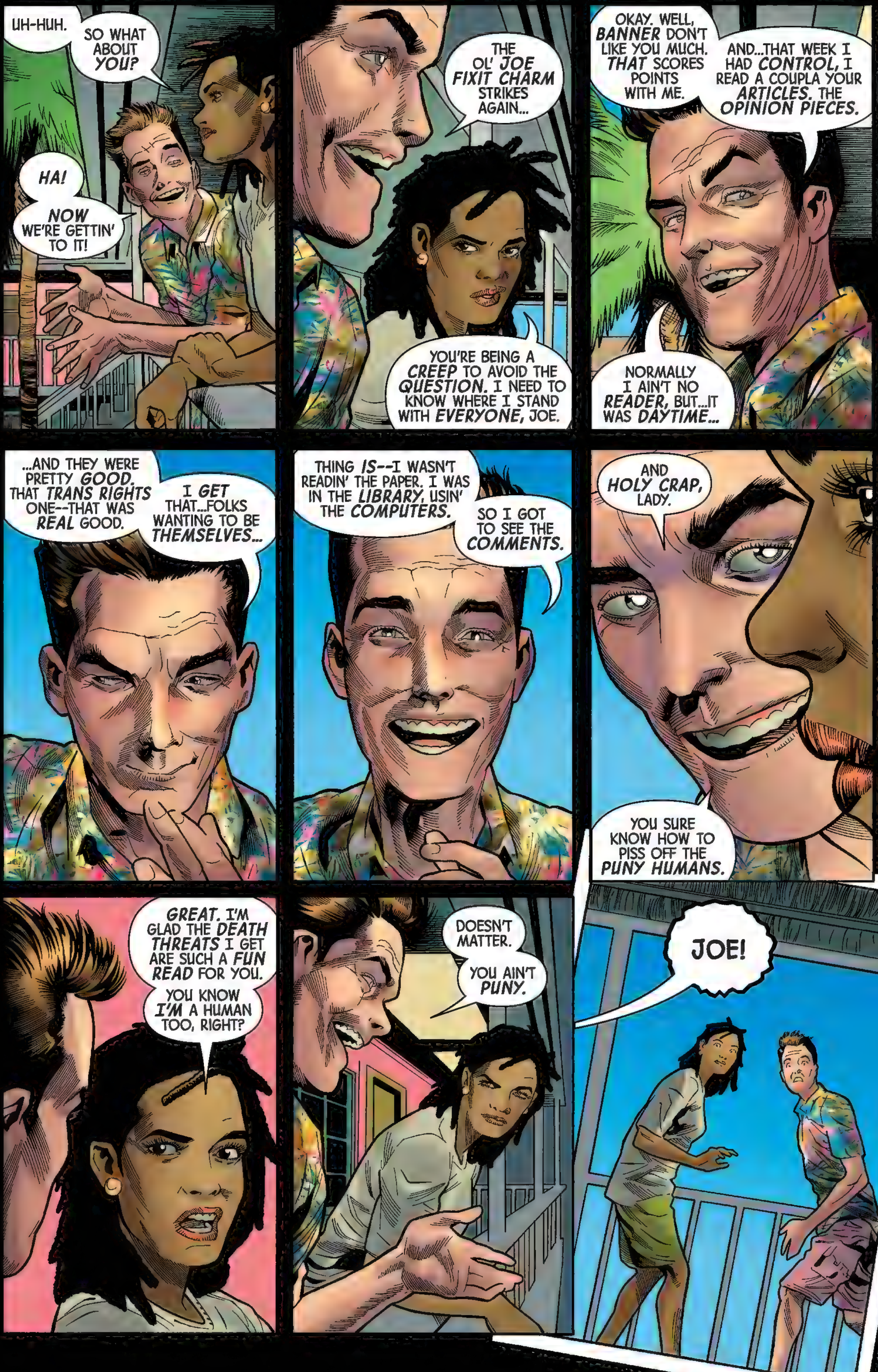

"...I'M IN VASTLY BETTER SHAPE THAN THE LAST PILOT WAS."
SOMEWHERE IN CALIFORNIA.
GR.
...
HM.
KNOCK KNOCK
BETTY? ARE YOU OKAY?
YOU'VE-- YOU'VE BEEN IN THERE SINCE DAWN--

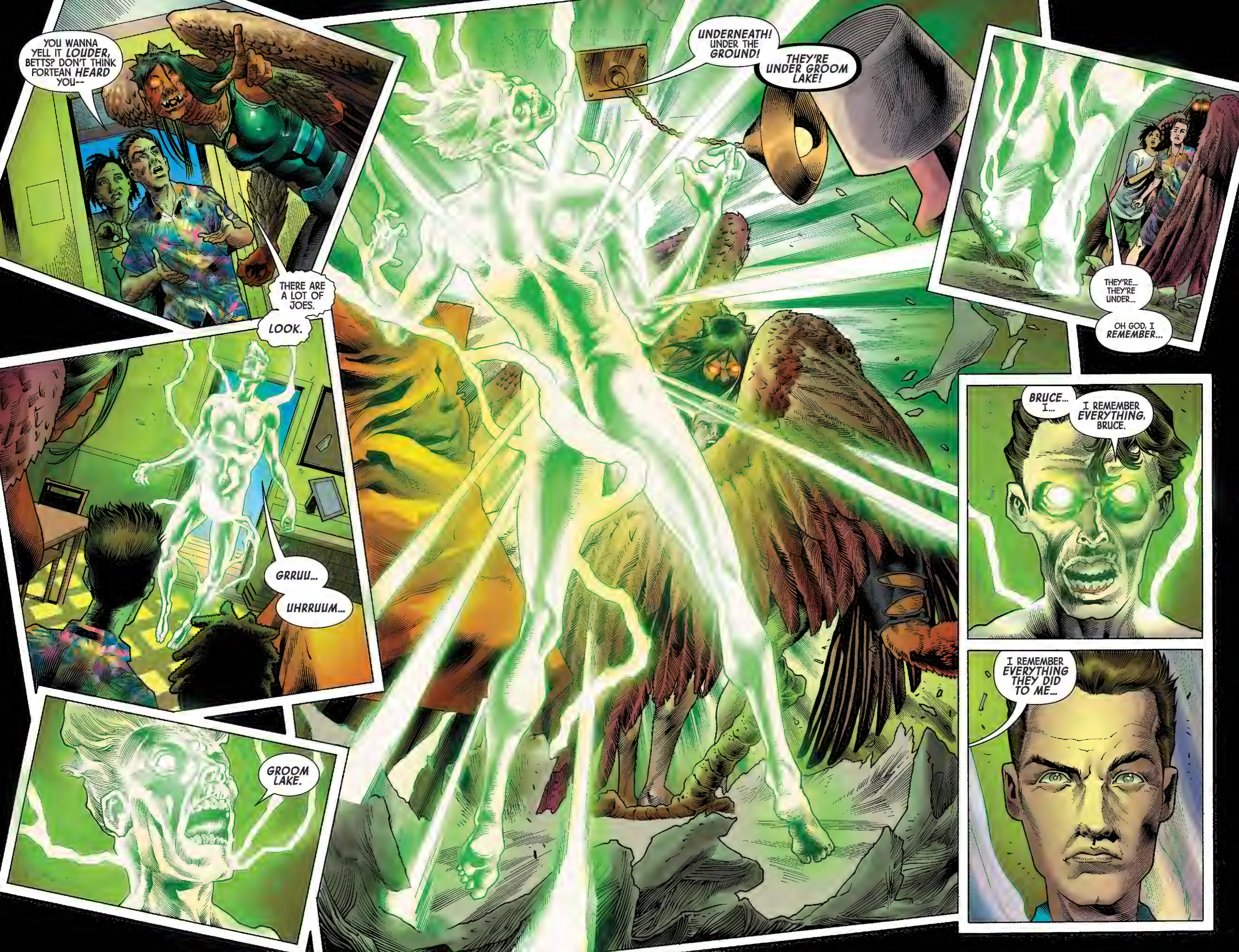

WE--WE *HAVE* TO TALK--
OH.
YES?
I JUST... HOPED...
...IS THERE ANY MORE CHANGE IN *RICK?*
HE MADE A *NOISE.* I THINK.
OR NOT.
GREAT.
BETTY-- I *NEED* TO TALK. TO *YOU.* AND...IT'S THE *DAY*...SO...
ARE YOU... ARE YOU *ABLE* TO CHANGE BACK?
OH YES.
...
ARE YOU GOING TO?
NO.
THIS IS *ME.*

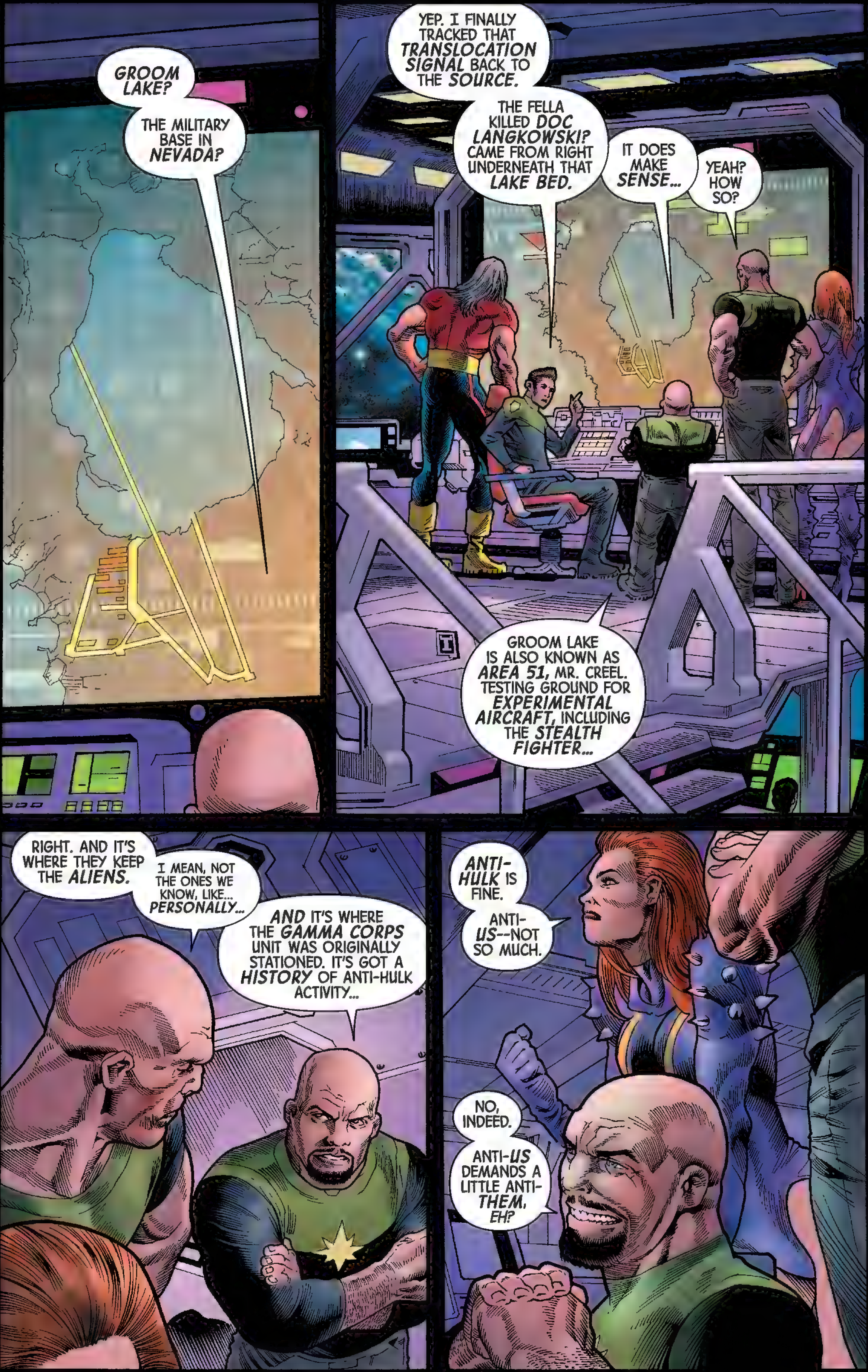

SO YOU'VE SAID.
I...I JUST... I CAN'T...I'M SORRY, I...
I CAN'T DO THIS.
HEY, BETTS!
LOOKING GOOD!
THANK YOU, JOE.
THAT'S VERY KIND.
HEY, I MEAN IT. I'D KILL FOR SOME CLAWS AND FEATHERS RIGHT NOW.
LISTEN, WHILE I'M OUT, I'M GONNA CHECK ON McGEE.
YOU WANT I SHOULD BRING BACK SOME LUNCH?
NO THANK YOU.
GOODBYE, JOE.
CLICK
SUIT YOURSELF...
...
MM.
GRUM.

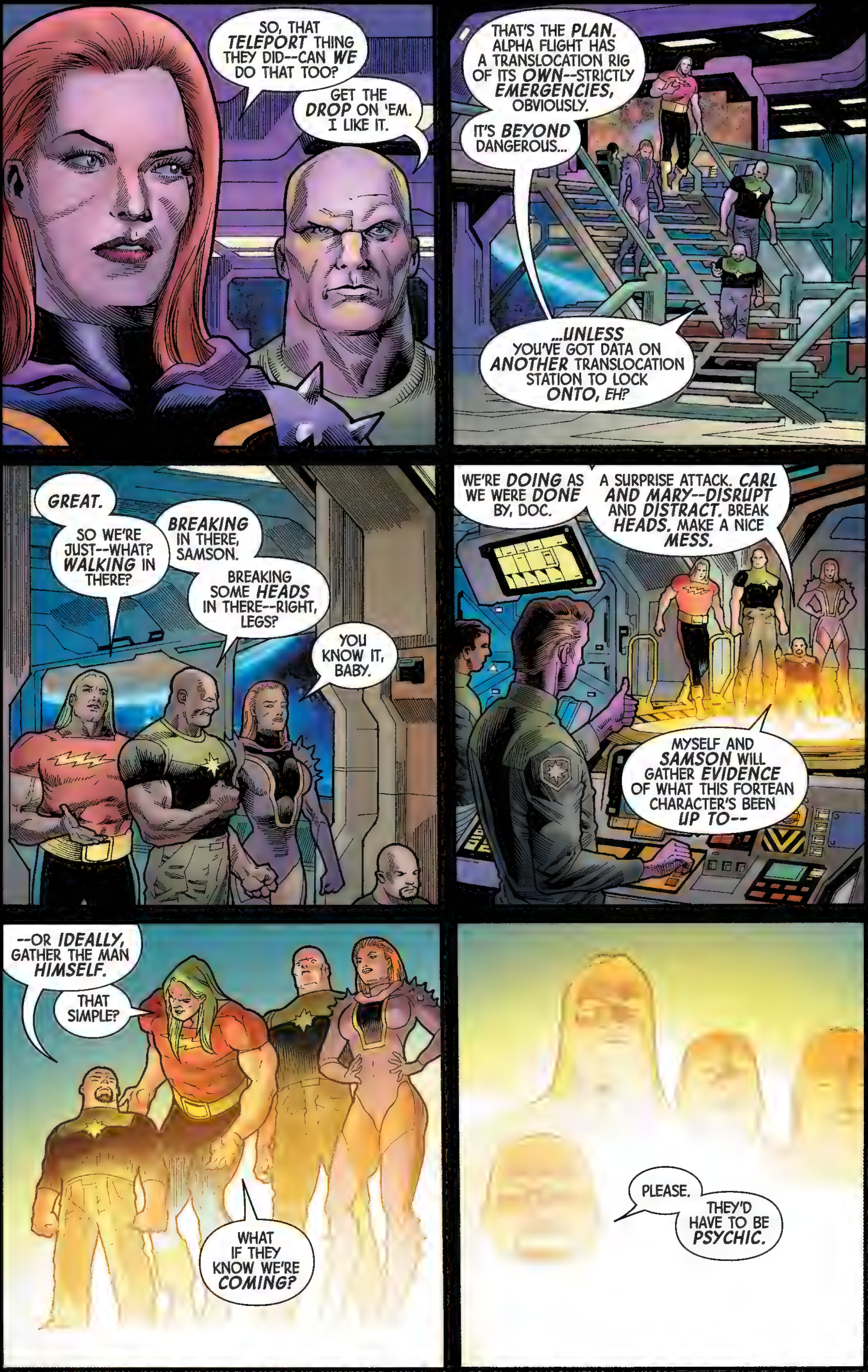

HEH.
Y'KNOW WHAT?
YOU AN' ME?
I THINK WE'RE STARTIN' TO GET ALONG.
"SUNSHINE JOE."
WHAT A CONCEPT.
NOTES TOWARD...SOMETHING. A FRONT PAGE, IF I LIVE TO WRITE IT.
NOT A GUARANTEE WHEN A BLACK-OPS ANTI-HULK OPERATION SEEMS TO WANT ME DEAD BEFORE I CAN.
WE'VE BEEN ON THE RUN SINCE RENO.
MOVING BETWEEN MOTELS, SMUGGLING BETTY AND WHAT'S LEFT OF RICK JONES IN UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS.
THE HULK ISN'T ALWAYS WITH US. HE'S BEEN SIGHTED IN JERSEY...
...FIGHTING THE THING ON SOME TROPICAL ISLAND...
I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S HIS STRATEGY OR JUST HIS LIFE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE PLAN IS. IT'S LIKE WE'RE WAITING TO BE NOTICED.
I HATE HOW FAMILIAR THAT FEELS. ALWAYS BEING ON EDGE.
ALWAYS WAITING FOR THE KNOCK ON THE--
BAM BAM BAM

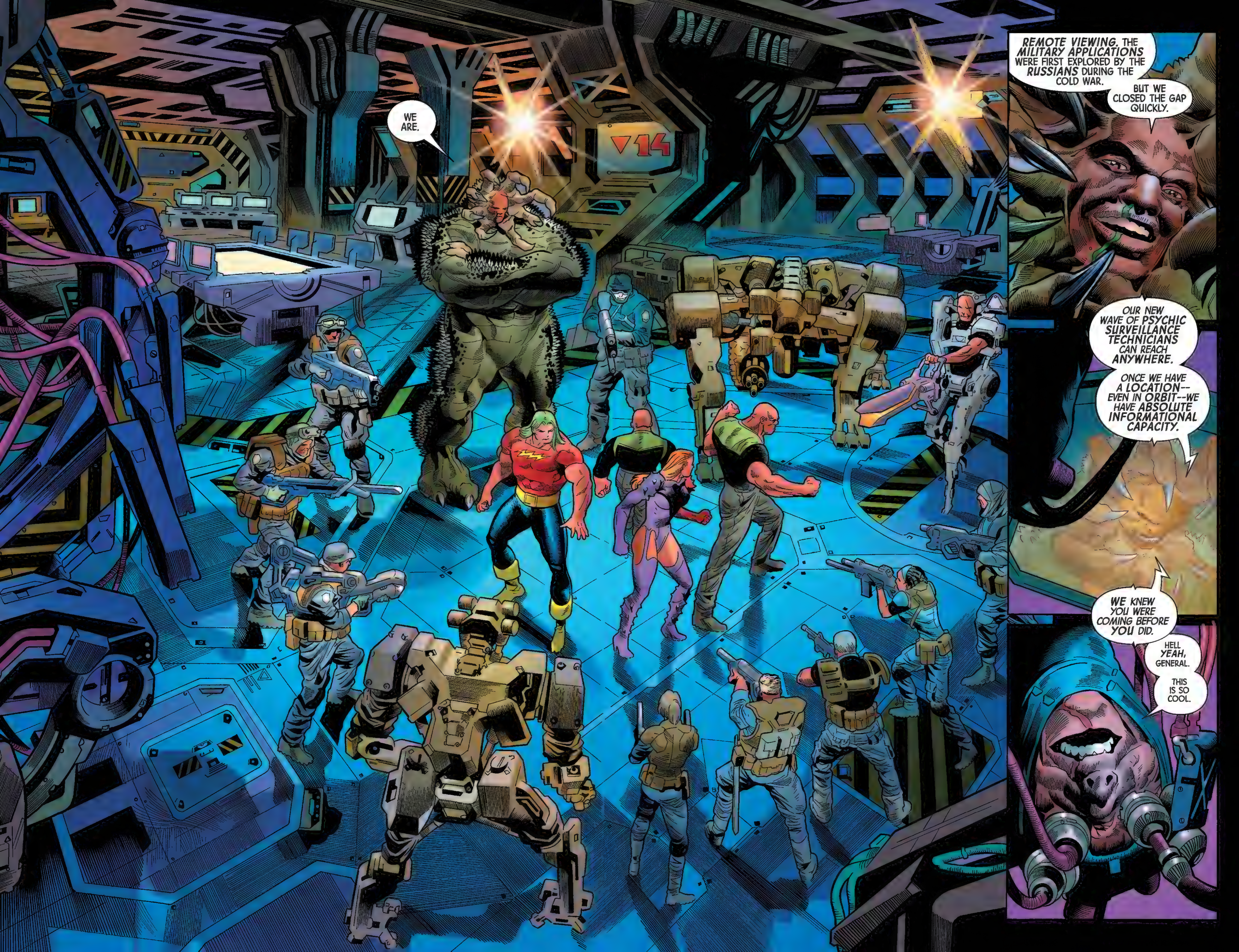

McGEE!
IT'S ME! OPEN UP!
GOD.
JOE.
DON'T DO THAT, OKAY? IT WASN'T FUNNY THE FIRST TIME.
YEAH, YEAH.
LISTEN-- WE'RE MOVING TONIGHT.
GOT A LINE ON A PLACE OUTSIDE STOCKTON. SHOULD BE QUIET.
I'LL DROP IN ON THE GOODWILL LATER, GET SOME FRESH CLOTHES--
YOU KNOW...YOU COULD LEAVE ME BEHIND.
IT'D BE EASIER FOR YOU.
WHY DON'T YOU?
WHAT, YOU WANNA GO? GO, ALREADY. I AIN'T STOPPIN' YA.
IT'S BIG DADDY DEVIL WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT SAFE--
SURE. HE'S IN CHARGE. BUT WHY DOES HE CARE?
WHY DOES HE CARE ABOUT ANYONE WHO'S NOT BRUCE?
...HUH.
GOOD QUESTION.
MY BEST GUESS? IT'S 'CAUSE THE BIG GUY LIKES YOU.
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE CALLIN' THE DUMB GREEN JERK NOW, APPARENTLY.
BUT IT'S LIKE WITH MA--YOU WERE KIND TO SALAD-BRAIN EXACTLY ONCE, AND HE'LL NEVER FORGET IT.
OR...I GUESS DEVIL DADDY MAYBE LIKES YOU 'CAUSE YOU TALK BACK AT HIM...
SINNOTT MOTEL
HE SCARES THE HELL OUT OF ME. YOU ALL DO.
AND THEN YOU GIVE HIM CRAP ANYWAY.
HE LIKES THAT.

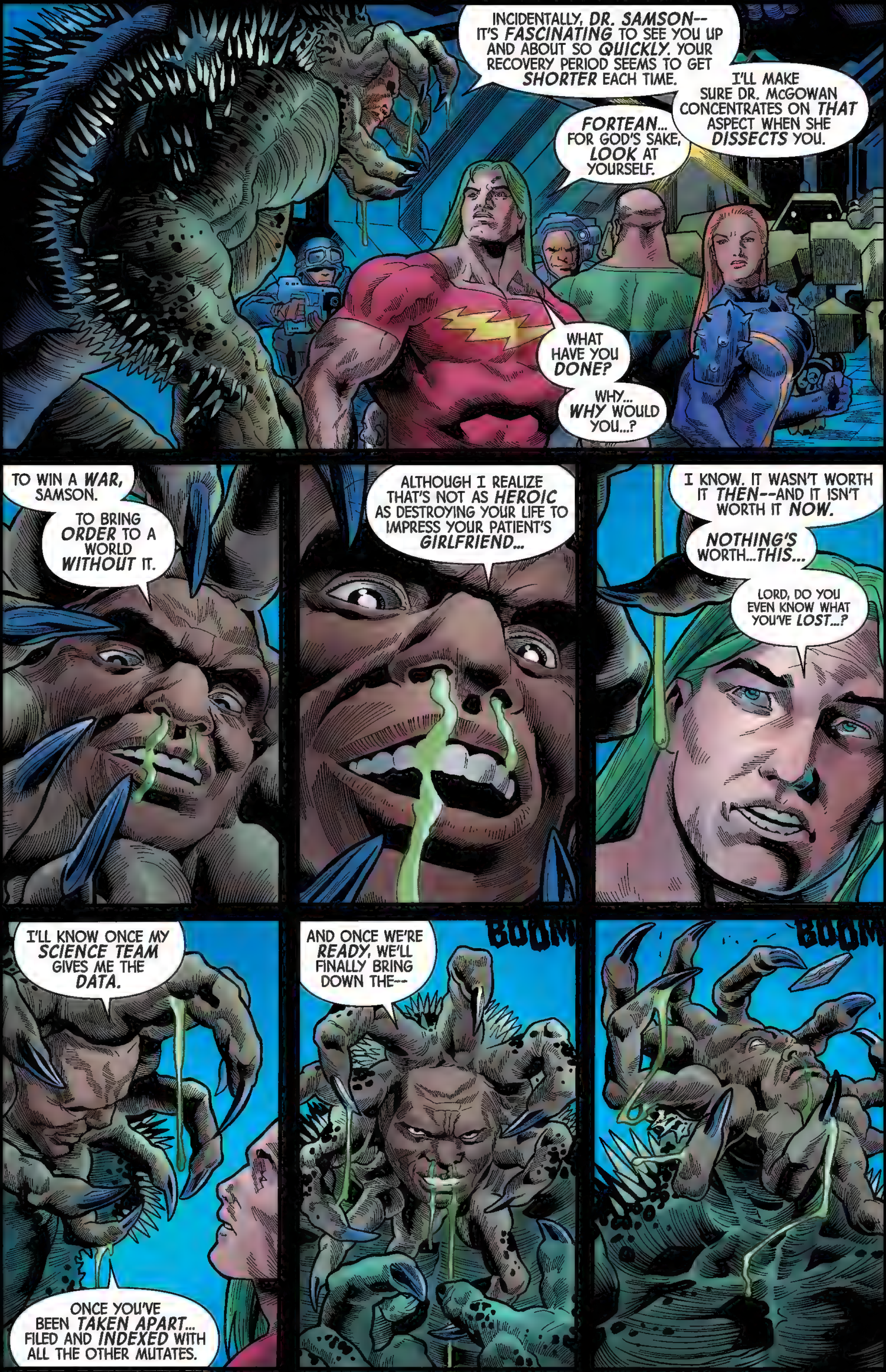

UH-HUH.
SO WHAT ABOUT *YOU?*
HA! *NOW* WE'RE GETTIN' TO IT!
THE OL' *JOE FIXIT CHARM* STRIKES AGAIN...
YOU'RE BEING A *CREEP* TO AVOID THE *QUESTION.* I NEED TO KNOW WHERE I STAND WITH *EVERYONE,* JOE.
OKAY. WELL, *BANNER* DON'T LIKE YOU MUCH. *THAT* SCORES POINTS WITH ME.
AND...THAT WEEK I HAD *CONTROL,* I READ A COUPLA YOUR *ARTICLES.* THE *OPINION PIECES.*
NORMALLY I AIN'T NO *READER,* BUT...IT WAS *DAYTIME...*
...AND THEY WERE PRETTY *GOOD.* THAT *TRANS RIGHTS* ONE--THAT WAS *REAL* GOOD.
I *GET* THAT...FOLKS WANTING TO BE *THEMSELVES...*
THING *IS*--I WASN'T READIN' THE PAPER. I WAS IN THE *LIBRARY,* USIN' THE *COMPUTERS.*
SO I GOT TO SEE THE *COMMENTS.*
AND *HOLY CRAP,* LADY.
YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO PISS OFF THE *PUNY HUMANS.*
GREAT. I'M GLAD THE *DEATH THREATS* I GET ARE SUCH A *FUN READ* FOR YOU.
YOU KNOW *I'M* A HUMAN TOO, RIGHT?
DOESN'T MATTER.
YOU AIN'T *PUNY.*
JOE!

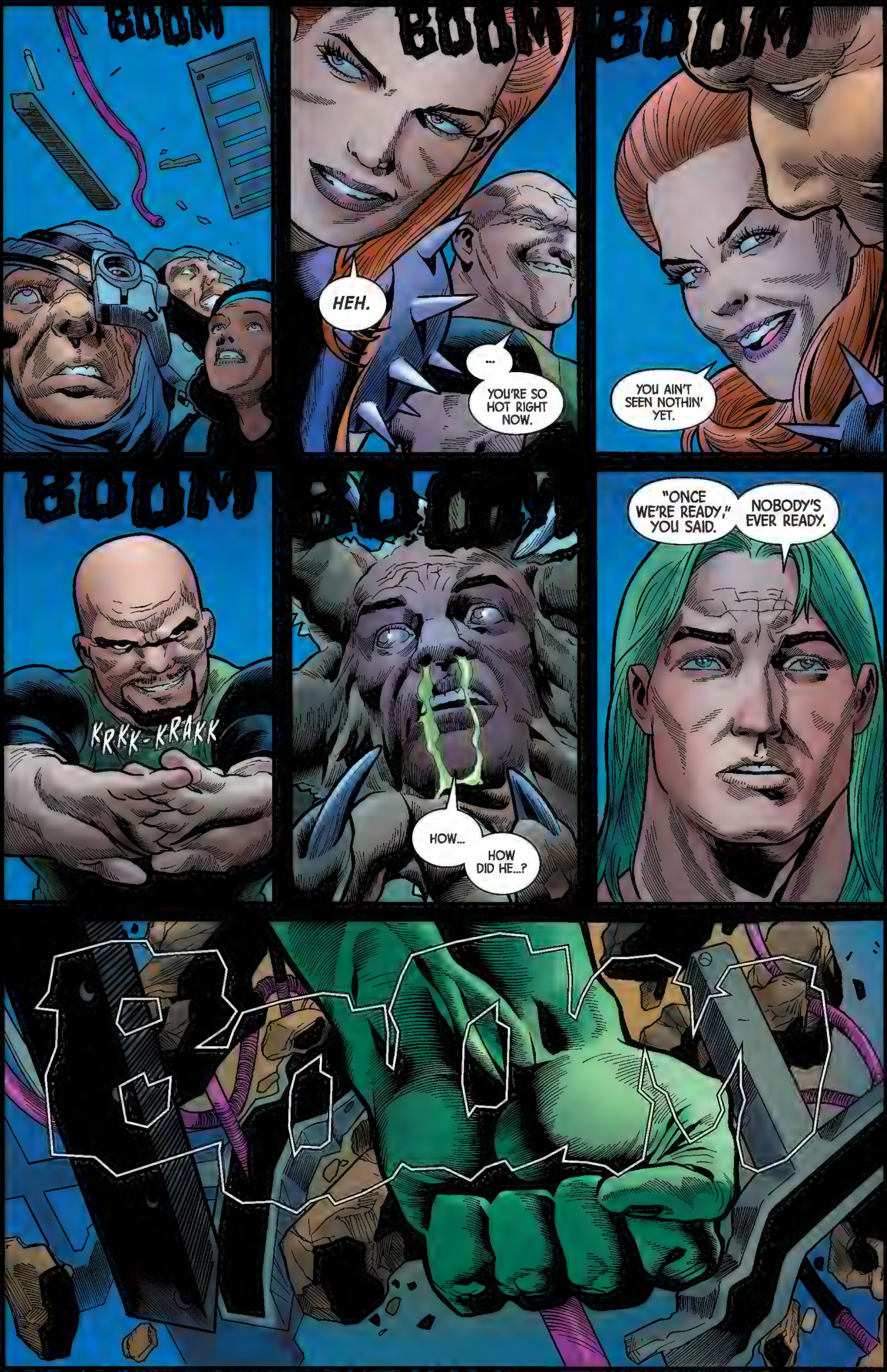

YOU WANNA YELL IT *LOUDER*, BETTS? DON'T THINK FORTEAN *HEARD* YOU--
THERE ARE A LOT OF JOES.
LOOK.
GRRUU...
UHRRUUM...
GROOM LAKE.
UNDERNEATH! UNDER THE *GROUND!*
THEY'RE UNDER GROOM LAKE!
THEY'RE... THEY'RE UNDER...
OH GOD, I *REMEMBER...*
BRUCE... I...
I REMEMBER *EVERYTHING,* BRUCE.
I REMEMBER *EVERYTHING THEY DID TO ME...*

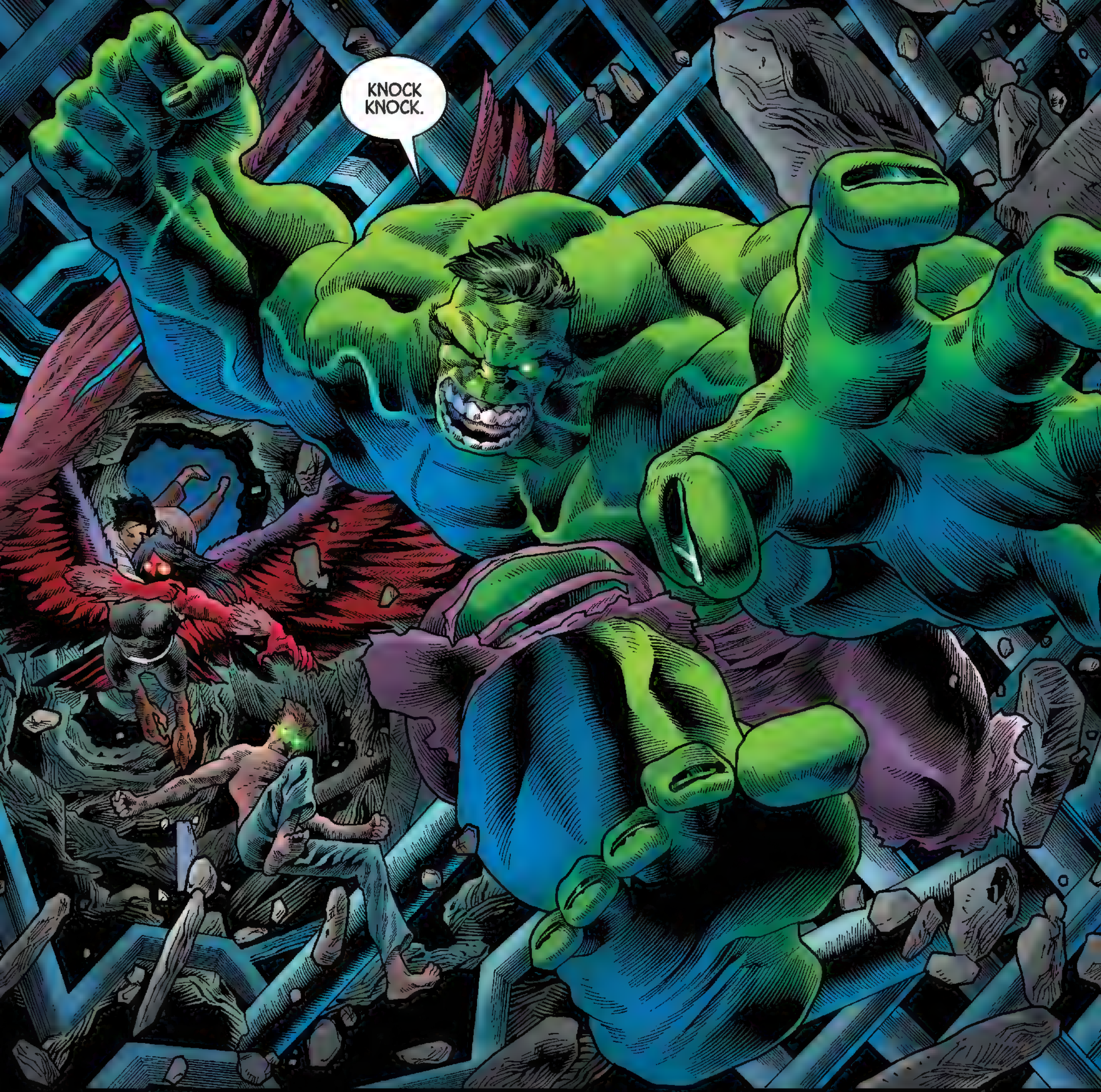

GROOM LAKE?
THE MILITARY BASE IN NEVADA?
YEP. I FINALLY TRACKED THAT TRANSLOCATION SIGNAL BACK TO THE SOURCE.
THE FELLA KILLED DOC LANGKOWSKI? CAME FROM RIGHT UNDERNEATH THAT LAKE BED.
IT DOES MAKE SENSE...
YEAH? HOW SO?
GROOM LAKE IS ALSO KNOWN AS AREA 51, MR. CREEL. TESTING GROUND FOR EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT, INCLUDING THE STEALTH FIGHTER...
RIGHT. AND IT'S WHERE THEY KEEP THE ALIENS.
I MEAN, NOT THE ONES WE KNOW, LIKE... PERSONALLY...
AND IT'S WHERE THE GAMMA CORPS UNIT WAS ORIGINALLY STATIONED. IT'S GOT A HISTORY OF ANTI-HULK ACTIVITY...
ANTI-HULK IS FINE.
ANTI-US--NOT SO MUCH.
NO, INDEED.
ANTI-US DEMANDS A LITTLE ANTI-THEM, EH?


SO, THAT *TELEPORT* THING THEY DID--CAN *WE* DO THAT TOO?
GET THE *DROP* ON 'EM. I LIKE IT.
THAT'S THE *PLAN.* ALPHA FLIGHT HAS A TRANSLOCATION RIG OF ITS *OWN*--STRICTLY *EMERGENCIES,* OBVIOUSLY.
IT'S *BEYOND* DANGEROUS...
...*UNLESS* YOU'VE GOT DATA ON *ANOTHER* TRANSLOCATION STATION TO LOCK *ONTO,* EH?
GREAT.
SO WE'RE JUST--WHAT? *WALKING* IN THERE?
BREAKING IN THERE, SAMSON.
BREAKING SOME *HEADS* IN THERE--RIGHT, LEGS?
YOU KNOW IT, BABY.
WE'RE *DOING* AS WE WERE *DONE* BY, DOC.
A SURPRISE ATTACK. *CARL AND MARY--DISRUPT* AND *DISTRACT.* BREAK *HEADS.* MAKE A NICE *MESS.*
MYSELF AND *SAMSON* WILL GATHER *EVIDENCE* OF WHAT THIS FORTEAN CHARACTER'S BEEN *UP TO--*
--OR *IDEALLY,* GATHER THE MAN *HIMSELF.*
THAT SIMPLE?
WHAT IF THEY KNOW WE'RE *COMING?*
PLEASE.
THEY'D HAVE TO BE *PSYCHIC.*


WE ARE.
▼14
REMOTE VIEWING. THE MILITARY APPLICATIONS WERE FIRST EXPLORED BY THE RUSSIANS DURING THE COLD WAR.
BUT WE CLOSED THE GAP QUICKLY.
OUR NEW WAVE OF PSYCHIC SURVEILLANCE TECHNICIANS CAN REACH ANYWHERE.
ONCE WE HAVE A LOCATION--EVEN IN ORBIT--WE HAVE ABSOLUTE INFORMATIONAL CAPACITY.
WE KNEW YOU WERE COMING BEFORE YOU DID.
HELL YEAH, GENERAL.
THIS IS SO COOL.


INCIDENTALLY, *DR. SAMSON*-- IT'S *FASCINATING* TO SEE YOU UP AND ABOUT SO *QUICKLY*. YOUR RECOVERY PERIOD SEEMS TO GET *SHORTER* EACH TIME.
I'LL MAKE SURE DR. McGOWAN CONCENTRATES ON *THAT* ASPECT WHEN SHE *DISSECTS* YOU.
FORTEAN... FOR GOD'S SAKE, *LOOK* AT YOURSELF.
WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE?*
WHY... *WHY* WOULD YOU...?
TO WIN A *WAR*, SAMSON.
TO BRING *ORDER* TO A WORLD *WITHOUT* IT.
ALTHOUGH I REALIZE THAT'S NOT AS *HEROIC* AS DESTROYING YOUR LIFE TO IMPRESS YOUR PATIENT'S *GIRLFRIEND*...
I KNOW. IT WASN'T WORTH IT *THEN*--AND IT ISN'T WORTH IT *NOW.*
NOTHING'S WORTH...*THIS*...
LORD, DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'VE *LOST*...?
I'LL KNOW ONCE MY *SCIENCE TEAM* GIVES ME THE *DATA*.
ONCE YOU'VE BEEN *TAKEN APART*... FILED AND *INDEXED* WITH ALL THE OTHER MUTATES.
AND ONCE WE'RE *READY*, WE'LL FINALLY BRING DOWN THE--
BOOM
BOOM


BOOM
BOOM
HEH.
BOOM
...
YOU'RE SO HOT RIGHT NOW.
YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET.
BOOM
KRKK-KRAKK
BOOM
HOW...
HOW DID HE...?
"ONCE WE'RE READY," YOU SAID.
NOBODY'S EVER READY.
BOOM

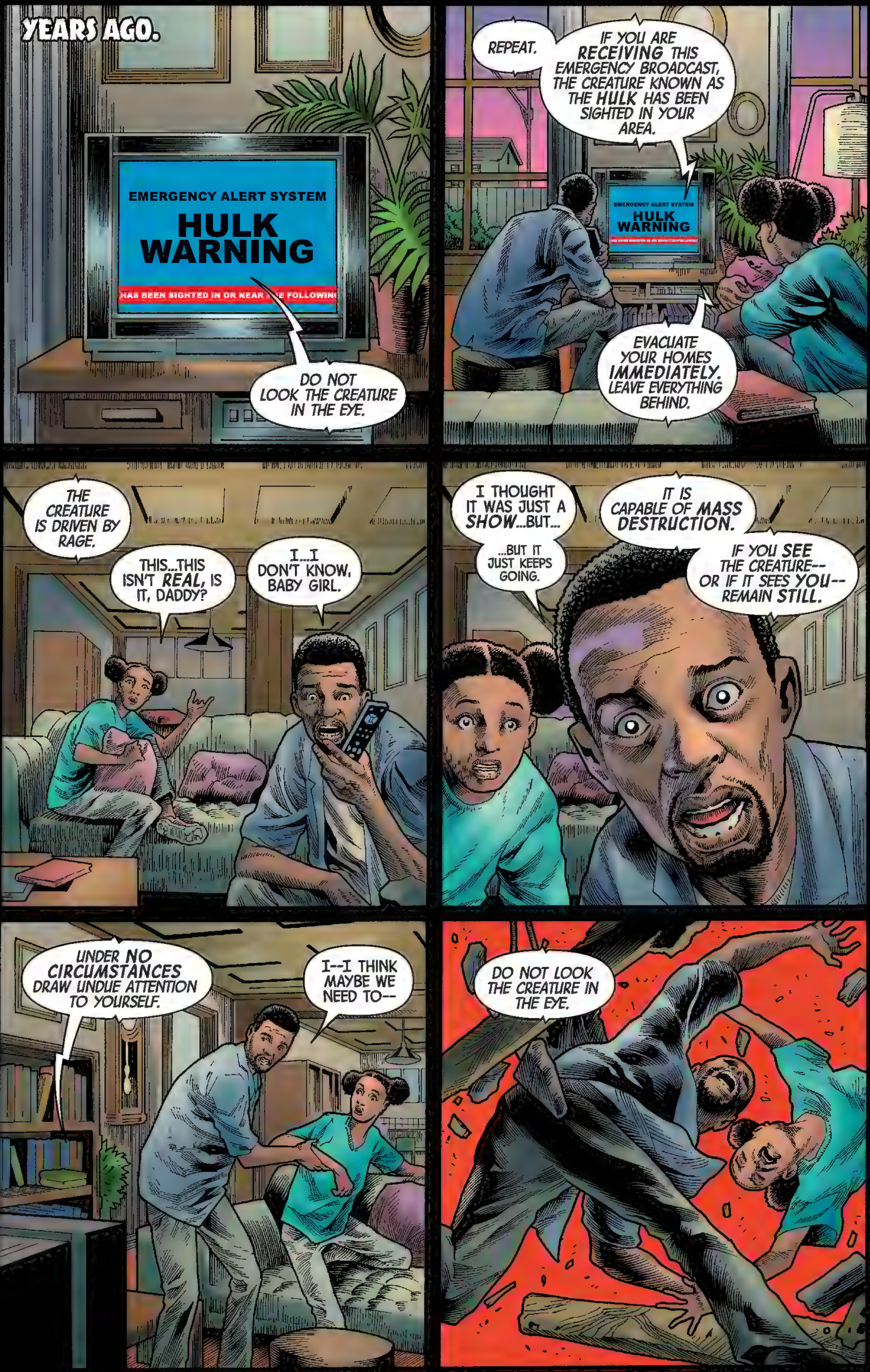

KNOCK KNOCK.

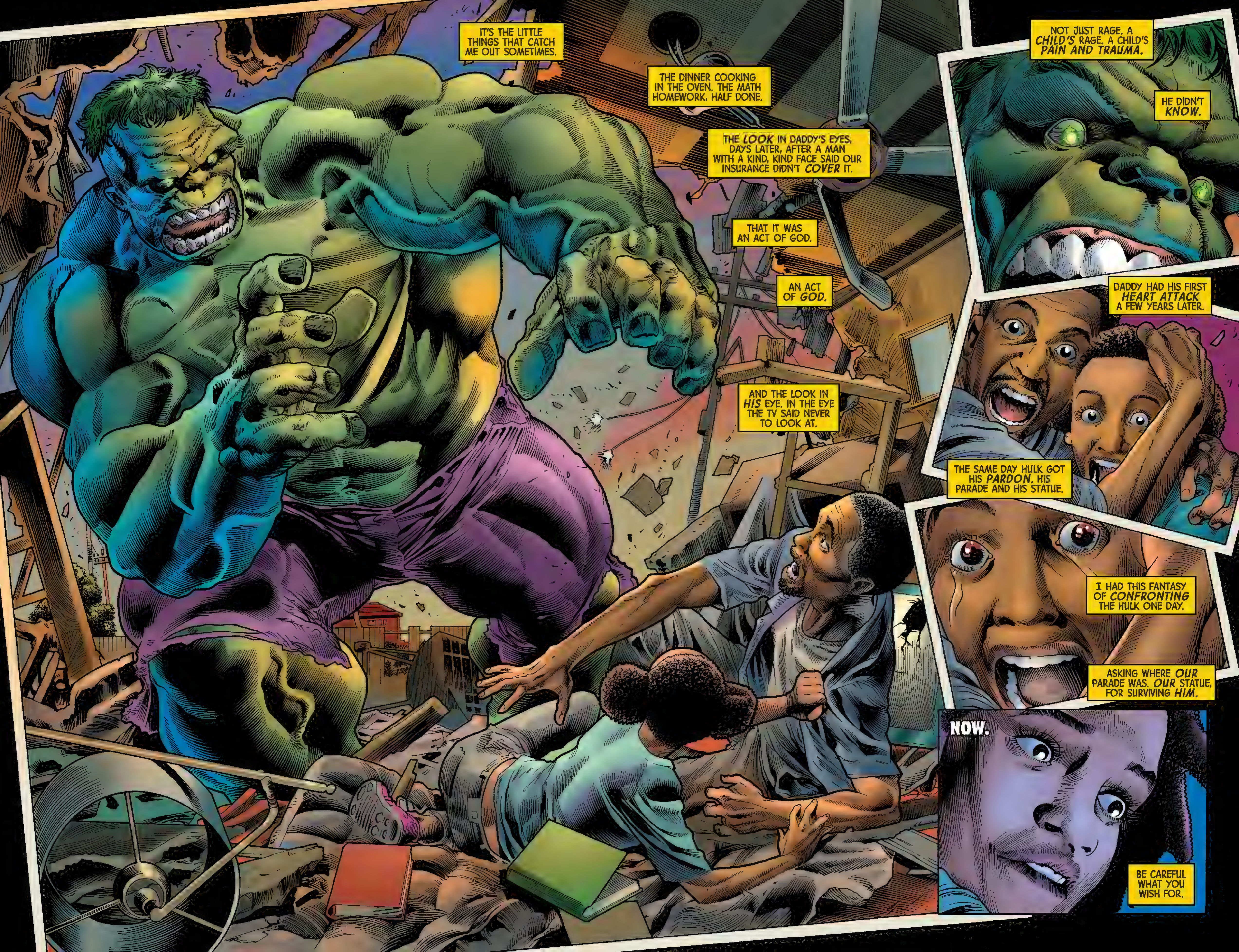
WHO'S THERE

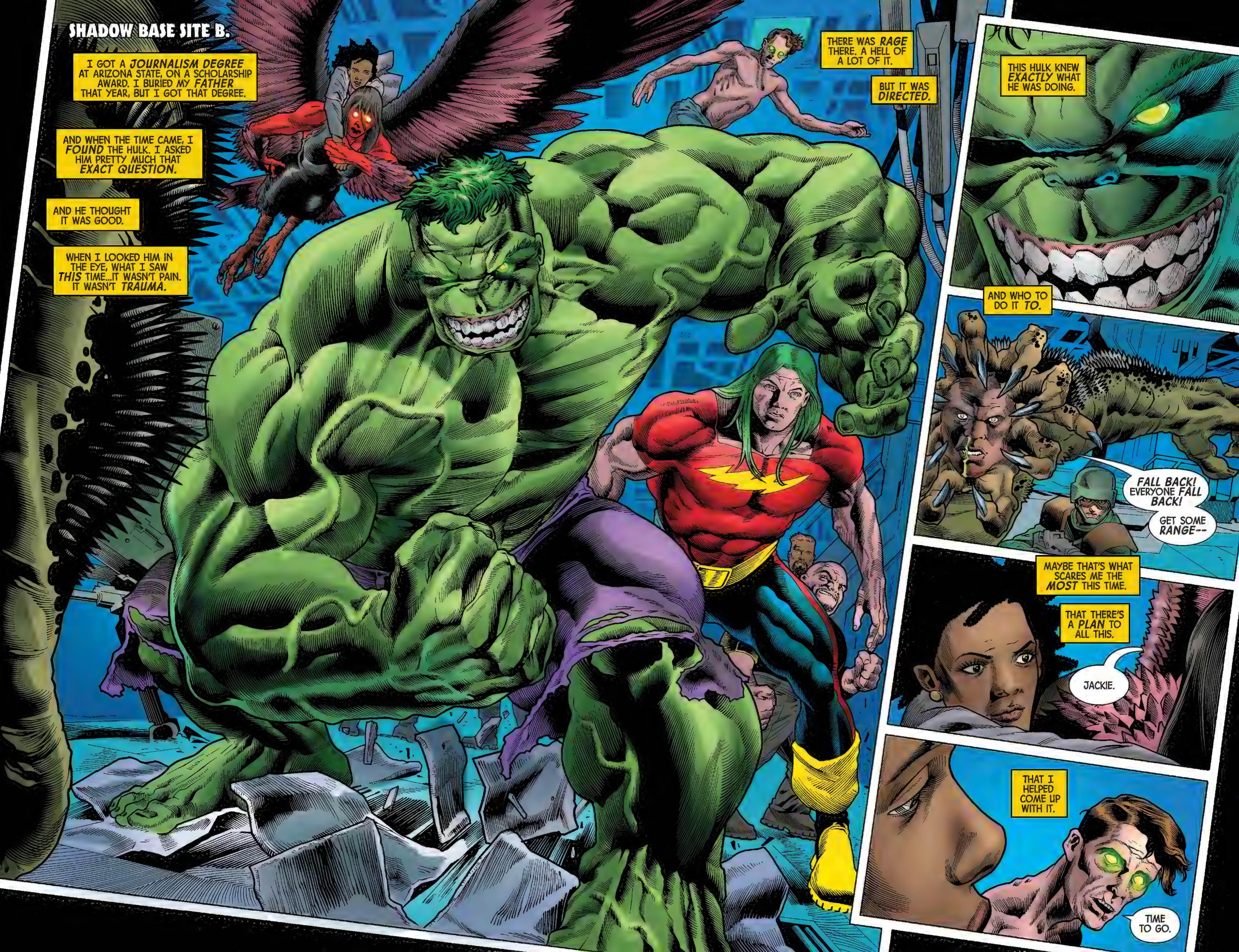
23

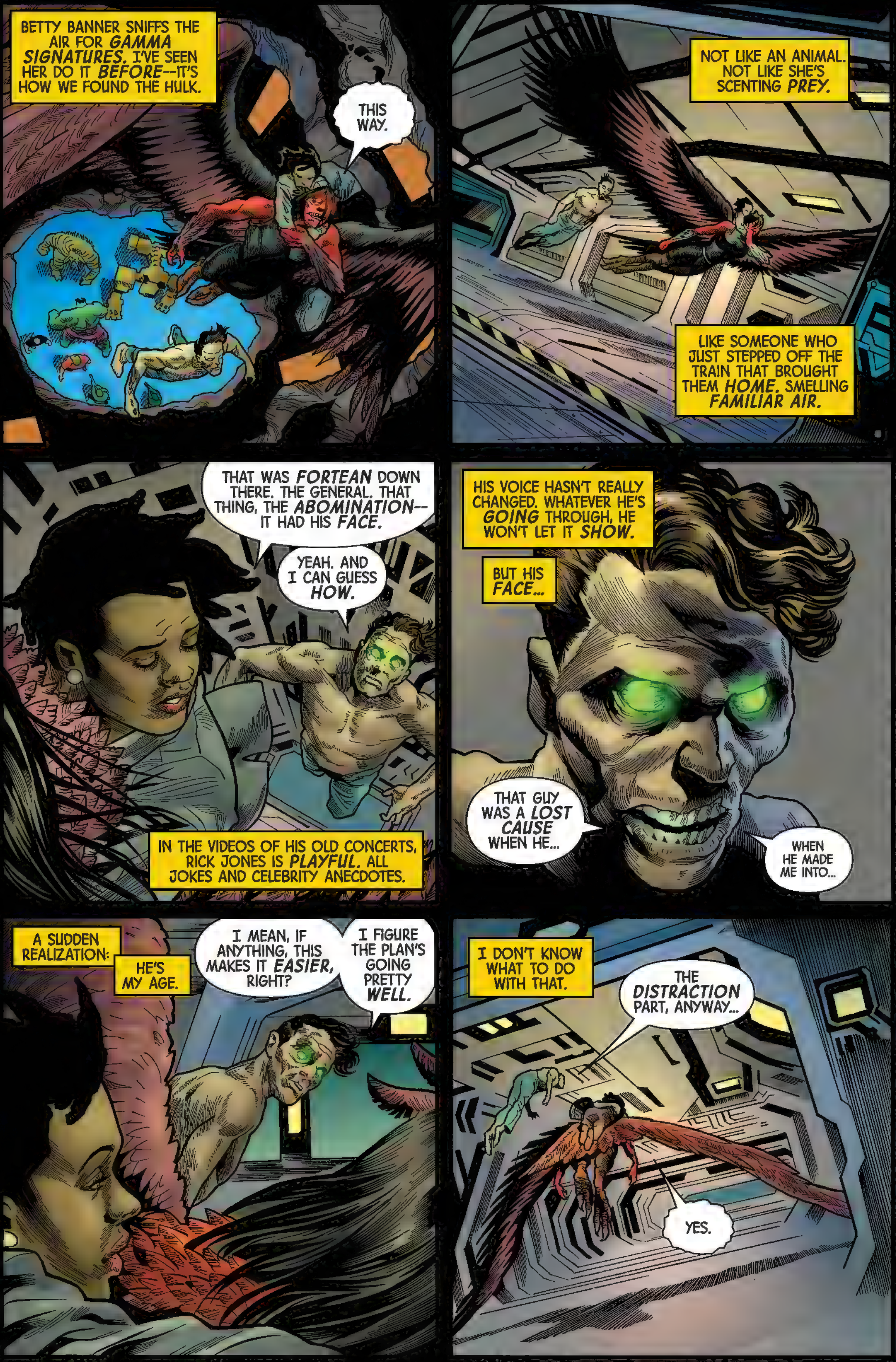
"LET YOUR PLANS BE DARK AND IMPENETRABLE AS NIGHT."

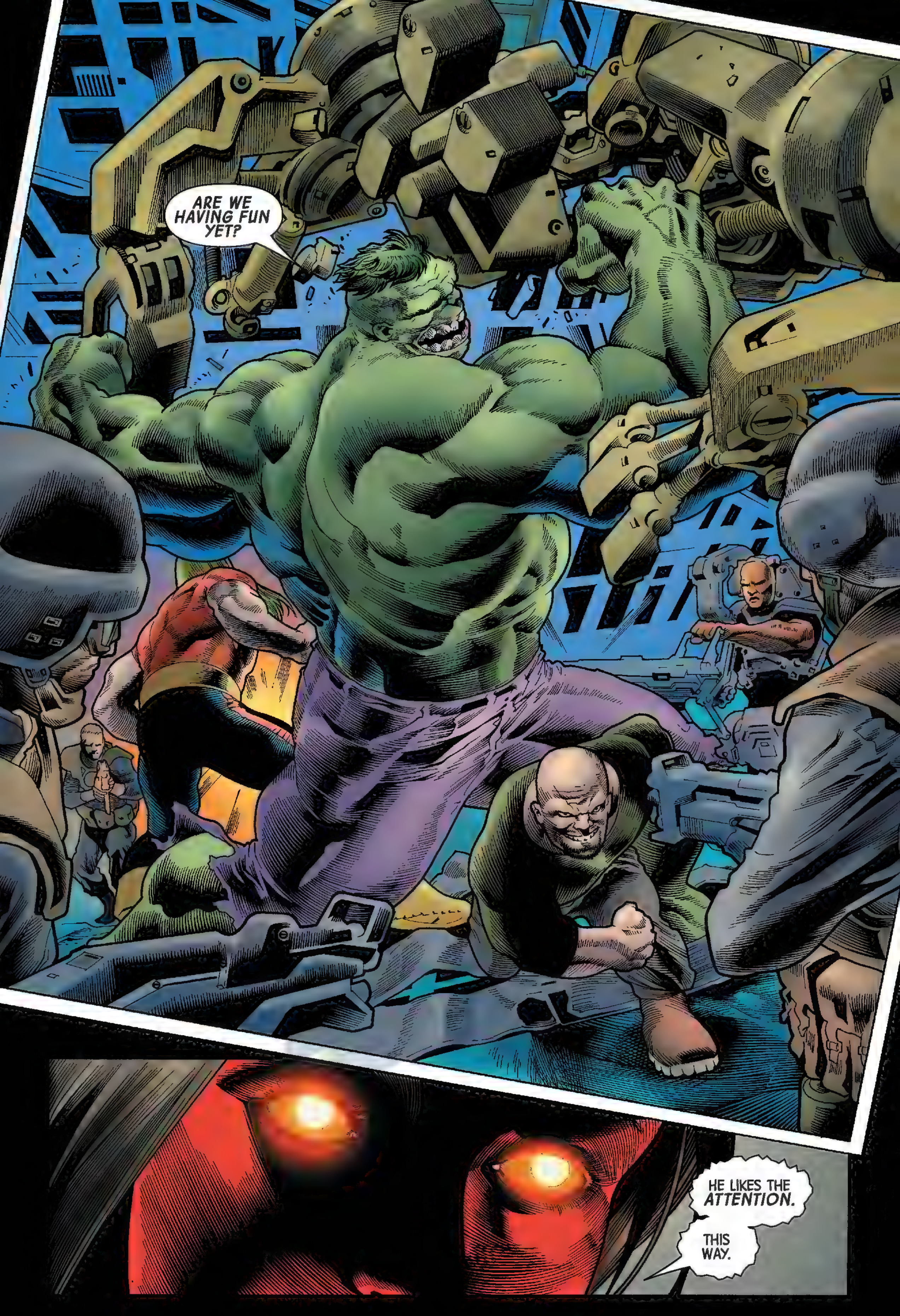
– SUN TZU
THE ART OF WAR

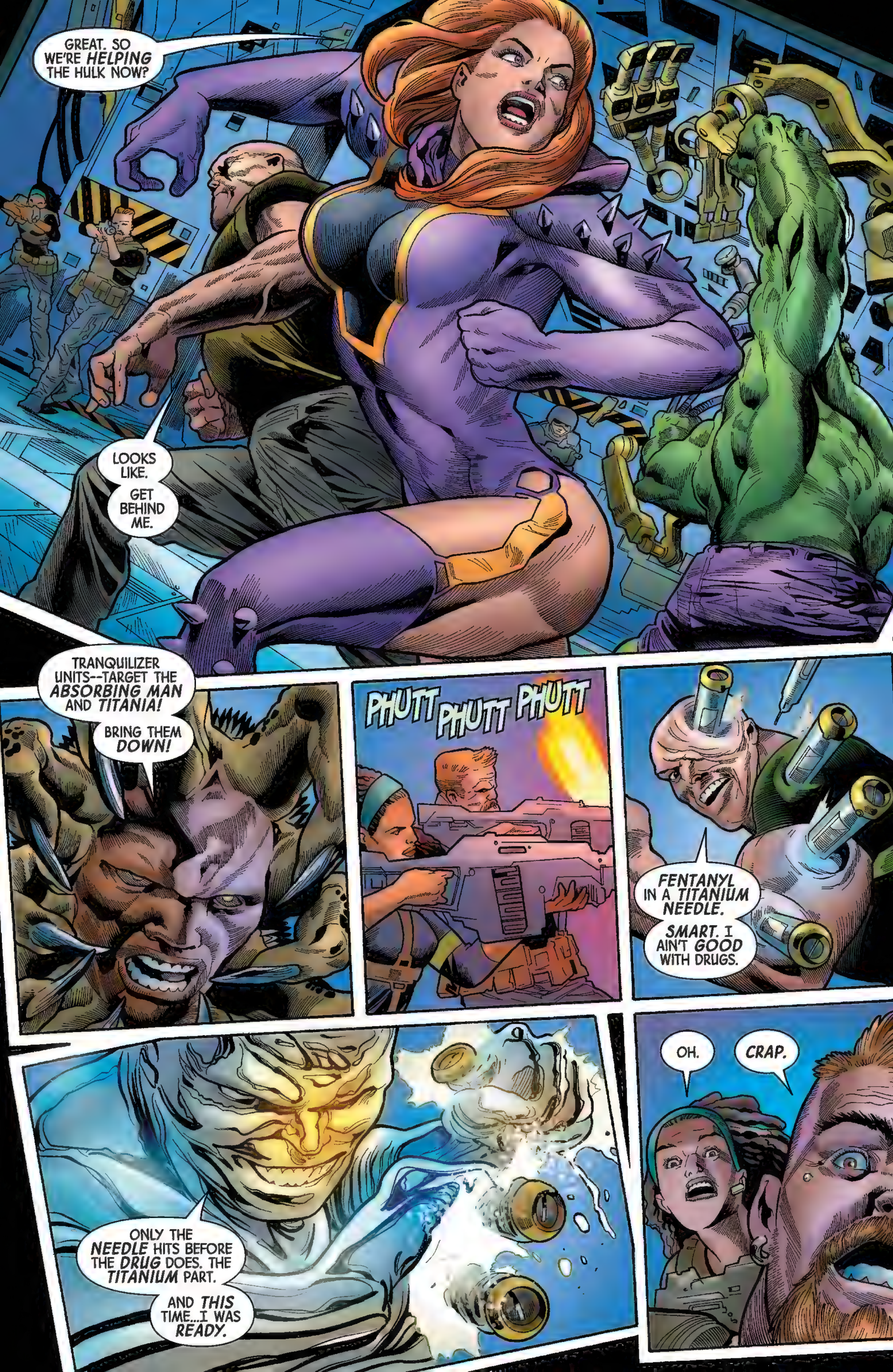

YEARS AGO.
EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM
HULK WARNING
HAS BEEN SIGHTED IN OR NEAR E FOLLOWING
DO NOT LOOK THE CREATURE IN THE EYE.
REPEAT.
IF YOU ARE RECEIVING THIS EMERGENCY BROADCAST, THE CREATURE KNOWN AS THE HULK HAS BEEN SIGHTED IN YOUR AREA.
EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM
HULK WARNING
EVACUATE YOUR HOMES IMMEDIATELY. LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND.
THE CREATURE IS DRIVEN BY RAGE.
THIS...THIS ISN'T REAL, IS IT, DADDY?
I...I DON'T KNOW, BABY GIRL.
I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A SHOW...BUT...
...BUT IT JUST KEEPS GOING.
IT IS CAPABLE OF MASS DESTRUCTION.
IF YOU SEE THE CREATURE-- OR IF IT SEES YOU-- REMAIN STILL.
UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES DRAW UNDUE ATTENTION TO YOURSELF.
I--I THINK MAYBE WE NEED TO--
DO NOT LOOK THE CREATURE IN THE EYE.

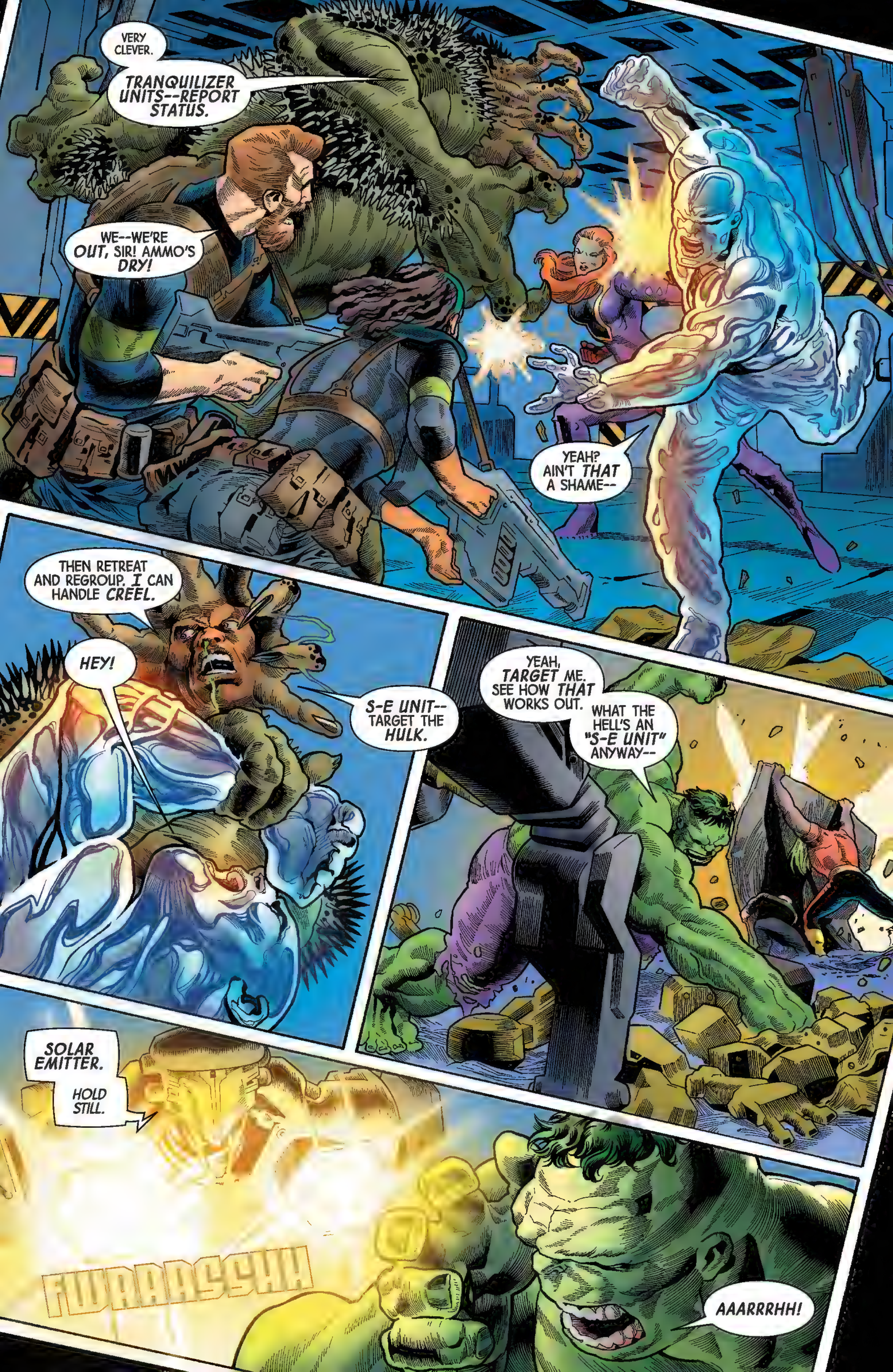

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT CATCH ME OUT SOMETIMES.
THE DINNER COOKING IN THE OVEN. THE MATH HOMEWORK, HALF DONE.
THE *LOOK* IN DADDY'S EYES, DAYS LATER, AFTER A MAN WITH A KIND, KIND FACE SAID OUR INSURANCE DIDN'T *COVER* IT.
THAT IT WAS AN ACT OF GOD.
AN ACT OF *GOD.*
AND THE LOOK IN *HIS* EYE. IN THE EYE THE TV SAID NEVER TO LOOK AT.
NOT JUST RAGE. A *CHILD'S* RAGE. A CHILD'S *PAIN AND TRAUMA.*
HE DIDN'T *KNOW.*
DADDY HAD HIS FIRST *HEART ATTACK* A FEW YEARS LATER.
THE SAME DAY HULK GOT HIS *PARDON.* HIS PARADE AND HIS STATUE.
I HAD THIS FANTASY OF *CONFRONTING* THE HULK ONE DAY.
ASKING WHERE *OUR* PARADE WAS. *OUR* STATUE, FOR SURVIVING *HIM.*
NOW.
BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.

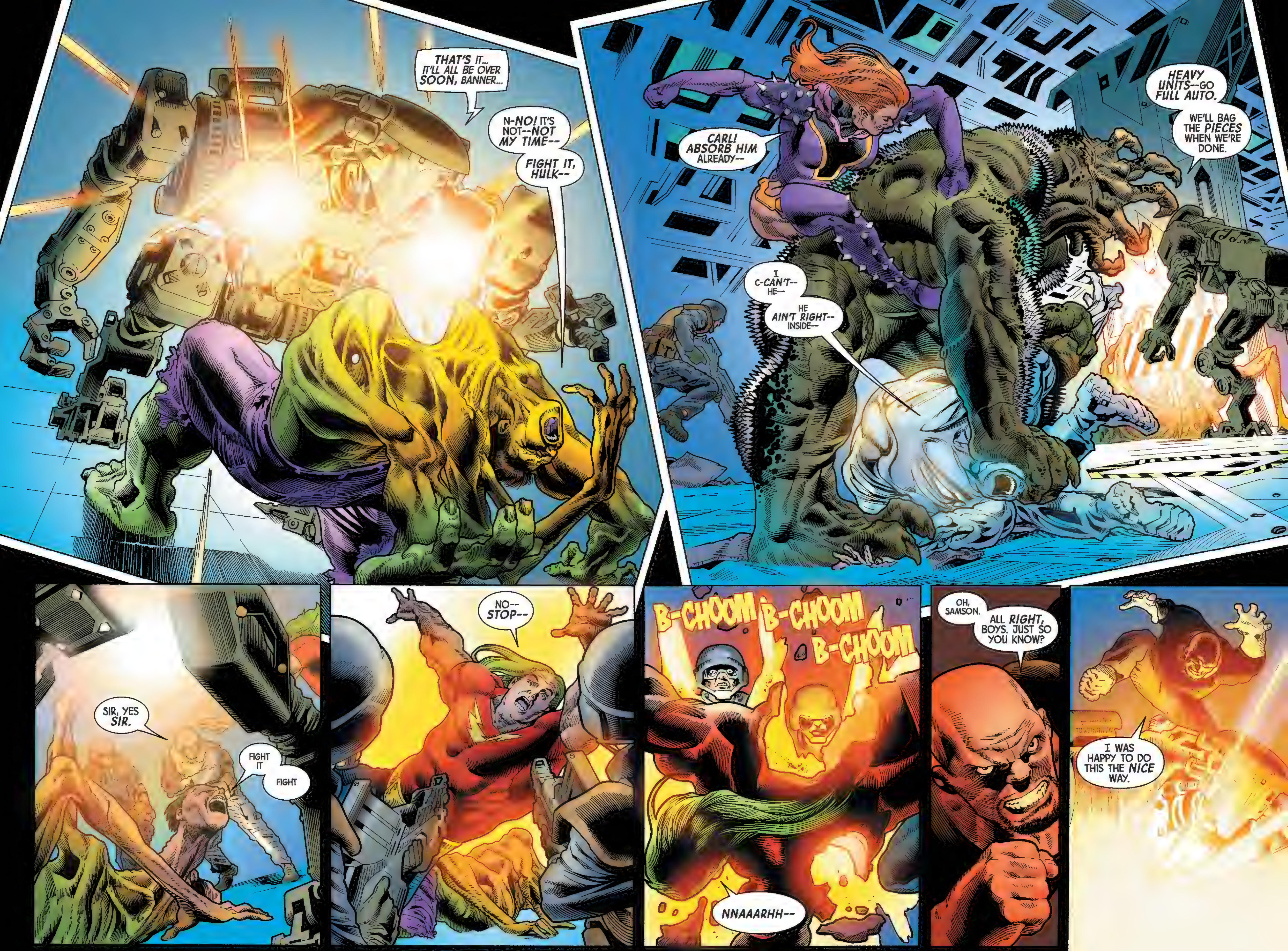

SHADOW BASE SITE B.
I GOT A *JOURNALISM DEGREE* AT ARIZONA STATE, ON A SCHOLARSHIP AWARD. I BURIED MY *FATHER* THAT YEAR, BUT I GOT THAT DEGREE.
AND WHEN THE TIME CAME, I *FOUND* THE HULK. I ASKED HIM PRETTY MUCH THAT *EXACT QUESTION.*
AND HE THOUGHT IT WAS GOOD.
WHEN I LOOKED HIM IN THE EYE, WHAT I SAW *THIS* TIME...IT WASN'T PAIN. IT WASN'T *TRAUMA.*
THERE WAS *RAGE* THERE. A HELL OF A LOT OF IT.
BUT IT WAS *DIRECTED.*
THIS HULK KNEW *EXACTLY* WHAT HE WAS DOING.
AND WHO TO DO IT *TO.*
FALL BACK! EVERYONE *FALL BACK!*
GET SOME *RANGE--*
MAYBE THAT'S WHAT SCARES ME THE *MOST* THIS TIME.
THAT THERE'S A *PLAN* TO ALL THIS.
JACKIE.
THAT I HELPED COME UP WITH IT.
TIME TO GO.

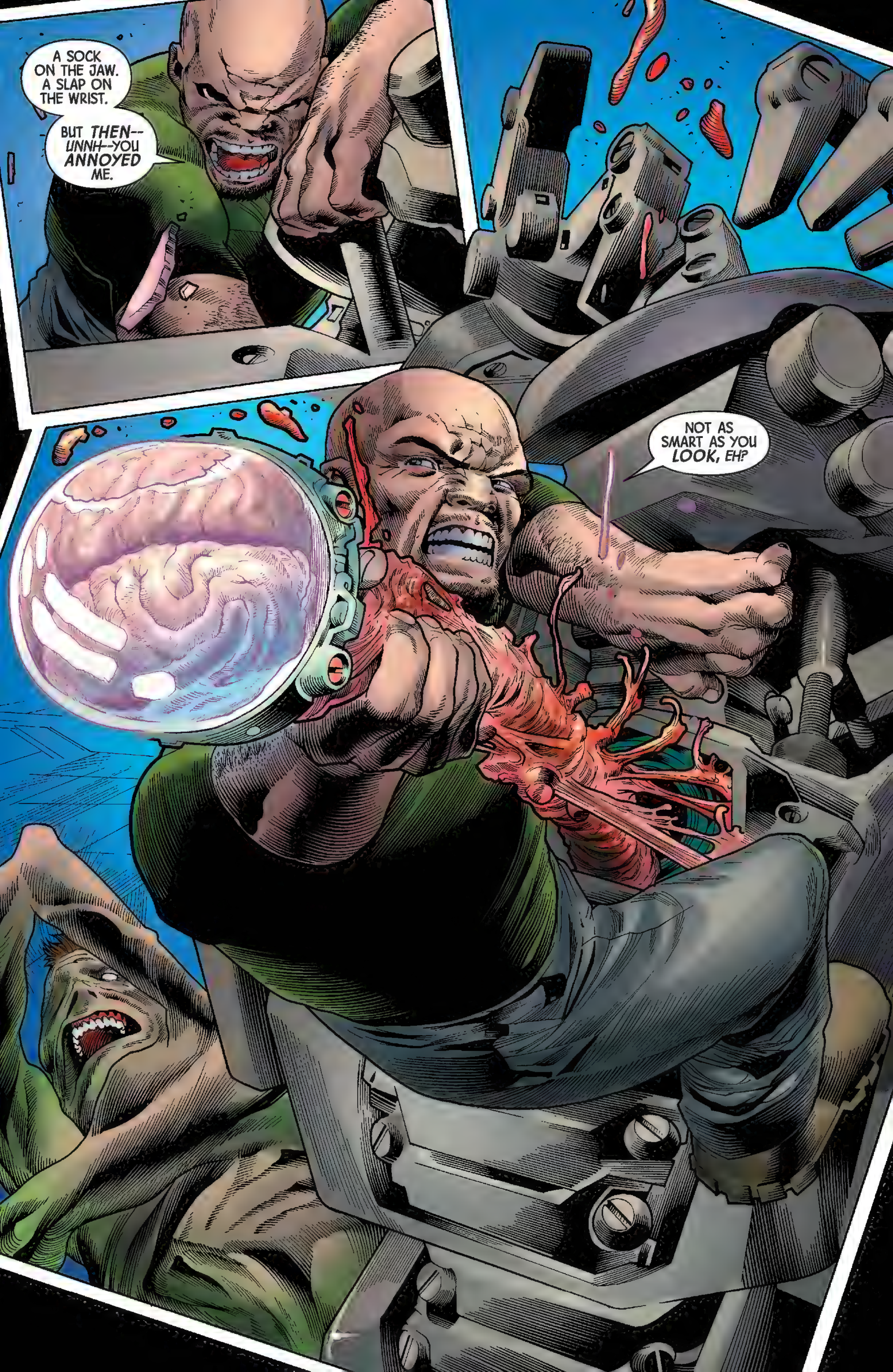

BETTY BANNER SNIFFS THE AIR FOR *GAMMA SIGNATURES.* I'VE SEEN HER DO IT *BEFORE*--IT'S HOW WE FOUND THE HULK.
THIS WAY.
NOT LIKE AN ANIMAL. NOT LIKE SHE'S SCENTING *PREY.*
LIKE SOMEONE WHO JUST STEPPED OFF THE TRAIN THAT BROUGHT THEM *HOME,* SMELLING *FAMILIAR AIR.*
THAT WAS *FORTEAN* DOWN THERE. THE GENERAL. THAT THING, THE *ABOMINATION*-- IT HAD HIS *FACE.*
YEAH. AND I CAN GUESS *HOW.*
IN THE VIDEOS OF HIS OLD CONCERTS, RICK JONES IS *PLAYFUL.* ALL JOKES AND CELEBRITY ANECDOTES.
HIS VOICE HASN'T REALLY CHANGED. WHATEVER HE'S *GOING* THROUGH, HE WON'T LET IT *SHOW.*
BUT HIS *FACE...*
THAT GUY WAS A *LOST CAUSE* WHEN HE...
WHEN HE MADE ME INTO...
A SUDDEN REALIZATION:
HE'S MY AGE.
I MEAN, IF ANYTHING, THIS MAKES IT *EASIER,* RIGHT?
I FIGURE THE PLAN'S GOING PRETTY *WELL.*
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THAT.
THE *DISTRACTION* PART, ANYWAY...
YES.

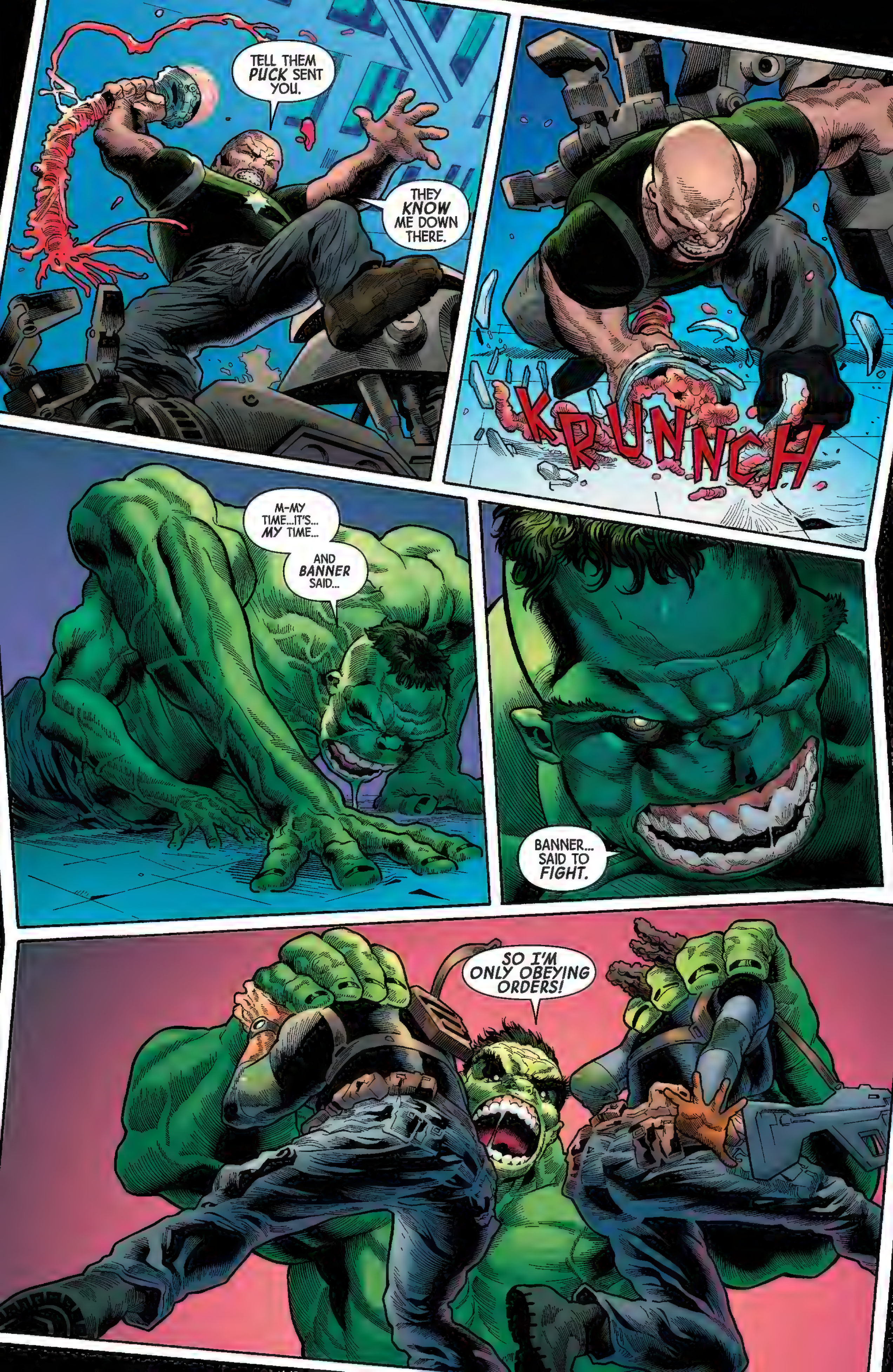

ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?
HE LIKES THE *ATTENTION.*
THIS WAY.

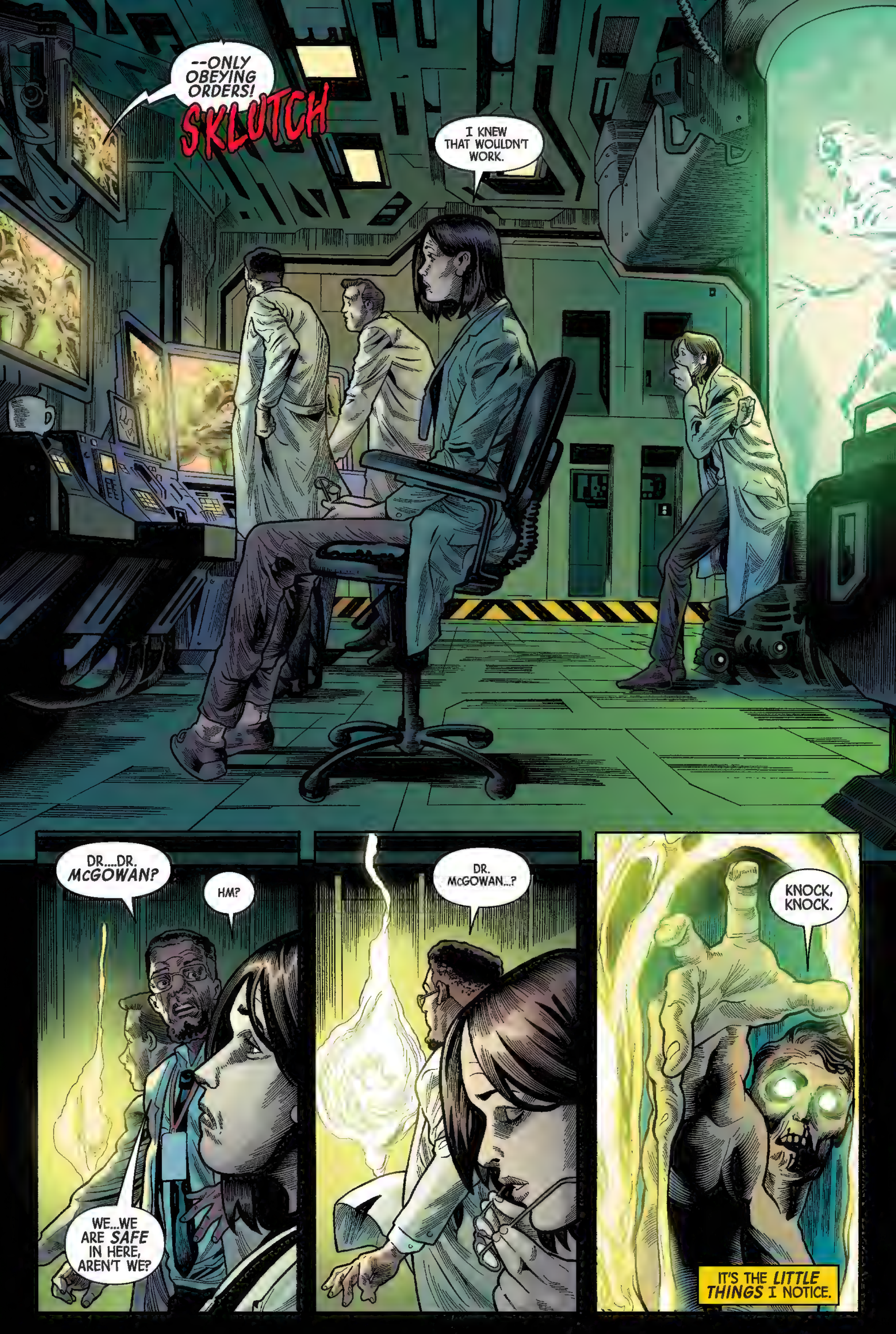

GREAT. SO WE'RE *HELPING* THE HULK NOW?
LOOKS LIKE.
GET BEHIND ME.
TRANQUILIZER UNITS--TARGET THE *ABSORBING MAN* AND *TITANIA!*
BRING THEM *DOWN!*
PHUTT PHUTT PHUTT
FENTANYL IN A *TITANIUM NEEDLE.*
SMART. I AIN'T *GOOD* WITH DRUGS.
ONLY THE *NEEDLE* HITS BEFORE THE *DRUG* DOES. THE *TITANIUM* PART.
AND *THIS* TIME...I WAS *READY.*
OH.
CRAP.

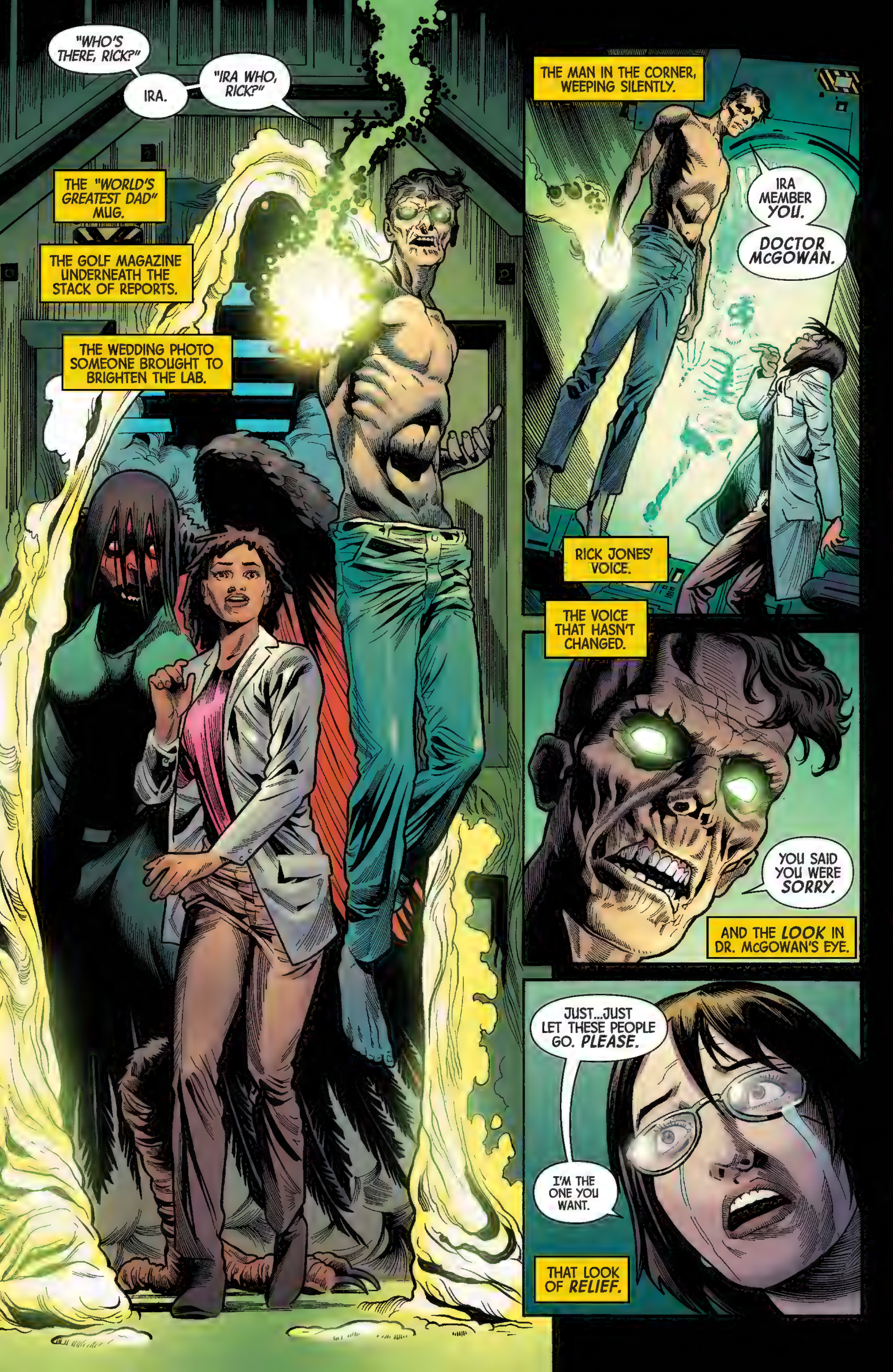

VERY CLEVER.
TRANQUILIZER UNITS--REPORT STATUS.
WE--WE'RE *OUT*, SIR! AMMO'S *DRY!*
YEAH? AIN'T *THAT* A SHAME--
THEN RETREAT AND REGROUP. *I* CAN HANDLE *CREEL.*
HEY!
S-E UNIT--TARGET THE *HULK.*
YEAH, *TARGET* ME. SEE HOW *THAT* WORKS OUT.
WHAT THE HELL'S AN *"S-E UNIT"* ANYWAY--
SOLAR EMITTER.
HOLD STILL.
FWAAASSHH
AAARRRHH!

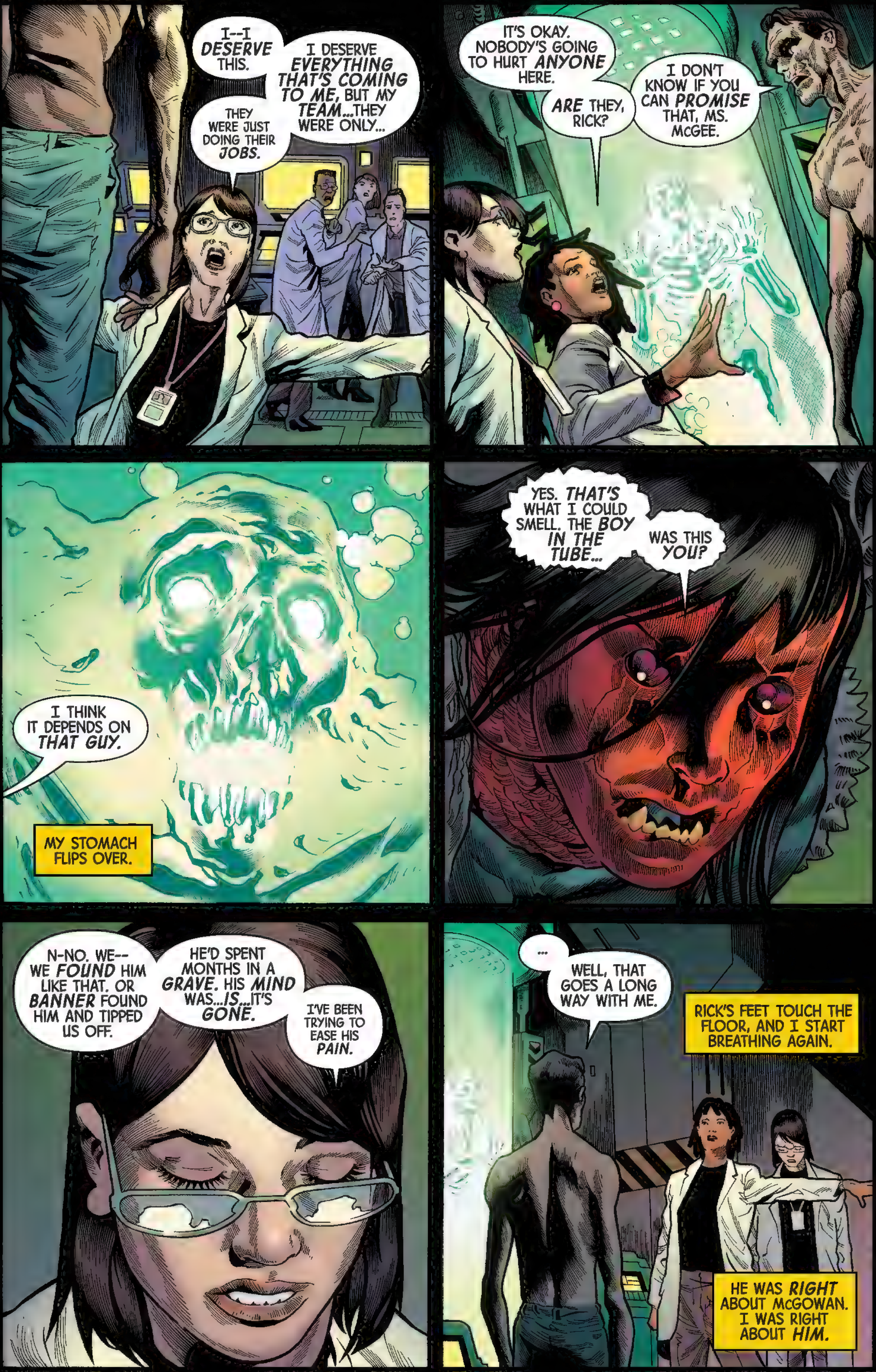

THAT'S IT... IT'LL ALL BE OVER SOON, BANNER...
N-NO! IT'S NOT--NOT MY TIME--
FIGHT IT, HULK--
CARL! ABSORB HIM ALREADY--
I C-CAN'T-- HE--
HE AIN'T RIGHT-- INSIDE--
HEAVY UNITS--GO FULL AUTO.
WE'LL BAG THE PIECES WHEN WE'RE DONE.
SIR, YES SIR.
FIGHT IT
FIGHT
NO-- STOP--
B-CHOOM B-CHOOM B-CHOOM
NNAAARHH--
OH, SAMSON.
ALL RIGHT, BOYS. JUST SO YOU KNOW?
I WAS HAPPY TO DO THIS THE NICE WAY.

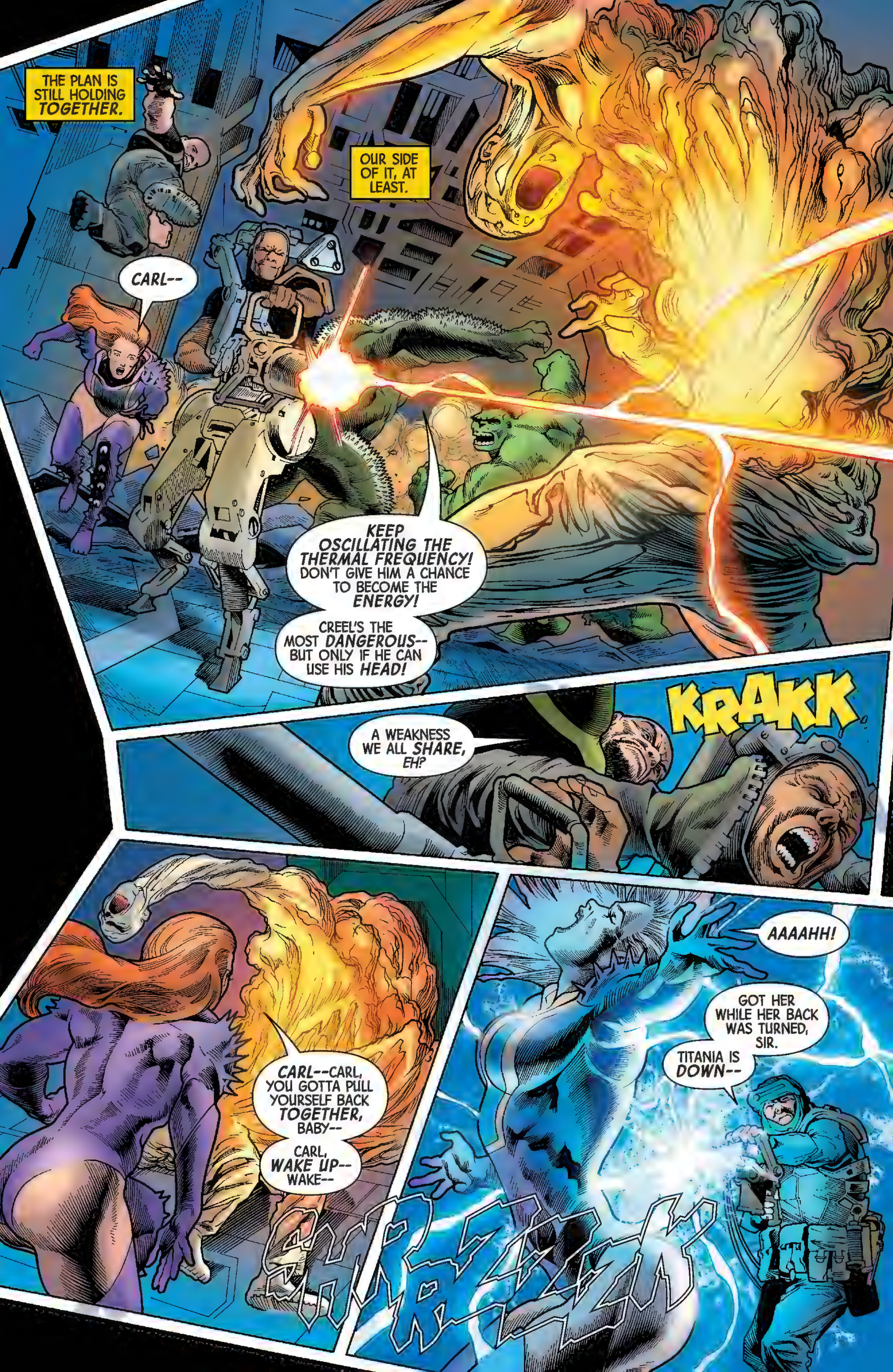

A SOCK ON THE JAW. A SLAP ON THE WRIST.
BUT *THEN*-- *UNNH*--YOU *ANNOYED* ME.
NOT AS SMART AS YOU *LOOK*, EH?

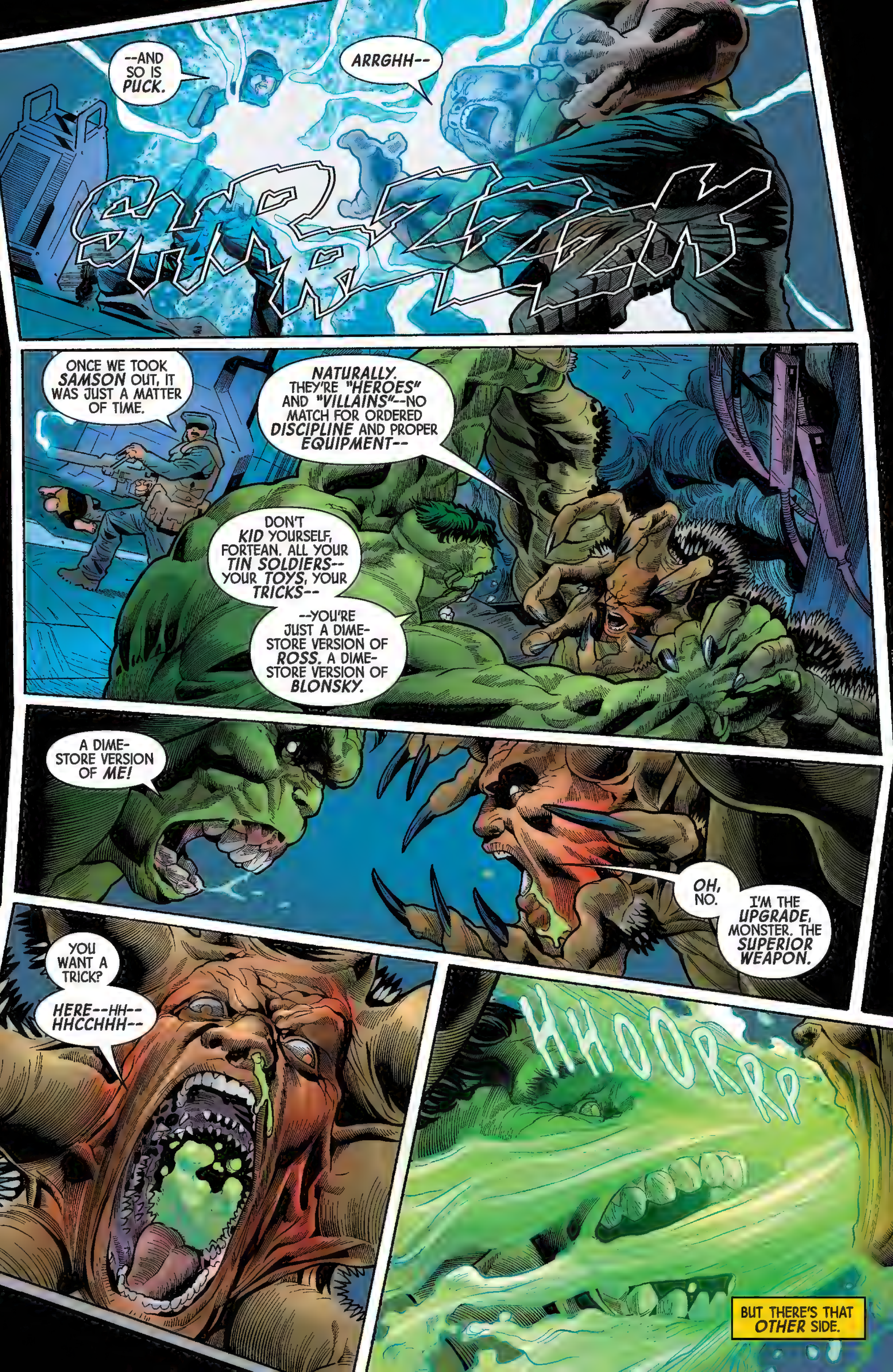

TELL THEM *PUCK* SENT YOU.
THEY *KNOW* ME DOWN THERE.
KRUNNCH
M-MY TIME...IT'S... *MY* TIME...
AND *BANNER* SAID...
BANNER... SAID TO *FIGHT.*
SO I'M ONLY OBEYING ORDERS!

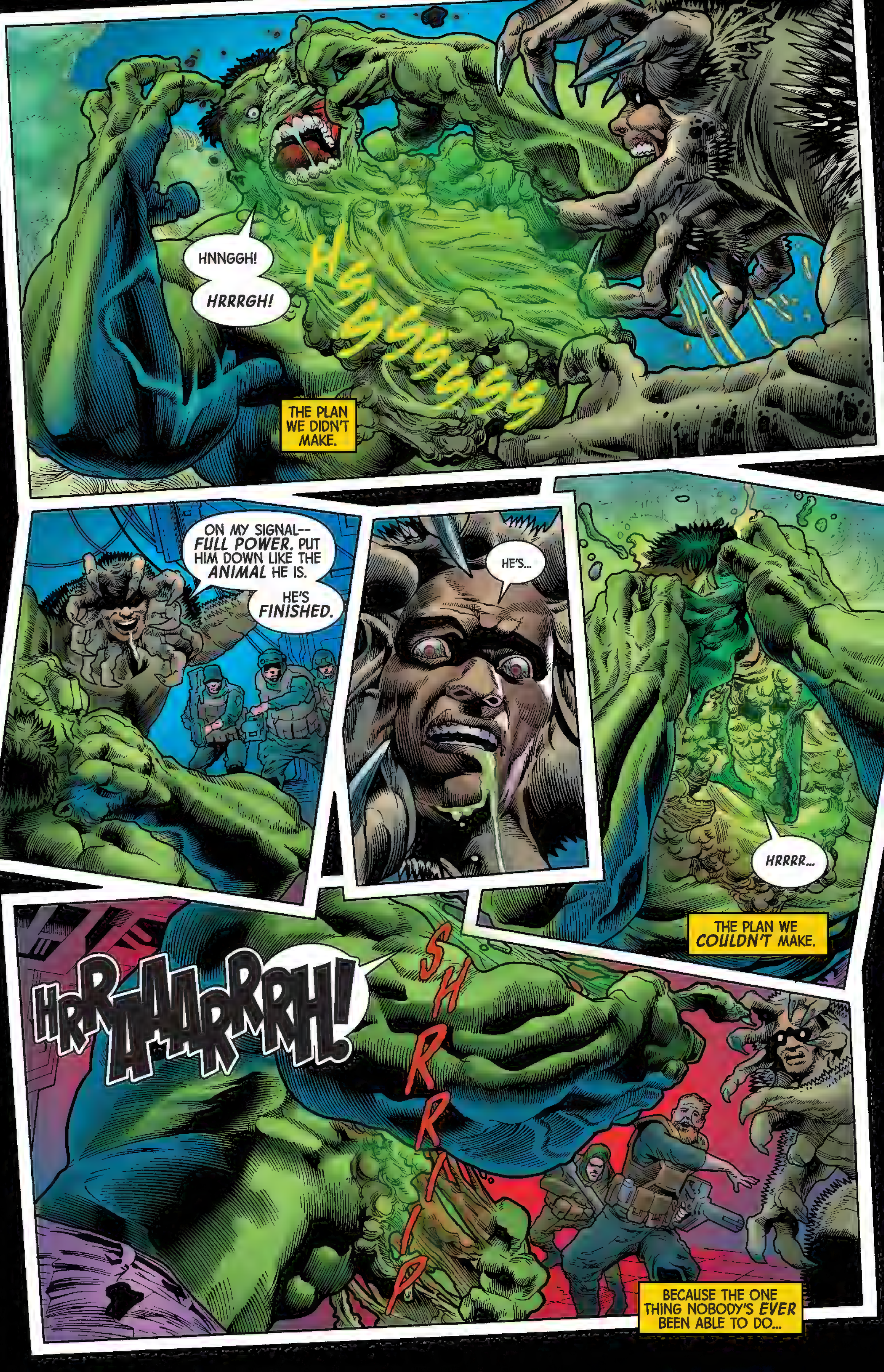

--ONLY OBEYING ORDERS!
SKLUTCH
I KNEW THAT WOULDN'T WORK.
DR....DR. MCGOWAN?
HM?
WE...WE ARE SAFE IN HERE, AREN'T WE?
DR. McGOWAN...?
KNOCK, KNOCK.
IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS I NOTICE.

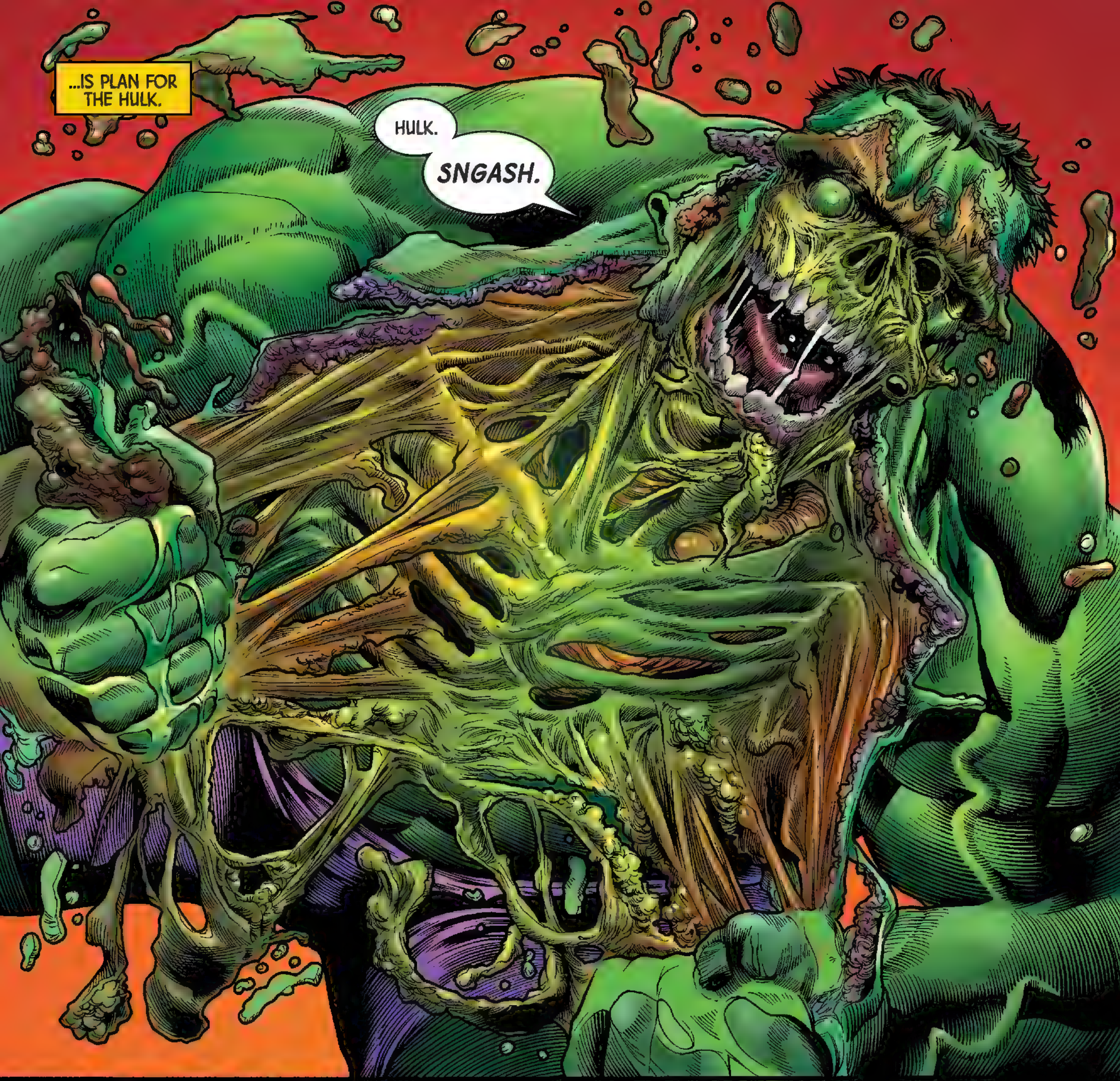

"WHO'S THERE, RICK?"
IRA.
"IRA WHO, RICK?"
THE "WORLD'S GREATEST DAD" MUG.
THE GOLF MAGAZINE UNDERNEATH THE STACK OF REPORTS.
THE WEDDING PHOTO SOMEONE BROUGHT TO BRIGHTEN THE LAB.
THE MAN IN THE CORNER, WEEPING SILENTLY.
IRA MEMBER YOU.
DOCTOR McGOWAN.
RICK JONES' VOICE.
THE VOICE THAT HASN'T CHANGED.
YOU SAID YOU WERE SORRY.
AND THE LOOK IN DR. McGOWAN'S EYE.
JUST...JUST LET THESE PEOPLE GO. PLEASE.
I'M THE ONE YOU WANT.
THAT LOOK OF RELIEF.


I--I *DESERVE* THIS.
I DESERVE *EVERYTHING THAT'S COMING TO ME,* BUT MY *TEAM*...THEY WERE ONLY...
THEY WERE JUST DOING THEIR *JOBS.*
IT'S OKAY. NOBODY'S GOING TO HURT *ANYONE* HERE.
ARE THEY, RICK?
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN *PROMISE* THAT, MS. McGEE.
I THINK IT DEPENDS ON *THAT GUY.*
MY STOMACH FLIPS OVER.
YES. *THAT'S* WHAT I COULD SMELL. THE *BOY IN THE TUBE*...
WAS THIS *YOU?*
N-NO. WE-- WE *FOUND* HIM LIKE THAT. OR *BANNER* FOUND HIM AND TIPPED US OFF.
HE'D SPENT MONTHS IN A *GRAVE.* HIS *MIND* WAS...*IS*...IT'S *GONE.*
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO EASE HIS *PAIN.*
...
WELL, THAT GOES A LONG WAY WITH ME.
RICK'S FEET TOUCH THE FLOOR, AND I START BREATHING AGAIN.
HE WAS *RIGHT* ABOUT McGOWAN. I WAS RIGHT ABOUT *HIM.*


THE PLAN IS STILL HOLDING TOGETHER.
OUR SIDE OF IT, AT LEAST.
CARL--
KEEP OSCILLATING THE THERMAL FREQUENCY! DON'T GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO BECOME THE ENERGY!
CREEL'S THE MOST DANGEROUS-- BUT ONLY IF HE CAN USE HIS HEAD!
KRAKK
A WEAKNESS WE ALL SHARE, EH?
CARL--CARL, YOU GOTTA PULL YOURSELF BACK TOGETHER, BABY--
CARL, WAKE UP-- WAKE--
SHRZZZK
AAAAHH!
GOT HER WHILE HER BACK WAS TURNED, SIR.
TITANIA IS DOWN--

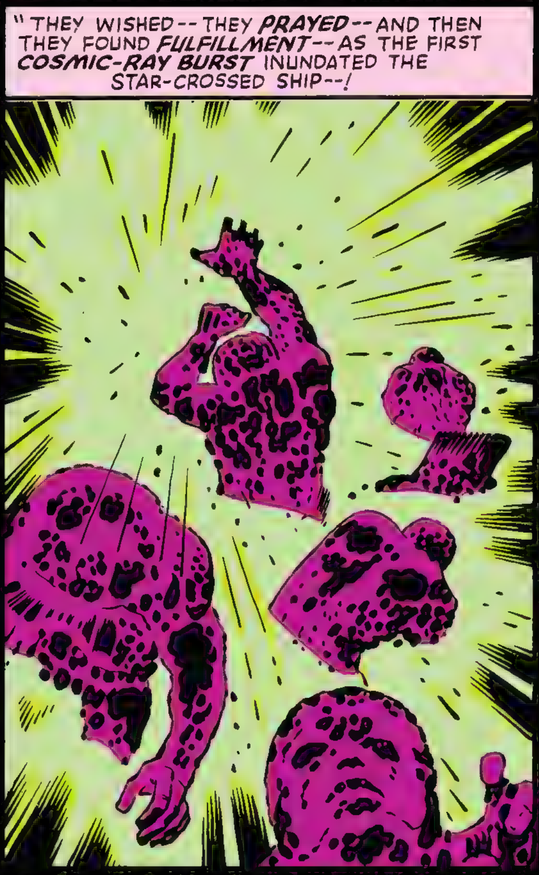

--AND SO IS PUCK.
ARRGHH--
ONCE WE TOOK SAMSON OUT, IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME.
NATURALLY. THEY'RE "HEROES" AND "VILLAINS"--NO MATCH FOR ORDERED DISCIPLINE AND PROPER EQUIPMENT--
DON'T KID YOURSELF, FORTEAN. ALL YOUR TIN SOLDIERS--YOUR TOYS, YOUR TRICKS--
--YOU'RE JUST A DIME-STORE VERSION OF ROSS, A DIME-STORE VERSION OF BLONSKY.
A DIME-STORE VERSION OF ME!
OH, NO.
I'M THE UPGRADE, MONSTER. THE SUPERIOR WEAPON.
YOU WANT A TRICK?
HERE--HH--HHCCHHH--
HHOORRRP
BUT THERE'S THAT OTHER SIDE.


HNNGGH!
HRRRGH!
HSSSSSSSS
THE PLAN WE DIDN'T MAKE.
ON MY SIGNAL-- *FULL POWER.* PUT HIM DOWN LIKE THE *ANIMAL* HE IS.
HE'S *FINISHED.*
HE'S...
HRRRR...
THE PLAN WE *COULDN'T* MAKE.
HRRAHHARRRH!
SHRRIP
BECAUSE THE ONE THING NOBODY'S *EVER* BEEN ABLE TO DO...

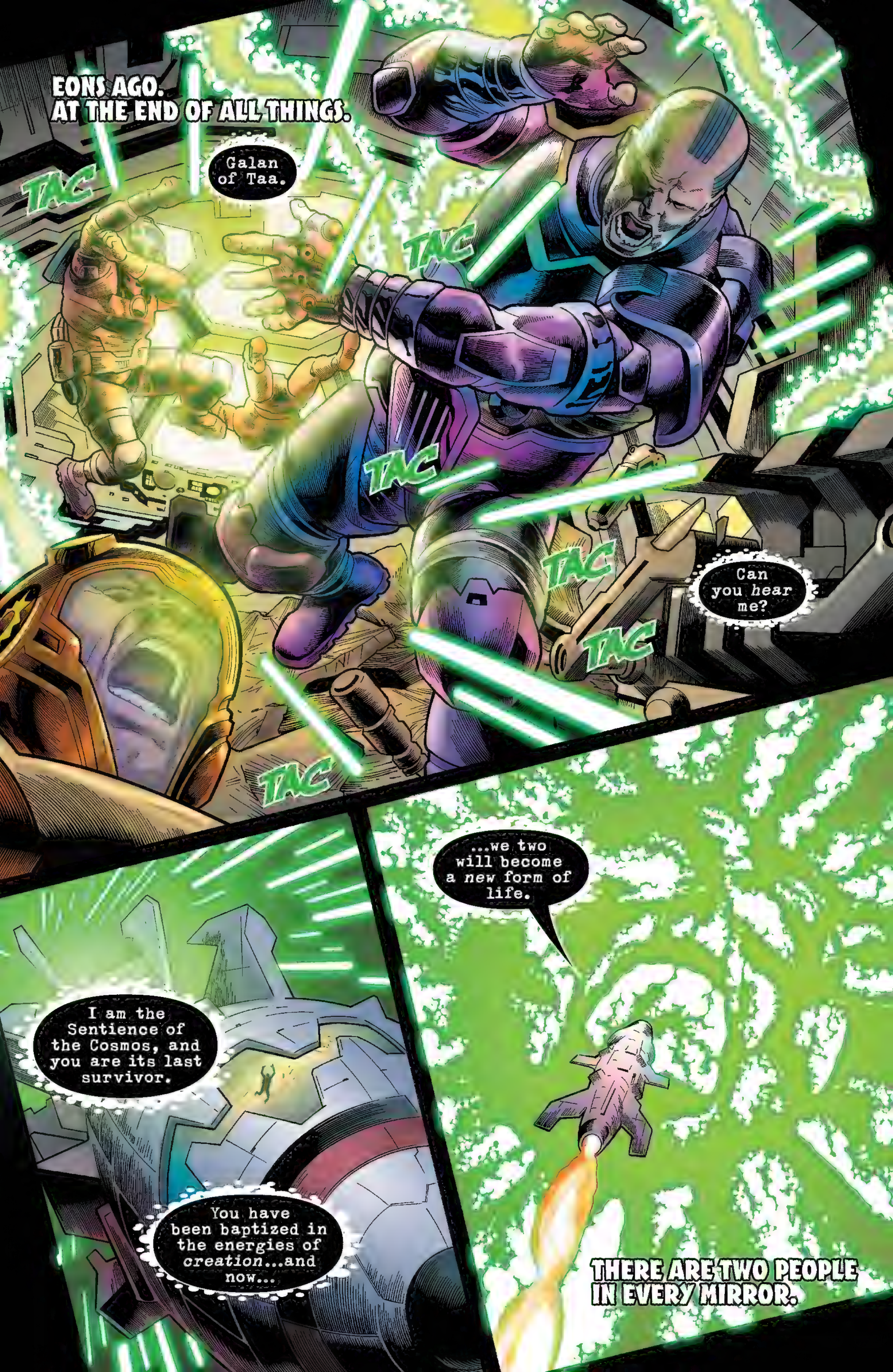

...IS PLAN FOR THE HULK.
HULK.
SNGASH.

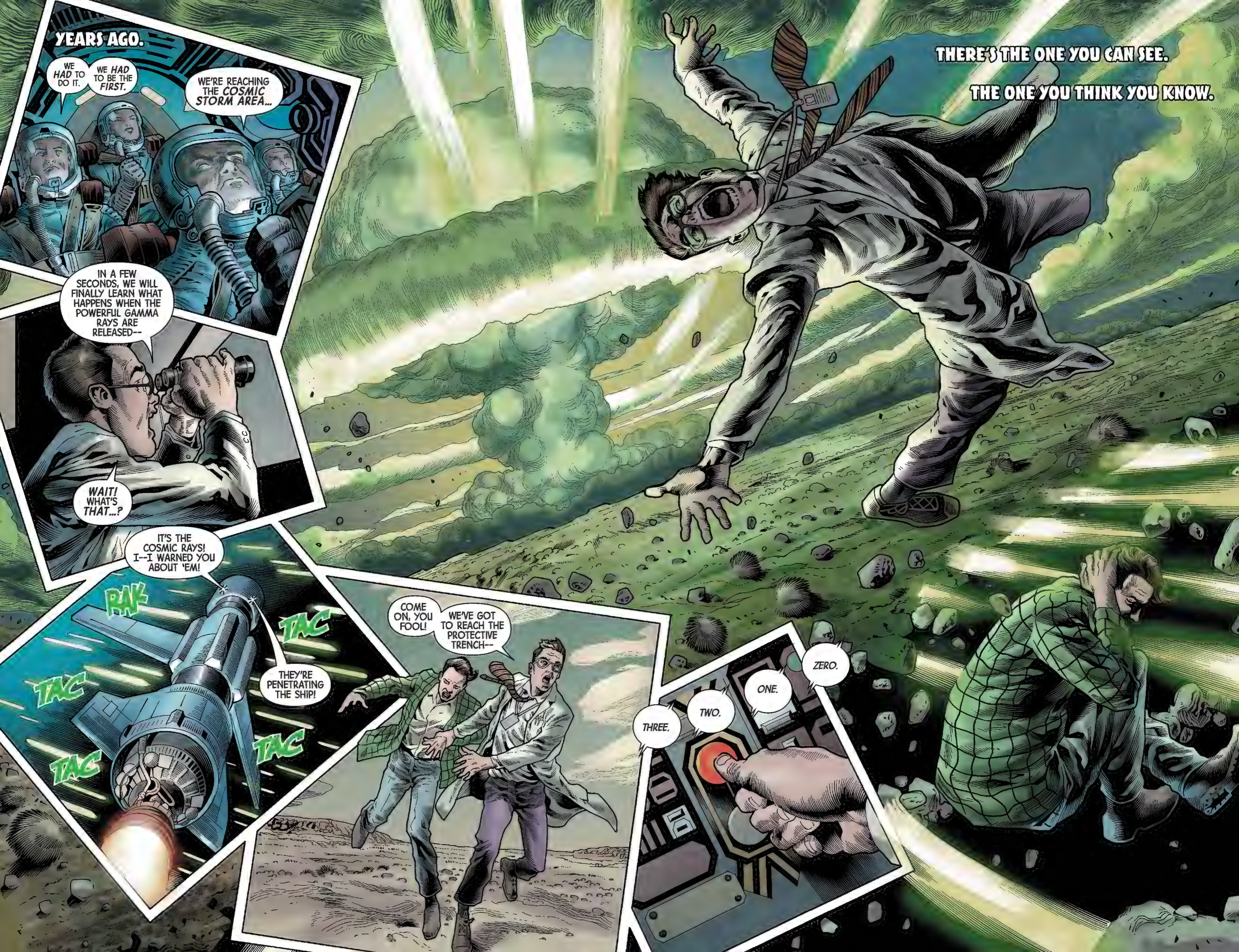
THE FACE OF THE ENEMY

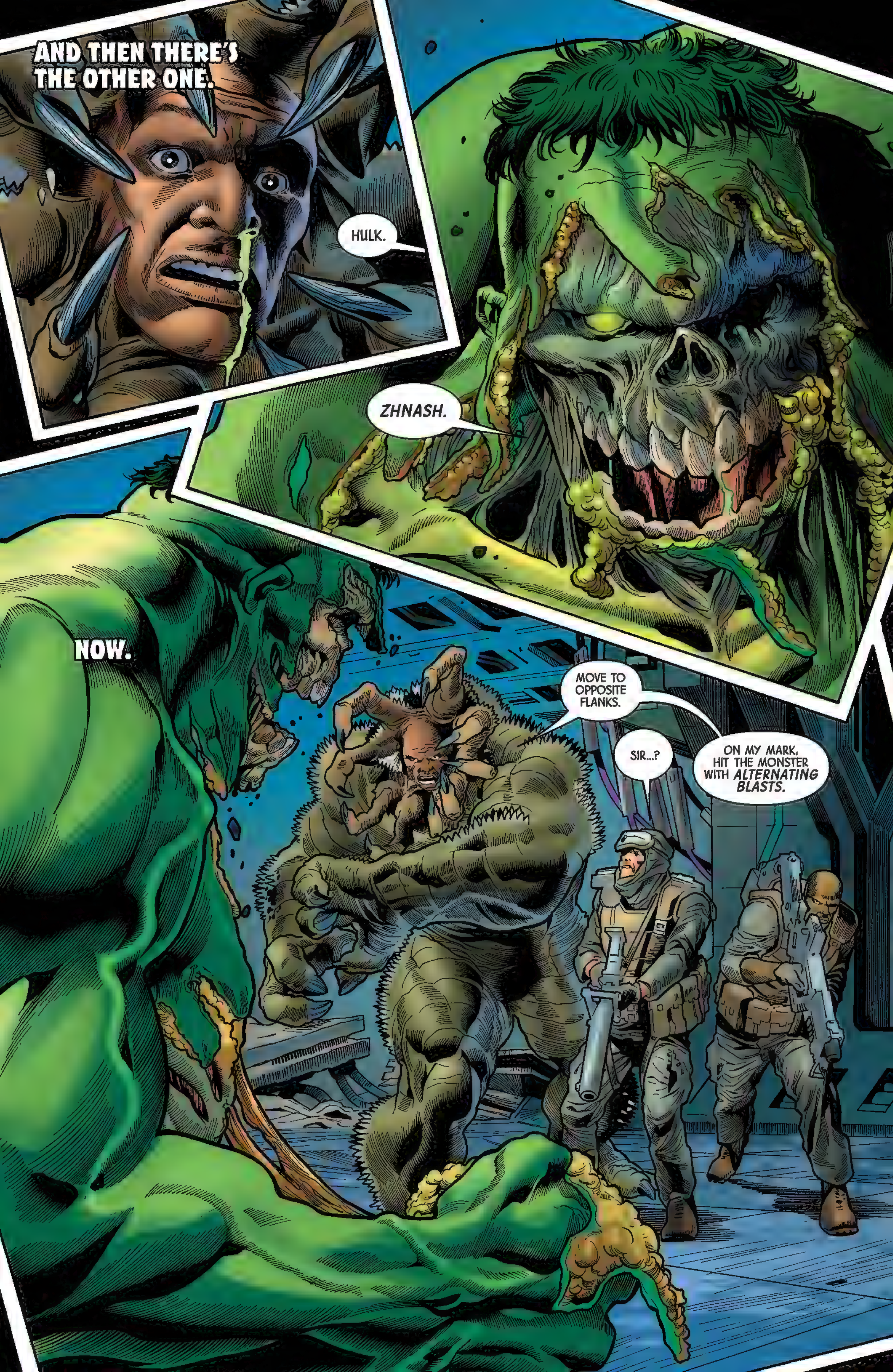
24

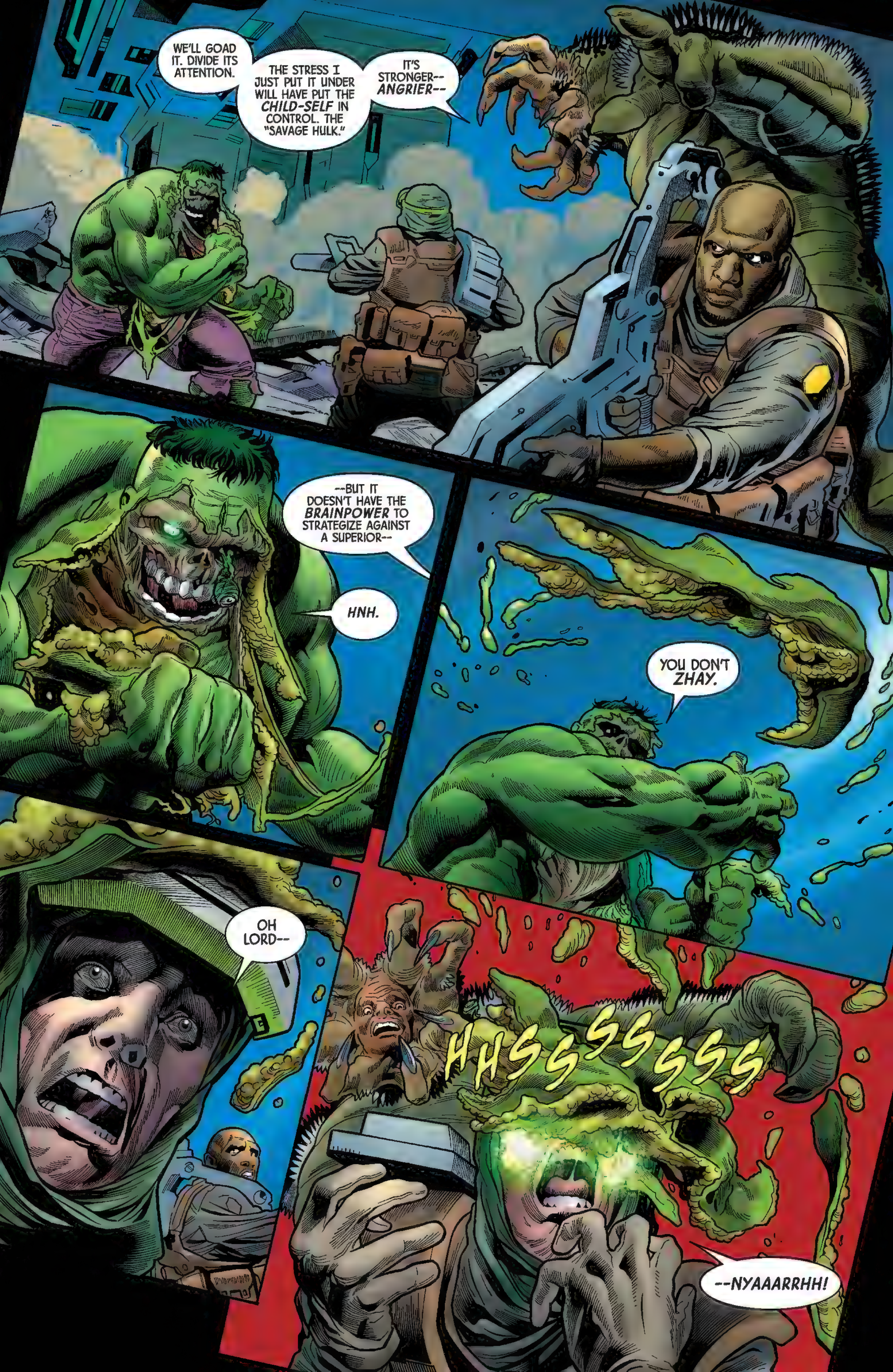

"THEY WISHED--THEY *PRAYED*--AND THEN THEY FOUND *FULFILLMENT*--AS THE FIRST *COSMIC-RAY BURST* INUNDATED THE STAR-CROSSED SHIP--!

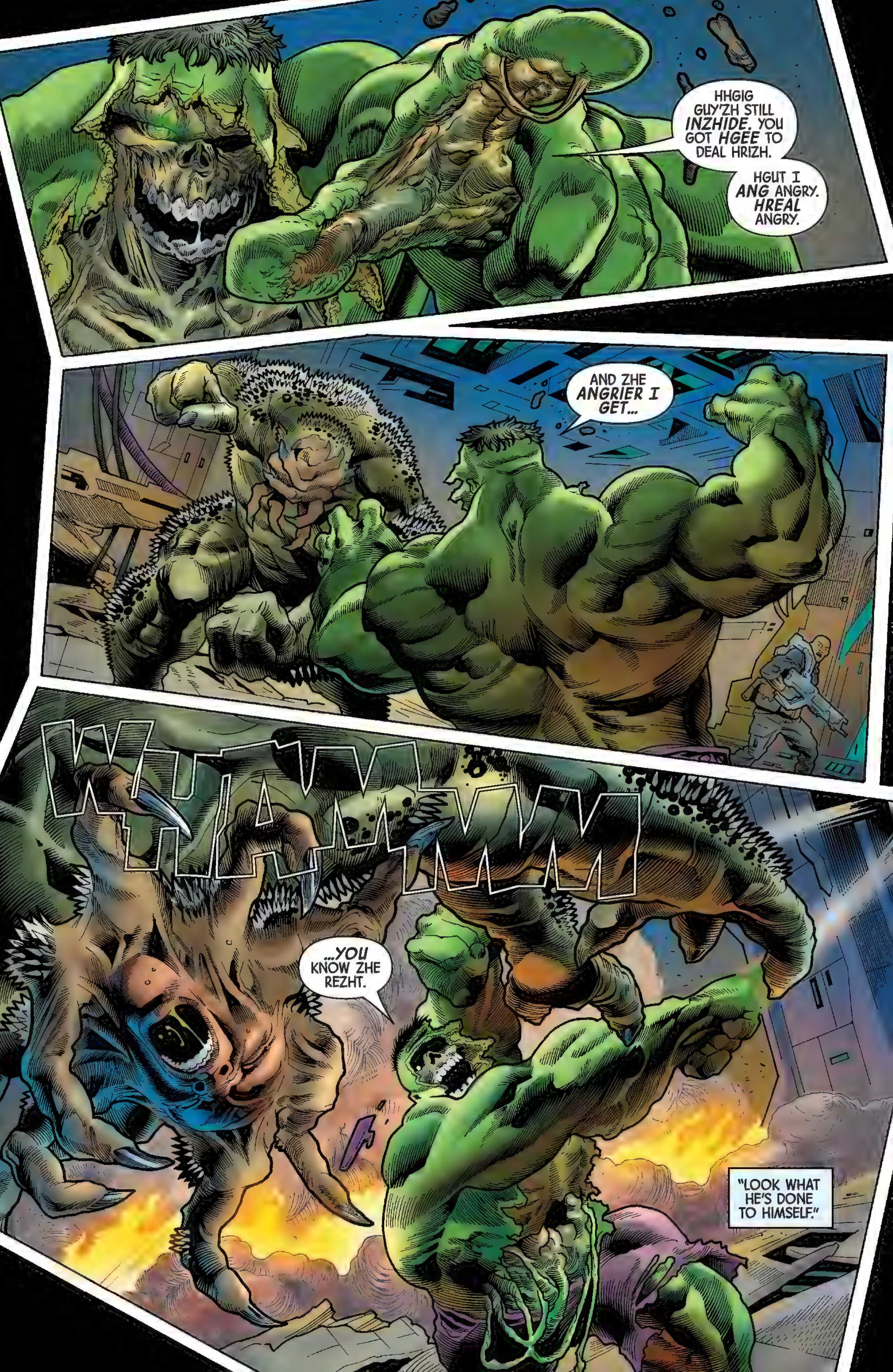
– STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY, "GALACTUS: THE ORIGIN"

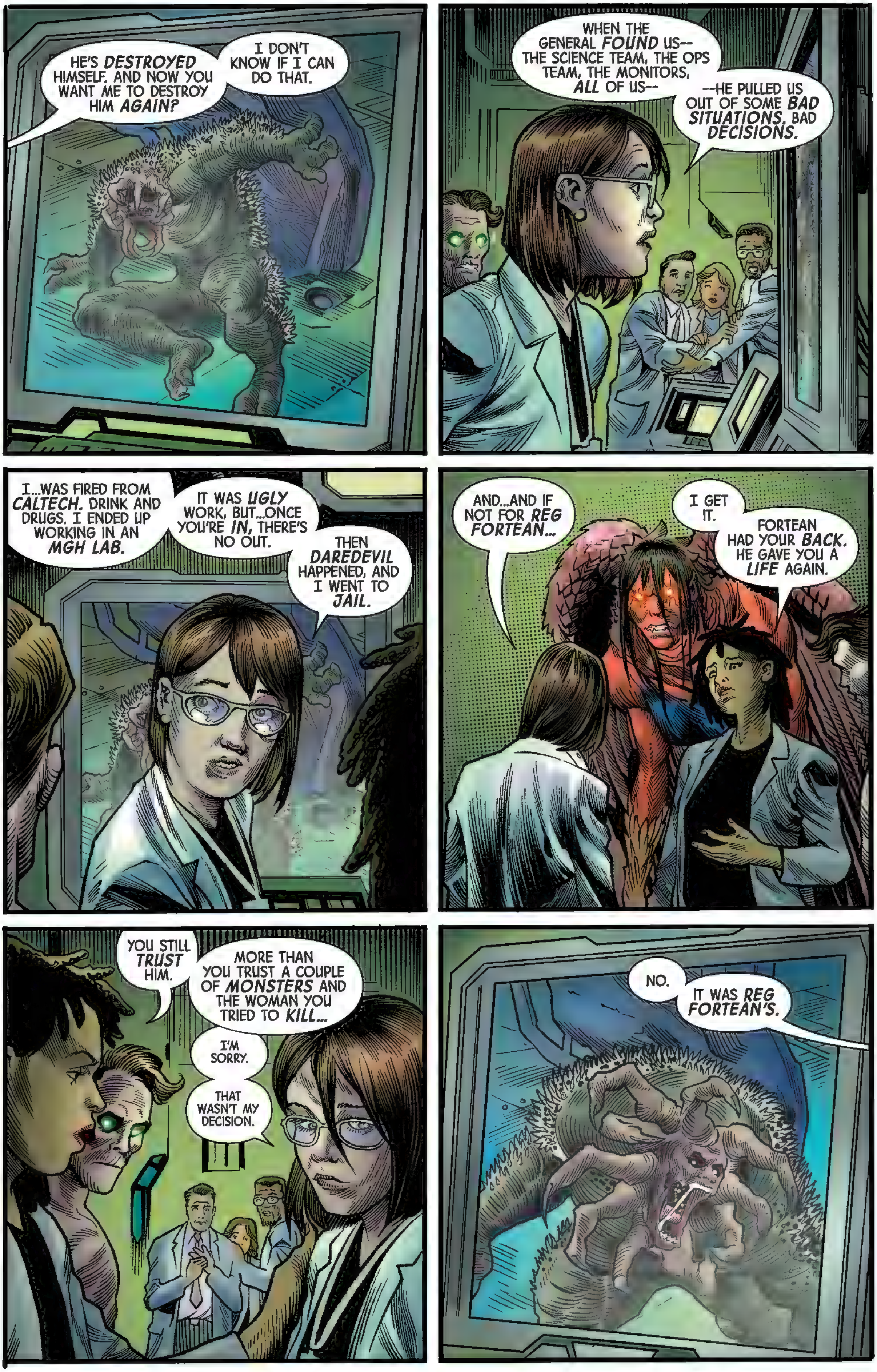

EONS AGO.
AT THE END OF ALL THINGS.
Galan of Taa.
TAC
TAC
TAC
Can you *hear* me?
TAC
TAC
TAC
I am the Sentience of the Cosmos, and you are its last survivor.
You have been baptized in the energies of *creation*...and now...
...we two will become a *new* form of life.
THERE ARE TWO PEOPLE IN EVERY MIRROR.

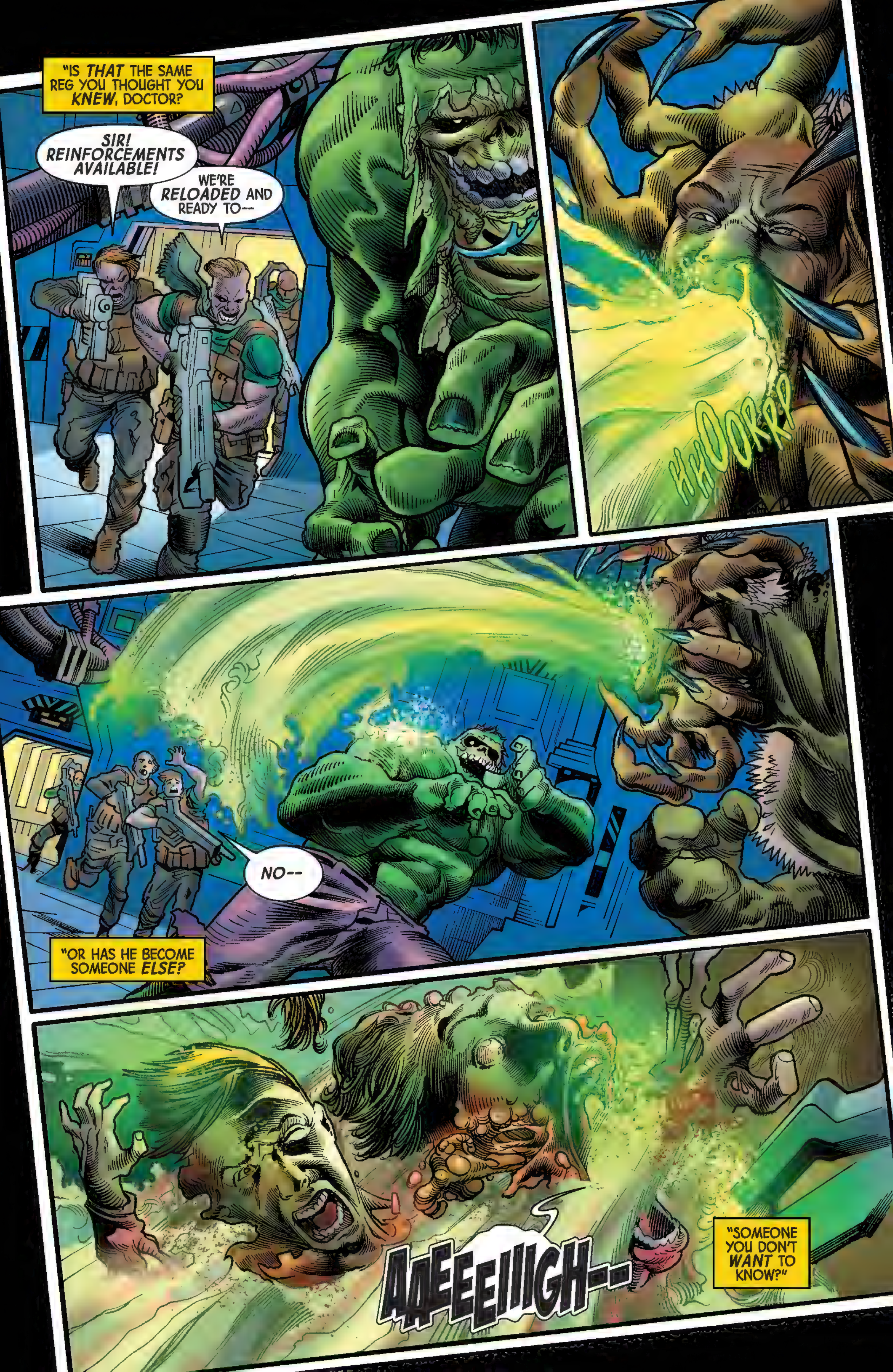

YEARS AGO.
WE HAD TO DO IT.
WE HAD TO BE THE FIRST.
WE'RE REACHING THE COSMIC STORM AREA...
IN A FEW SECONDS, WE WILL FINALLY LEARN WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE POWERFUL GAMMA RAYS ARE RELEASED--
WAIT! WHAT'S THAT...?
IT'S THE COSMIC RAYS! I--I WARNED YOU ABOUT 'EM!
RAK
TAC
TAC
TAC
TAC
THEY'RE PENETRATING THE SHIP!
COME ON, YOU FOOL!
WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE PROTECTIVE TRENCH--
THREE.
TWO.
ONE.
ZERO.
THERE'S THE ONE YOU CAN SEE.
THE ONE YOU THINK YOU KNOW.

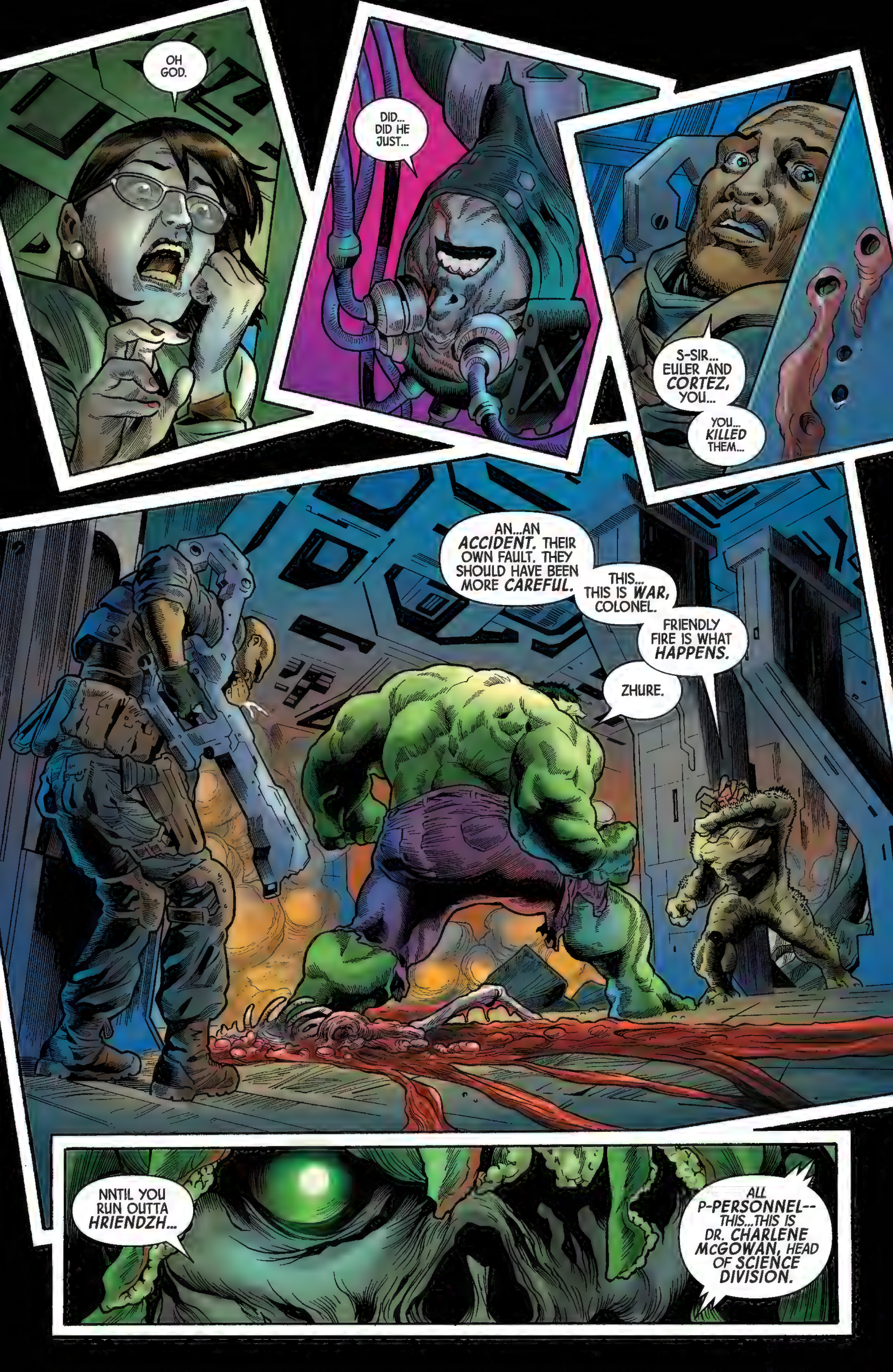

AND THEN THERE'S THE OTHER ONE.
HULK.
ZHNASH.
NOW.
MOVE TO OPPOSITE FLANKS.
SIR...?
ON MY MARK, HIT THE MONSTER WITH *ALTERNATING BLASTS.*

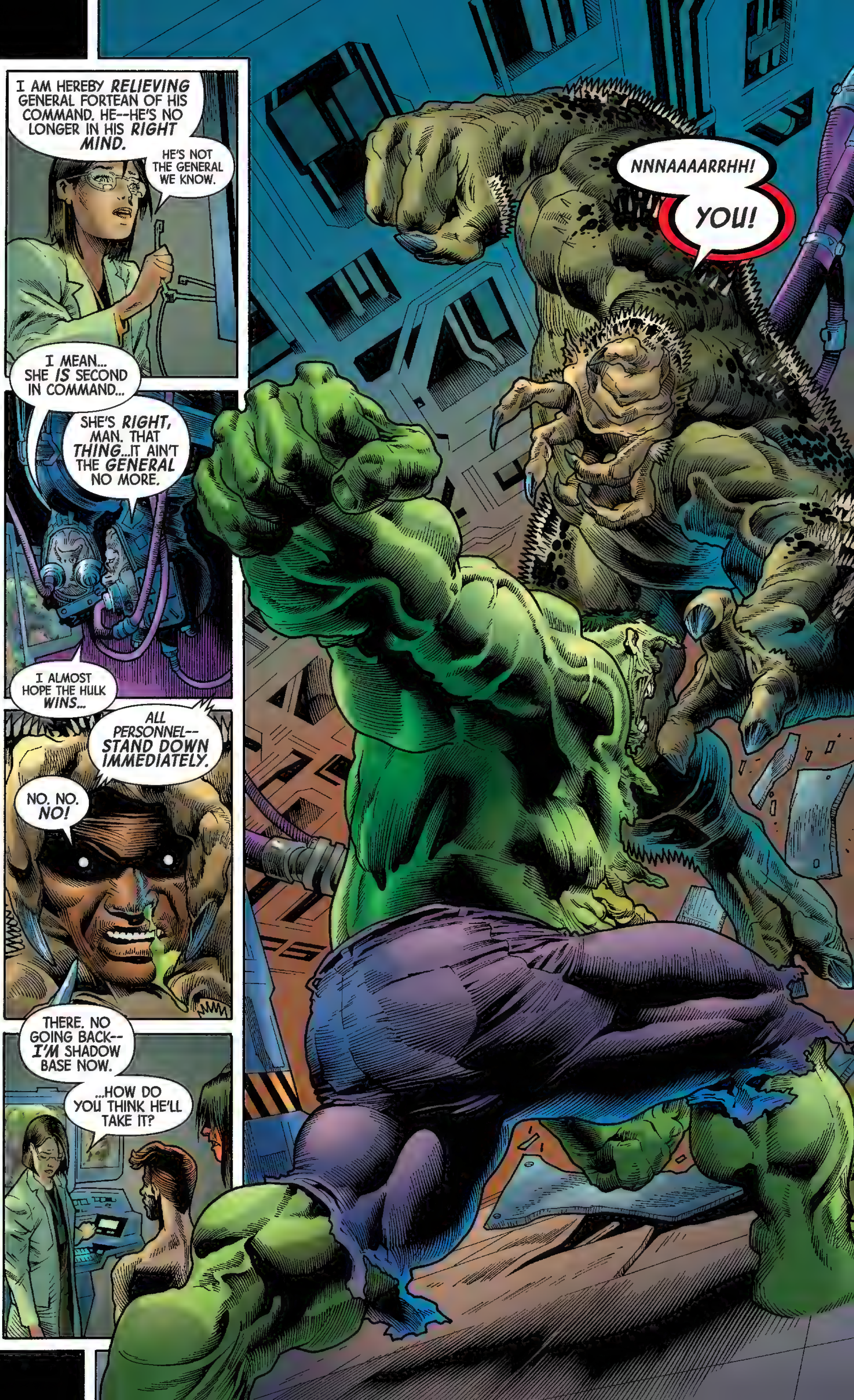

WE'LL GOAD IT. DIVIDE ITS ATTENTION.
THE STRESS I JUST PUT IT UNDER WILL HAVE PUT THE *CHILD-SELF* IN CONTROL. THE "SAVAGE HULK."
IT'S STRONGER-- *ANGRIER*--
--BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE THE *BRAINPOWER* TO STRATEGIZE AGAINST A SUPERIOR--
HNH.
YOU DON'T *ZHAY.*
OH LORD--
HHSSSSSSSS
--NYAAARRHH!

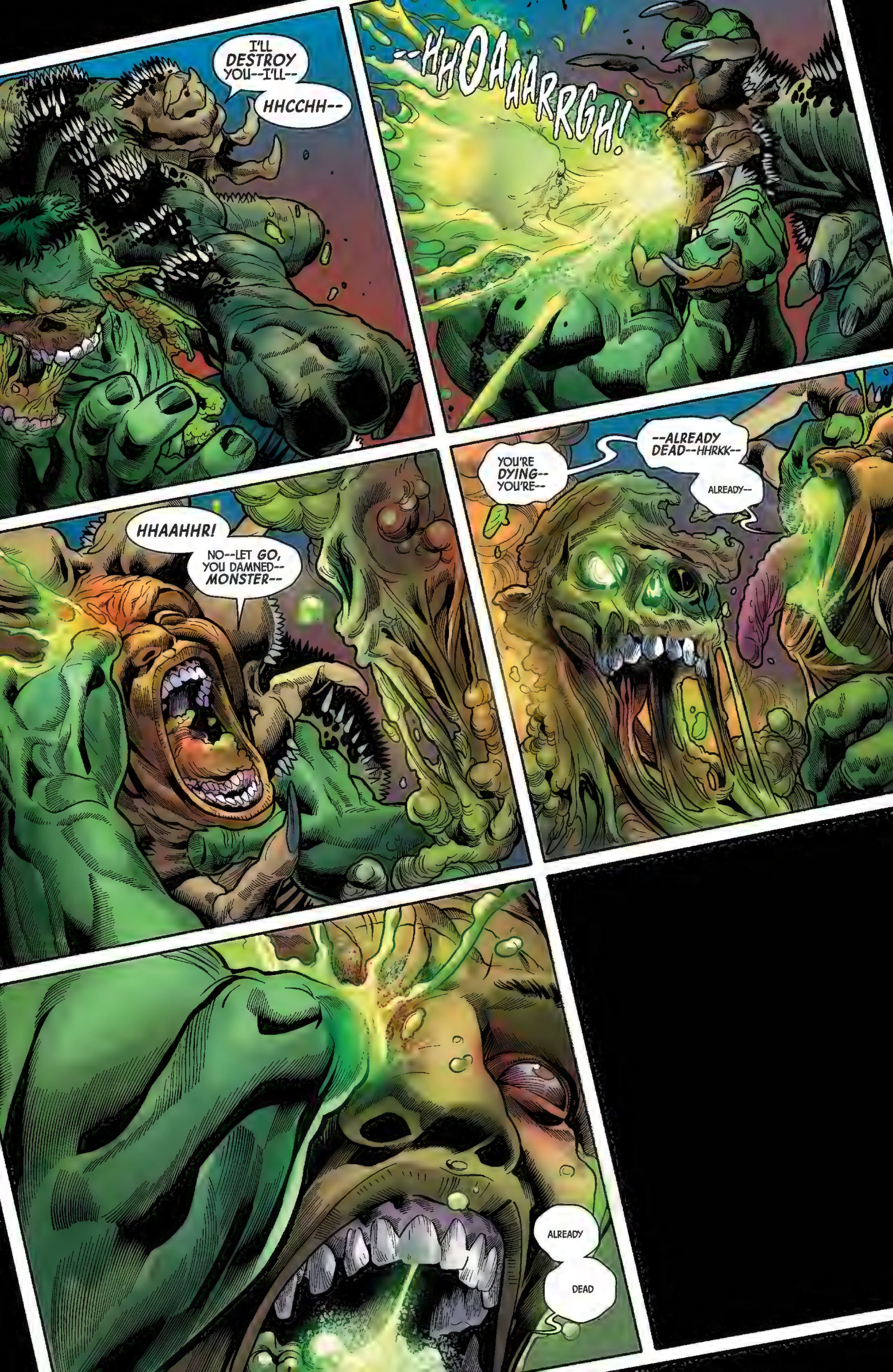

HHGIG GUY'ZH STILL *INZHIDE*. YOU GOT *HGEE* TO DEAL HRIZH.
HGUT I *ANG* ANGRY. *HREAL* ANGRY.
AND ZHE *ANGRIER I GET...*
WHAMMM
...YOU KNOW ZHE REZHT.
"LOOK WHAT HE'S DONE TO HIMSELF."

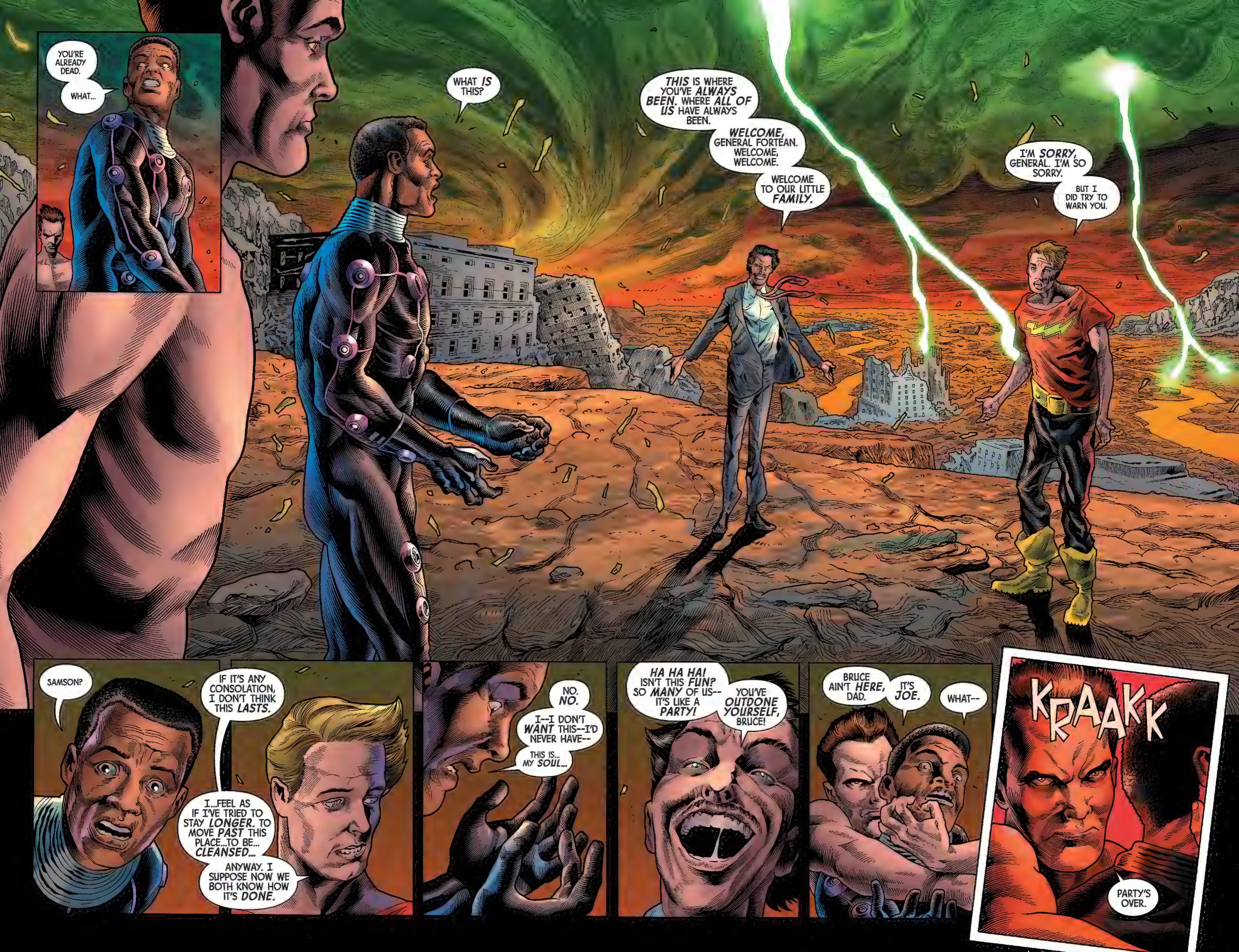

HE'S DESTROYED HIMSELF. AND NOW YOU WANT ME TO DESTROY HIM AGAIN?
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DO THAT.
WHEN THE GENERAL FOUND US-- THE SCIENCE TEAM, THE OPS TEAM, THE MONITORS, ALL OF US--
--HE PULLED US OUT OF SOME BAD SITUATIONS, BAD DECISIONS.
I...WAS FIRED FROM CALTECH. DRINK AND DRUGS. I ENDED UP WORKING IN AN MGH LAB.
IT WAS UGLY WORK, BUT...ONCE YOU'RE IN, THERE'S NO OUT.
THEN DAREDEVIL HAPPENED, AND I WENT TO JAIL.
AND...AND IF NOT FOR REG FORTEAN...
I GET IT.
FORTEAN HAD YOUR BACK. HE GAVE YOU A LIFE AGAIN.
YOU STILL TRUST HIM.
MORE THAN YOU TRUST A COUPLE OF MONSTERS AND THE WOMAN YOU TRIED TO KILL...
I'M SORRY.
THAT WASN'T MY DECISION.
NO.
IT WAS REG FORTEAN'S.

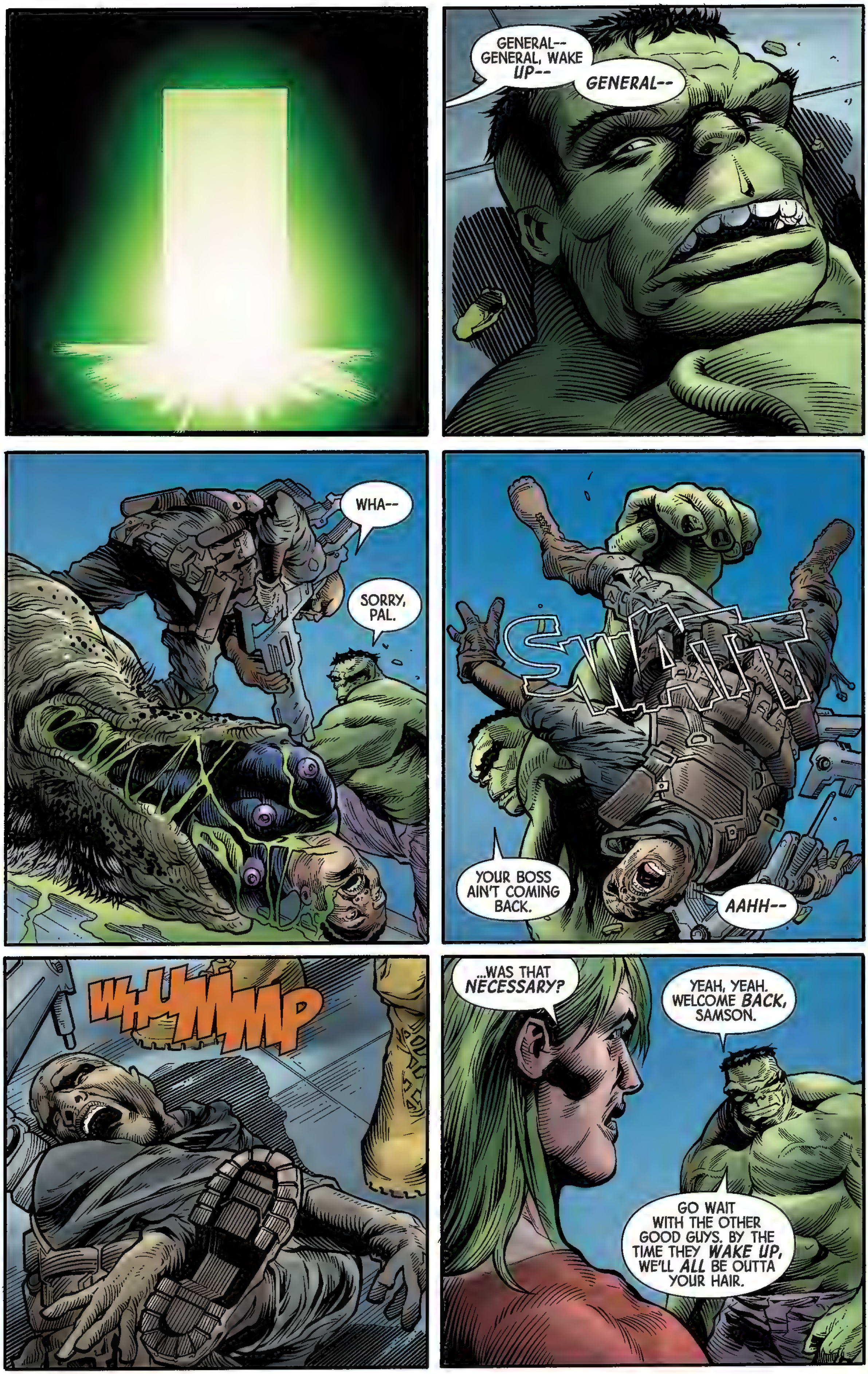

"IS *THAT* THE SAME REG YOU THOUGHT YOU *KNEW*, DOCTOR?
SIR! REINFORCEMENTS AVAILABLE!
WE'RE *RELOADED* AND READY TO--
HHOORRP
NO--
"OR HAS HE BECOME SOMEONE *ELSE?*
AAEEEIIIGH--
"SOMEONE YOU DON'T *WANT* TO KNOW?"

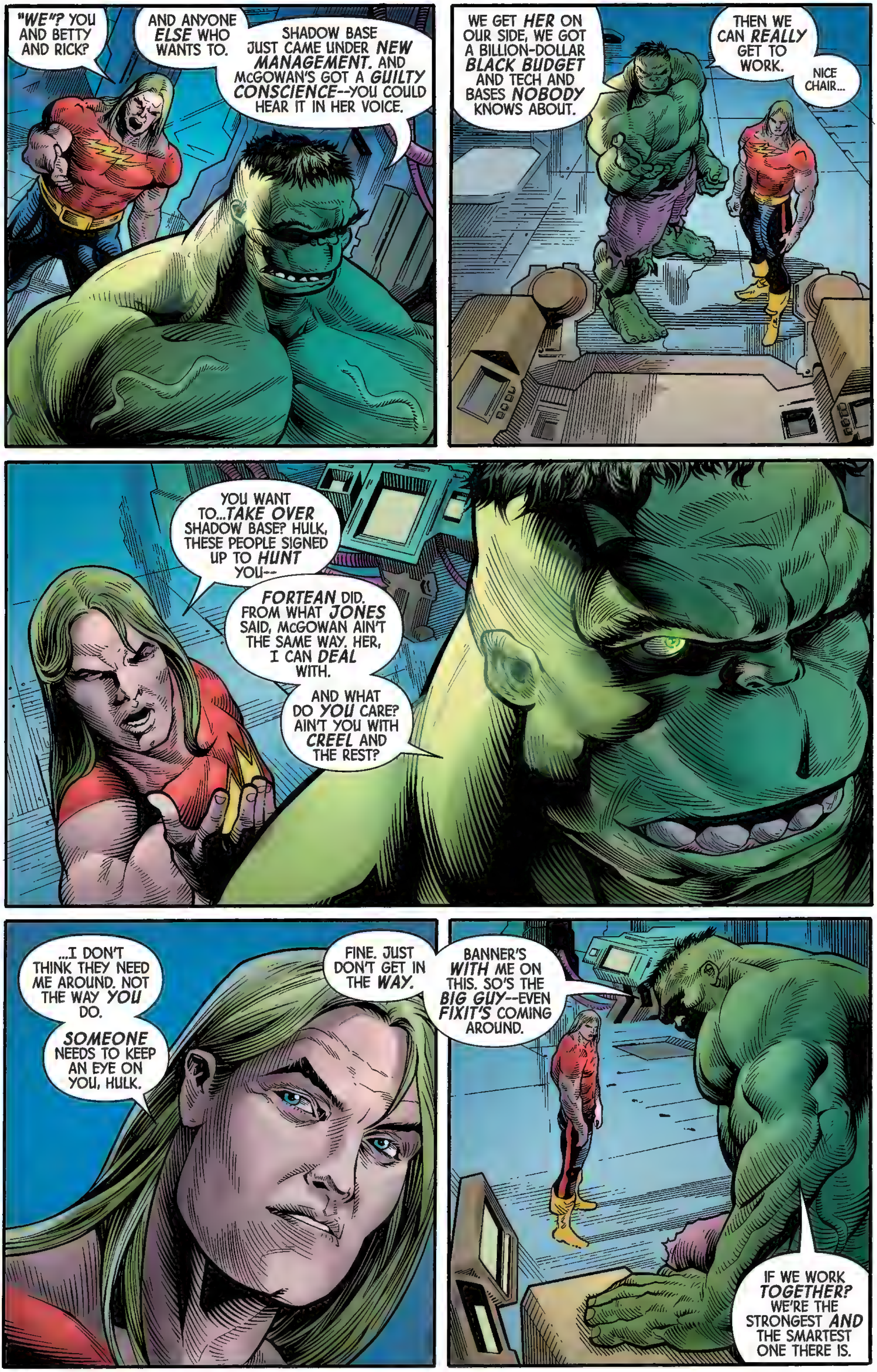

OH GOD.
DID... DID HE JUST...
S-SIR... EULER AND CORTEZ, YOU...
YOU... KILLED THEM...
AN...AN ACCIDENT. THEIR OWN FAULT. THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CAREFUL.
THIS... THIS IS WAR, COLONEL.
FRIENDLY FIRE IS WHAT HAPPENS.
ZHURE.
NNTIL YOU RUN OUTTA HRIENDZH...
ALL P-PERSONNEL-- THIS...THIS IS DR. CHARLENE McGOWAN, HEAD OF SCIENCE DIVISION.

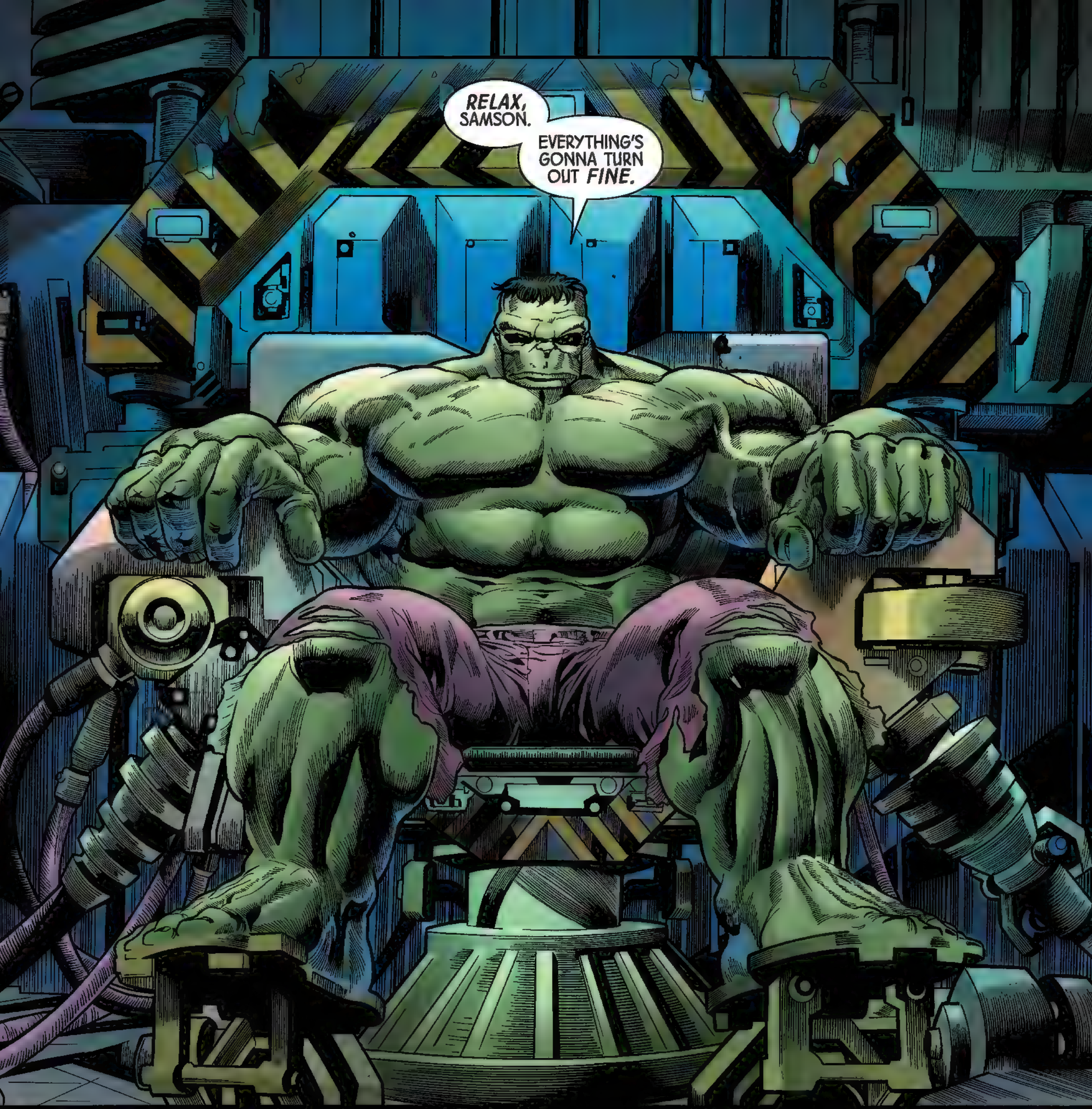

I AM HEREBY *RELIEVING* GENERAL FORTEAN OF HIS COMMAND. HE--HE'S NO LONGER IN HIS *RIGHT MIND.*
HE'S NOT THE GENERAL WE KNOW.
I MEAN... SHE *IS* SECOND IN COMMAND...
SHE'S *RIGHT,* MAN. THAT *THING*...IT AIN'T THE *GENERAL* NO MORE.
I ALMOST HOPE THE HULK *WINS*...
ALL PERSONNEL-- ***STAND DOWN IMMEDIATELY.***
NO. NO. ***NO!***
THERE. NO GOING BACK-- ***I'M*** SHADOW BASE NOW.
...HOW DO YOU THINK HE'LL TAKE IT?
NNNAAAARRHH!
YOU!


I'LL DESTROY YOU--I'LL--
HHCCHH--
--HHOAAARRGH!
HHAAHHR!
NO--LET GO, YOU DAMNED-- MONSTER--
YOU'RE DYING-- YOU'RE--
--ALREADY DEAD--HHRKK--
ALREADY--
ALREADY
DEAD


YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.
WHAT...
WHAT IS THIS?
THIS IS WHERE YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN. WHERE ALL OF US HAVE ALWAYS BEEN.
WELCOME, GENERAL FORTEAN. WELCOME, WELCOME.
WELCOME TO OUR LITTLE FAMILY.
I'M SORRY, GENERAL. I'M SO SORRY.
BUT I DID TRY TO WARN YOU.
SAMSON?
IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, I DON'T THINK THIS LASTS.
I...FEEL AS IF I'VE TRIED TO STAY LONGER. TO MOVE PAST THIS PLACE...TO BE... CLEANSED...
ANYWAY. I SUPPOSE NOW WE BOTH KNOW HOW IT'S DONE.
NO. NO.
I--I DON'T WANT THIS--I'D NEVER HAVE--
THIS IS... MY SOUL...
HA HA HA! ISN'T THIS FUN? SO MANY OF US-- IT'S LIKE A PARTY!
YOU'VE OUTDONE YOURSELF, BRUCE!
BRUCE AIN'T HERE, DAD.
IT'S JOE.
WHAT--
KRAAKK
PARTY'S OVER.


GENERAL-- GENERAL, WAKE *UP*--
GENERAL--
WHA--
SORRY, PAL.
SWAT
YOUR BOSS AIN'T COMING BACK.
AAHH--
WHUMMMP
...WAS THAT *NECESSARY?*
YEAH, YEAH. WELCOME *BACK,* SAMSON.
GO WAIT WITH THE OTHER GOOD GUYS. BY THE TIME THEY *WAKE UP,* WE'LL *ALL* BE OUTTA YOUR HAIR.


"WE"? YOU AND BETTY AND RICK?
AND ANYONE *ELSE* WHO WANTS TO.
SHADOW BASE JUST CAME UNDER *NEW MANAGEMENT.* AND McGOWAN'S GOT A *GUILTY CONSCIENCE*--YOU COULD HEAR IT IN HER VOICE.
WE GET *HER* ON OUR SIDE, WE GOT A BILLION-DOLLAR *BLACK BUDGET* AND TECH AND BASES *NOBODY* KNOWS ABOUT.
THEN WE CAN *REALLY* GET TO WORK.
NICE CHAIR...
YOU WANT TO...*TAKE OVER* SHADOW BASE? HULK, THESE PEOPLE SIGNED UP TO *HUNT* YOU--
FORTEAN DID. FROM WHAT *JONES* SAID, McGOWAN AIN'T THE SAME WAY. HER, I CAN *DEAL* WITH.
AND WHAT DO *YOU* CARE? AIN'T YOU WITH *CREEL* AND THE REST?
...I DON'T THINK THEY NEED ME AROUND. NOT THE WAY *YOU* DO.
SOMEONE NEEDS TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU, HULK.
FINE. JUST DON'T GET IN THE *WAY.*
BANNER'S *WITH* ME ON THIS. SO'S THE *BIG GUY*--EVEN *FIXIT'S* COMING AROUND.
IF WE WORK *TOGETHER?* WE'RE THE STRONGEST *AND* THE SMARTEST ONE THERE IS.


RELAX, SAMSON.
EVERYTHING'S GONNA TURN OUT FINE.

THE STEEL THRONE

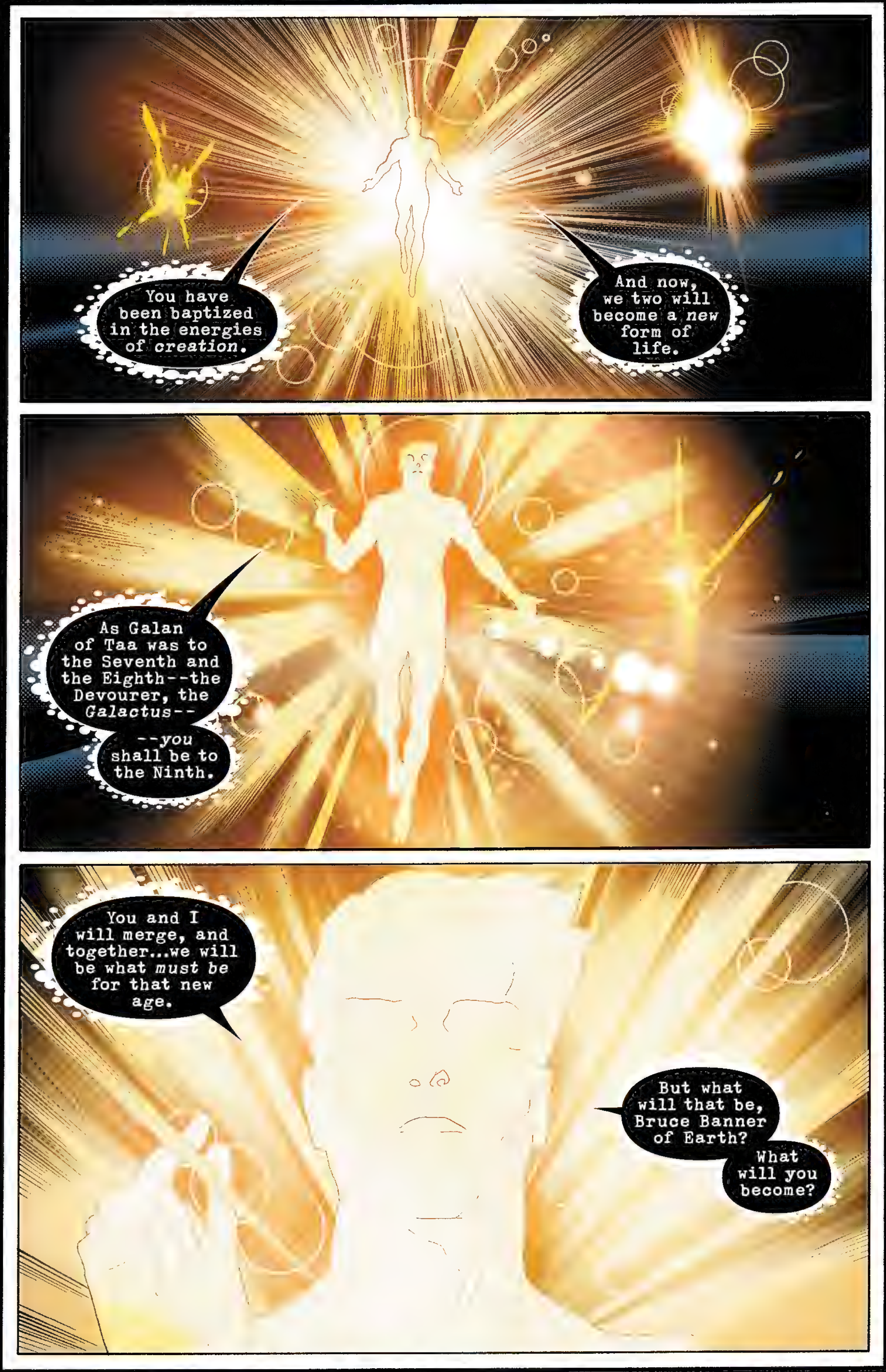
EONS FROM NOW.

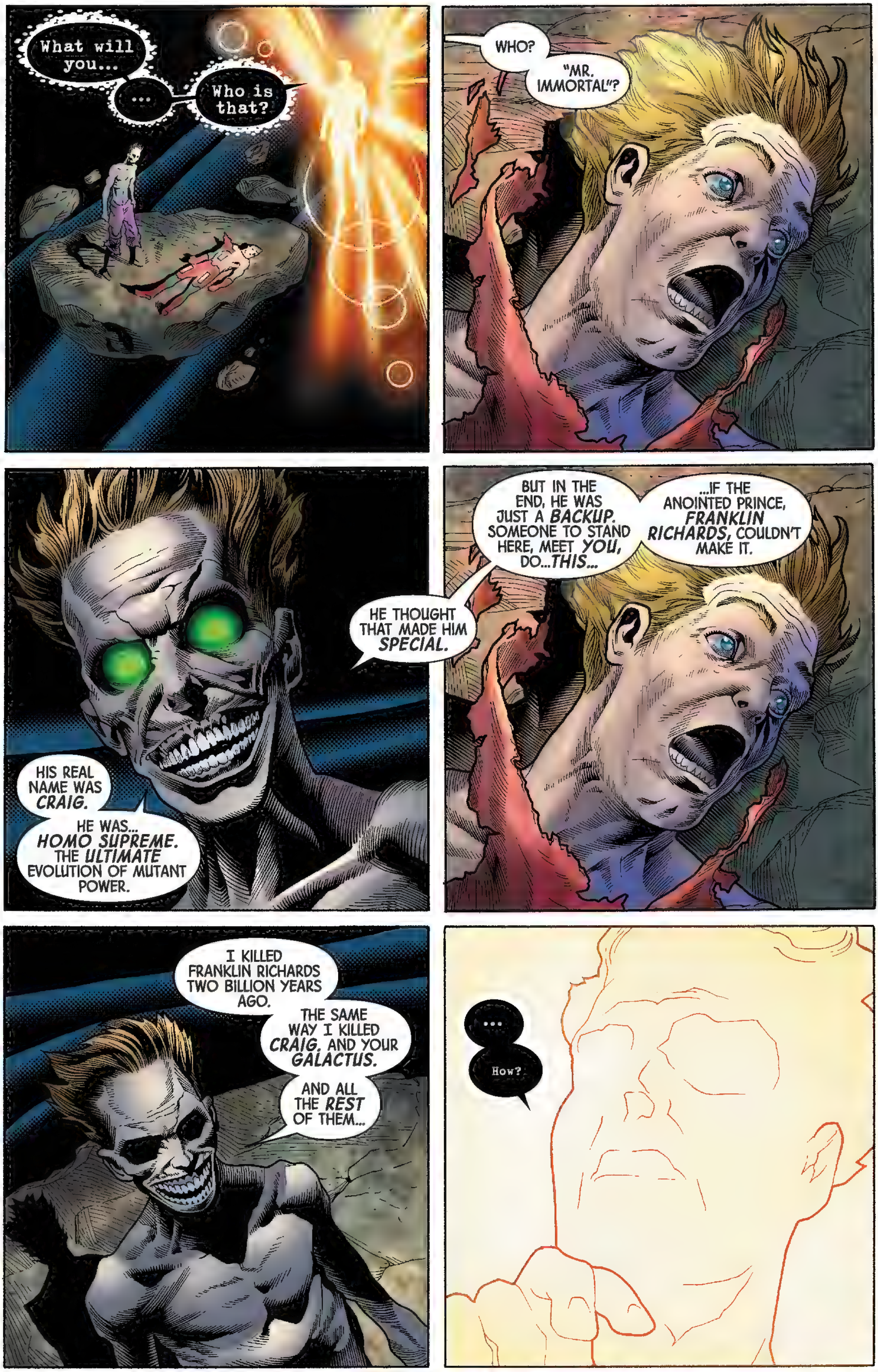
AT THE END OF ALL THINGS.

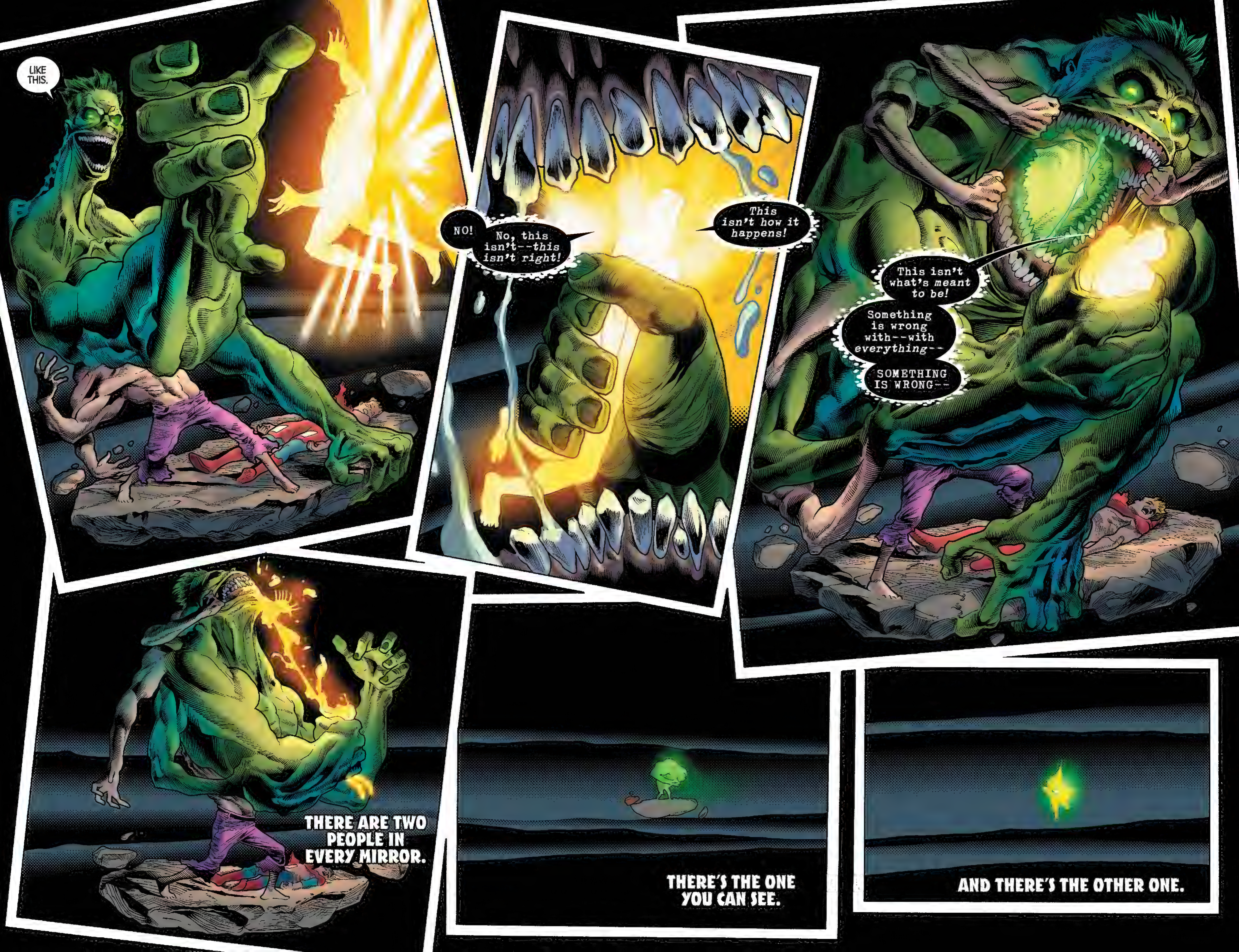
Bruce Banner
of Earth.

I am the
Sentience of the Cosmos...

...and you are its
last survivor.


You have been baptized in the energies of *creation.*
And now, we two will become a *new* form of life.
As Galan of Taa was to the Seventh and the Eighth--the Devourer, the *Galactus*--
--*you* shall be to the Ninth.
You and I will merge, and together...we will be what *must be* for that new age.
But what will that be, Bruce Banner of Earth?
What will you become?


What will you...
...
Who is that?
WHO?
"MR. IMMORTAL"?
HIS REAL NAME WAS CRAIG.
HE WAS... HOMO SUPREME. THE ULTIMATE EVOLUTION OF MUTANT POWER.
HE THOUGHT THAT MADE HIM SPECIAL.
BUT IN THE END, HE WAS JUST A BACKUP. SOMEONE TO STAND HERE, MEET YOU, DO...THIS...
...IF THE ANOINTED PRINCE, FRANKLIN RICHARDS, COULDN'T MAKE IT.
I KILLED FRANKLIN RICHARDS TWO BILLION YEARS AGO.
THE SAME WAY I KILLED CRAIG, AND YOUR GALACTUS.
AND ALL THE REST OF THEM...
...
How?


LIKE THIS.
NO!
No, this isn't--this isn't right!
This isn't how it happens!
This isn't what's meant to be!
Something is wrong with--with *everything*--
SOMETHING IS WRONG--
THERE ARE TWO PEOPLE IN EVERY MIRROR.
THERE'S THE ONE YOU CAN SEE.
AND THERE'S THE OTHER ONE.

THE ONE YOU DON'T WANT TO.

AVENGERS #684 VARIANT BY
SKOTTIE YOUNG

#1 REMASTERED VARIANT BY **SAL BUSCEMA**,
ALFREDO ALCALA & **EBER EVANGELISTA**

#1 VARIANT BY
CLAYTON CRAIN

#2 VARIANT BY
GERARDO ZAFFINO

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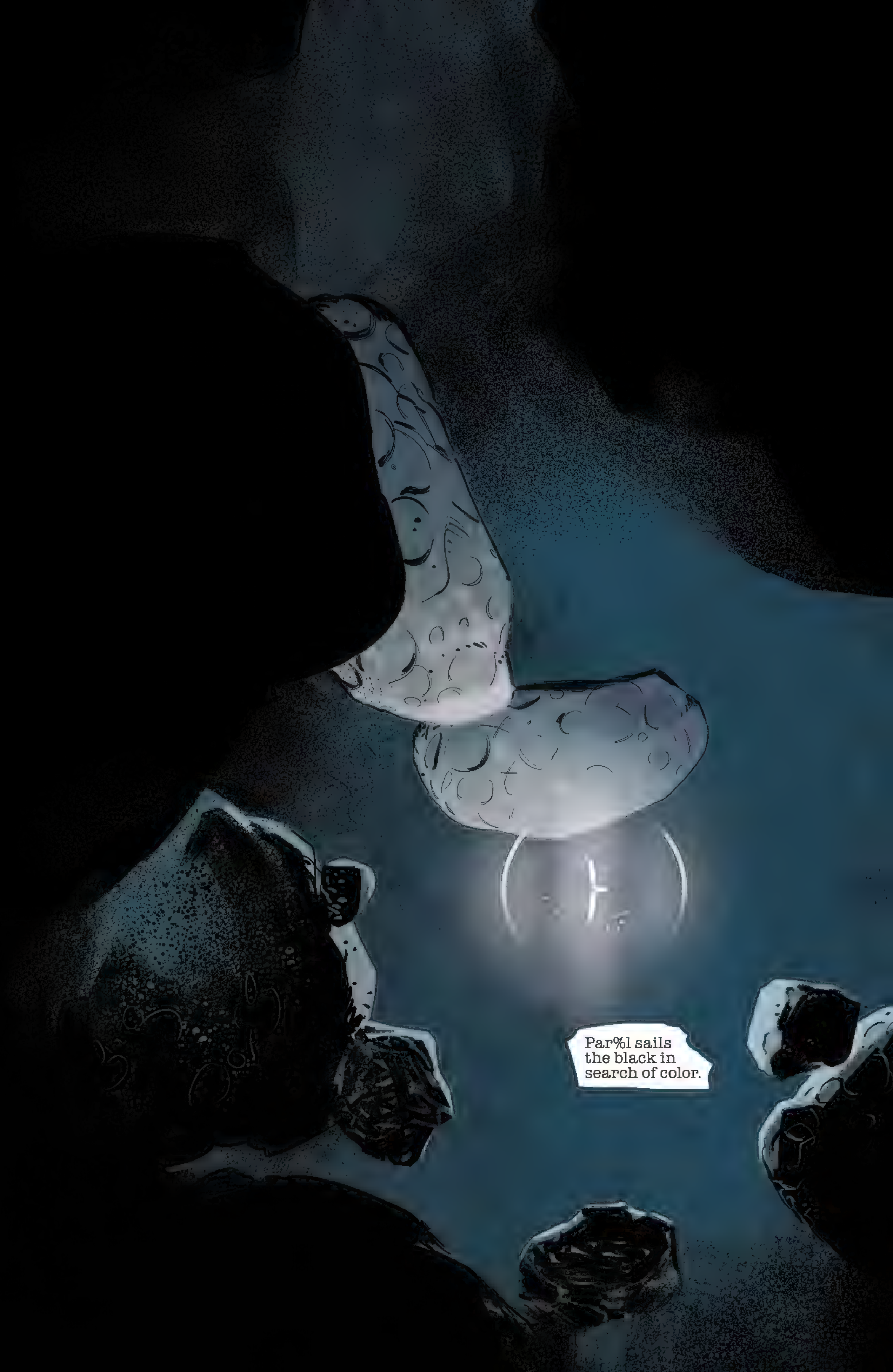
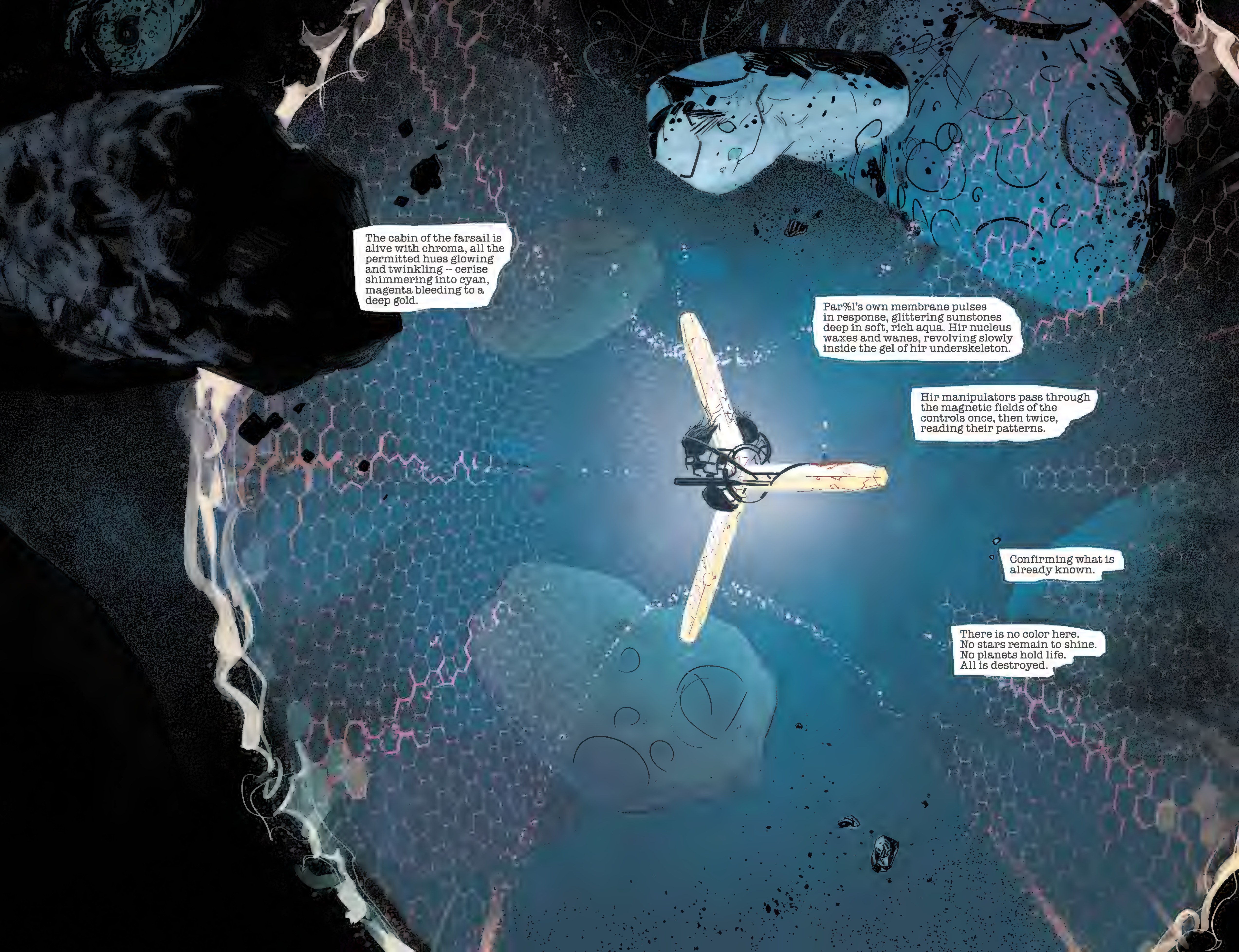
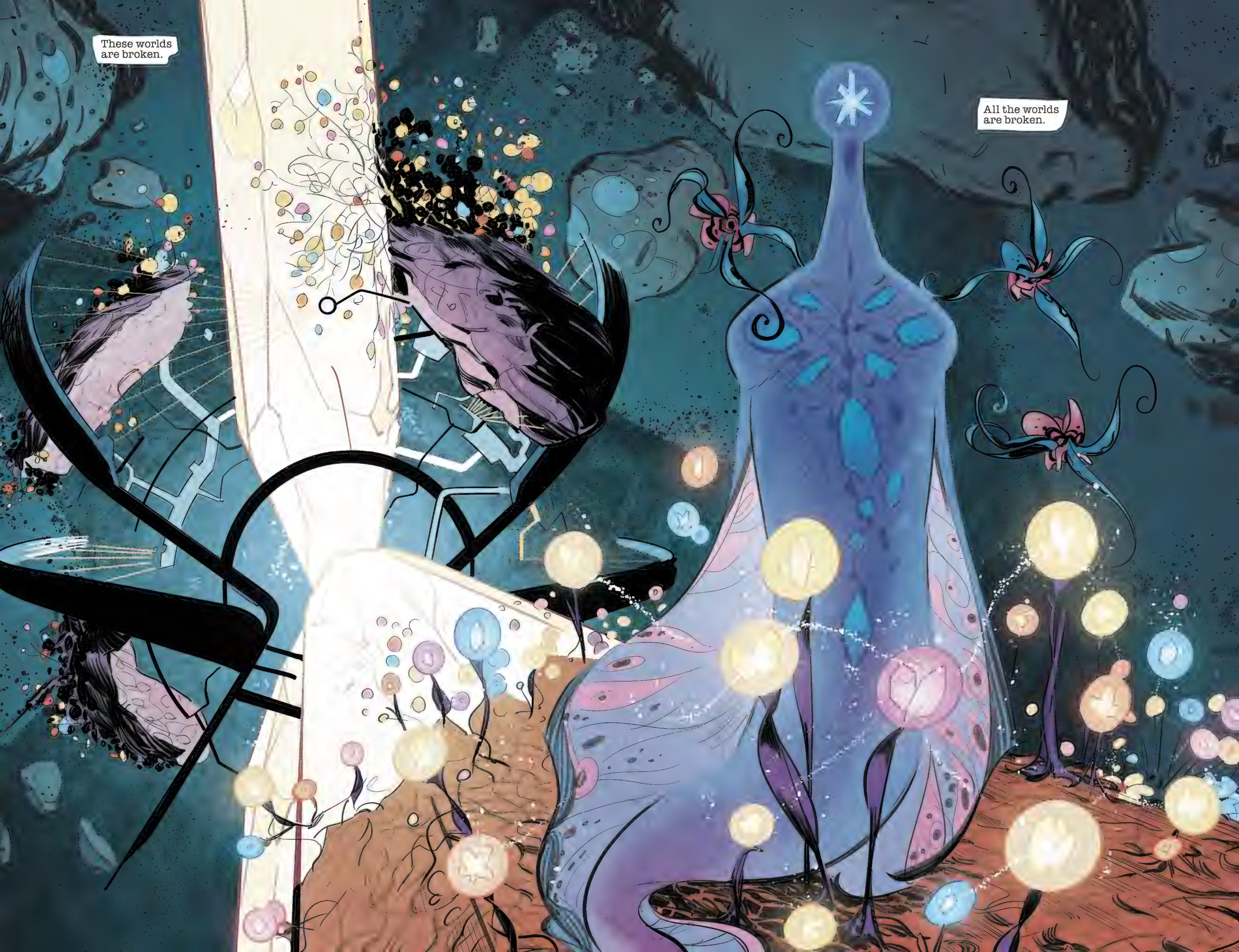

Par%l sails
the black in
search of color.

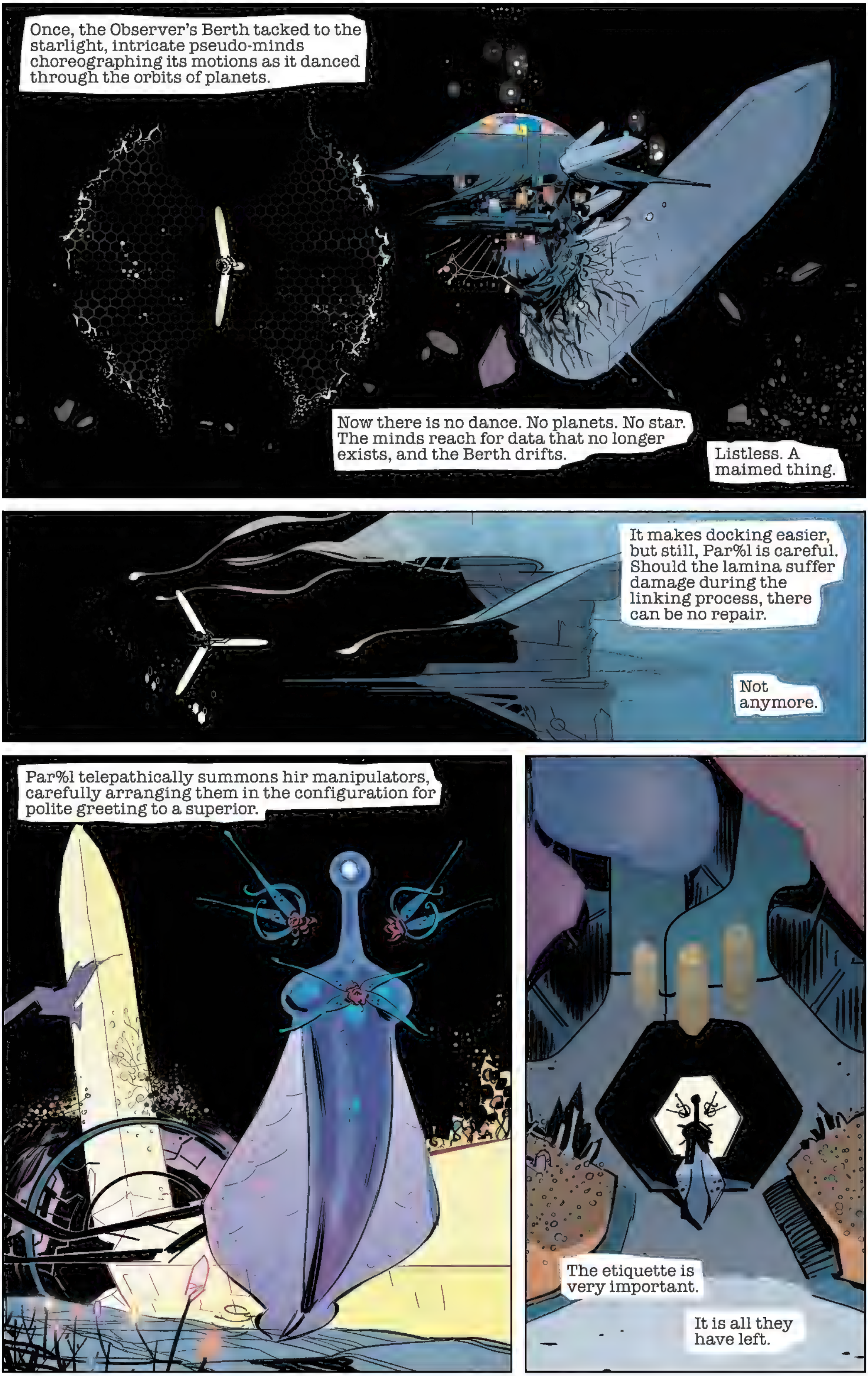

The cabin of the farsail is alive with chroma, all the permitted hues glowing and twinkling -- cerise shimmering into cyan, magenta bleeding to a deep gold.
Par%l's own membrane pulses in response, glittering sunstones deep in soft, rich aqua. Hir nucleus waxes and wanes, revolving slowly inside the gel of hir underskeleton.
Hir manipulators pass through the magnetic fields of the controls once, then twice, reading their patterns.
Confirming what is already known.
There is no color here.
No stars remain to shine.
No planets hold life.
All is destroyed.

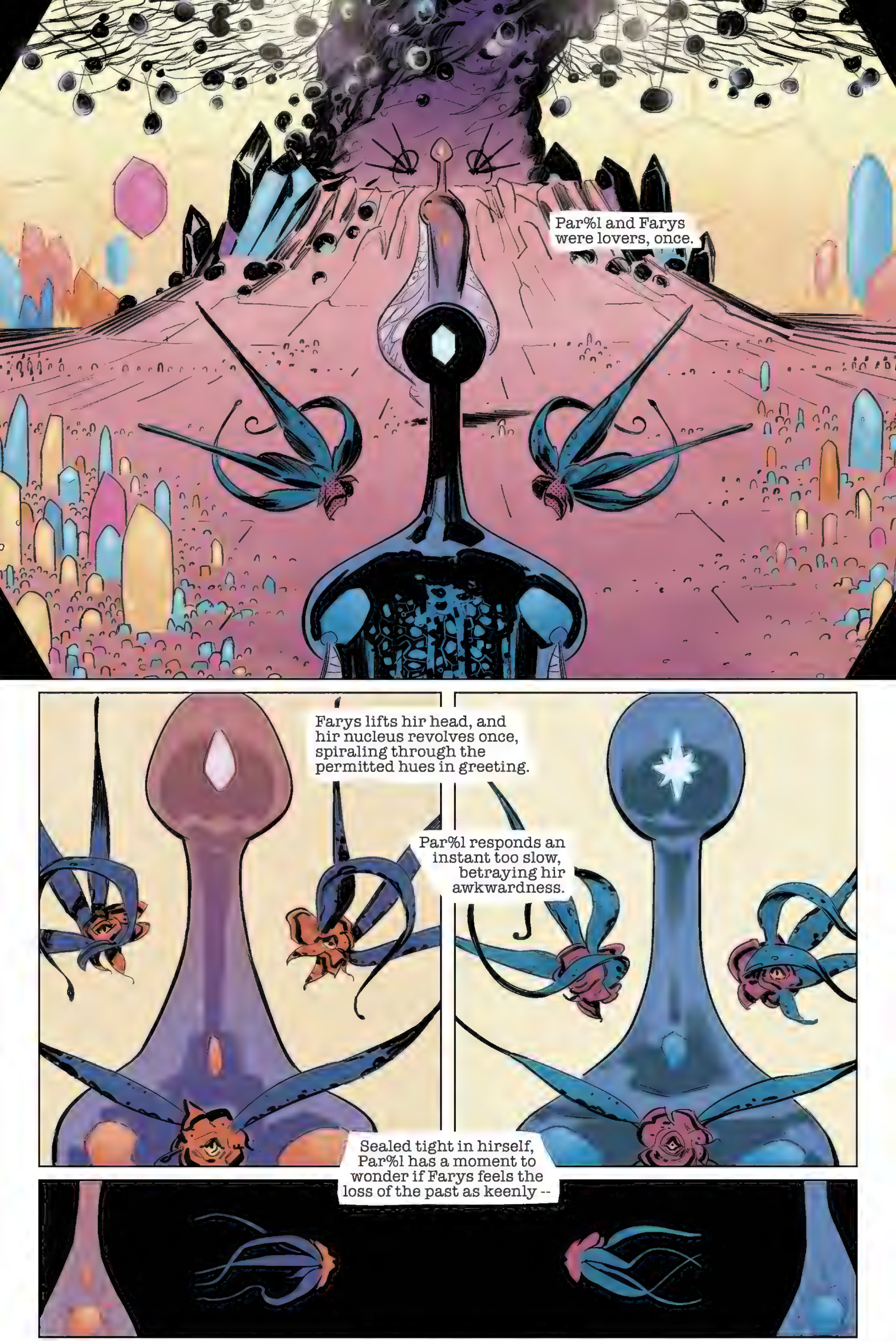

These worlds are broken.
All the worlds are broken.

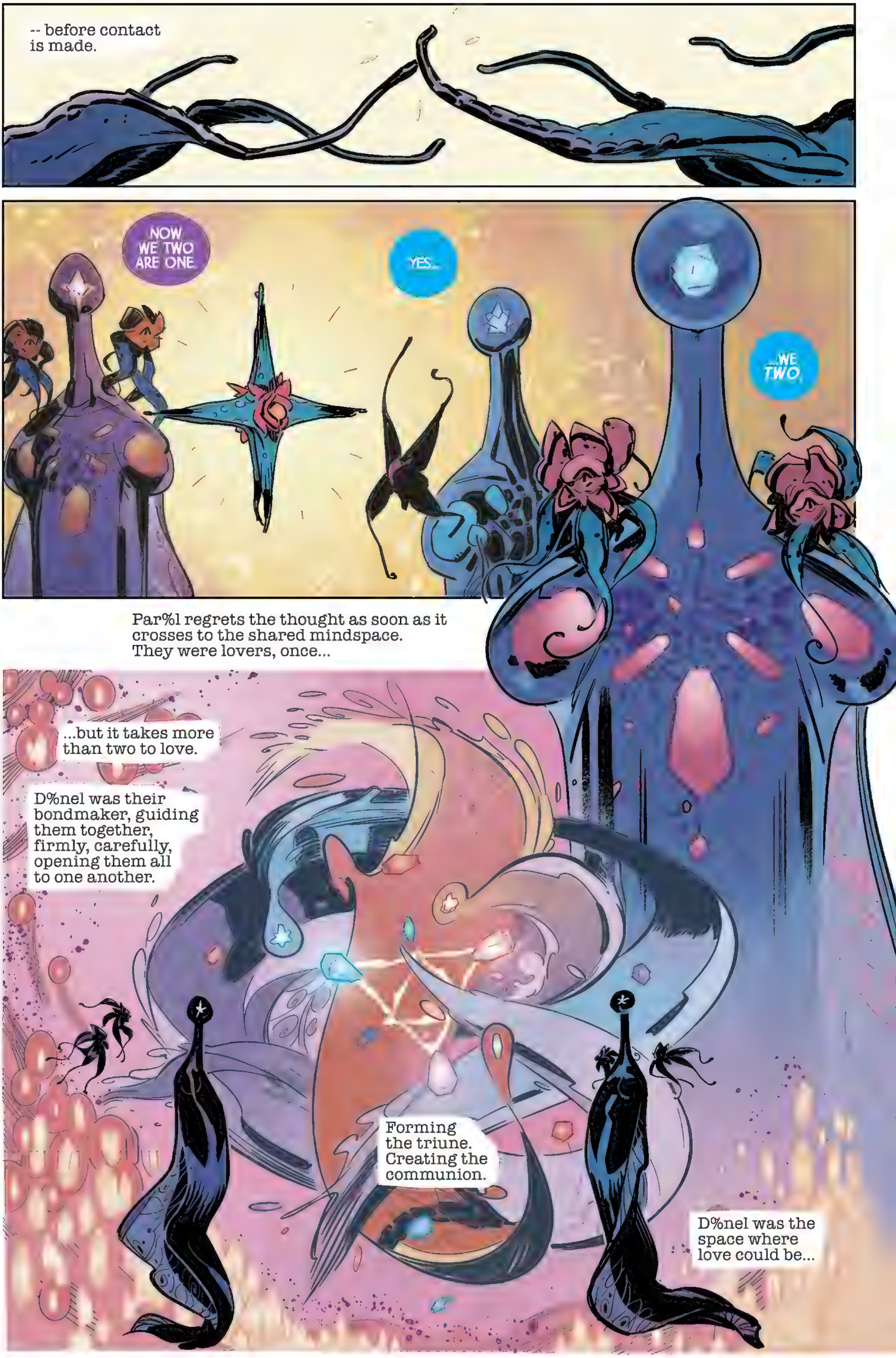
BREAKER OF WORLDS

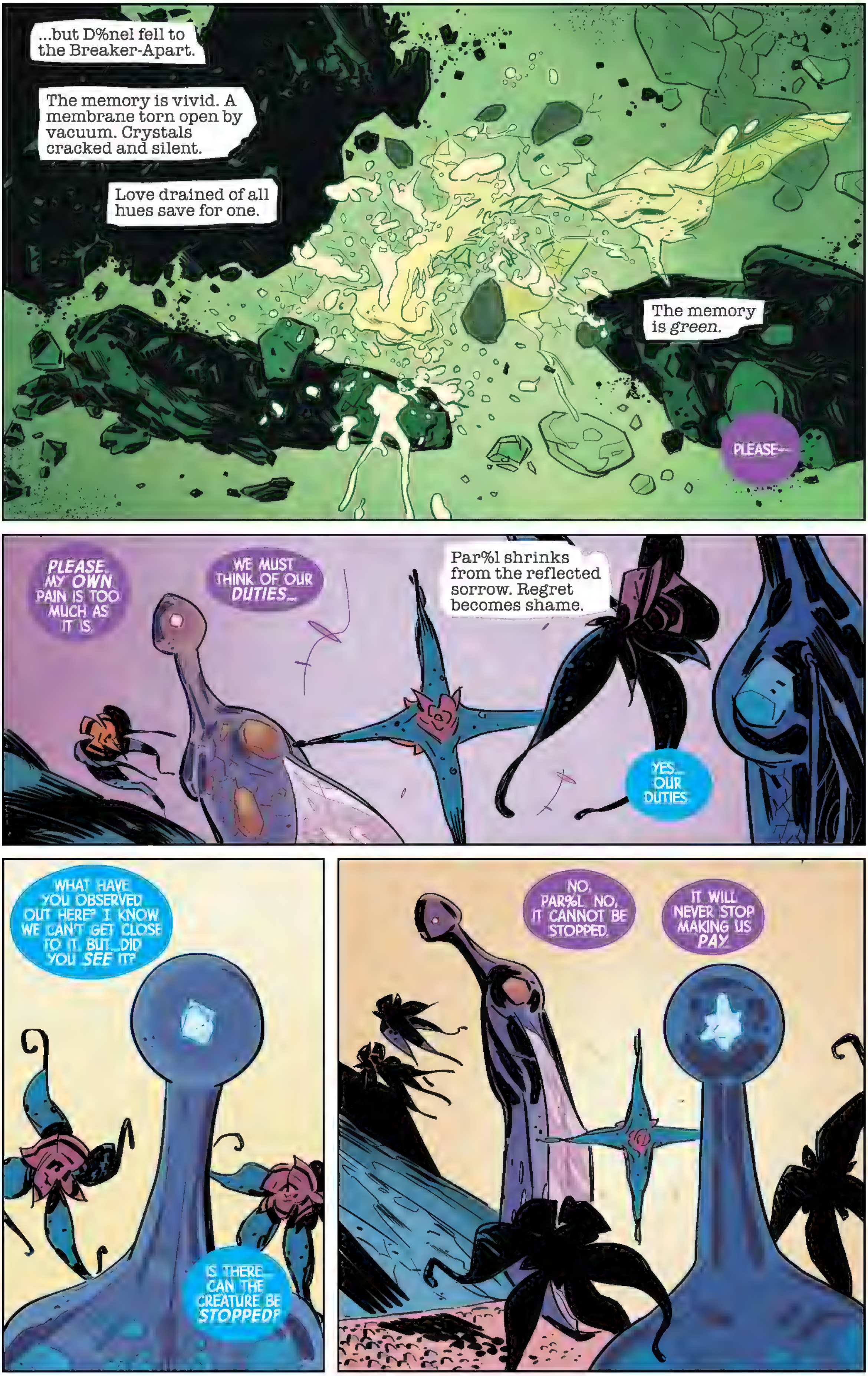
"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

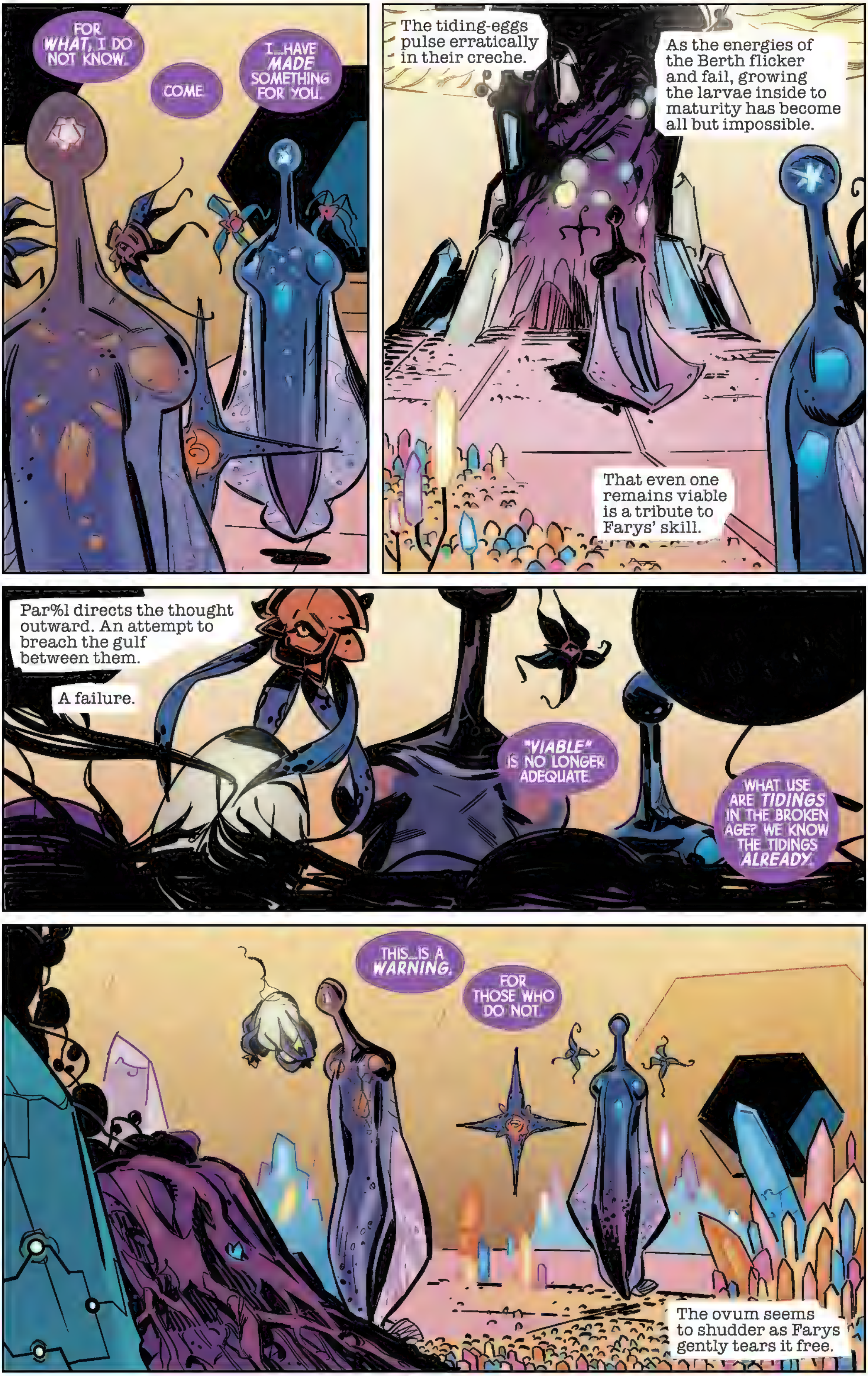
– HEBREWS 10:31

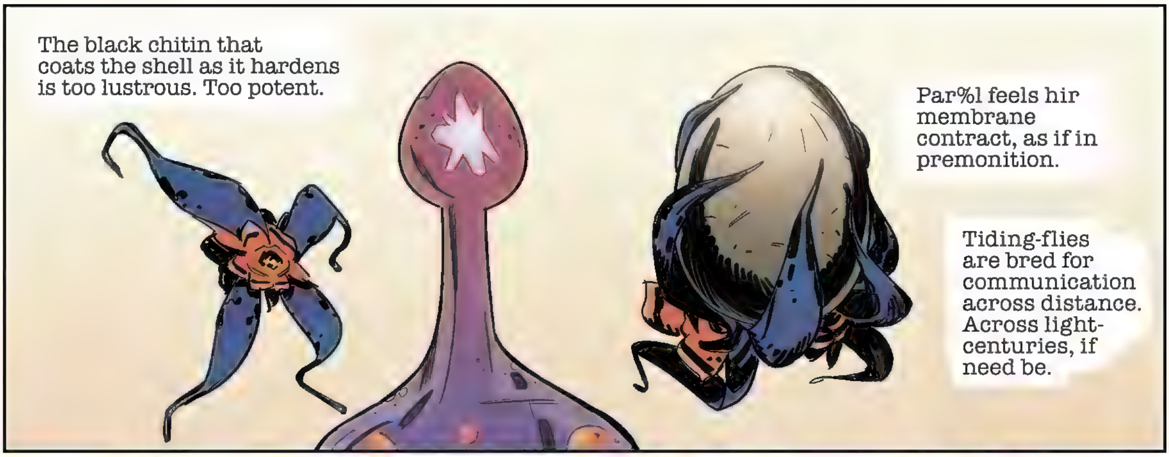

Once, the Observer's Berth tacked to the starlight, intricate pseudo-minds choreographing its motions as it danced through the orbits of planets.
Now there is no dance. No planets. No star. The minds reach for data that no longer exists, and the Berth drifts.
Listless. A maimed thing.
It makes docking easier, but still, Par%l is careful. Should the lamina suffer damage during the linking process, there can be no repair.
Not anymore.
Par%l telepathically summons hir manipulators, carefully arranging them in the configuration for polite greeting to a superior.
The etiquette is very important.
It is all they have left.


Par%l and Farys were lovers, once.
Farys lifts hir head, and hir nucleus revolves once, spiraling through the permitted hues in greeting.
Par%l responds an instant too slow, betraying hir awkwardness.
Sealed tight in hirself, Par%l has a moment to wonder if Farys feels the loss of the past as keenly --


-- before contact is made.
NOW WE TWO ARE ONE.
YES...
...WE TWO.
Par%l regrets the thought as soon as it crosses to the shared mindspace. They were lovers, once...
...but it takes more than two to love.
D%nel was their bondmaker, guiding them together, firmly, carefully, opening them all to one another.
Forming the triune. Creating the communion.
D%nel was the space where love could be...


...but D%nel fell to the Breaker-Apart.
The memory is vivid. A membrane torn open by vacuum. Crystals cracked and silent.
Love drained of all hues save for one.
The memory is *green.*
PLEASE--
PLEASE. MY *OWN* PAIN IS TOO MUCH AS IT IS.
WE MUST THINK OF OUR *DUTIES...*
Par%l shrinks from the reflected sorrow. Regret becomes shame.
YES... OUR DUTIES.
WHAT HAVE YOU OBSERVED OUT HERE? I KNOW WE CAN'T GET CLOSE TO IT. BUT...DID YOU *SEE* IT?
IS THERE... CAN THE CREATURE BE *STOPPED?*
NO, PAR%L. NO, IT CANNOT BE STOPPED.
IT WILL NEVER STOP MAKING US *PAY.*

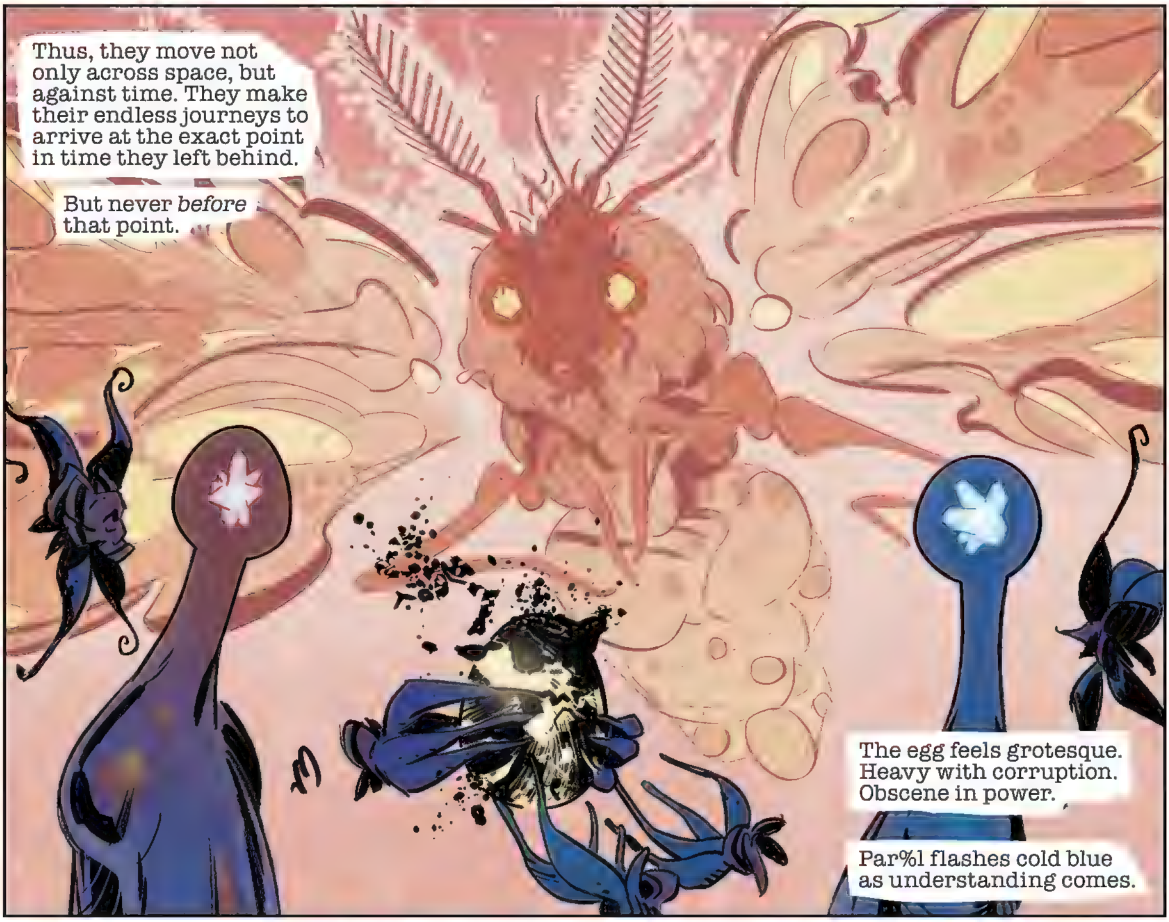

FOR *WHAT*, I DO NOT KNOW.
COME.
I...HAVE *MADE* SOMETHING FOR YOU.
The tiding-eggs pulse erratically in their creche.
As the energies of the Berth flicker and fail, growing the larvae inside to maturity has become all but impossible.
That even one remains viable is a tribute to Farys' skill.
Par%l directs the thought outward. An attempt to breach the gulf between them.
A failure.
"VIABLE" IS NO LONGER ADEQUATE.
WHAT USE ARE *TIDINGS* IN THE BROKEN AGE? WE KNOW THE TIDINGS *ALREADY*.
THIS...IS A *WARNING*.
FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT.
The ovum seems to shudder as Farys gently tears it free.



The black chitin that coats the shell as it hardens is too lustrous. Too potent.

Par%l feels hir membrane contract, as if in premonition.

Tiding-flies are bred for communication across distance. Across light-centuries, if need be.

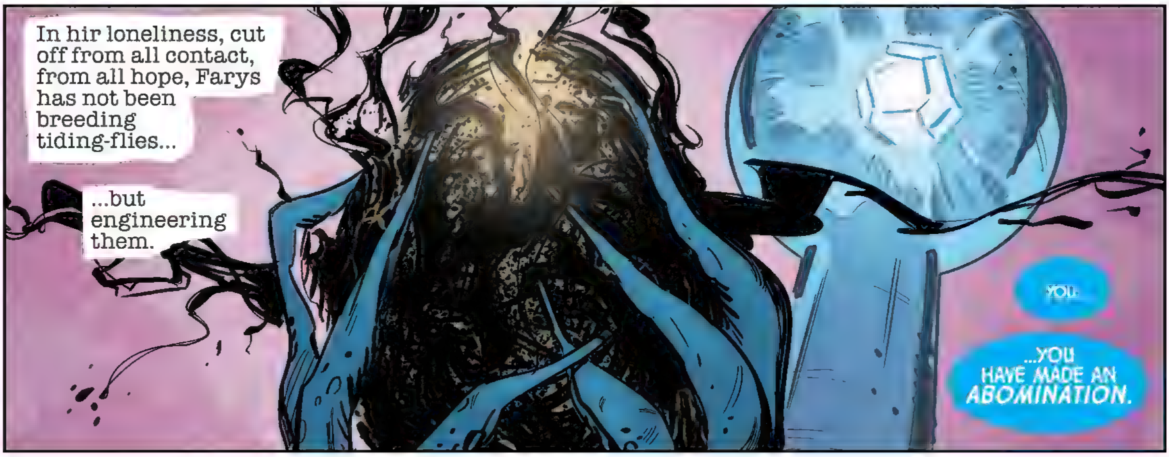


Thus, they move not only across space, but against time. They make their endless journeys to arrive at the exact point in time they left behind.

But never *before* that point.

The egg feels grotesque. Heavy with corruption. Obscene in power.

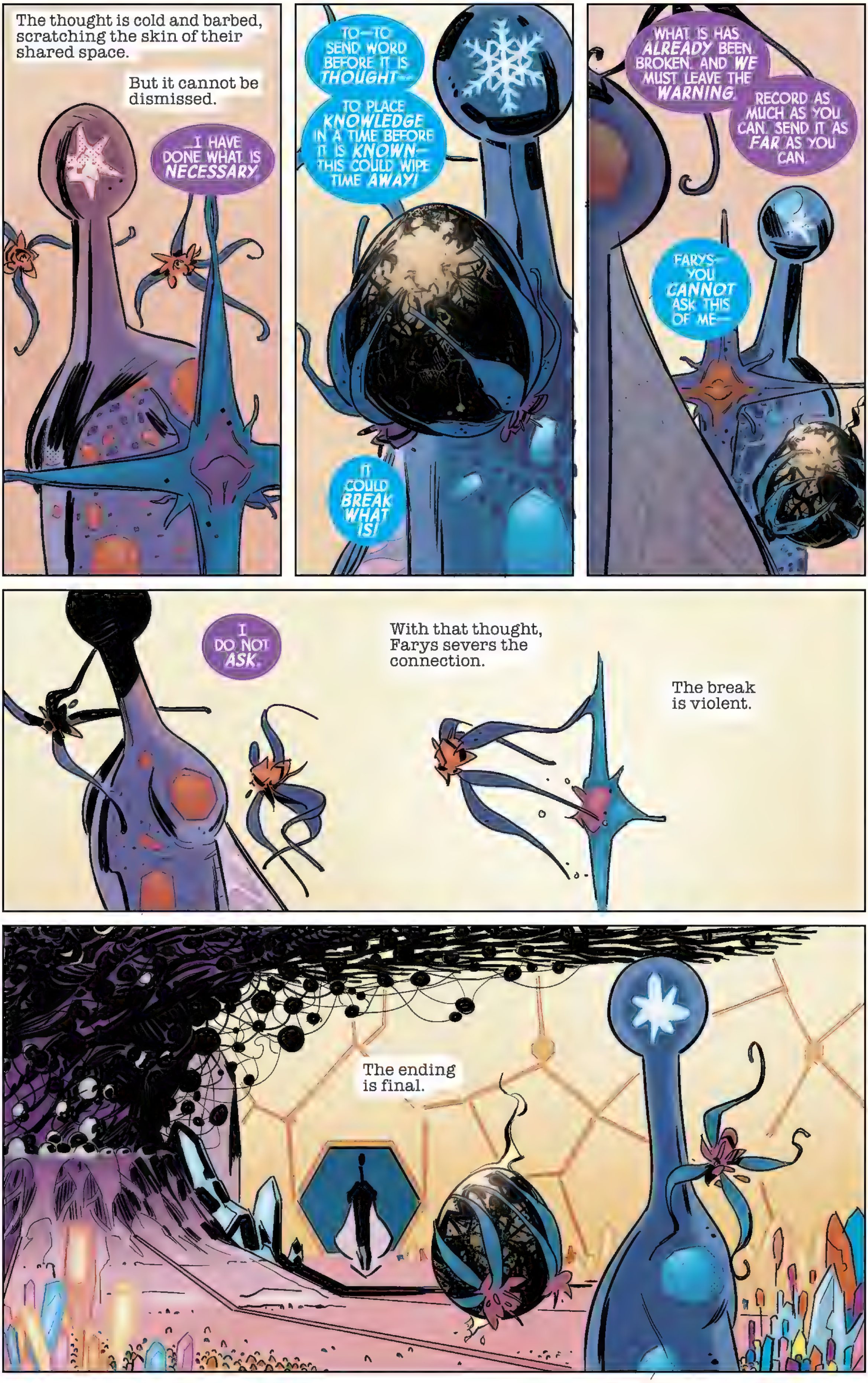
Par%l flashes cold blue as understanding comes.

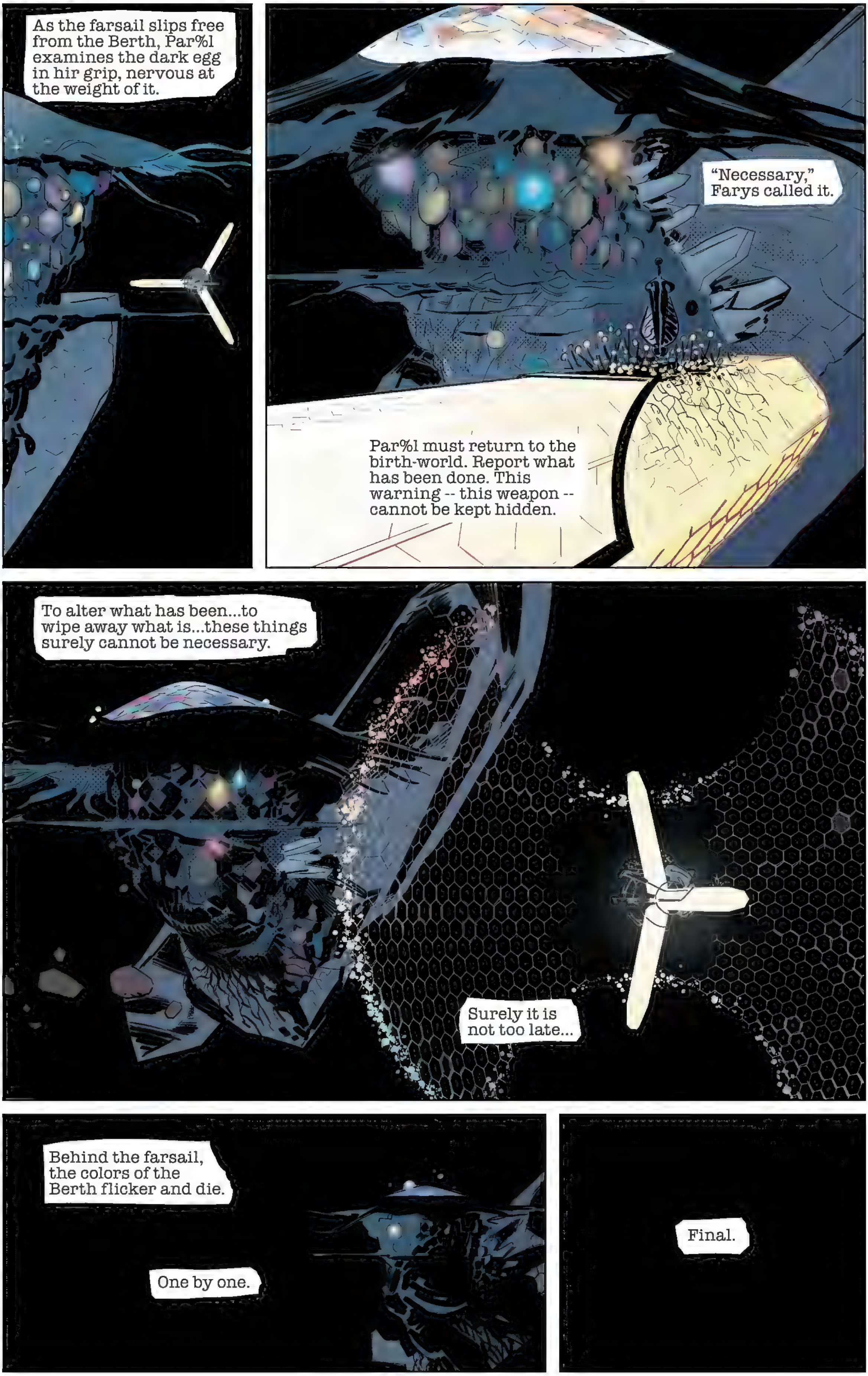


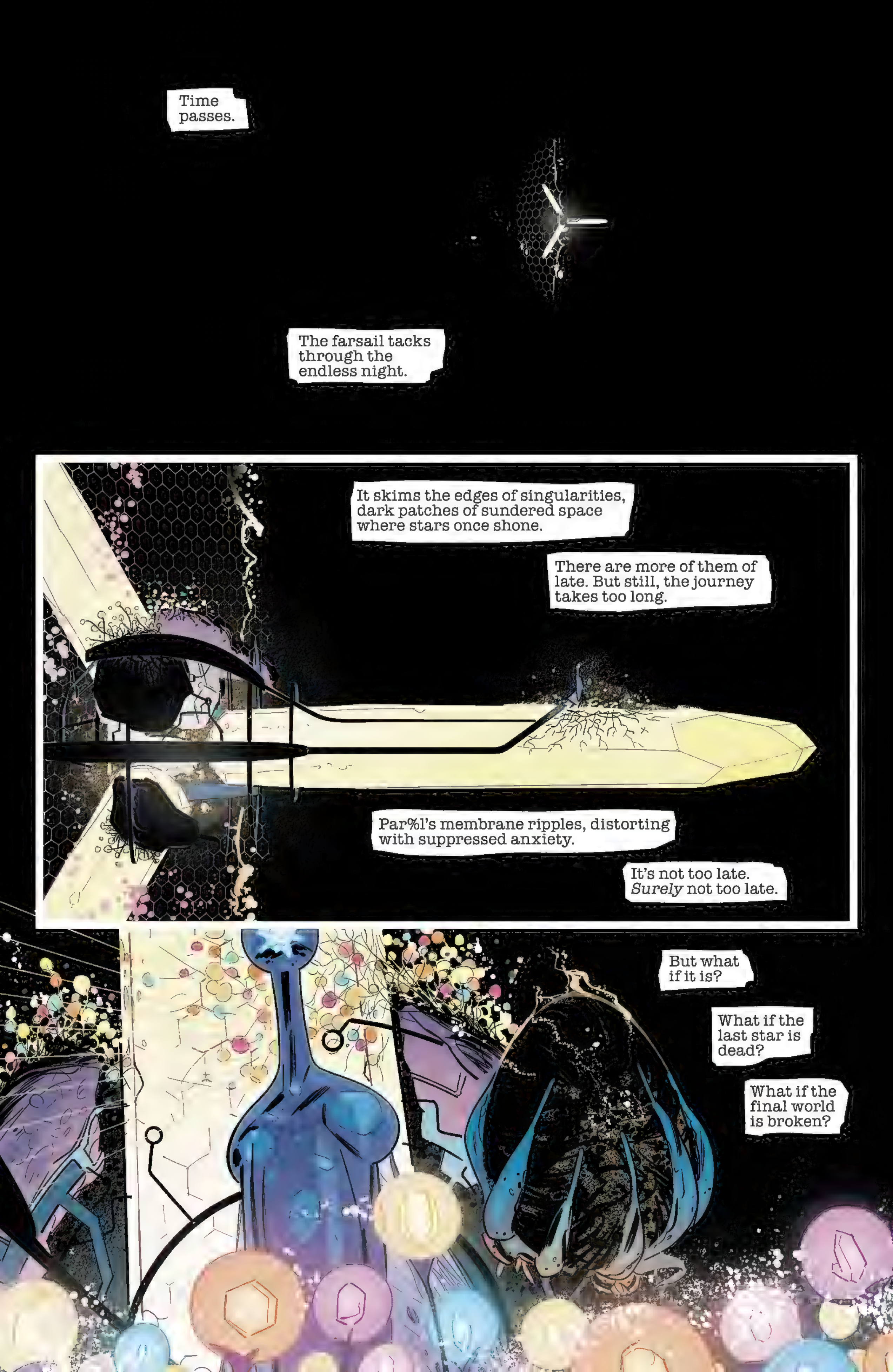
In hir loneliness, cut off from all contact, from all hope, Farys has not been breeding tiding-flies...

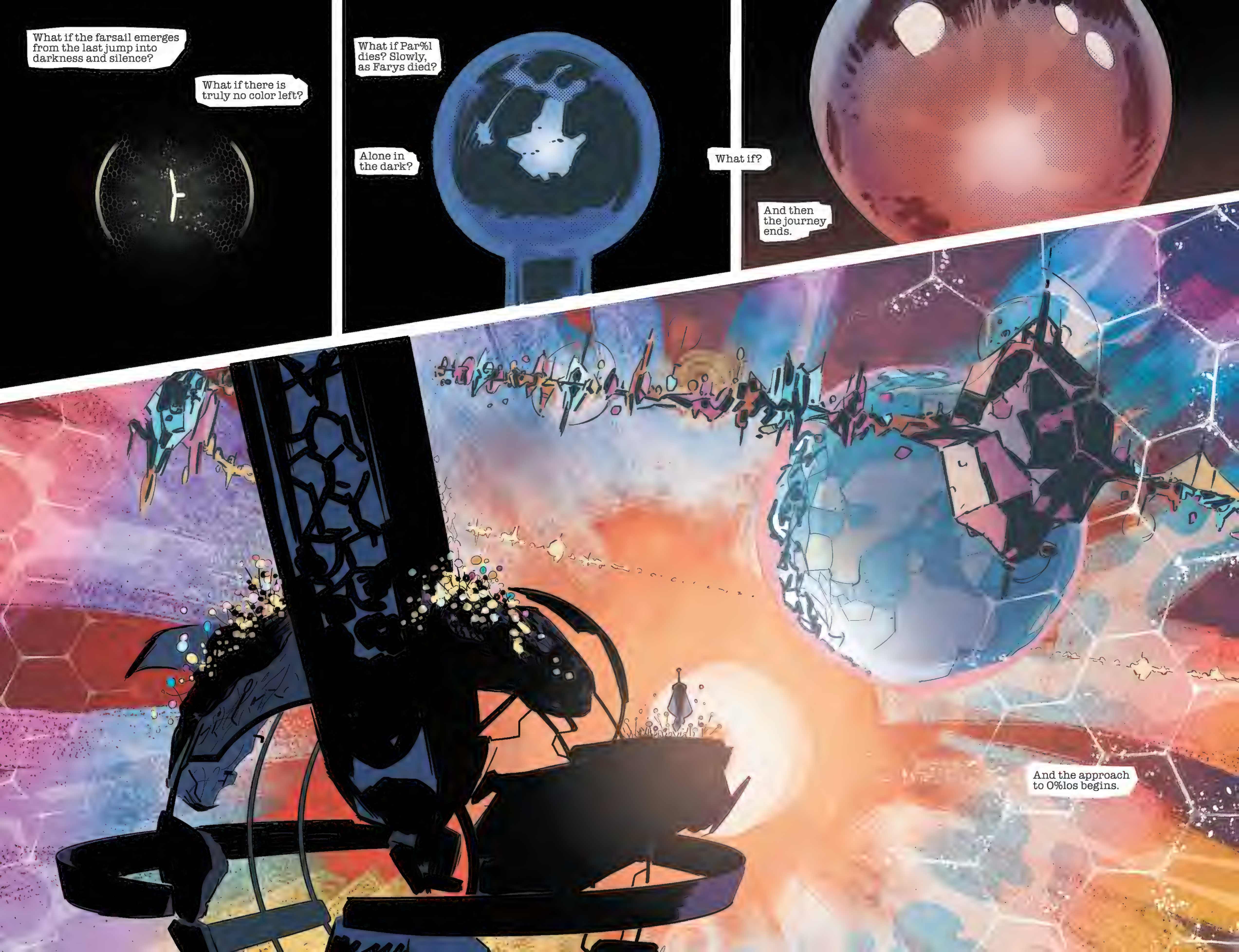
...but engineering them.

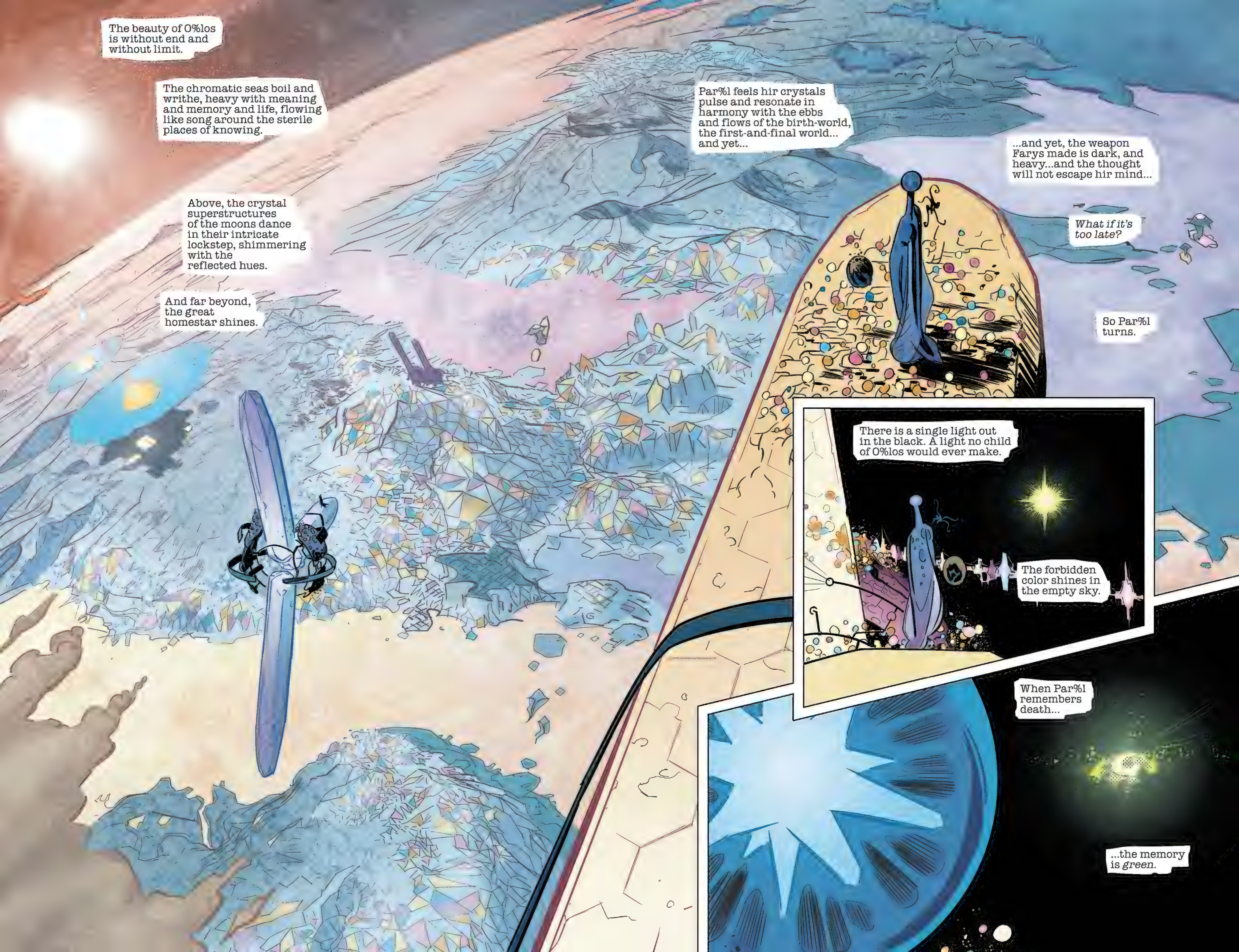
YOU...
...YOU HAVE MADE AN *ABOMINATION.*

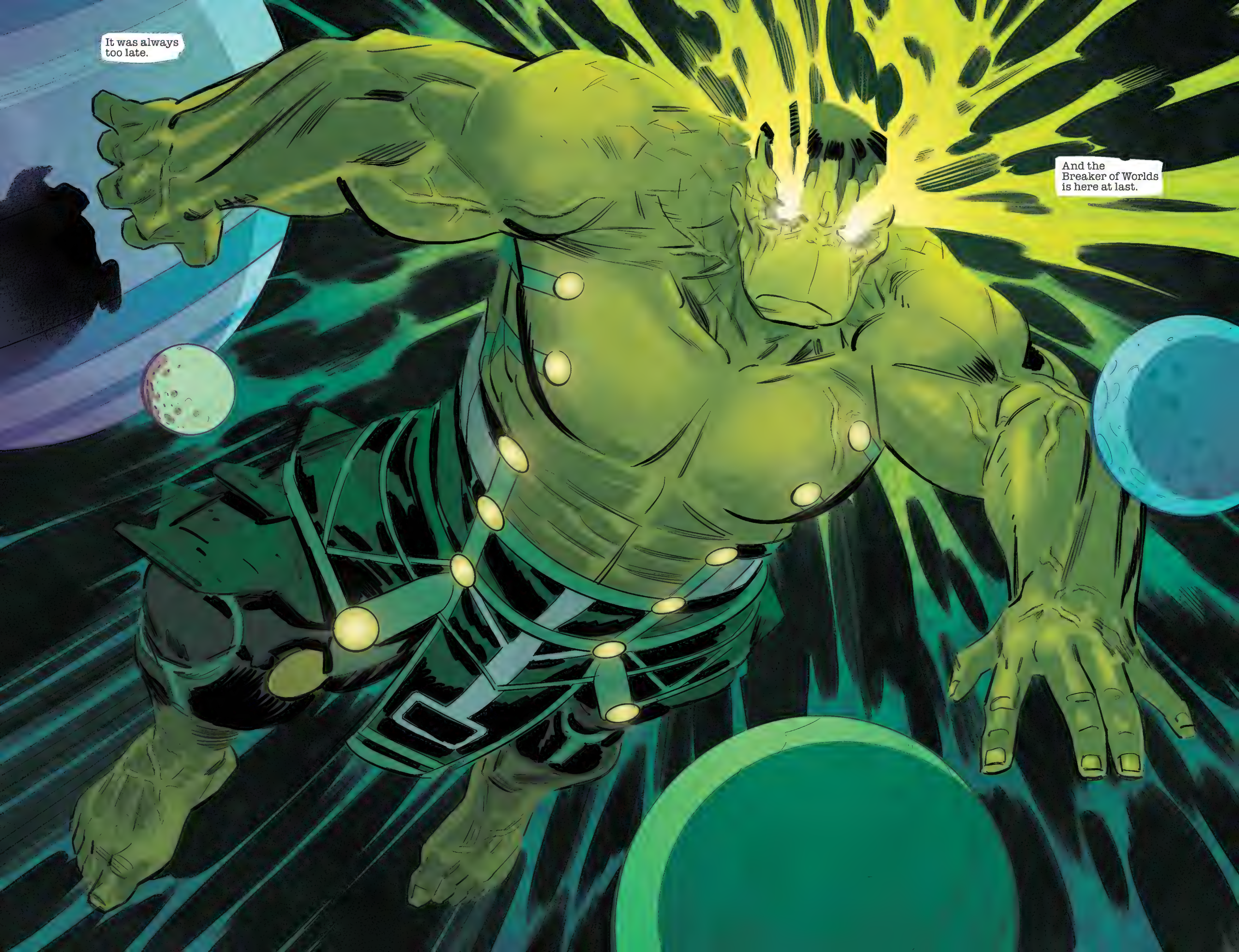

The thought is cold and barbed, scratching the skin of their shared space.
But it cannot be dismissed.
...I HAVE DONE WHAT IS NECESSARY.
TO—TO SEND WORD BEFORE IT IS THOUGHT—
TO PLACE KNOWLEDGE IN A TIME BEFORE IT IS KNOWN—THIS COULD WIPE TIME AWAY!
IT COULD BREAK WHAT IS!
WHAT IS HAS ALREADY BEEN BROKEN. AND WE MUST LEAVE THE WARNING.
RECORD AS MUCH AS YOU CAN. SEND IT AS FAR AS YOU CAN.
FARYS—YOU CANNOT ASK THIS OF ME—
I DO NOT ASK.
With that thought, Farys severs the connection.
The break is violent.
The ending is final.

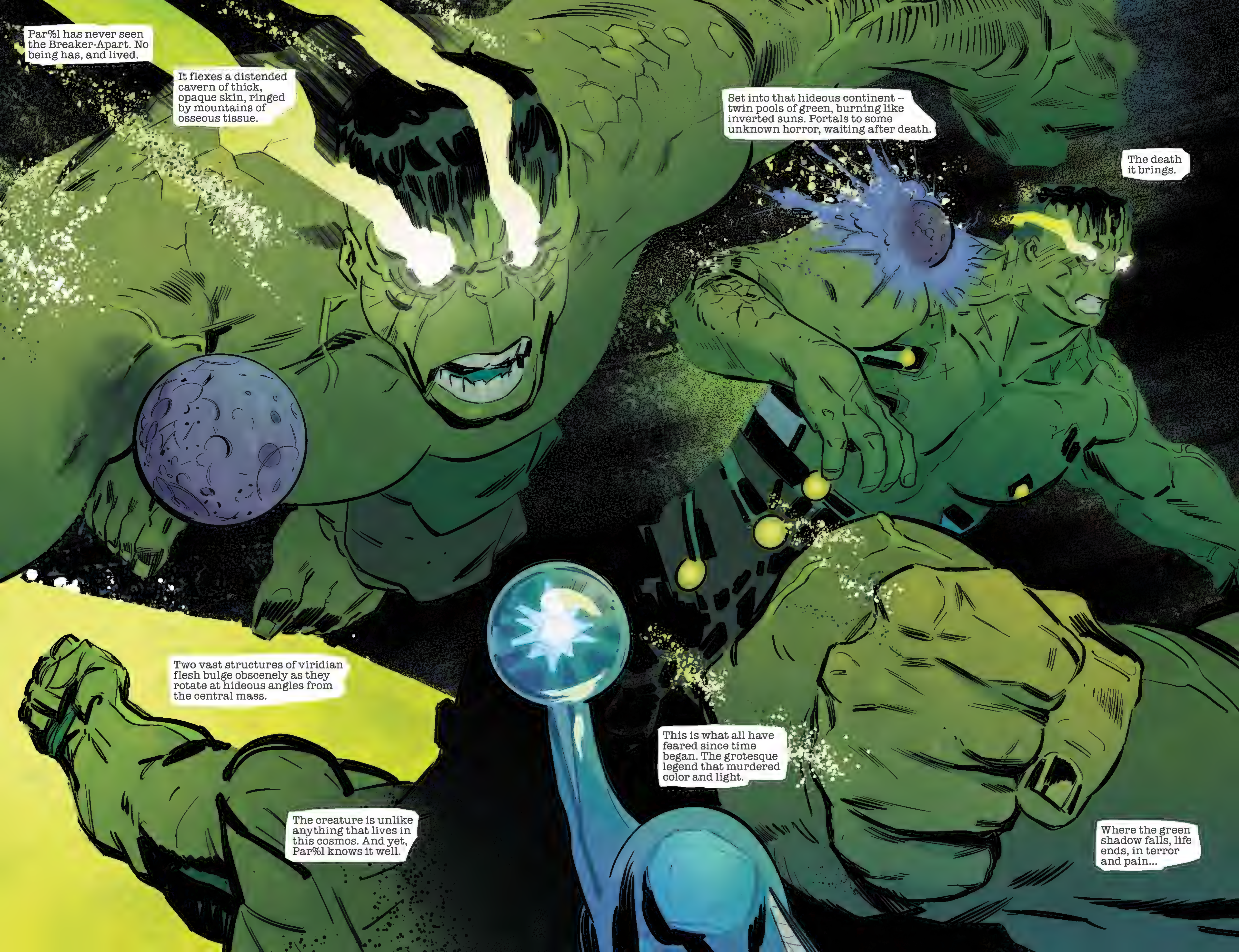

As the farsail slips free from the Berth, Par%l examines the dark egg in hir grip, nervous at the weight of it.
"Necessary," Farys called it.
Par%l must return to the birth-world. Report what has been done. This warning -- this weapon -- cannot be kept hidden.
To alter what has been...to wipe away what is...these things surely cannot be necessary.
Surely it is not too late...
Behind the farsail, the colors of the Berth flicker and die.
One by one.
Final.

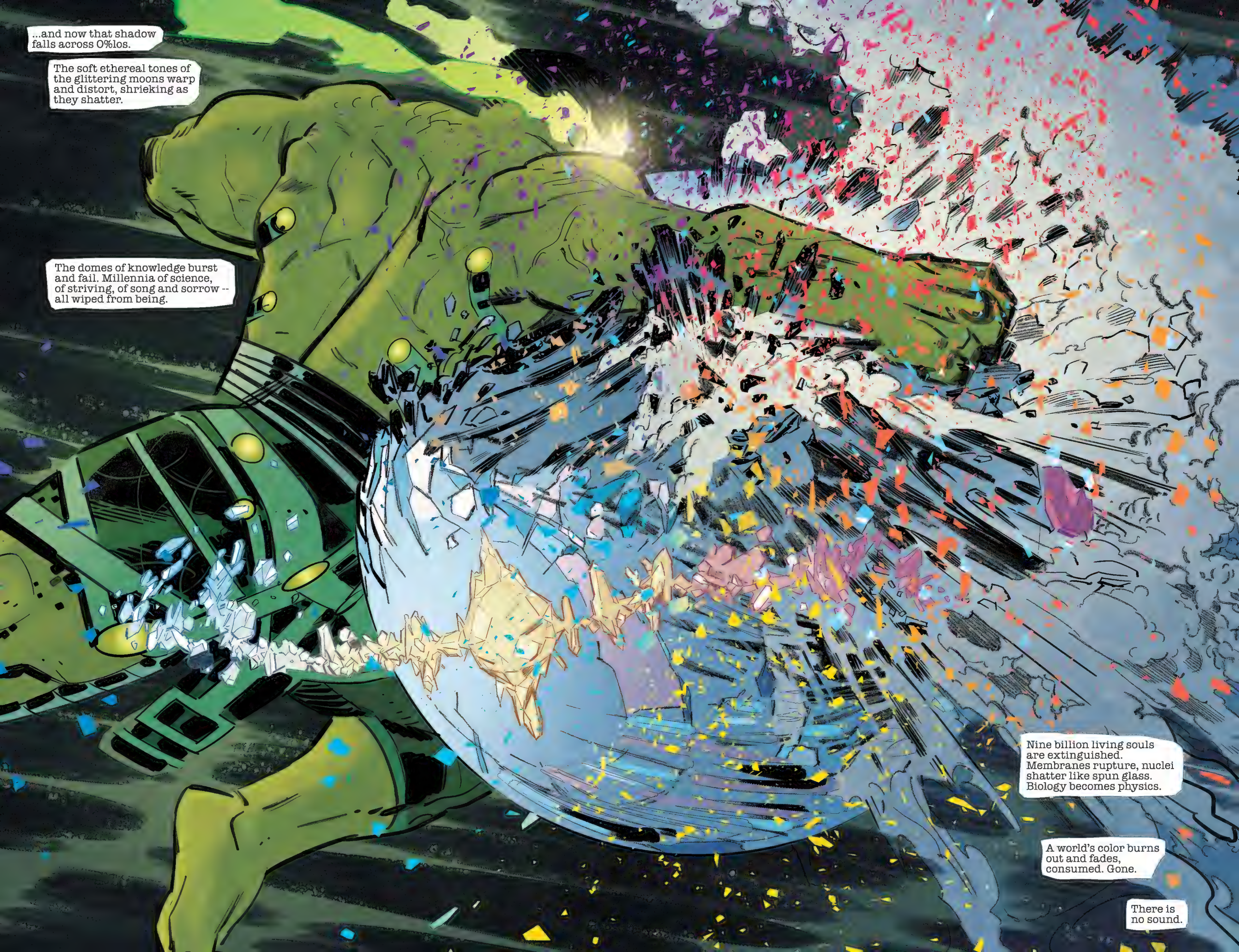

Time passes.
The farsail tacks through the endless night.
It skims the edges of singularities, dark patches of sundered space where stars once shone.
There are more of them of late. But still, the journey takes too long.
Par%l's membrane ripples, distorting with suppressed anxiety.
It's not too late. *Surely* not too late.
But what if it is?
What if the last star is dead?
What if the final world is broken?

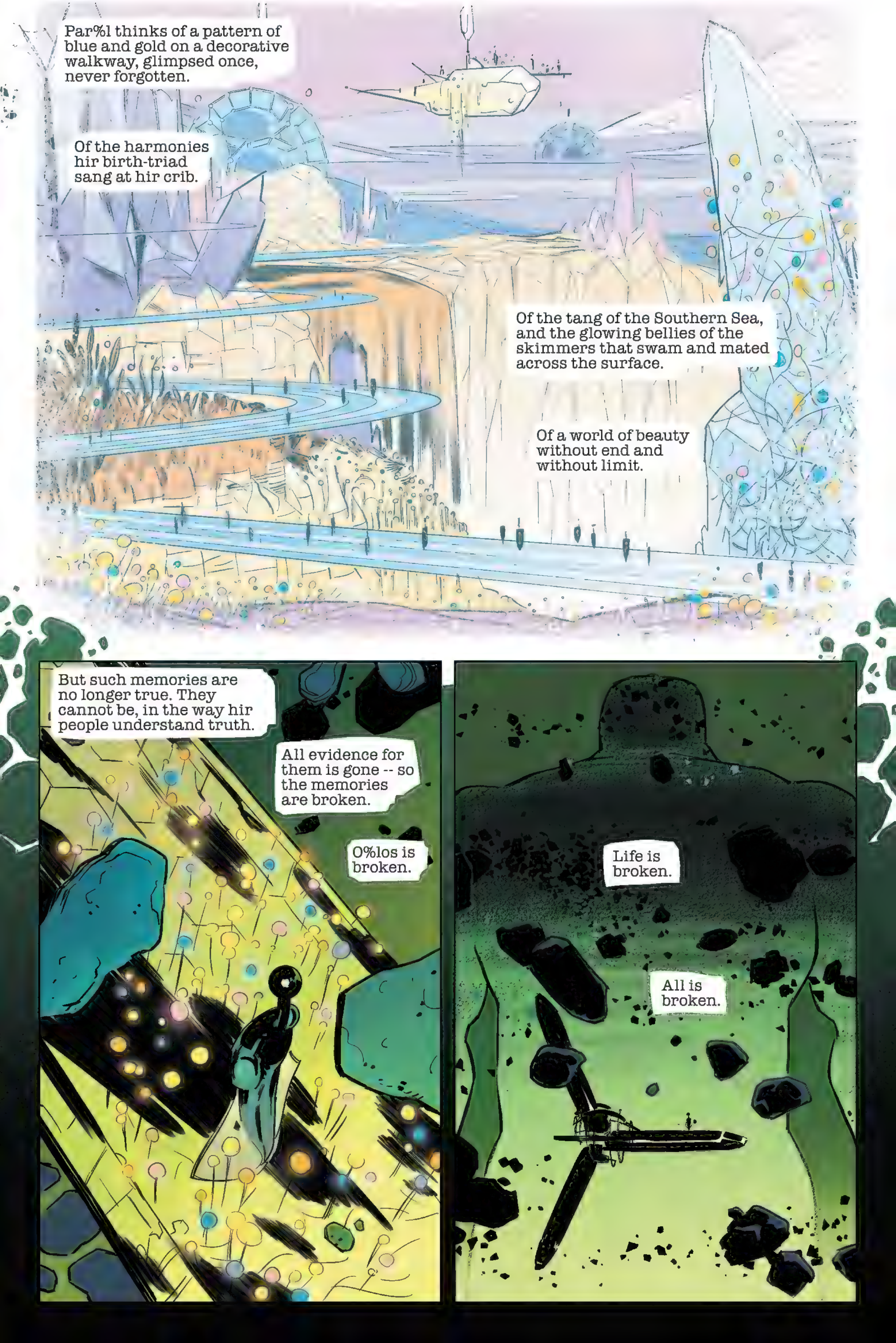

What if the farsail emerges from the last jump into darkness and silence?
What if there is truly no color left?
What if Par%l dies? Slowly, as Farys died?
Alone in the dark?
What if?
And then the journey ends.
And the approach to O%los begins.

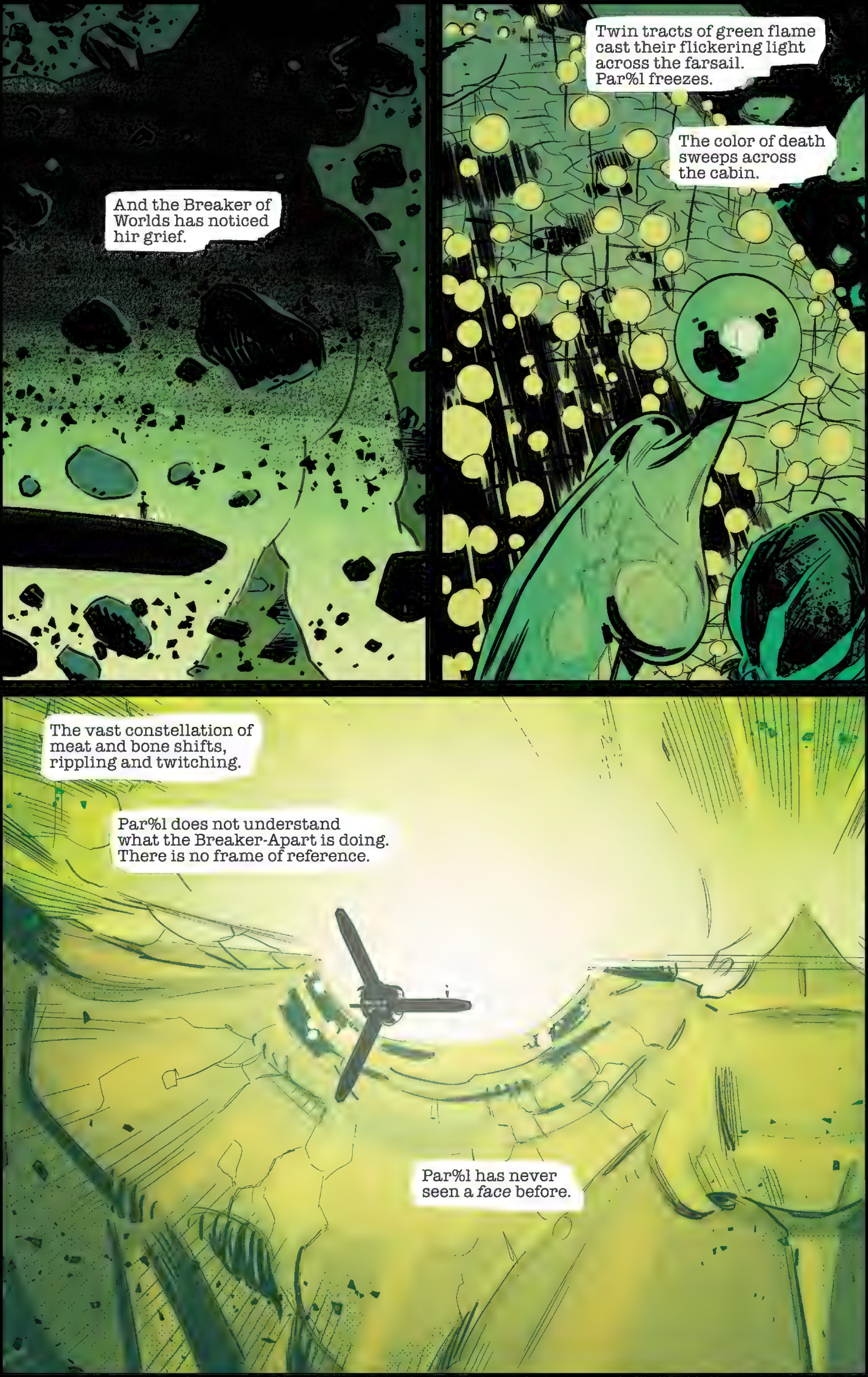

The beauty of O%los is without end and without limit.
The chromatic seas boil and writhe, heavy with meaning and memory and life, flowing like song around the sterile places of knowing.
Above, the crystal superstructures of the moons dance in their intricate lockstep, shimmering with the reflected hues.
And far beyond, the great homestar shines.
Par%l feels hir crystals pulse and resonate in harmony with the ebbs and flows of the birth-world, the first-and-final world... and yet...
...and yet, the weapon Farys made is dark, and heavy...and the thought will not escape hir mind...
What if it's too late?
So Par%l turns.
There is a single light out in the black. A light no child of O%los would ever make.
The forbidden color shines in the empty sky.
When Par%l remembers death...
...the memory is *green.*

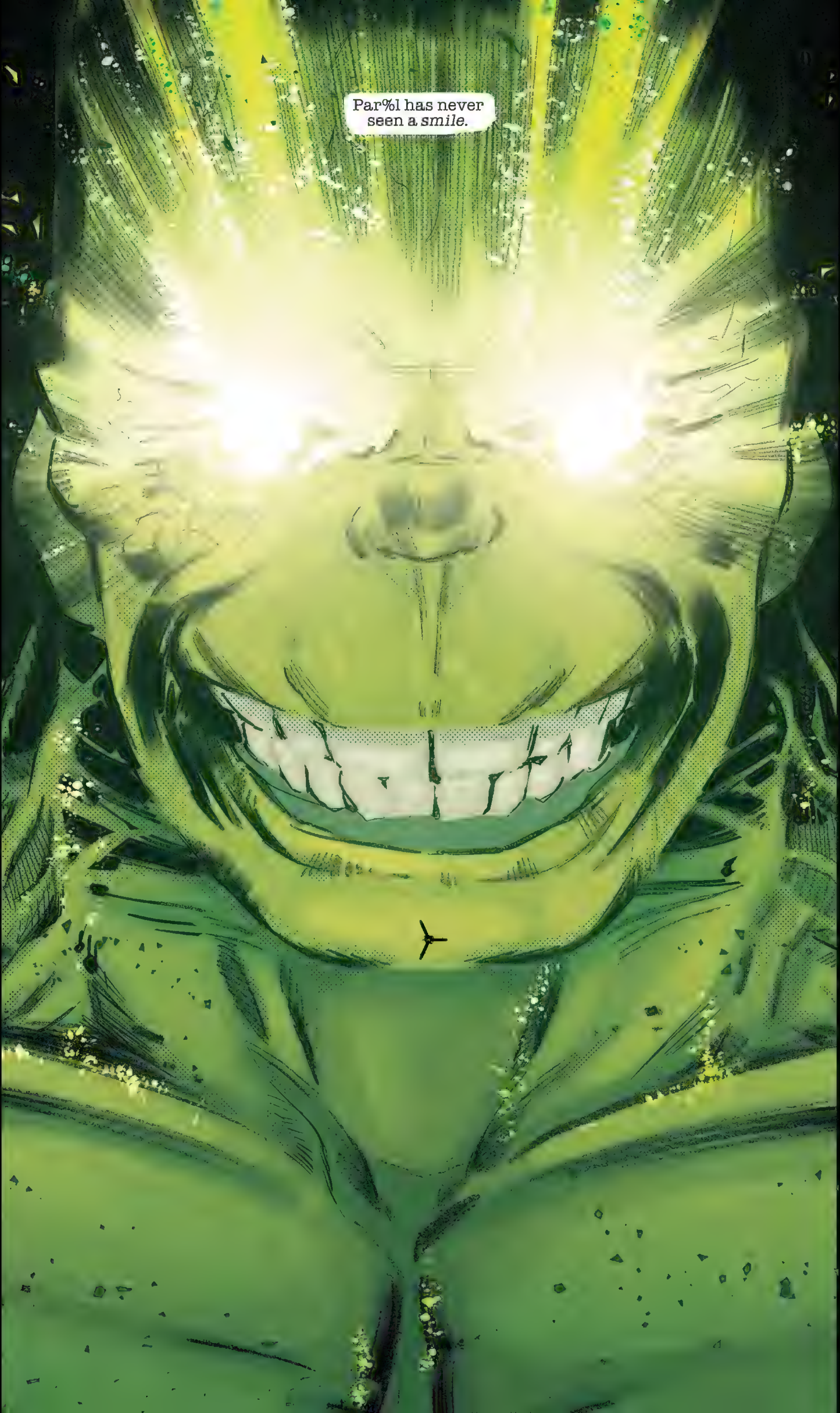

It was always too late.
And the Breaker of Worlds is here at last.

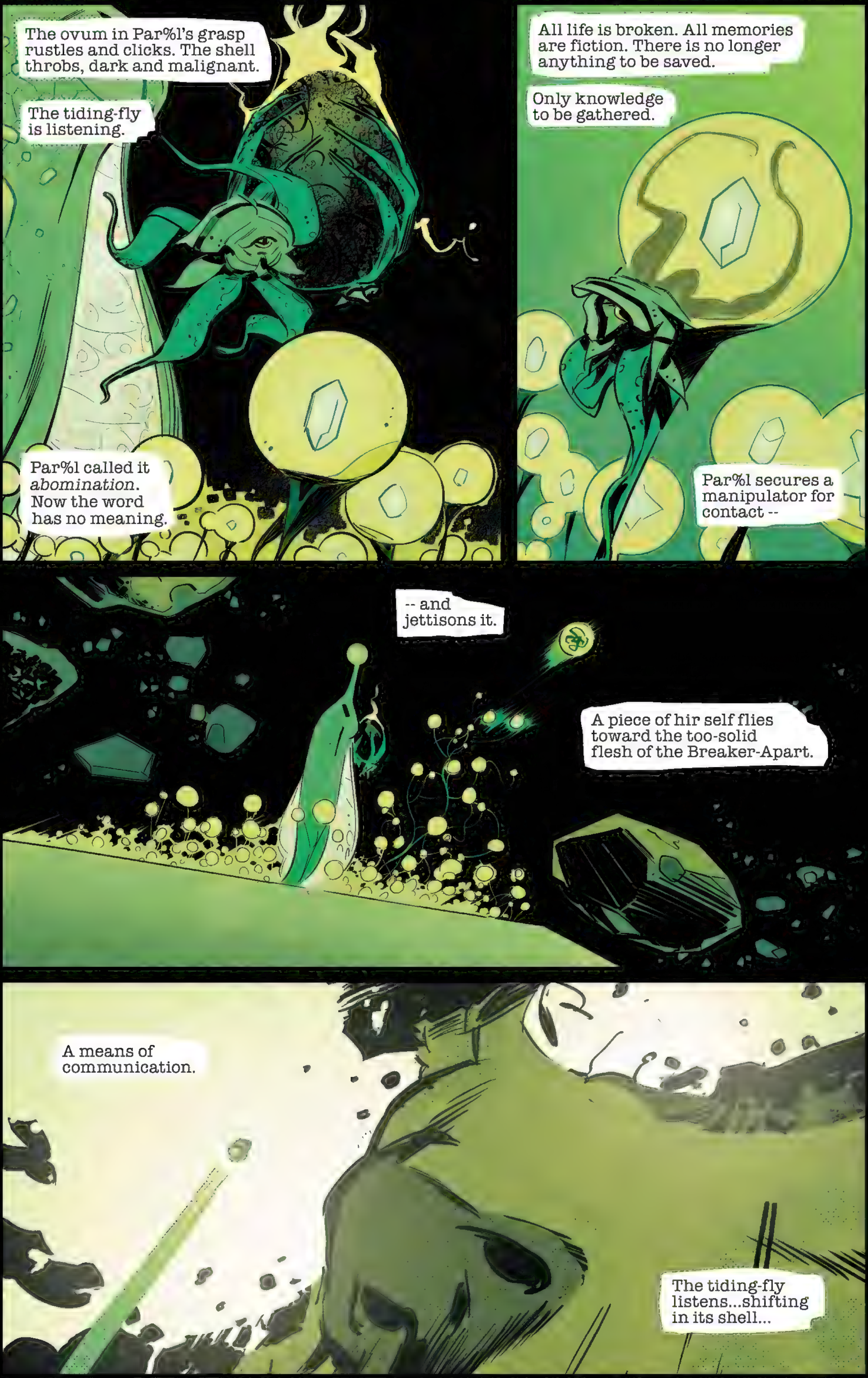

Par%l has never seen the Breaker-Apart. No being has, and lived.
It flexes a distended cavern of thick, opaque skin, ringed by mountains of osseous tissue.
Set into that hideous continent -- twin pools of green, burning like inverted suns. Portals to some unknown horror, waiting after death.
The death it brings.
Two vast structures of viridian flesh bulge obscenely as they rotate at hideous angles from the central mass.
The creature is unlike anything that lives in this cosmos. And yet, Par%l knows it well.
This is what all have feared since time began. The grotesque legend that murdered color and light.
Where the green shadow falls, life ends, in terror and pain...

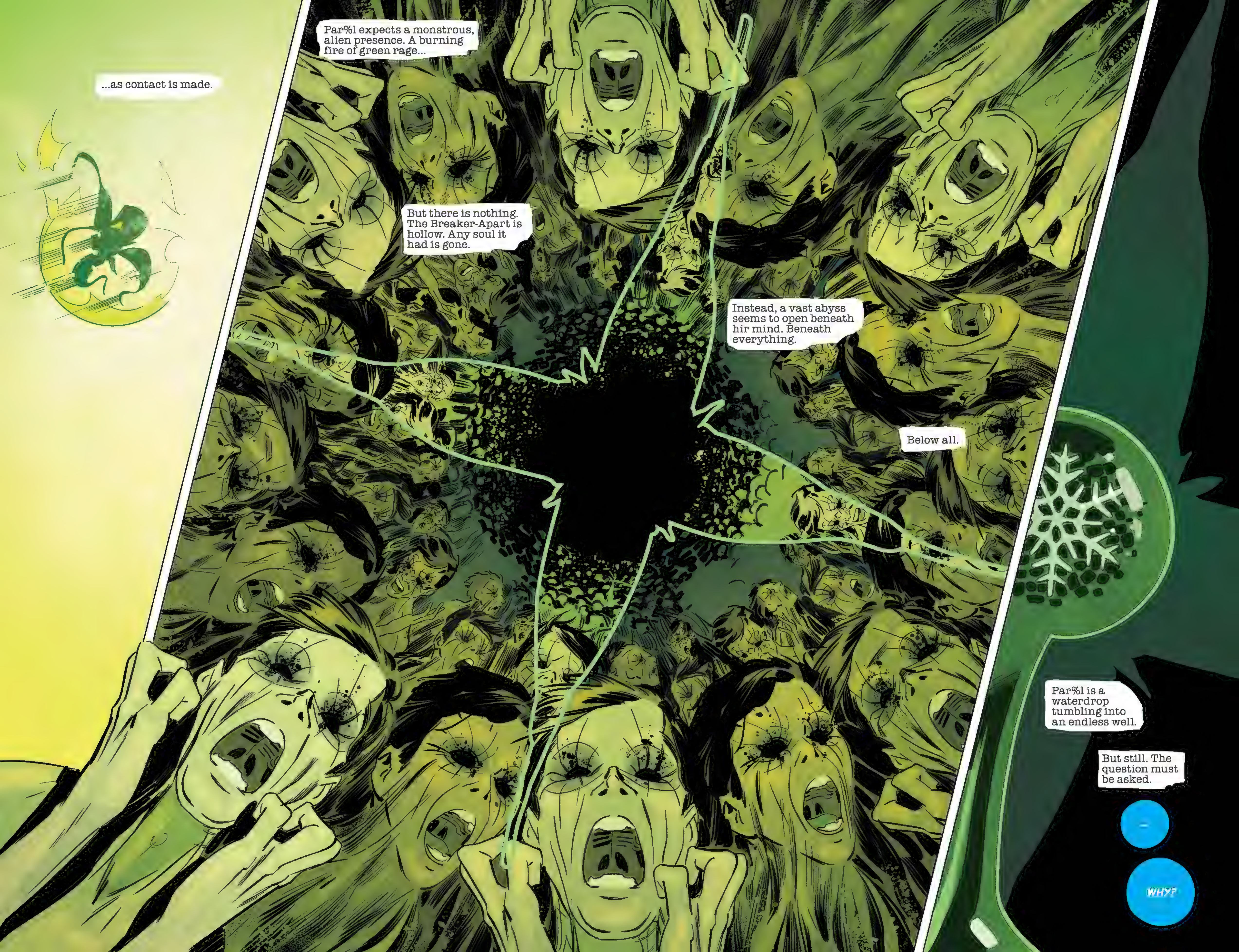

...and now that shadow falls across O%los.
The soft ethereal tones of the glittering moons warp and distort, shrieking as they shatter.
The domes of knowledge burst and fail. Millennia of science, of striving, of song and sorrow -- all wiped from being.
Nine billion living souls are extinguished. Membranes rupture, nuclei shatter like spun glass. Biology becomes physics.
A world's color burns out and fades, consumed. Gone.
There is no sound.

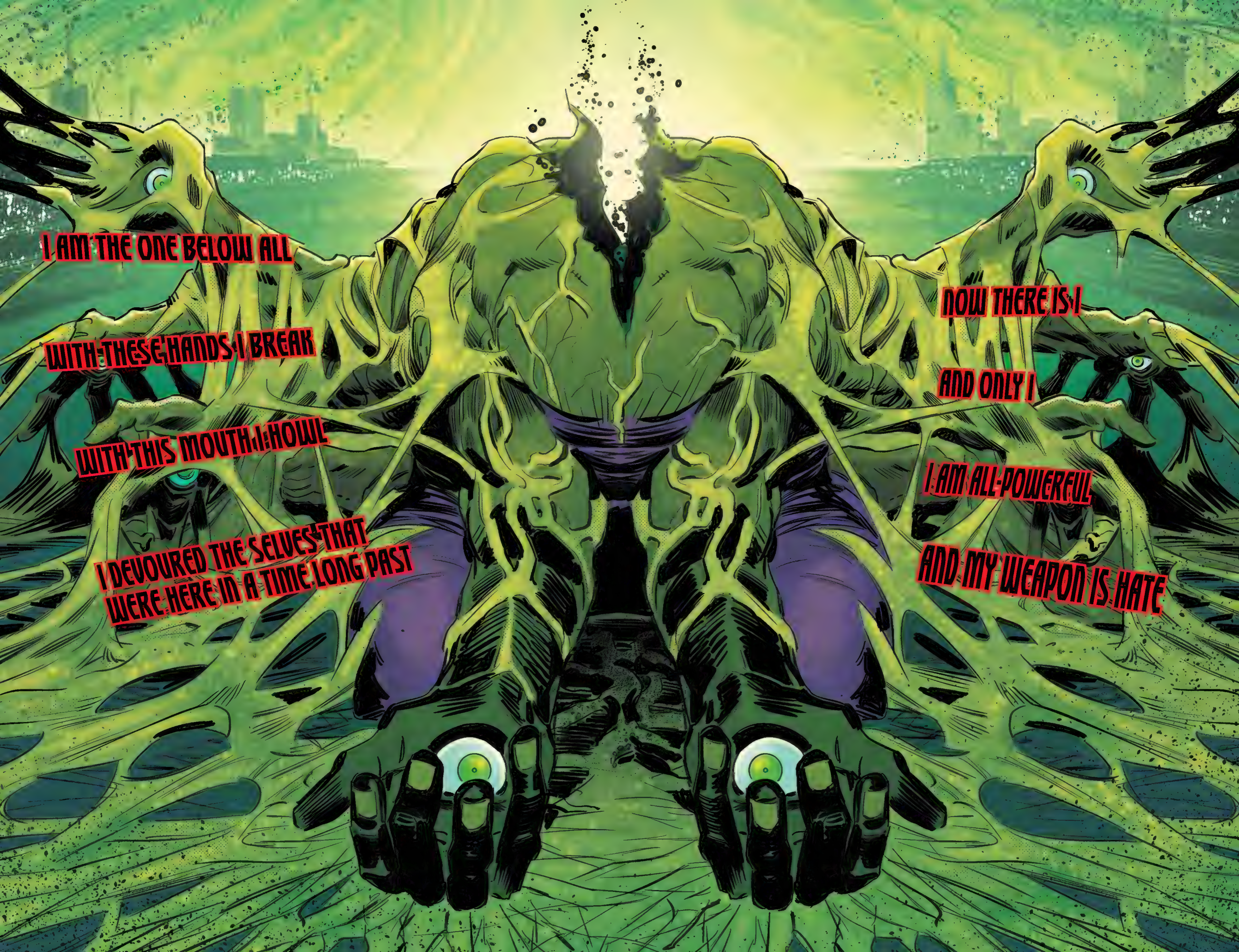

Par%l thinks of a pattern of blue and gold on a decorative walkway, glimpsed once, never forgotten.
Of the harmonies hir birth-triad sang at hir crib.
Of the tang of the Southern Sea, and the glowing bellies of the skimmers that swam and mated across the surface.
Of a world of beauty without end and without limit.
But such memories are no longer true. They cannot be, in the way hir people understand truth.
All evidence for them is gone -- so the memories are broken.
O%los is broken.
Life is broken.
All is broken.

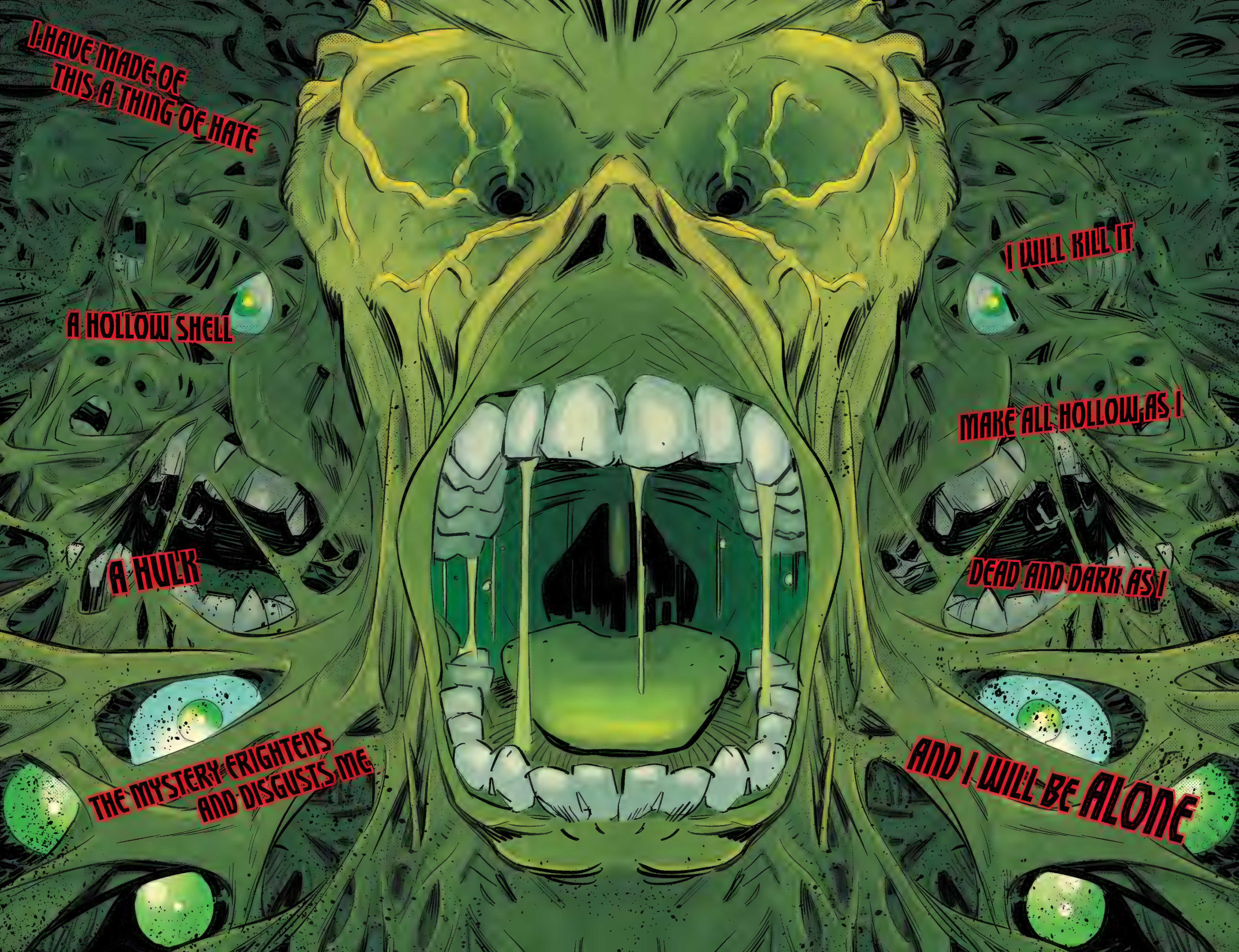

And the Breaker of Worlds has noticed hir grief.
Twin tracts of green flame cast their flickering light across the farsail. Par%l freezes.
The color of death sweeps across the cabin.
The vast constellation of meat and bone shifts, rippling and twitching.
Par%l does not understand what the Breaker-Apart is doing. There is no frame of reference.
Par%l has never seen a *face* before.

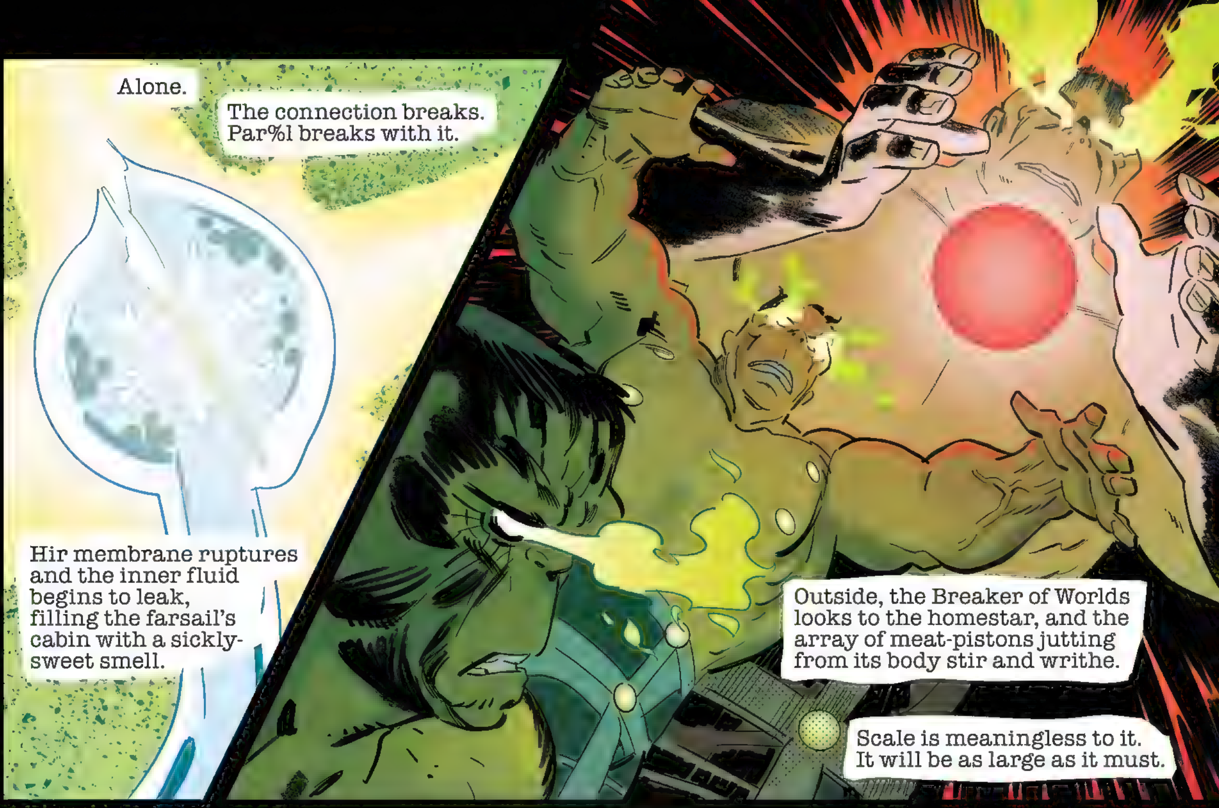

Par%l has never seen a *smile.*

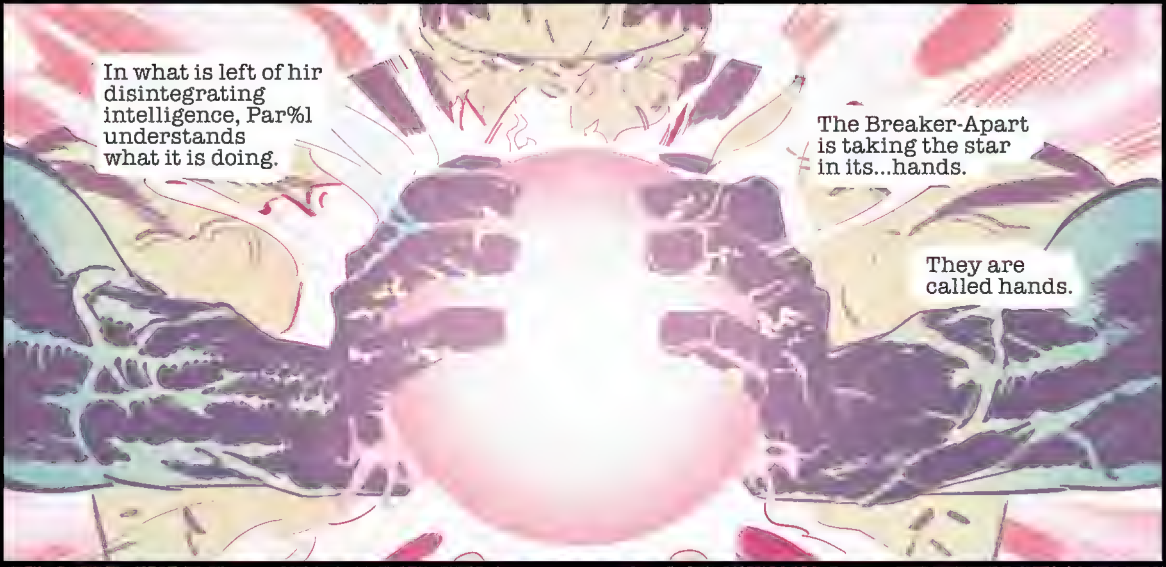

The ovum in Par%l's grasp rustles and clicks. The shell throbs, dark and malignant.
The tiding-fly is listening.
Par%l called it *abomination*. Now the word has no meaning.
All life is broken. All memories are fiction. There is no longer anything to be saved.
Only knowledge to be gathered.
Par%l secures a manipulator for contact --
-- and jettisons it.
A piece of hir self flies toward the too-solid flesh of the Breaker-Apart.
A means of communication.
The tiding-fly listens...shifting in its shell...

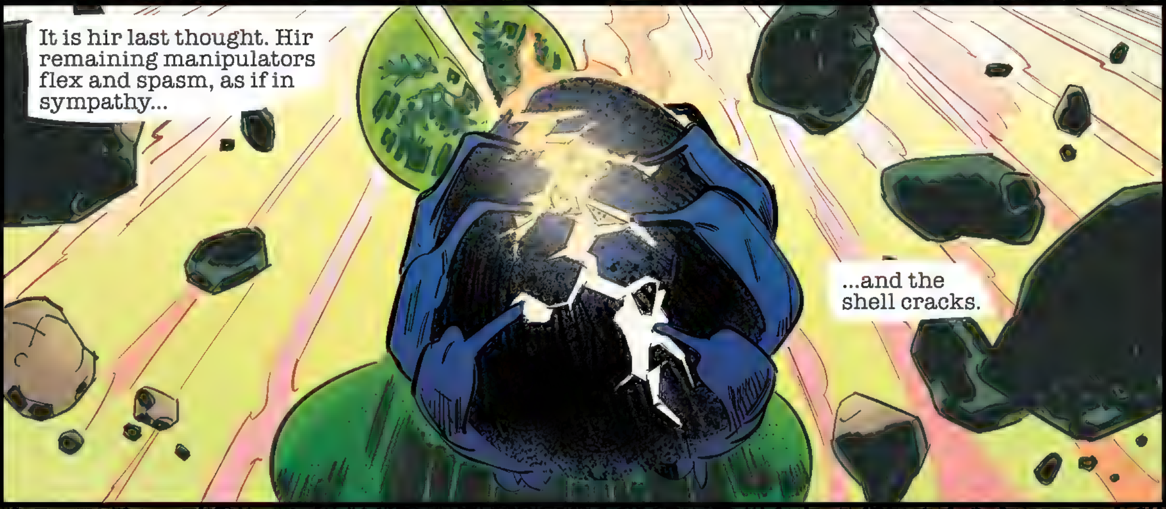

...as contact is made.
Par%l expects a monstrous, alien presence. A burning fire of green rage...
But there is nothing. The Breaker-Apart is hollow. Any soul it had is gone.
Instead, a vast abyss seems to open beneath hir mind. Beneath everything.
Below all.
Par%l is a waterdrop tumbling into an endless well.
But still. The question must be asked.
–
WHY?

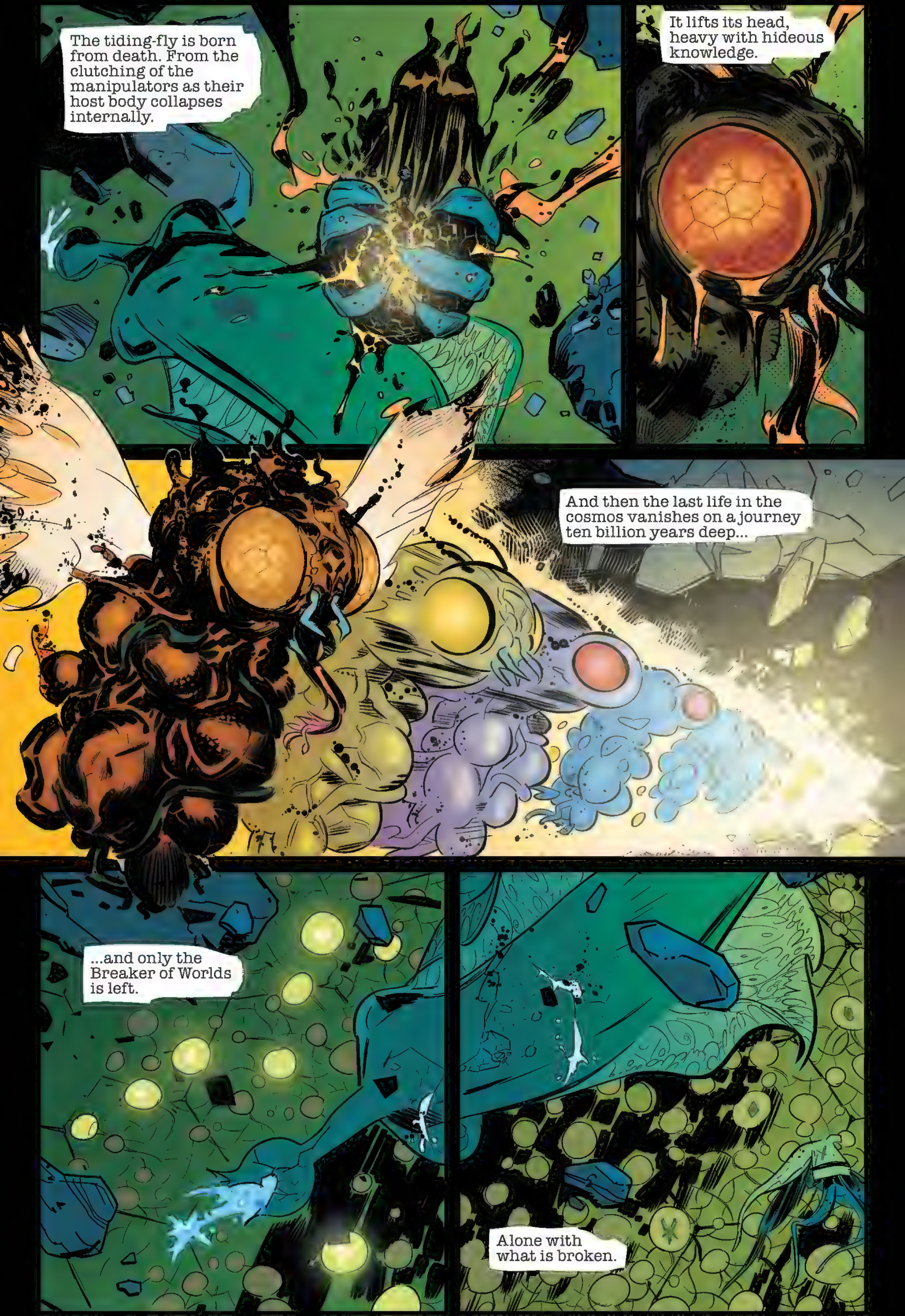

I AM THE ONE BELOW ALL
WITH THESE HANDS I BREAK
WITH THIS MOUTH I HOWL
I DEVOURED THE SELVES THAT WERE HERE IN A TIME LONG PAST
NOW THERE IS I
AND ONLY I
I AM ALL-POWERFUL
AND MY WEAPON IS HATE

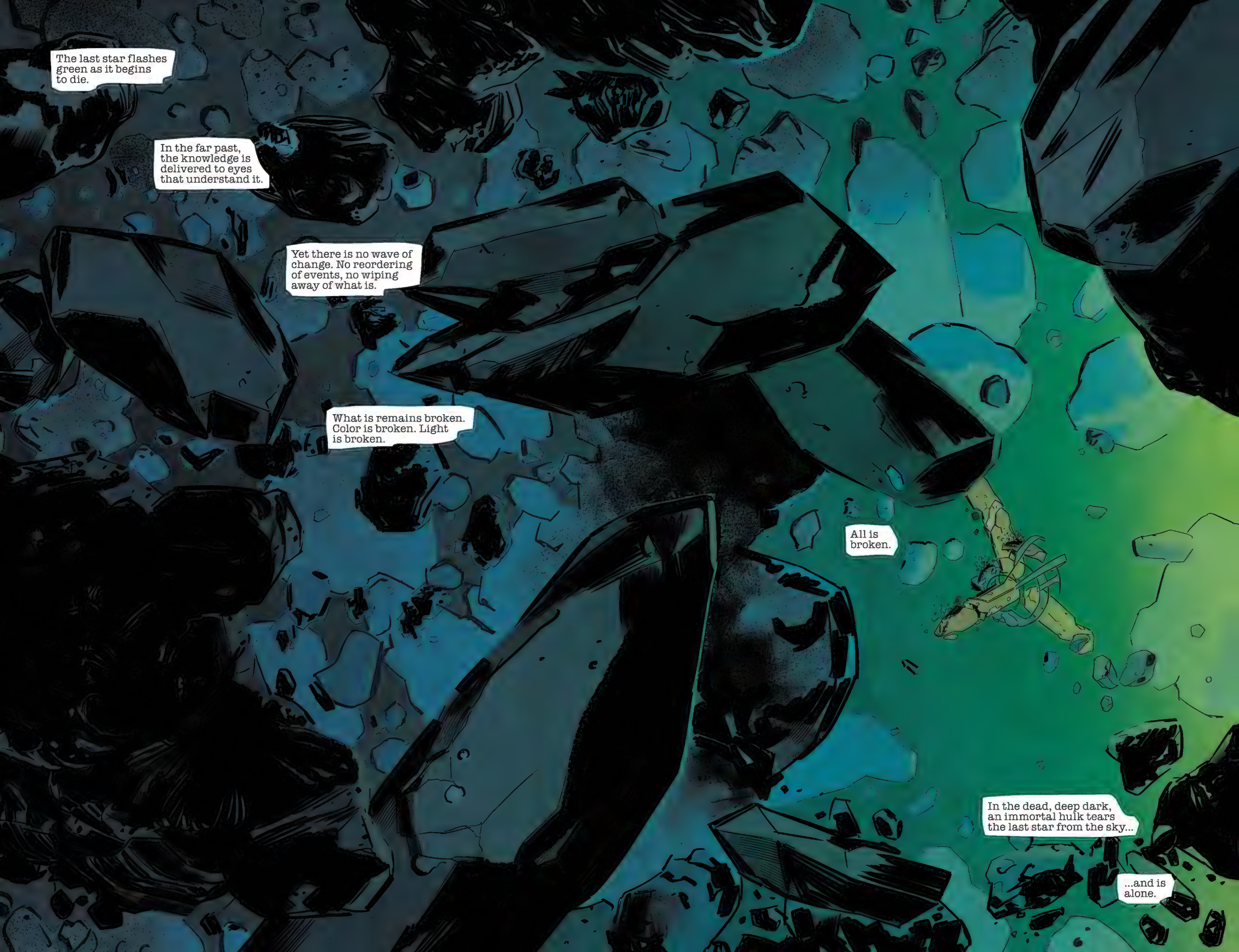

I HAVE MADE OF THIS A THING OF HATE
A HOLLOW SHELL
A HULK
THE MYSTERY FRIGHTENS AND DISGUSTS ME
I WILL KILL IT
MAKE ALL HOLLOW AS I
DEAD AND DARK AS I
AND I WILL BE ALONE


Alone.
The connection breaks. Par%l breaks with it.
Hir membrane ruptures and the inner fluid begins to leak, filling the farsail's cabin with a sickly-sweet smell.
Outside, the Breaker of Worlds looks to the homestar, and the array of meat-pistons jutting from its body stir and writhe.
Scale is meaningless to it. It will be as large as it must.


In what is left of hir disintegrating intelligence, Par%l understands what it is doing.
The Breaker-Apart is taking the star in its...hands.
They are called hands.


It is hir last thought. Hir remaining manipulators flex and spasm, as if in sympathy...
...and the shell cracks.


The tiding-fly is born from death. From the clutching of the manipulators as their host body collapses internally.
It lifts its head, heavy with hideous knowledge.
And then the last life in the cosmos vanishes on a journey ten billion years deep...
...and only the Breaker of Worlds is left.
Alone with what is broken.


The last star flashes green as it begins to die.
In the far past, the knowledge is delivered to eyes that understand it.
Yet there is no wave of change. No reordering of events, no wiping away of what is.
What is remains broken. Color is broken. Light is broken.
All is broken.
In the dead, deep dark, an immortal hulk tears the last star from the sky...
...and is alone.

"JOE?

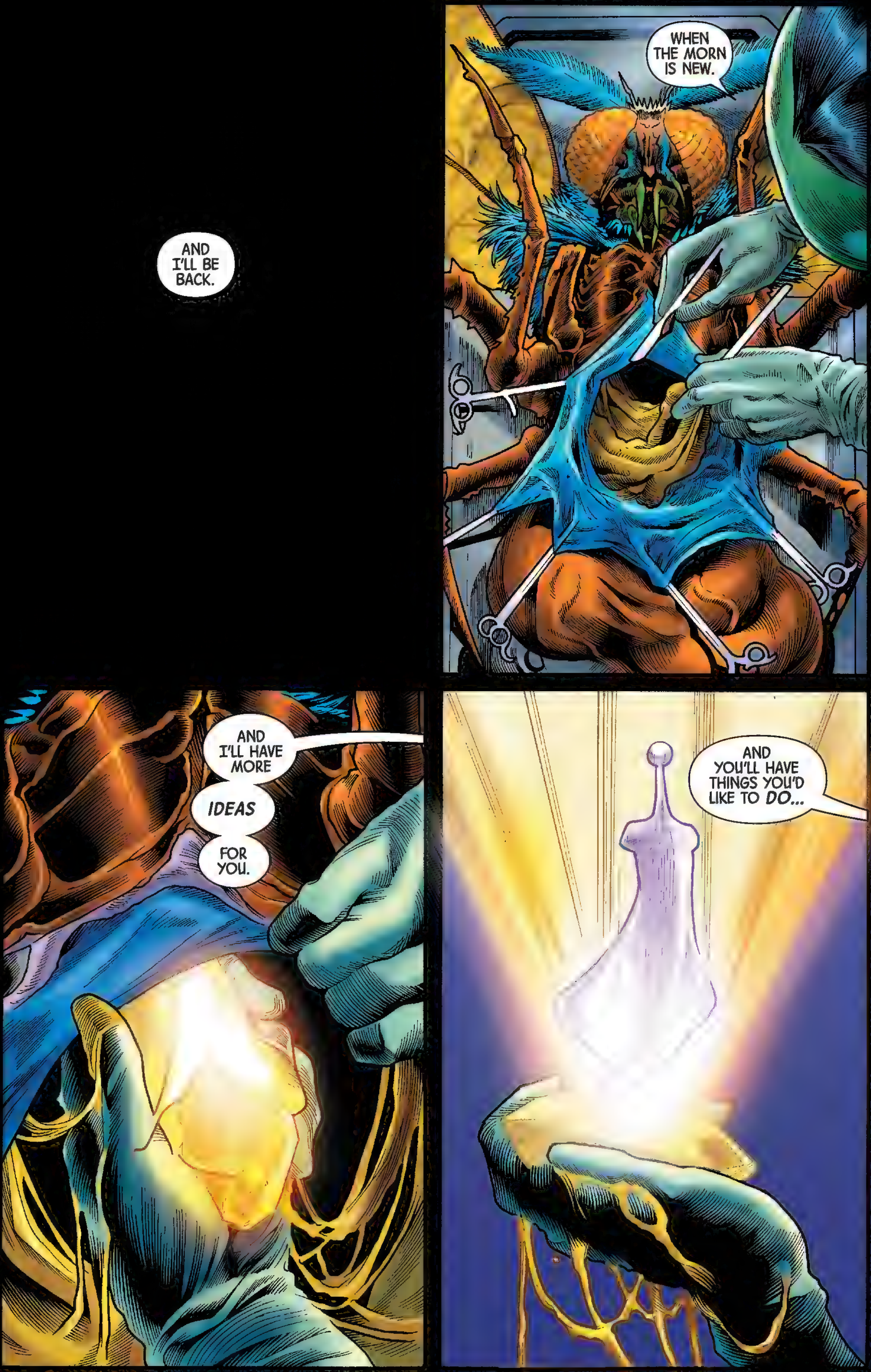
IS THAT YOU? ARE YOU THERE?
I NEED HELP, JOE. I CAN'T SEE.

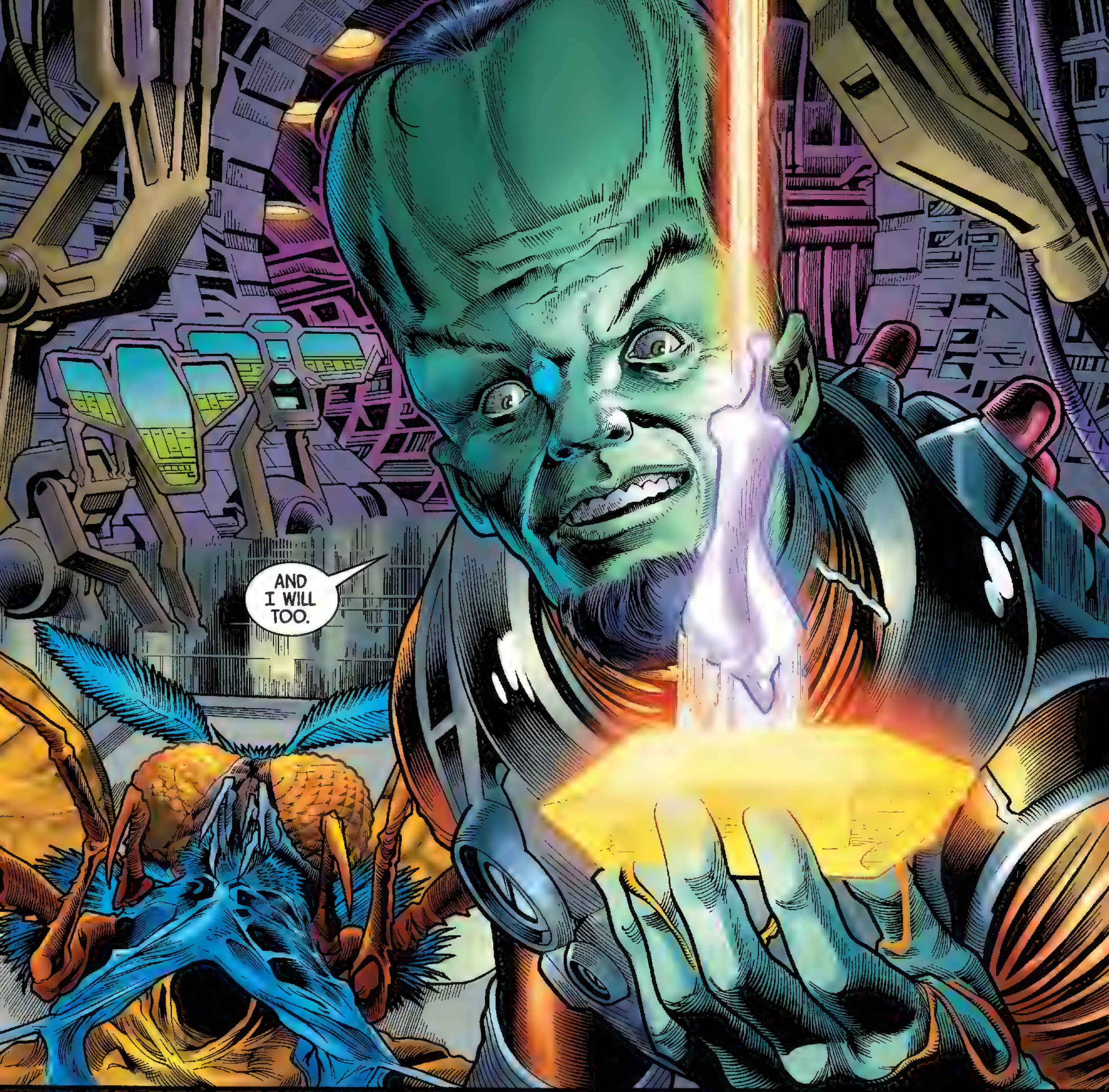
SOMETHING'S EATING ME.

I THINK...

I THINK IT KILLED THE HULK."

– BRUCE BANNER

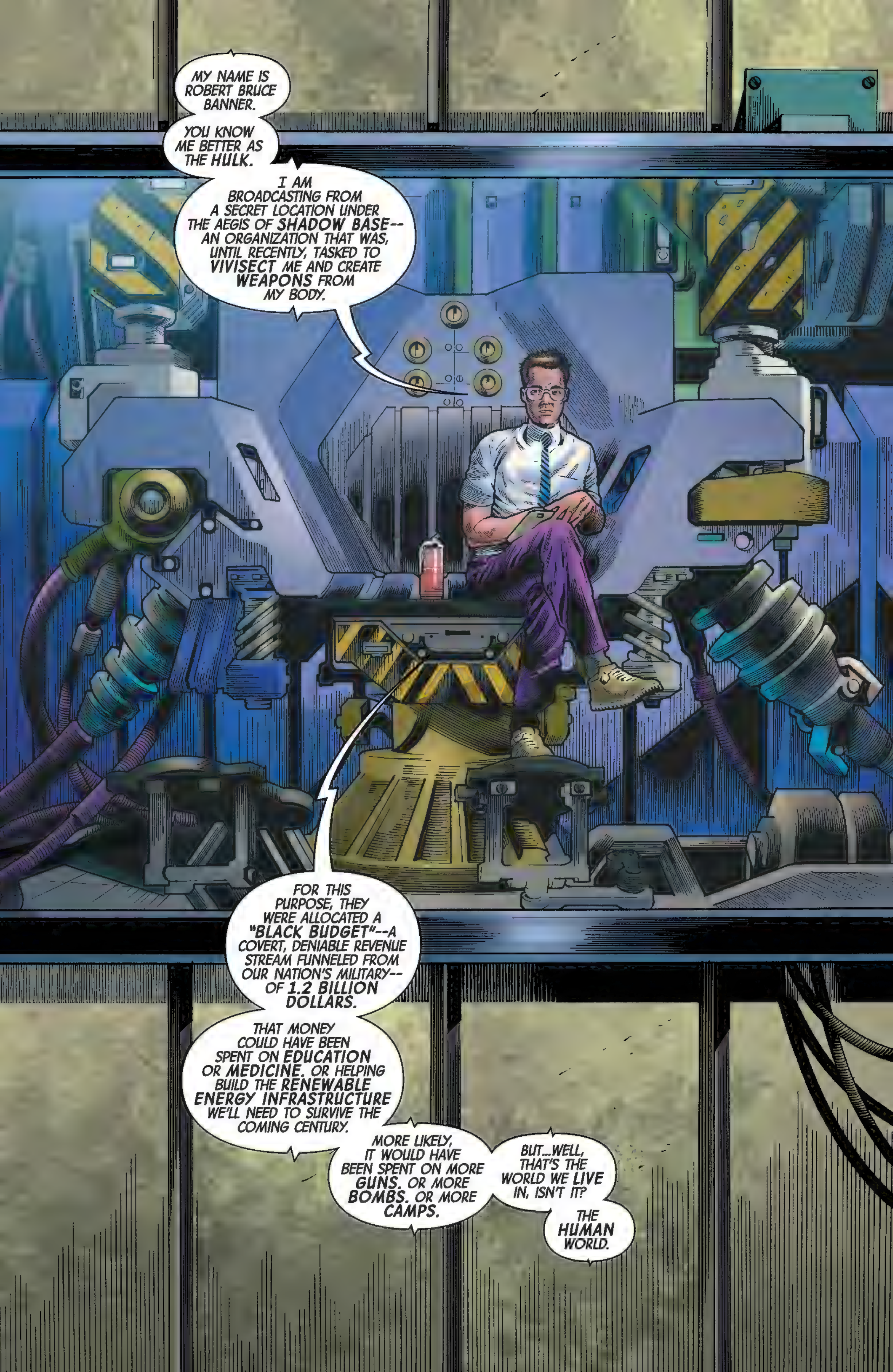

AND I'LL BE BACK.
WHEN THE MORN IS NEW.
AND I'LL HAVE MORE
IDEAS
FOR YOU.
AND YOU'LL HAVE THINGS YOU'D LIKE TO *DO*...

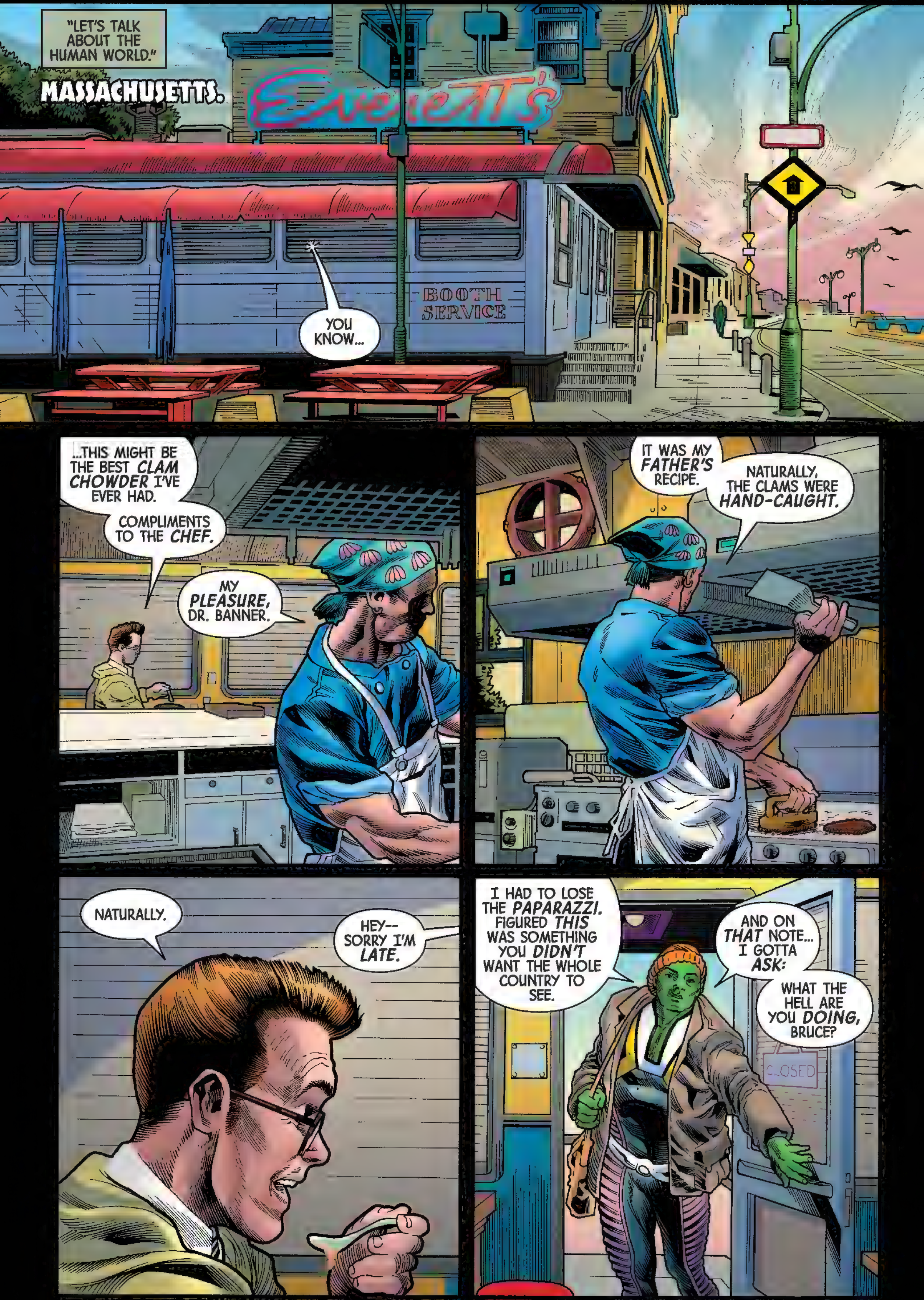

AND I WILL TOO.

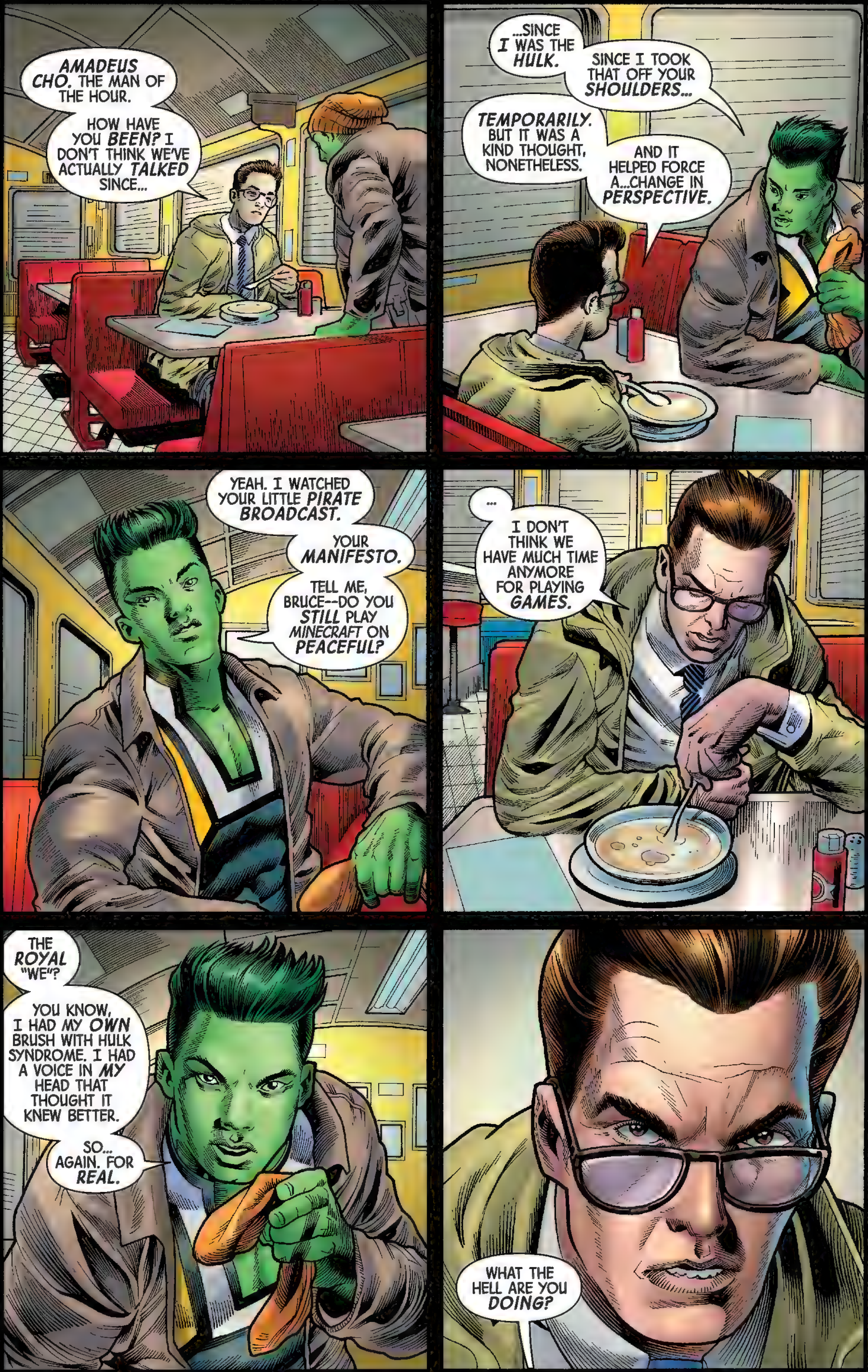
26

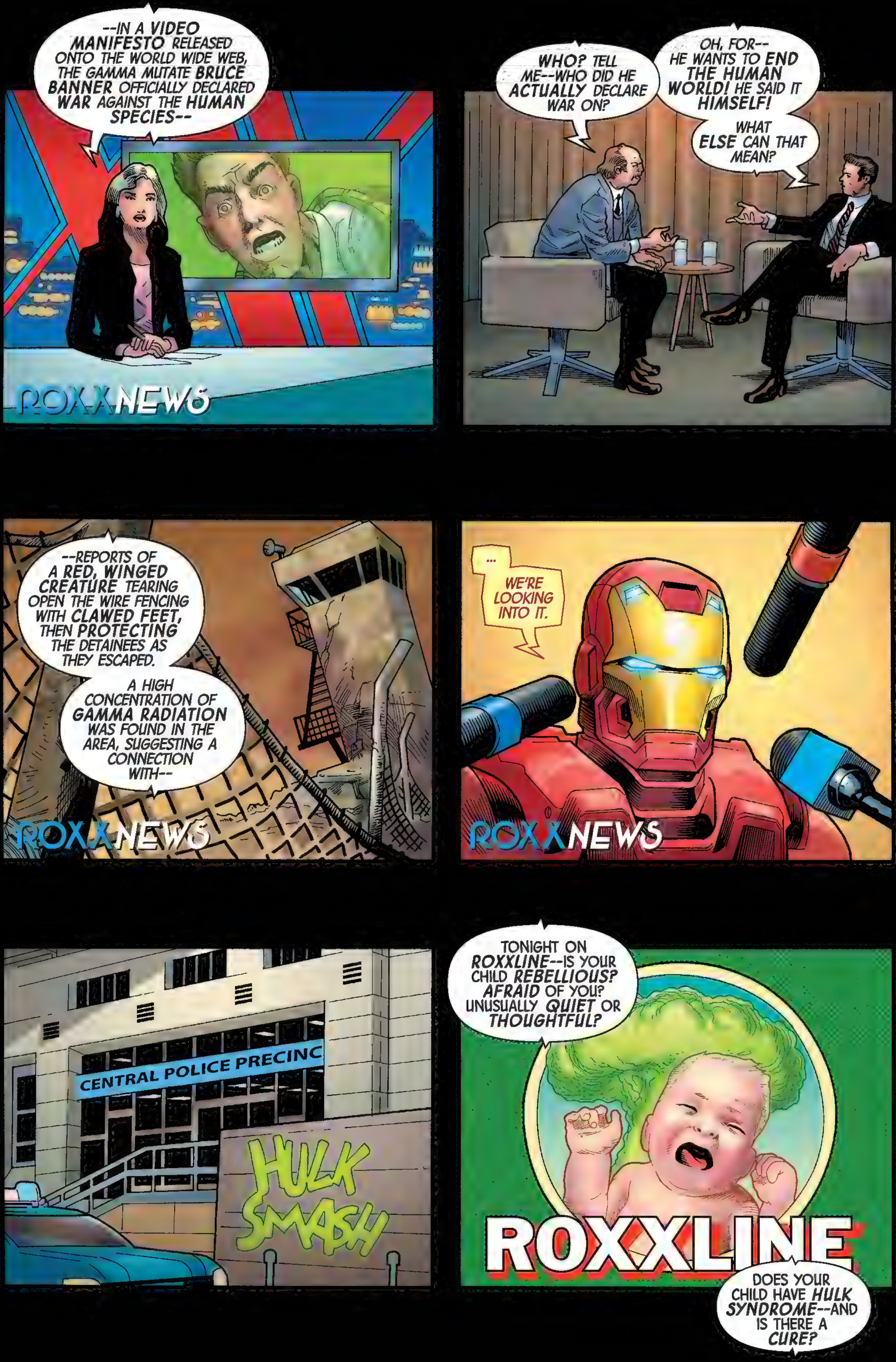
“THAT STONY LAW I STAMP TO DUST;
AND SCATTER RELIGION ABROAD
TO THE FOUR WINDS AS A TORN BOOK,
& NONE SHALL GATHER THE LEAVES...”

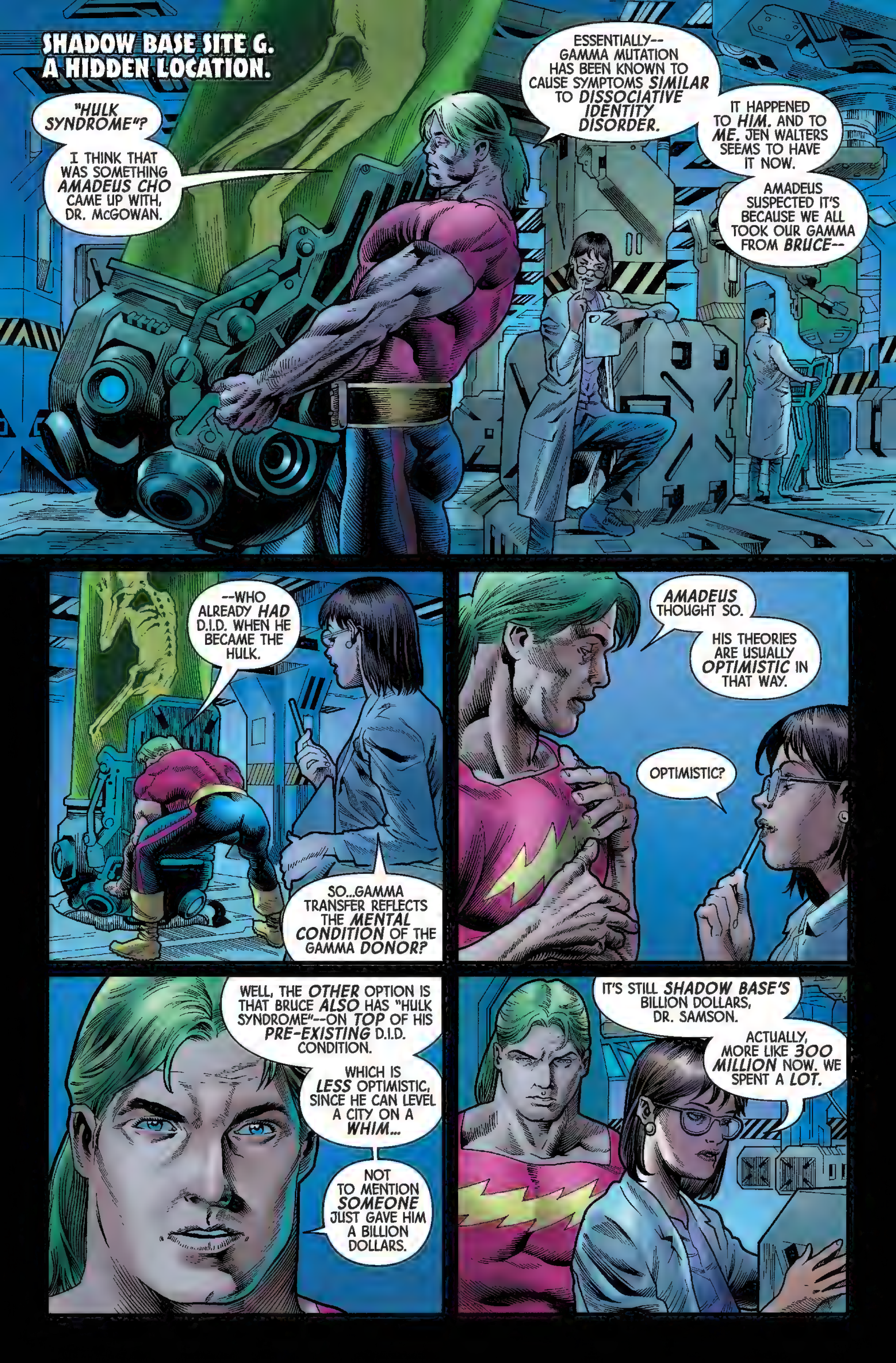
– WILLIAM BLAKE
AMERICA: A PROPHECY

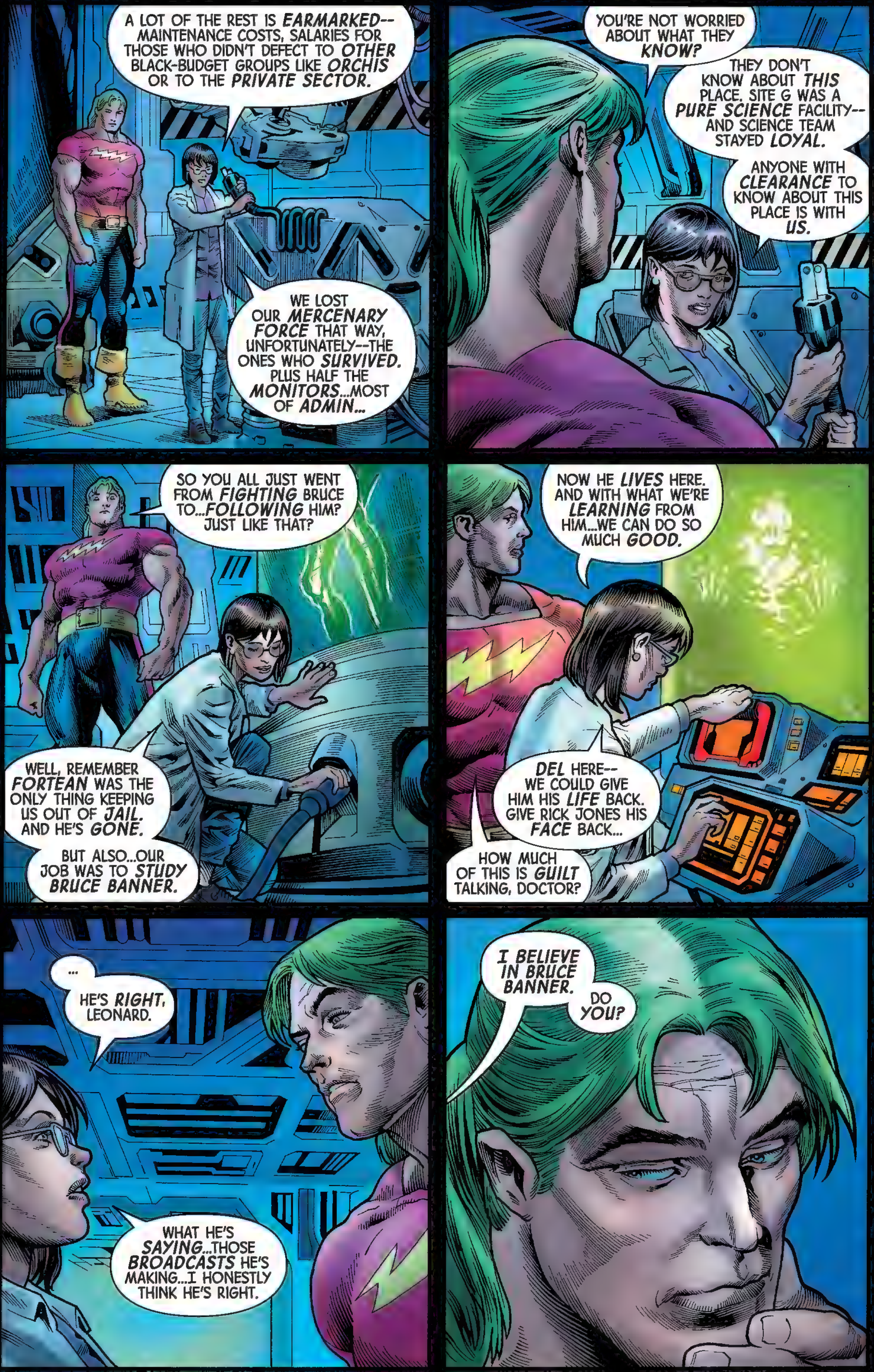

MY NAME IS ROBERT BRUCE BANNER.
YOU KNOW ME BETTER AS THE **HULK**.
I AM BROADCASTING FROM A SECRET LOCATION UNDER THE AEGIS OF **SHADOW BASE**-- AN ORGANIZATION THAT WAS, UNTIL RECENTLY, TASKED TO **VIVISECT** ME AND CREATE **WEAPONS** FROM MY BODY.
FOR THIS PURPOSE, THEY WERE ALLOCATED A **"BLACK BUDGET"**--A COVERT, DENIABLE REVENUE STREAM FUNNELED FROM OUR NATION'S MILITARY-- OF **1.2 BILLION DOLLARS**.
THAT MONEY COULD HAVE BEEN SPENT ON **EDUCATION** OR **MEDICINE**. OR HELPING BUILD THE **RENEWABLE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE** WE'LL NEED TO SURVIVE THE COMING CENTURY.
MORE LIKELY, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SPENT ON MORE **GUNS**. OR MORE **BOMBS**. OR MORE **CAMPS**.
BUT...WELL, THAT'S THE WORLD WE **LIVE** IN, ISN'T IT?
THE **HUMAN** WORLD.

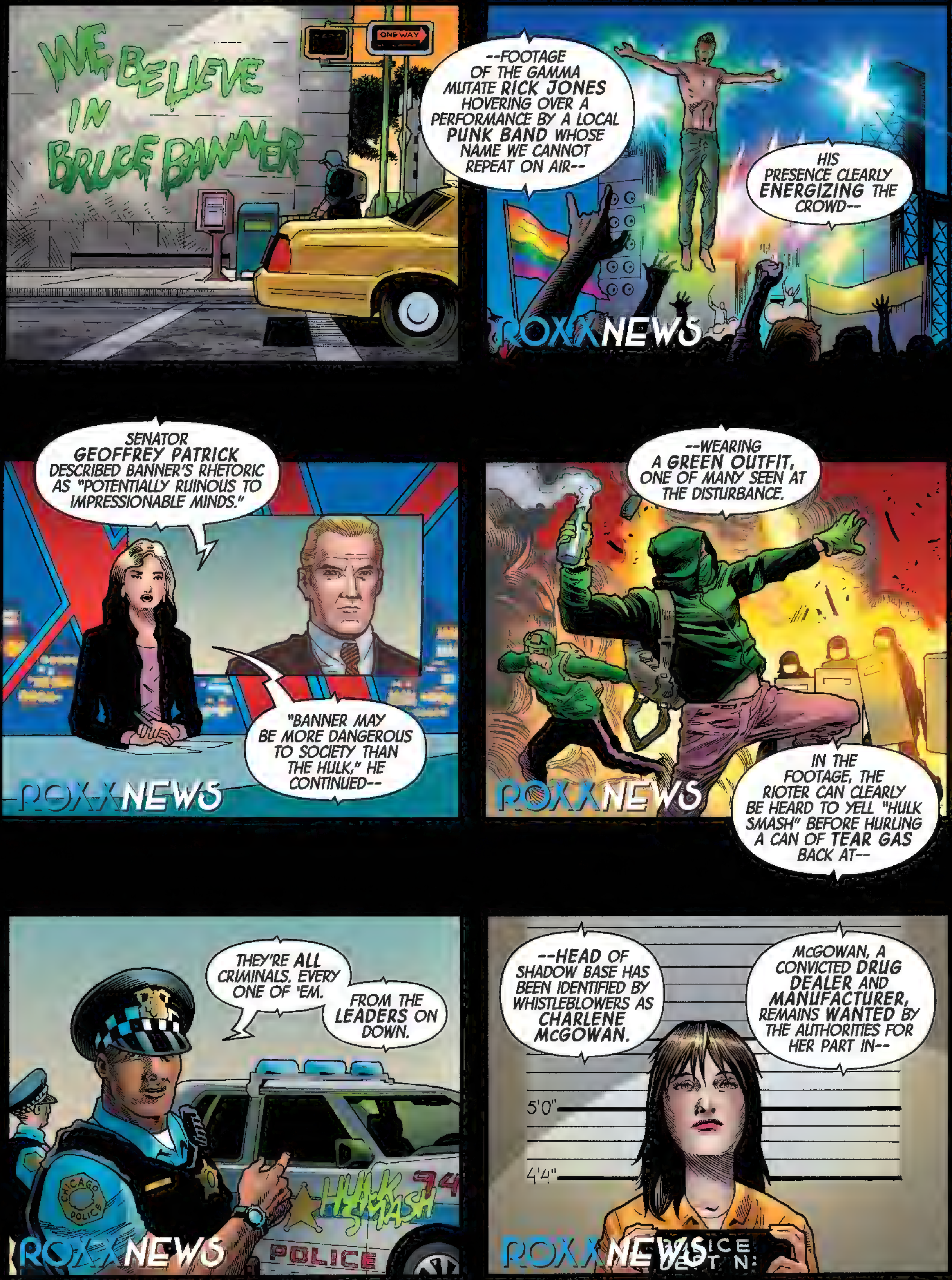

"LET'S TALK ABOUT THE HUMAN WORLD."
MASSACHUSETTS.
Everett's
BOOTH SERVICE
YOU KNOW...
...THIS MIGHT BE THE BEST *CLAM CHOWDER* I'VE EVER HAD.
COMPLIMENTS TO THE *CHEF.*
MY *PLEASURE,* DR. BANNER.
IT WAS MY *FATHER'S* RECIPE.
NATURALLY, THE CLAMS WERE *HAND-CAUGHT.*
NATURALLY.
HEY-- SORRY I'M *LATE.*
I HAD TO LOSE THE *PAPARAZZI.* FIGURED *THIS* WAS SOMETHING YOU *DIDN'T* WANT THE WHOLE COUNTRY TO SEE.
AND ON *THAT* NOTE... I GOTTA *ASK:*
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU *DOING,* BRUCE?
CLOSED

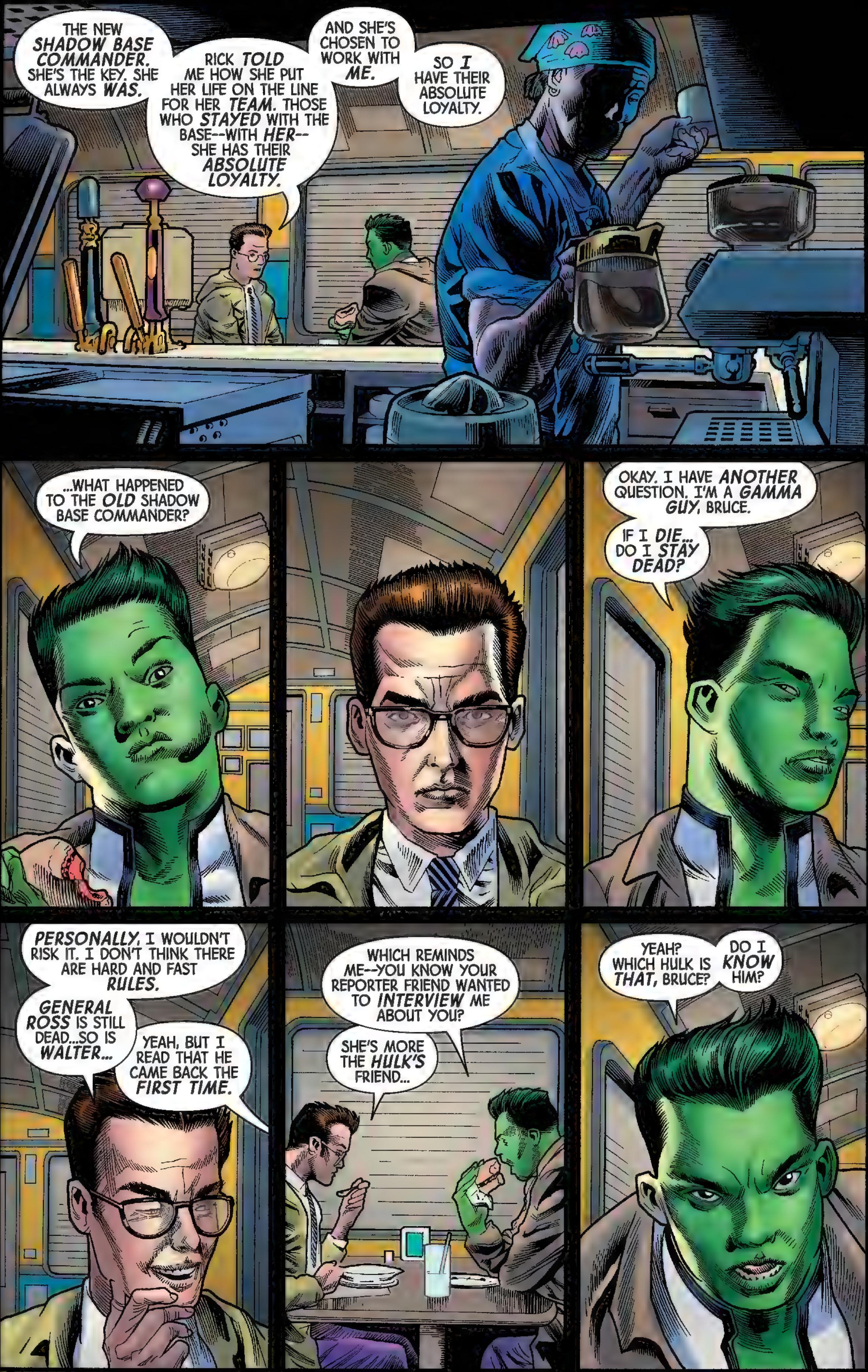

AMADEUS CHO. THE MAN OF THE HOUR.
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN? I DON'T THINK WE'VE ACTUALLY TALKED SINCE...
...SINCE I WAS THE HULK.
SINCE I TOOK THAT OFF YOUR SHOULDERS...
TEMPORARILY. BUT IT WAS A KIND THOUGHT, NONETHELESS.
AND IT HELPED FORCE A...CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE.
YEAH. I WATCHED YOUR LITTLE PIRATE BROADCAST.
YOUR MANIFESTO.
TELL ME, BRUCE--DO YOU STILL PLAY MINECRAFT ON PEACEFUL?
...
I DON'T THINK WE HAVE MUCH TIME ANYMORE FOR PLAYING GAMES.
THE ROYAL "WE"?
YOU KNOW, I HAD MY OWN BRUSH WITH HULK SYNDROME. I HAD A VOICE IN MY HEAD THAT THOUGHT IT KNEW BETTER.
SO... AGAIN. FOR REAL.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

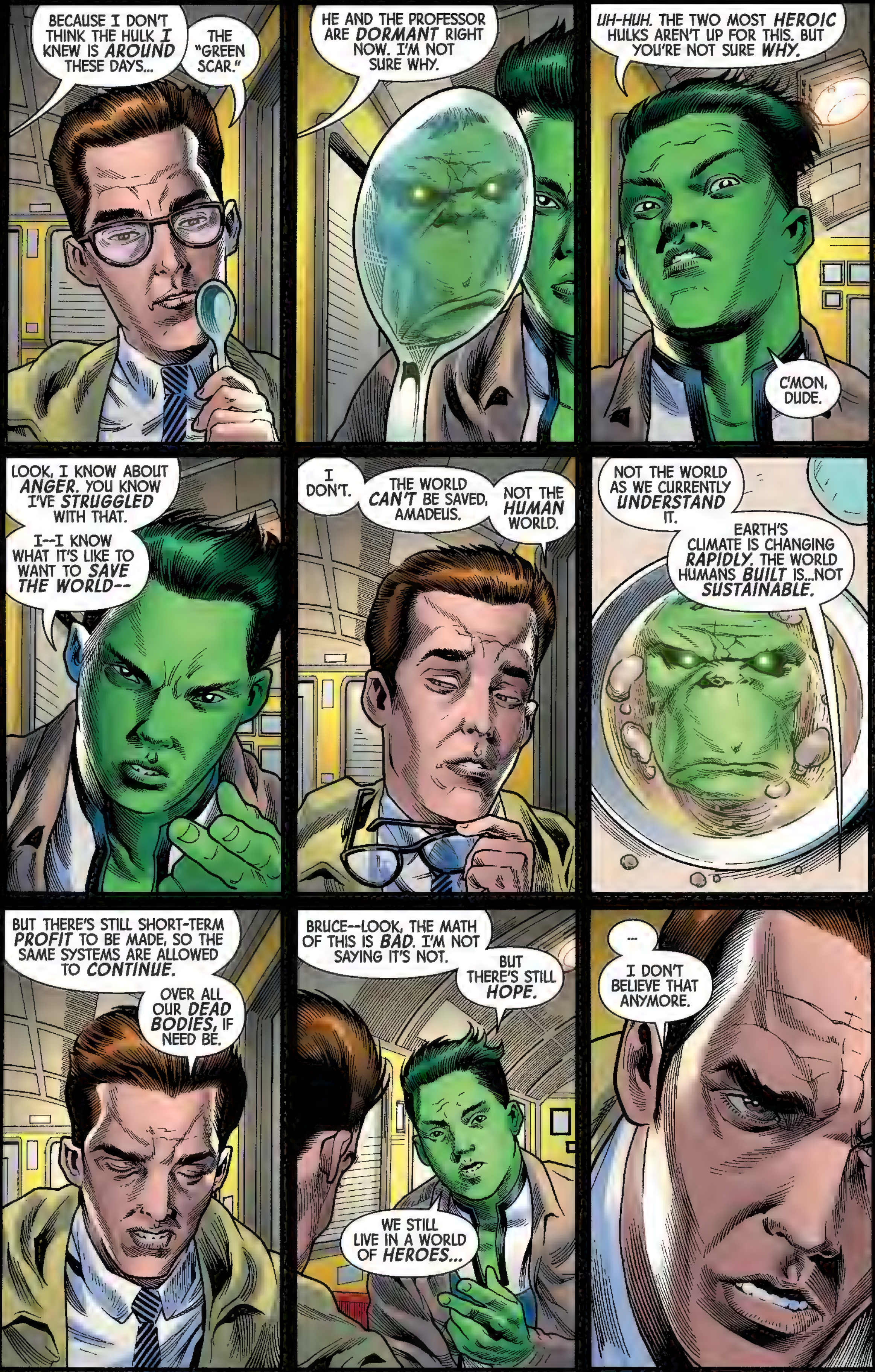

--IN A VIDEO MANIFESTO RELEASED ONTO THE WORLD WIDE WEB, THE GAMMA MUTATE BRUCE BANNER OFFICIALLY DECLARED WAR AGAINST THE HUMAN SPECIES--
ROXXNEWS
WHO? TELL ME--WHO DID HE ACTUALLY DECLARE WAR ON?
OH, FOR-- HE WANTS TO END THE HUMAN WORLD! HE SAID IT HIMSELF!
WHAT ELSE CAN THAT MEAN?
--REPORTS OF A RED, WINGED CREATURE TEARING OPEN THE WIRE FENCING WITH CLAWED FEET, THEN PROTECTING THE DETAINEES AS THEY ESCAPED.
A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF GAMMA RADIATION WAS FOUND IN THE AREA, SUGGESTING A CONNECTION WITH--
ROXXNEWS
... WE'RE LOOKING INTO IT.
ROXXNEWS
CENTRAL POLICE PRECINC
HULK SMASH
TONIGHT ON ROXXLINE--IS YOUR CHILD REBELLIOUS? AFRAID OF YOU? UNUSUALLY QUIET OR THOUGHTFUL?
ROXXLINE
DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE HULK SYNDROME--AND IS THERE A CURE?

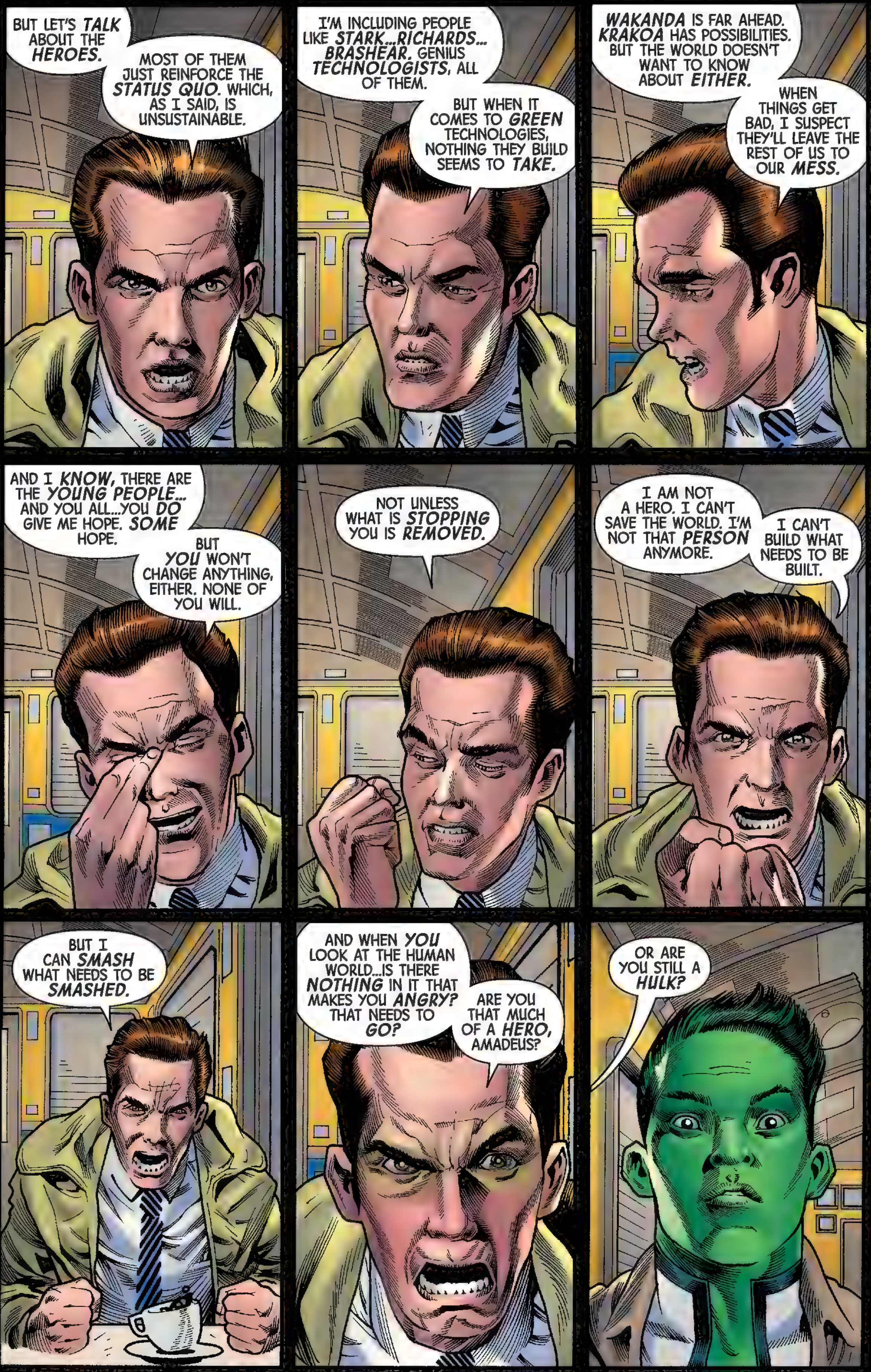

SHADOW BASE SITE G. A HIDDEN LOCATION.
"HULK SYNDROME"?
I THINK THAT WAS SOMETHING AMADEUS CHO CAME UP WITH, DR. McGOWAN.
ESSENTIALLY-- GAMMA MUTATION HAS BEEN KNOWN TO CAUSE SYMPTOMS SIMILAR TO DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER.
IT HAPPENED TO HIM, AND TO ME. JEN WALTERS SEEMS TO HAVE IT NOW.
AMADEUS SUSPECTED IT'S BECAUSE WE ALL TOOK OUR GAMMA FROM BRUCE--
--WHO ALREADY HAD D.I.D. WHEN HE BECAME THE HULK.
SO...GAMMA TRANSFER REFLECTS THE MENTAL CONDITION OF THE GAMMA DONOR?
AMADEUS THOUGHT SO.
HIS THEORIES ARE USUALLY OPTIMISTIC IN THAT WAY.
OPTIMISTIC?
WELL, THE OTHER OPTION IS THAT BRUCE ALSO HAS "HULK SYNDROME"--ON TOP OF HIS PRE-EXISTING D.I.D. CONDITION.
WHICH IS LESS OPTIMISTIC, SINCE HE CAN LEVEL A CITY ON A WHIM...
NOT TO MENTION SOMEONE JUST GAVE HIM A BILLION DOLLARS.
IT'S STILL SHADOW BASE'S BILLION DOLLARS, DR. SAMSON.
ACTUALLY, MORE LIKE 300 MILLION NOW. WE SPENT A LOT.

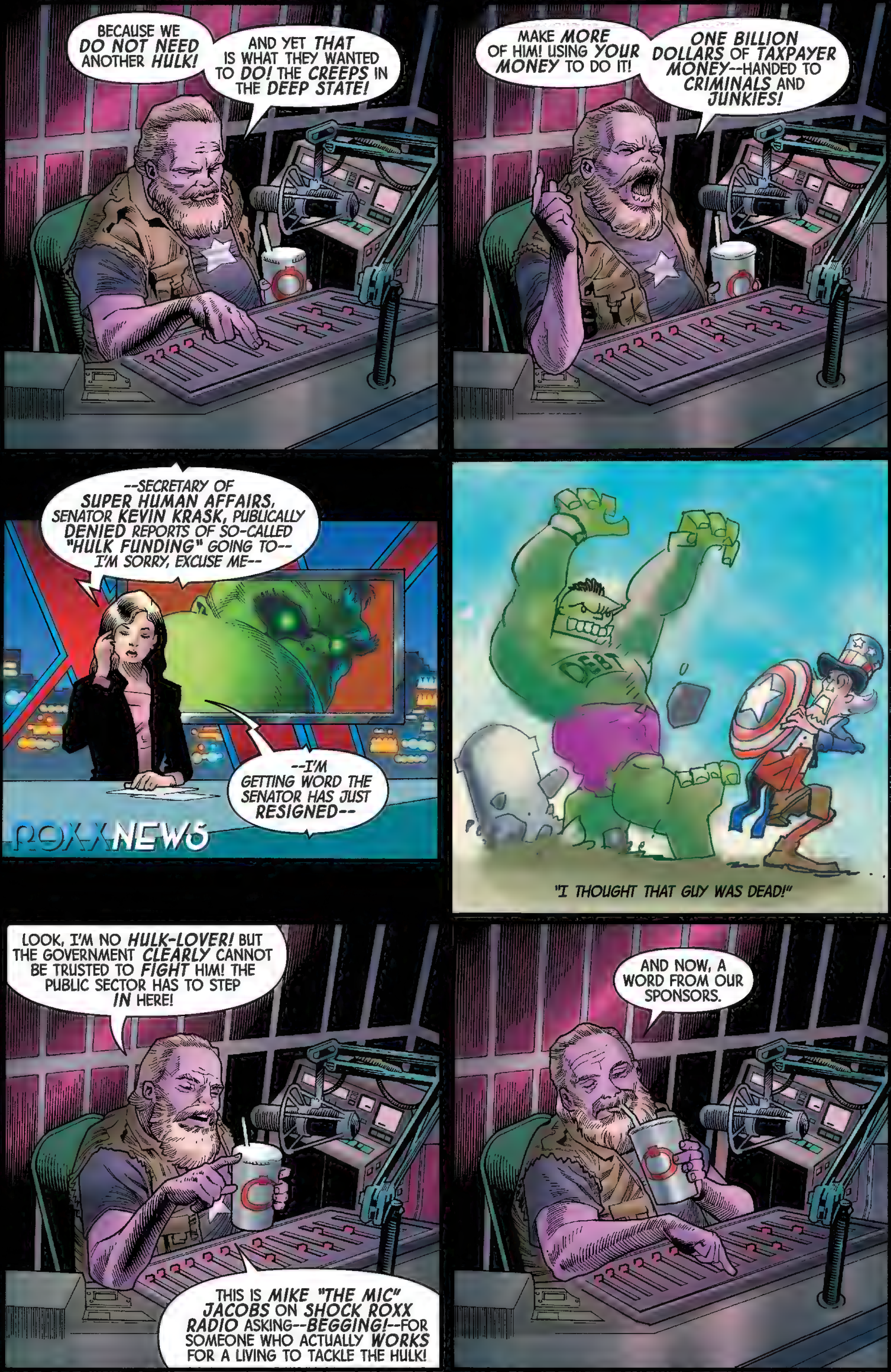

A LOT OF THE REST IS *EARMARKED*-- MAINTENANCE COSTS, SALARIES FOR THOSE WHO DIDN'T DEFECT TO *OTHER* BLACK-BUDGET GROUPS LIKE *ORCHIS* OR TO THE *PRIVATE SECTOR.*
WE LOST OUR *MERCENARY FORCE* THAT WAY, UNFORTUNATELY--THE ONES WHO *SURVIVED.* PLUS HALF THE *MONITORS*...MOST OF *ADMIN*...
YOU'RE NOT WORRIED ABOUT WHAT THEY *KNOW?*
THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT *THIS* PLACE. SITE G WAS A *PURE SCIENCE* FACILITY-- AND SCIENCE TEAM STAYED *LOYAL.*
ANYONE WITH *CLEARANCE* TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE IS WITH *US.*
SO YOU ALL JUST WENT FROM *FIGHTING* BRUCE TO...*FOLLOWING* HIM? JUST LIKE THAT?
WELL, REMEMBER *FORTEAN* WAS THE ONLY THING KEEPING US OUT OF *JAIL.* AND HE'S *GONE.*
BUT ALSO...OUR JOB WAS TO *STUDY BRUCE BANNER.*
NOW HE *LIVES* HERE. AND WITH WHAT WE'RE *LEARNING* FROM HIM...WE CAN DO SO MUCH *GOOD.*
DEL HERE-- WE COULD GIVE HIM HIS *LIFE* BACK. GIVE RICK JONES HIS *FACE* BACK...
HOW MUCH OF THIS IS *GUILT* TALKING, DOCTOR?
...
HE'S *RIGHT,* LEONARD.
WHAT HE'S *SAYING*...THOSE *BROADCASTS* HE'S MAKING...I HONESTLY THINK HE'S RIGHT.
I BELIEVE IN BRUCE BANNER.
DO *YOU?*

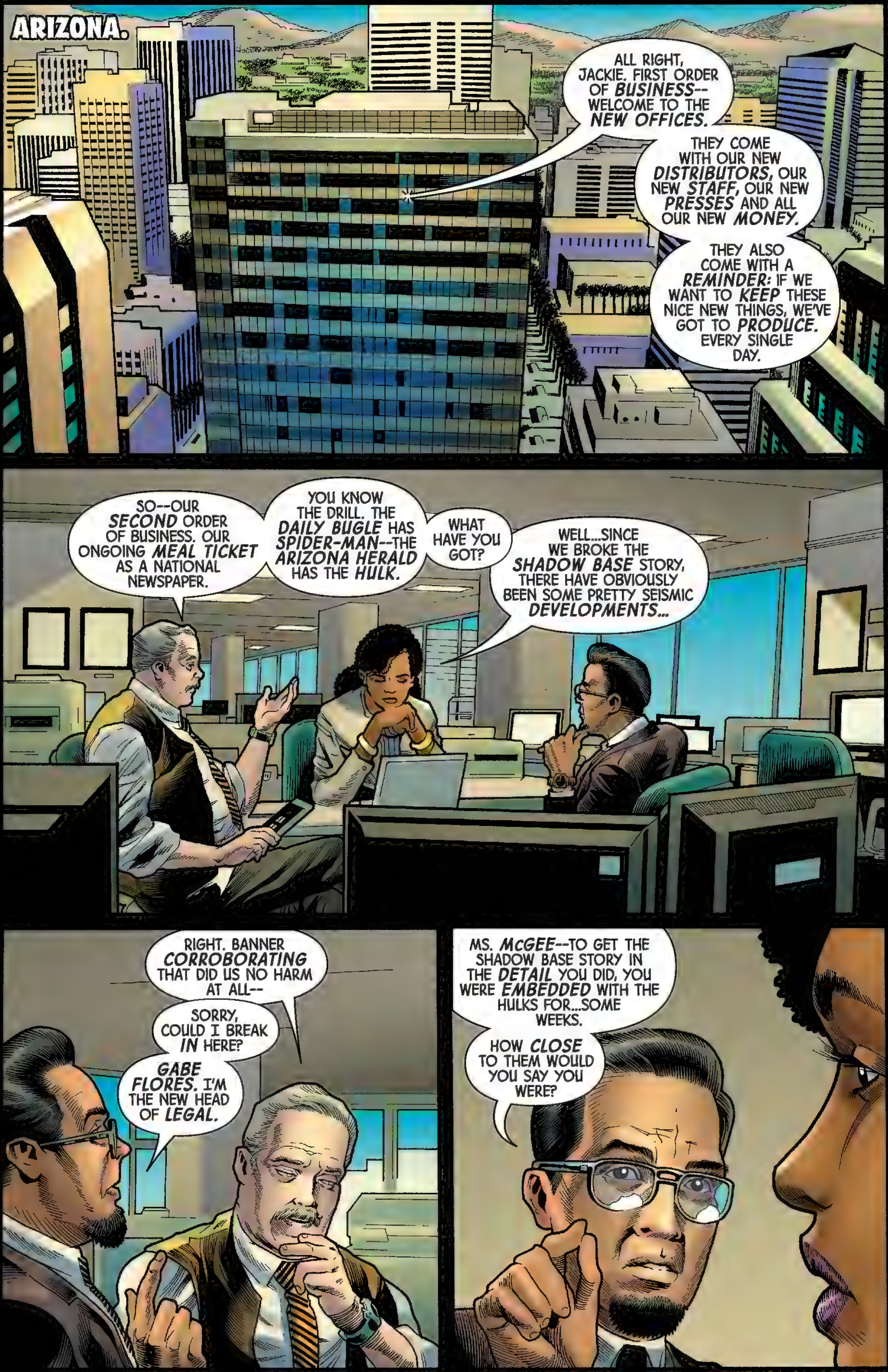

WE BELIEVE IN BRUCE BANNER
ONE WAY
--FOOTAGE OF THE GAMMA MUTATE **RICK JONES** HOVERING OVER A PERFORMANCE BY A LOCAL **PUNK BAND** WHOSE NAME WE CANNOT REPEAT ON AIR--
HIS PRESENCE CLEARLY **ENERGIZING** THE CROWD--
ROXXNEWS
SENATOR **GEOFFREY PATRICK** DESCRIBED BANNER'S RHETORIC AS "POTENTIALLY RUINOUS TO IMPRESSIONABLE MINDS."
"BANNER MAY BE MORE DANGEROUS TO SOCIETY THAN THE HULK," HE CONTINUED--
ROXXNEWS
--WEARING **A GREEN OUTFIT**, ONE OF MANY SEEN AT THE DISTURBANCE.
IN THE FOOTAGE, THE RIOTER CAN CLEARLY BE HEARD TO YELL "HULK SMASH" BEFORE HURLING A CAN OF **TEAR GAS** BACK AT--
ROXXNEWS
THEY'RE **ALL** CRIMINALS. EVERY ONE OF 'EM.
FROM THE **LEADERS** ON DOWN.
CHICAGO POLICE
HULK SMASH
94
POLICE
ROXXNEWS
--**HEAD** OF SHADOW BASE HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED BY WHISTLEBLOWERS AS **CHARLENE McGOWAN.**
McGOWAN, A CONVICTED **DRUG DEALER AND MANUFACTURER,** REMAINS **WANTED** BY THE AUTHORITIES FOR HER PART IN--
5'0"
4'4"
ROXXNEWS

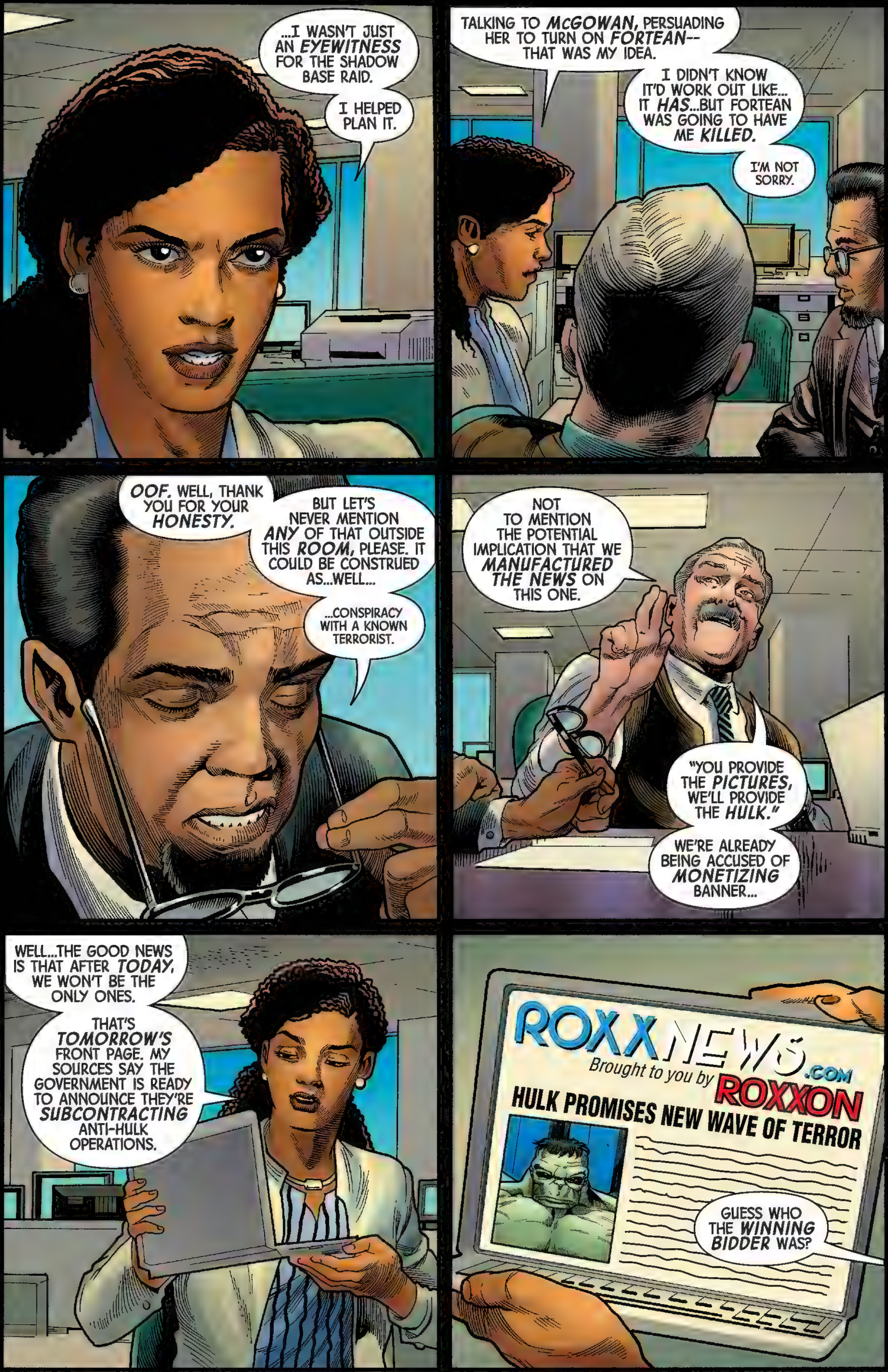

THE NEW SHADOW BASE COMMANDER. SHE'S THE KEY. SHE ALWAYS WAS.
RICK TOLD ME HOW SHE PUT HER LIFE ON THE LINE FOR HER TEAM. THOSE WHO STAYED WITH THE BASE--WITH HER-- SHE HAS THEIR ABSOLUTE LOYALTY.
AND SHE'S CHOSEN TO WORK WITH ME.
SO I HAVE THEIR ABSOLUTE LOYALTY.
...WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OLD SHADOW BASE COMMANDER?
OKAY. I HAVE ANOTHER QUESTION. I'M A GAMMA GUY, BRUCE.
IF I DIE... DO I STAY DEAD?
PERSONALLY, I WOULDN'T RISK IT. I DON'T THINK THERE ARE HARD AND FAST RULES.
GENERAL ROSS IS STILL DEAD...SO IS WALTER...
YEAH, BUT I READ THAT HE CAME BACK THE FIRST TIME.
WHICH REMINDS ME--YOU KNOW YOUR REPORTER FRIEND WANTED TO INTERVIEW ME ABOUT YOU?
SHE'S MORE THE HULK'S FRIEND...
YEAH? WHICH HULK IS THAT, BRUCE?
DO I KNOW HIM?

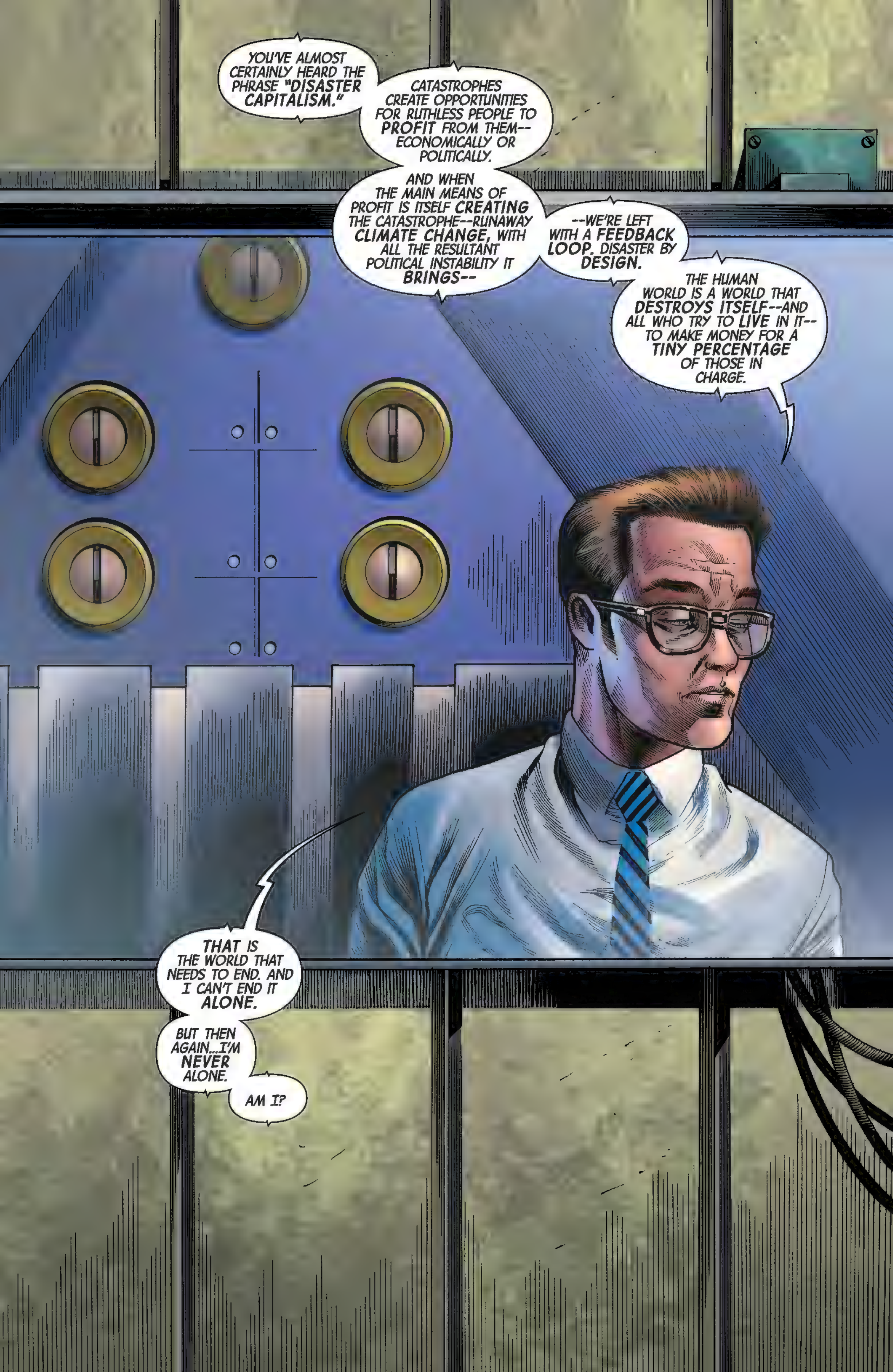

BECAUSE I DON'T THINK THE HULK *I* KNEW IS *AROUND* THESE DAYS...
THE "GREEN SCAR."
HE AND THE PROFESSOR ARE *DORMANT* RIGHT NOW. I'M NOT SURE WHY.
UH-HUH. THE TWO MOST *HEROIC* HULKS AREN'T UP FOR THIS. BUT YOU'RE NOT SURE *WHY.*
C'MON, DUDE.
LOOK, I KNOW ABOUT *ANGER*. YOU KNOW I'VE *STRUGGLED* WITH THAT.
I--I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WANT TO *SAVE THE WORLD--*
I DON'T.
THE WORLD *CAN'T* BE SAVED, AMADEUS.
NOT THE *HUMAN* WORLD.
NOT THE WORLD AS WE CURRENTLY *UNDERSTAND* IT.
EARTH'S CLIMATE IS CHANGING *RAPIDLY.* THE WORLD HUMANS *BUILT* IS...NOT *SUSTAINABLE.*
BUT THERE'S STILL SHORT-TERM *PROFIT* TO BE MADE, SO THE SAME SYSTEMS ARE ALLOWED TO *CONTINUE.*
OVER ALL OUR *DEAD BODIES,* IF NEED BE.
BRUCE--LOOK, THE MATH OF THIS IS *BAD*. I'M NOT SAYING IT'S NOT.
BUT THERE'S STILL *HOPE.*
WE STILL LIVE IN A WORLD OF *HEROES...*
...
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT ANYMORE.

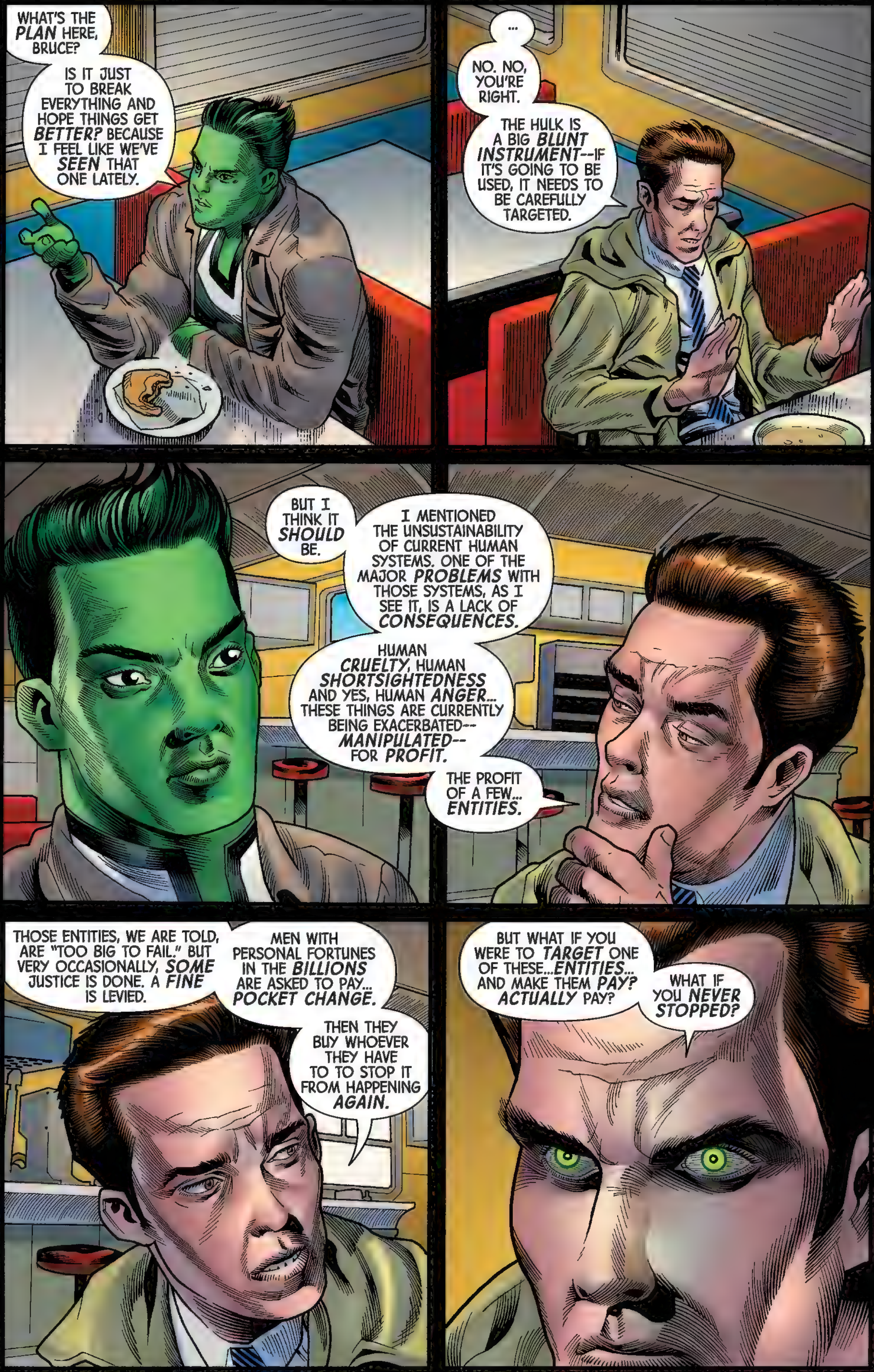

BUT LET'S TALK ABOUT THE HEROES.
MOST OF THEM JUST REINFORCE THE STATUS QUO. WHICH, AS I SAID, IS UNSUSTAINABLE.
I'M INCLUDING PEOPLE LIKE STARK...RICHARDS... BRASHEAR. GENIUS TECHNOLOGISTS, ALL OF THEM.
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO GREEN TECHNOLOGIES, NOTHING THEY BUILD SEEMS TO TAKE.
WAKANDA IS FAR AHEAD. KRAKOA HAS POSSIBILITIES. BUT THE WORLD DOESN'T WANT TO KNOW ABOUT EITHER.
WHEN THINGS GET BAD, I SUSPECT THEY'LL LEAVE THE REST OF US TO OUR MESS.
AND I KNOW, THERE ARE THE YOUNG PEOPLE... AND YOU ALL...YOU DO GIVE ME HOPE. SOME HOPE.
BUT YOU WON'T CHANGE ANYTHING, EITHER. NONE OF YOU WILL.
NOT UNLESS WHAT IS STOPPING YOU IS REMOVED.
I AM NOT A HERO. I CAN'T SAVE THE WORLD. I'M NOT THAT PERSON ANYMORE.
I CAN'T BUILD WHAT NEEDS TO BE BUILT.
BUT I CAN SMASH WHAT NEEDS TO BE SMASHED.
AND WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE HUMAN WORLD...IS THERE NOTHING IN IT THAT MAKES YOU ANGRY? THAT NEEDS TO GO?
ARE YOU THAT MUCH OF A HERO, AMADEUS?
OR ARE YOU STILL A HULK?

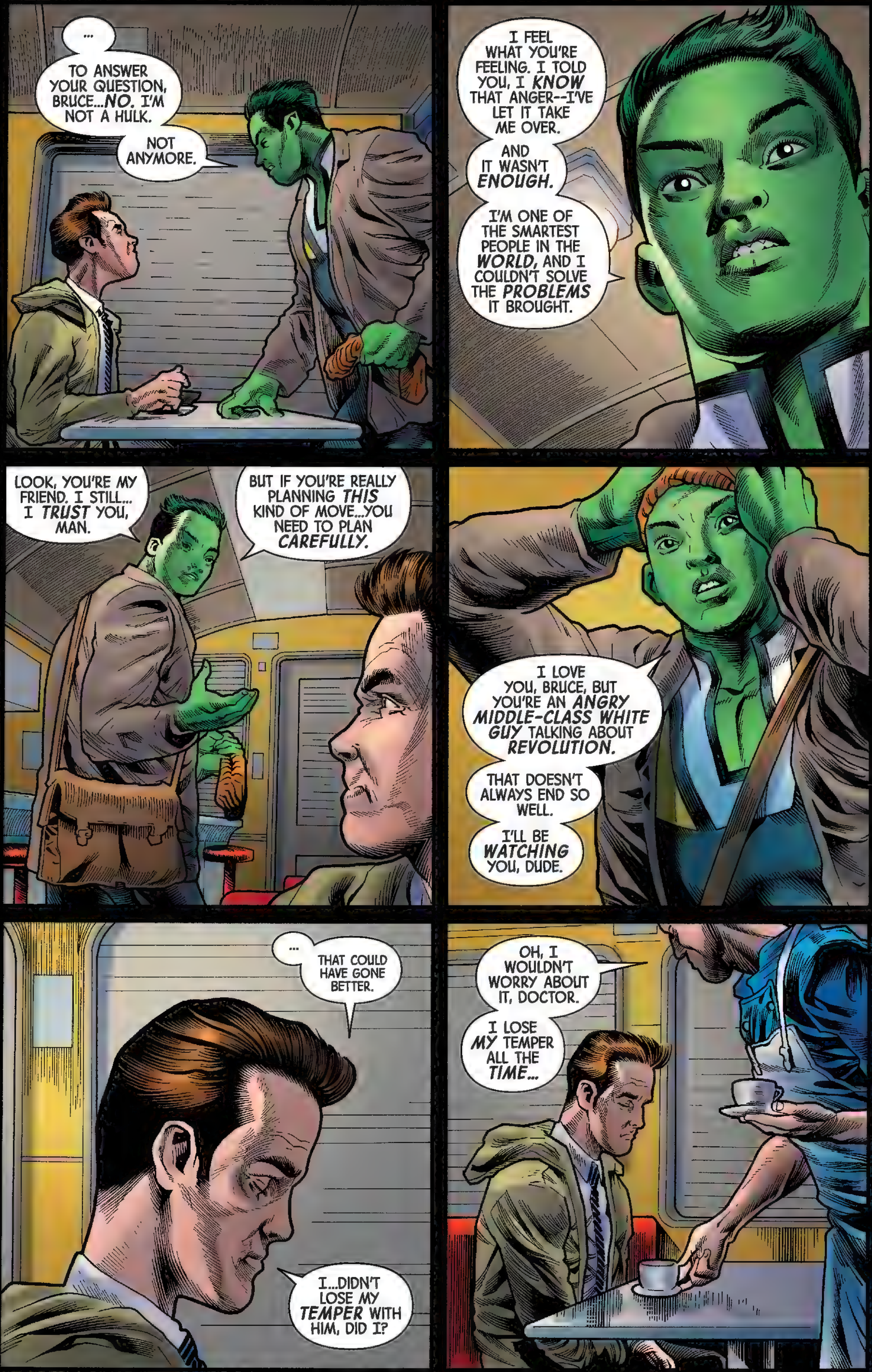

BECAUSE WE DO NOT NEED ANOTHER HULK!
AND YET THAT IS WHAT THEY WANTED TO DO! THE CREEPS IN THE DEEP STATE!
MAKE MORE OF HIM! USING YOUR MONEY TO DO IT!
ONE BILLION DOLLARS OF TAXPAYER MONEY--HANDED TO CRIMINALS AND JUNKIES!
--SECRETARY OF SUPER HUMAN AFFAIRS, SENATOR KEVIN KRASK, PUBLICALLY DENIED REPORTS OF SO-CALLED "HULK FUNDING" GOING TO-- I'M SORRY, EXCUSE ME--
--I'M GETTING WORD THE SENATOR HAS JUST RESIGNED--
ROXXNEWS
DEBT
"I THOUGHT THAT GUY WAS DEAD!"
LOOK, I'M NO HULK-LOVER! BUT THE GOVERNMENT CLEARLY CANNOT BE TRUSTED TO FIGHT HIM! THE PUBLIC SECTOR HAS TO STEP IN HERE!
THIS IS MIKE "THE MIC" JACOBS ON SHOCK ROXX RADIO ASKING--BEGGING!--FOR SOMEONE WHO ACTUALLY WORKS FOR A LIVING TO TACKLE THE HULK!
AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS.

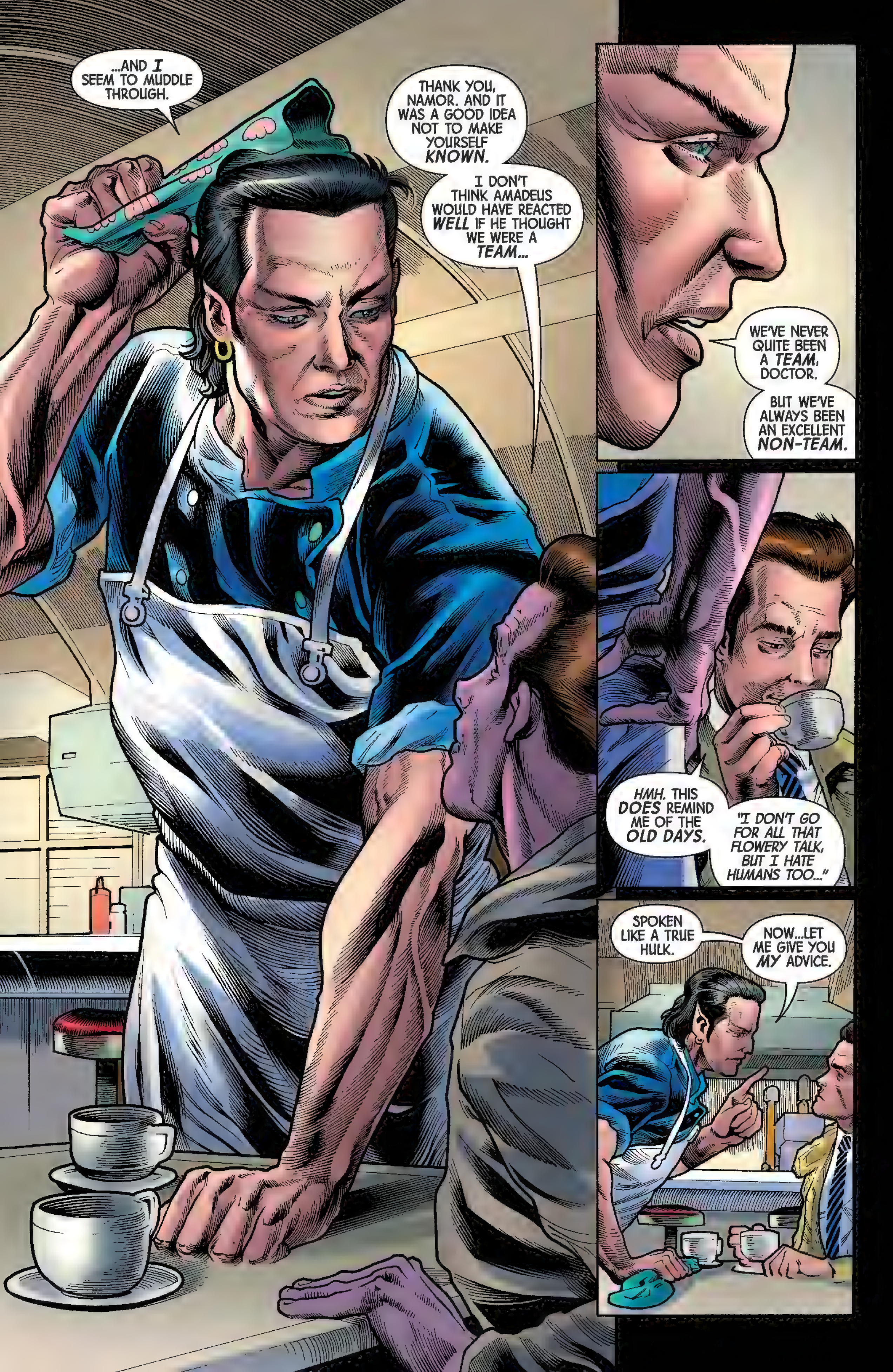

ARIZONA.
ALL RIGHT, JACKIE. FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS--WELCOME TO THE NEW OFFICES.
THEY COME WITH OUR NEW DISTRIBUTORS, OUR NEW STAFF, OUR NEW PRESSES AND ALL OUR NEW MONEY.
THEY ALSO COME WITH A REMINDER: IF WE WANT TO KEEP THESE NICE NEW THINGS, WE'VE GOT TO PRODUCE. EVERY SINGLE DAY.
SO--OUR SECOND ORDER OF BUSINESS. OUR ONGOING MEAL TICKET AS A NATIONAL NEWSPAPER.
YOU KNOW THE DRILL. THE DAILY BUGLE HAS SPIDER-MAN--THE ARIZONA HERALD HAS THE HULK.
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT?
WELL...SINCE WE BROKE THE SHADOW BASE STORY, THERE HAVE OBVIOUSLY BEEN SOME PRETTY SEISMIC DEVELOPMENTS...
RIGHT. BANNER CORROBORATING THAT DID US NO HARM AT ALL--
SORRY, COULD I BREAK IN HERE?
GABE FLORES. I'M THE NEW HEAD OF LEGAL.
MS. McGEE--TO GET THE SHADOW BASE STORY IN THE DETAIL YOU DID, YOU WERE EMBEDDED WITH THE HULKS FOR...SOME WEEKS.
HOW CLOSE TO THEM WOULD YOU SAY YOU WERE?

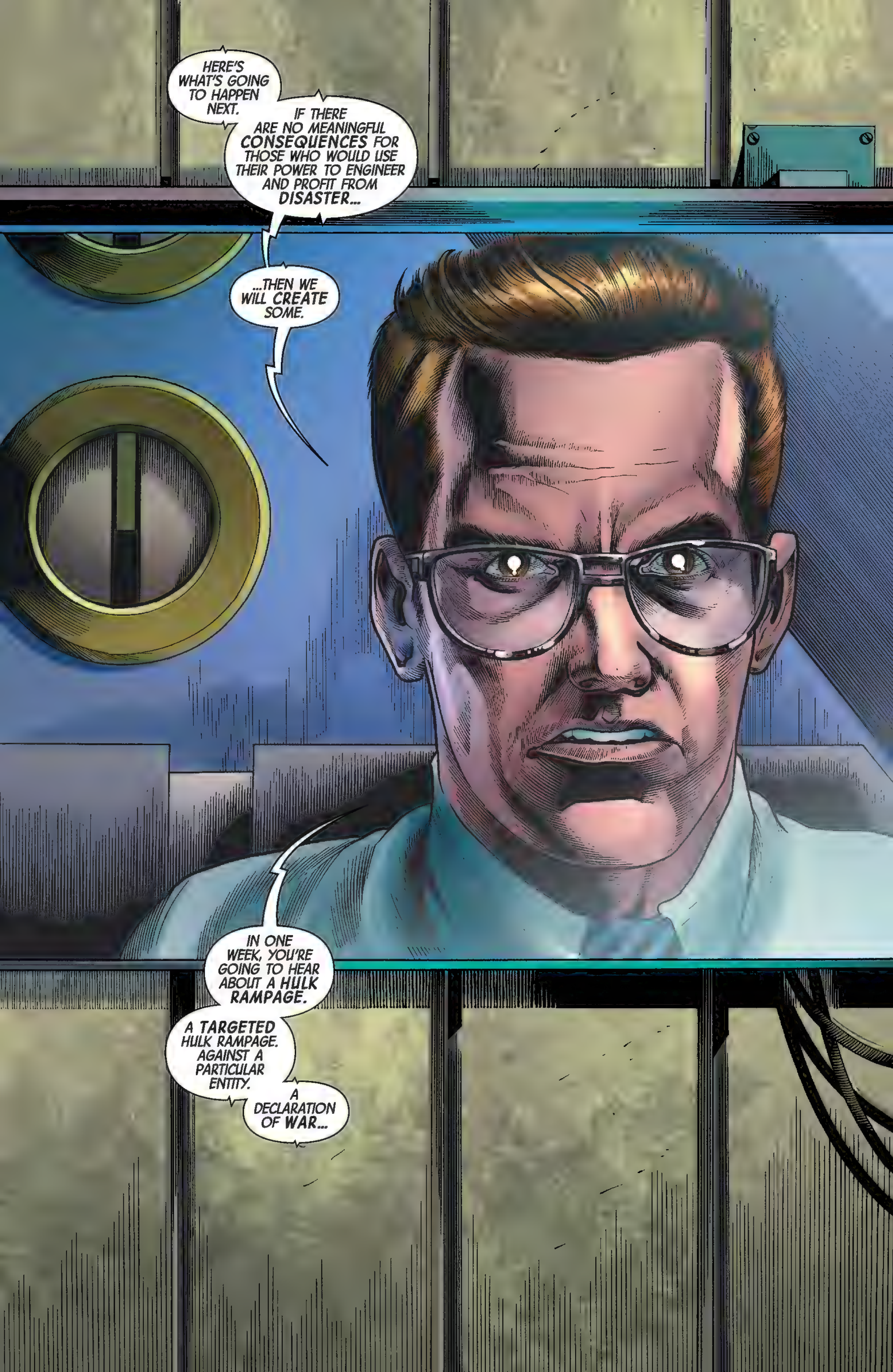

...I WASN'T JUST AN EYEWITNESS FOR THE SHADOW BASE RAID.
I HELPED PLAN IT.
TALKING TO McGOWAN, PERSUADING HER TO TURN ON FORTEAN-- THAT WAS MY IDEA.
I DIDN'T KNOW IT'D WORK OUT LIKE... IT HAS...BUT FORTEAN WAS GOING TO HAVE ME KILLED.
I'M NOT SORRY.
OOF. WELL, THANK YOU FOR YOUR HONESTY.
BUT LET'S NEVER MENTION ANY OF THAT OUTSIDE THIS ROOM, PLEASE. IT COULD BE CONSTRUED AS...WELL...
...CONSPIRACY WITH A KNOWN TERRORIST.
NOT TO MENTION THE POTENTIAL IMPLICATION THAT WE MANUFACTURED THE NEWS ON THIS ONE.
"YOU PROVIDE THE PICTURES, WE'LL PROVIDE THE HULK."
WE'RE ALREADY BEING ACCUSED OF MONETIZING BANNER...
WELL...THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT AFTER TODAY, WE WON'T BE THE ONLY ONES.
THAT'S TOMORROW'S FRONT PAGE. MY SOURCES SAY THE GOVERNMENT IS READY TO ANNOUNCE THEY'RE SUBCONTRACTING ANTI-HULK OPERATIONS.
ROXXNEWS.com
Brought to you by ROXXON
HULK PROMISES NEW WAVE OF TERROR
GUESS WHO THE WINNING BIDDER WAS?

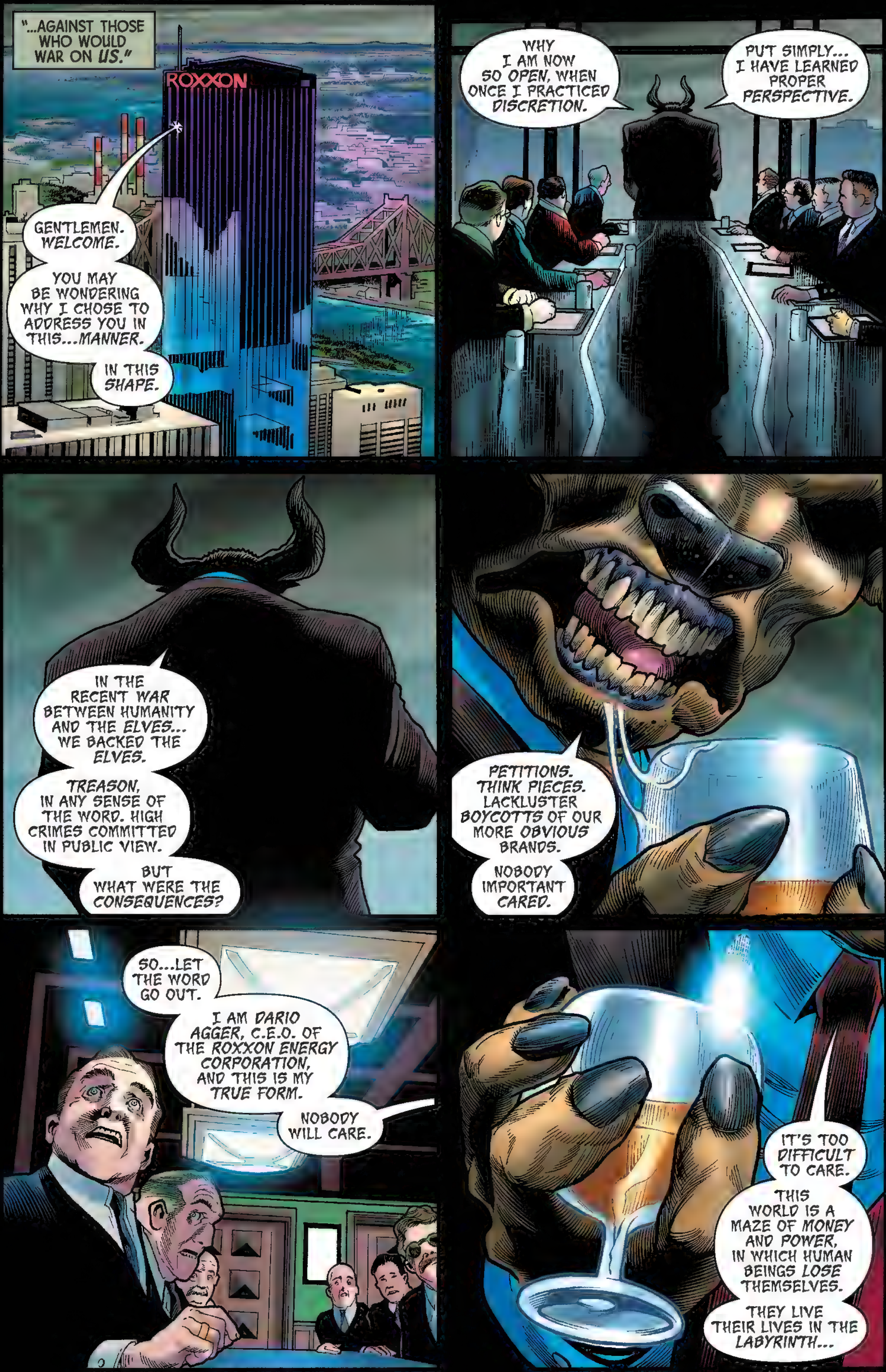

YOU'VE ALMOST CERTAINLY HEARD THE PHRASE "DISASTER CAPITALISM."
CATASTROPHES CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RUTHLESS PEOPLE TO PROFIT FROM THEM-- ECONOMICALLY OR POLITICALLY.
AND WHEN THE MAIN MEANS OF PROFIT IS ITSELF CREATING THE CATASTROPHE--RUNAWAY CLIMATE CHANGE, WITH ALL THE RESULTANT POLITICAL INSTABILITY IT BRINGS--
--WE'RE LEFT WITH A FEEDBACK LOOP. DISASTER BY DESIGN.
THE HUMAN WORLD IS A WORLD THAT DESTROYS ITSELF--AND ALL WHO TRY TO LIVE IN IT-- TO MAKE MONEY FOR A TINY PERCENTAGE OF THOSE IN CHARGE.
THAT IS THE WORLD THAT NEEDS TO END. AND I CAN'T END IT ALONE.
BUT THEN AGAIN...I'M NEVER ALONE.
AM I?

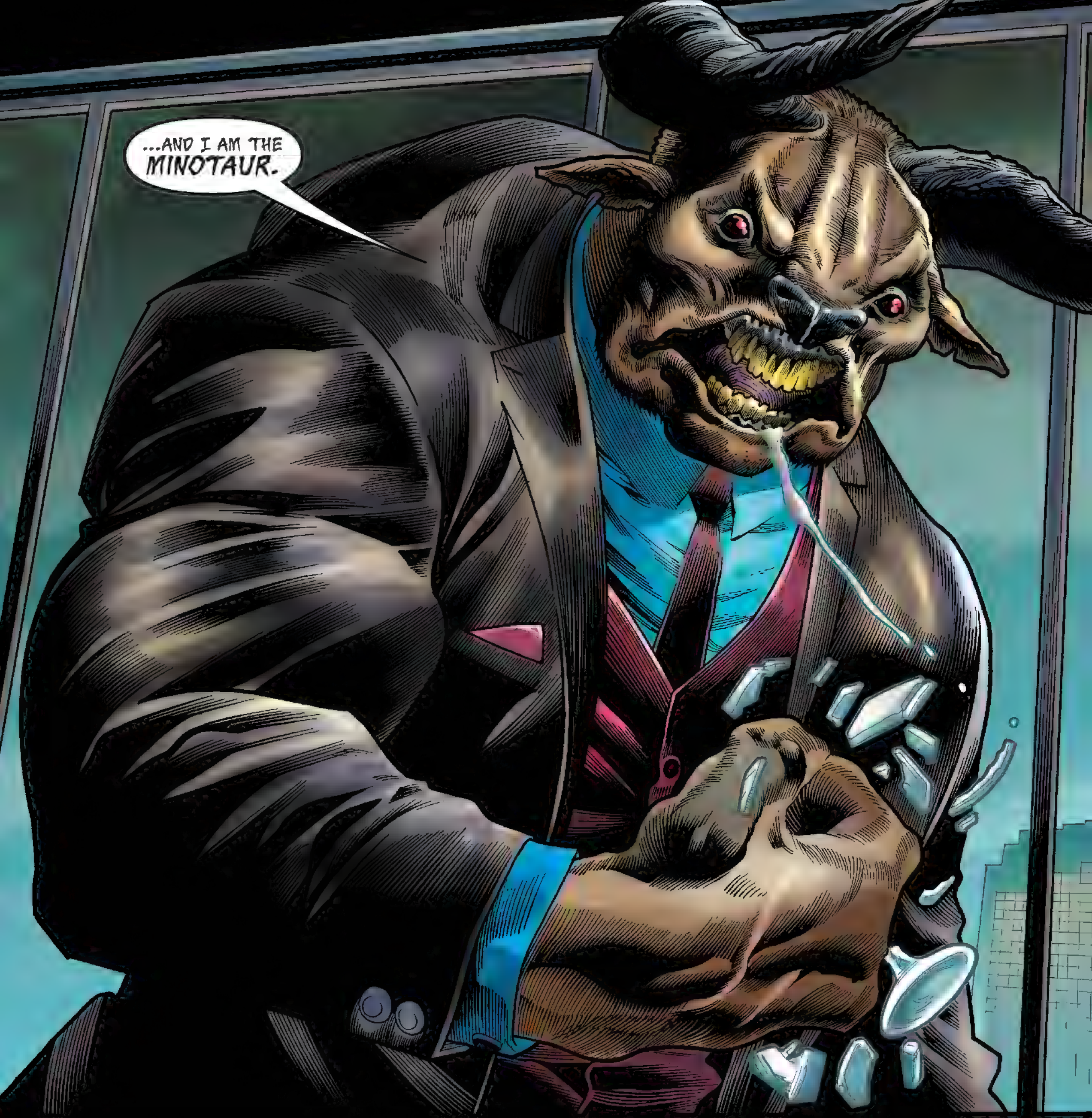

WHAT'S THE PLAN HERE, BRUCE?
IS IT JUST TO BREAK EVERYTHING AND HOPE THINGS GET BETTER? BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE WE'VE SEEN THAT ONE LATELY.
...
NO. NO, YOU'RE RIGHT.
THE HULK IS A BIG BLUNT INSTRUMENT--IF IT'S GOING TO BE USED, IT NEEDS TO BE CAREFULLY TARGETED.
BUT I THINK IT SHOULD BE.
I MENTIONED THE UNSUSTAINABILITY OF CURRENT HUMAN SYSTEMS. ONE OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS WITH THOSE SYSTEMS, AS I SEE IT, IS A LACK OF CONSEQUENCES.
HUMAN CRUELTY, HUMAN SHORTSIGHTEDNESS AND YES, HUMAN ANGER... THESE THINGS ARE CURRENTLY BEING EXACERBATED-- MANIPULATED-- FOR PROFIT.
THE PROFIT OF A FEW... ENTITIES.
THOSE ENTITIES, WE ARE TOLD, ARE "TOO BIG TO FAIL." BUT VERY OCCASIONALLY, SOME JUSTICE IS DONE. A FINE IS LEVIED.
MEN WITH PERSONAL FORTUNES IN THE BILLIONS ARE ASKED TO PAY... POCKET CHANGE.
THEN THEY BUY WHOEVER THEY HAVE TO TO STOP IT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.
BUT WHAT IF YOU WERE TO TARGET ONE OF THESE...ENTITIES... AND MAKE THEM PAY? ACTUALLY PAY?
WHAT IF YOU NEVER STOPPED?


...
TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, BRUCE...NO. I'M NOT A HULK.
NOT ANYMORE.
I FEEL WHAT YOU'RE FEELING. I TOLD YOU, I KNOW THAT ANGER--I'VE LET IT TAKE ME OVER.
AND IT WASN'T ENOUGH.
I'M ONE OF THE SMARTEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, AND I COULDN'T SOLVE THE PROBLEMS IT BROUGHT.
LOOK, YOU'RE MY FRIEND. I STILL... I TRUST YOU, MAN.
BUT IF YOU'RE REALLY PLANNING THIS KIND OF MOVE...YOU NEED TO PLAN CAREFULLY.
I LOVE YOU, BRUCE, BUT YOU'RE AN ANGRY MIDDLE-CLASS WHITE GUY TALKING ABOUT REVOLUTION.
THAT DOESN'T ALWAYS END SO WELL.
I'LL BE WATCHING YOU, DUDE.
...
THAT COULD HAVE GONE BETTER.
I...DIDN'T LOSE MY TEMPER WITH HIM, DID I?
OH, I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT, DOCTOR.
I LOSE MY TEMPER ALL THE TIME...


...AND *I* SEEM TO MUDDLE THROUGH.
THANK YOU, NAMOR. AND IT WAS A GOOD IDEA NOT TO MAKE YOURSELF ***KNOWN.***
I DON'T THINK AMADEUS WOULD HAVE REACTED ***WELL*** IF HE THOUGHT WE WERE A ***TEAM...***
WE'VE NEVER QUITE BEEN A *TEAM*, DOCTOR.
BUT WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN AN EXCELLENT ***NON-TEAM.***
HMH. THIS ***DOES*** REMIND ME OF THE ***OLD DAYS.***
"I DON'T GO FOR ALL THAT FLOWERY TALK, BUT I HATE HUMANS TOO..."
SPOKEN LIKE A TRUE HULK.
NOW...LET ME GIVE YOU *MY* ADVICE.


HERE'S WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT.
IF THERE ARE NO MEANINGFUL **CONSEQUENCES** FOR THOSE WHO WOULD USE THEIR POWER TO ENGINEER AND PROFIT FROM **DISASTER...**
...THEN WE WILL **CREATE** SOME.
IN ONE WEEK, YOU'RE GOING TO HEAR ABOUT A **HULK RAMPAGE.**
A **TARGETED** HULK RAMPAGE. AGAINST A PARTICULAR ENTITY.
A DECLARATION OF **WAR...**

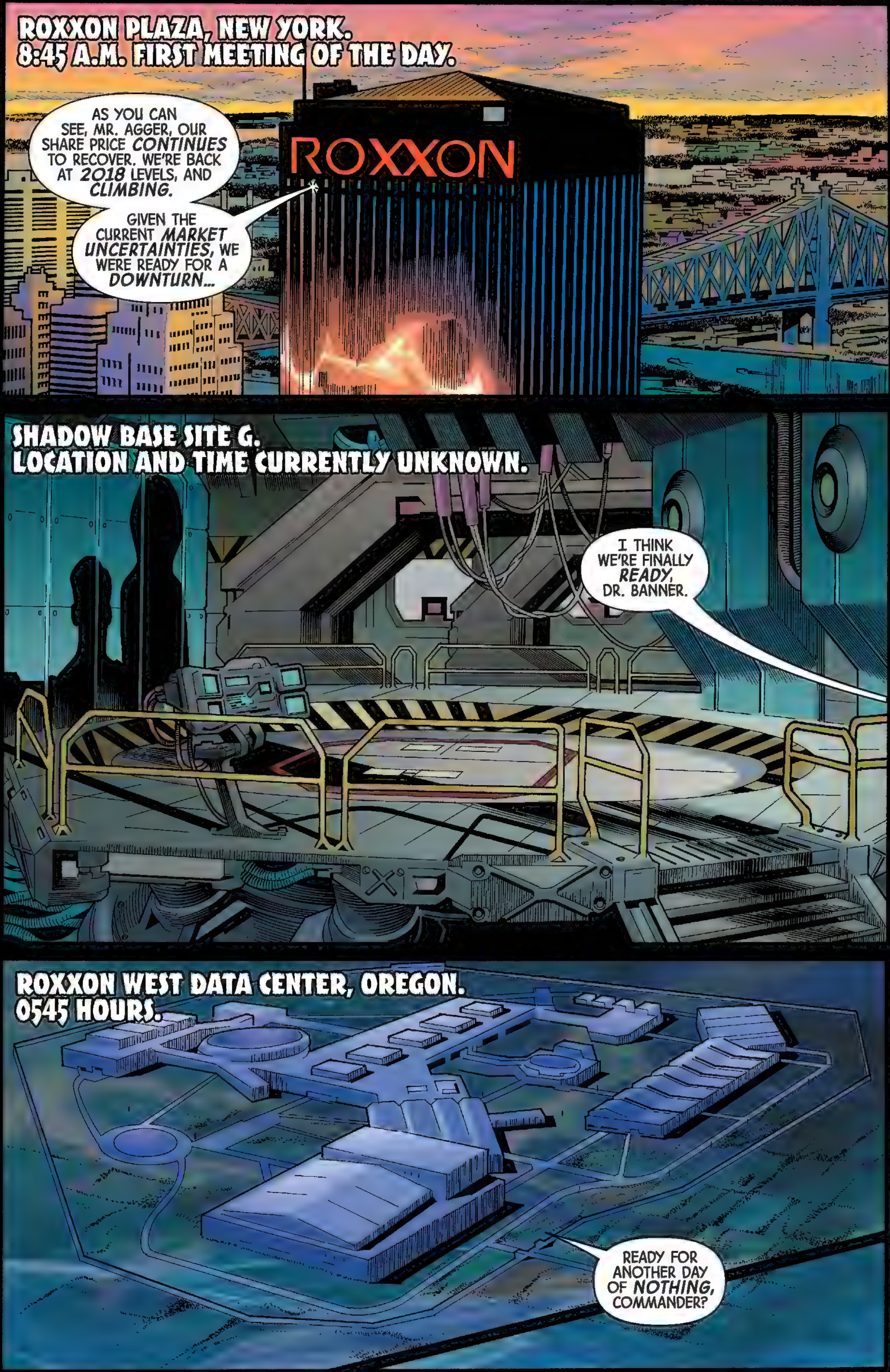

"...AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD WAR ON *US.*"
ROXXON
GENTLEMEN. *WELCOME.*
YOU MAY BE WONDERING WHY I CHOSE TO ADDRESS YOU IN THIS...*MANNER.*
IN THIS *SHAPE.*
WHY I AM NOW SO OPEN, WHEN ONCE I PRACTICED *DISCRETION.*
PUT SIMPLY... I HAVE LEARNED PROPER *PERSPECTIVE.*
IN THE RECENT *WAR* BETWEEN HUMANITY AND THE *ELVES*... WE BACKED THE *ELVES.*
TREASON, IN ANY SENSE OF THE WORD. HIGH CRIMES COMMITTED IN PUBLIC VIEW.
BUT WHAT WERE THE *CONSEQUENCES?*
PETITIONS. THINK PIECES. LACKLUSTER *BOYCOTTS* OF OUR MORE *OBVIOUS* BRANDS.
NOBODY IMPORTANT CARED.
SO...LET THE WORD GO OUT.
I AM *DARIO AGGER,* C.E.O. OF THE *ROXXON ENERGY CORPORATION,* AND THIS IS MY *TRUE FORM.*
NOBODY WILL CARE.
IT'S TOO *DIFFICULT* TO CARE.
THIS WORLD IS A MAZE OF MONEY AND POWER, IN WHICH HUMAN BEINGS *LOSE* THEMSELVES.
THEY LIVE THEIR LIVES IN THE *LABYRINTH...*

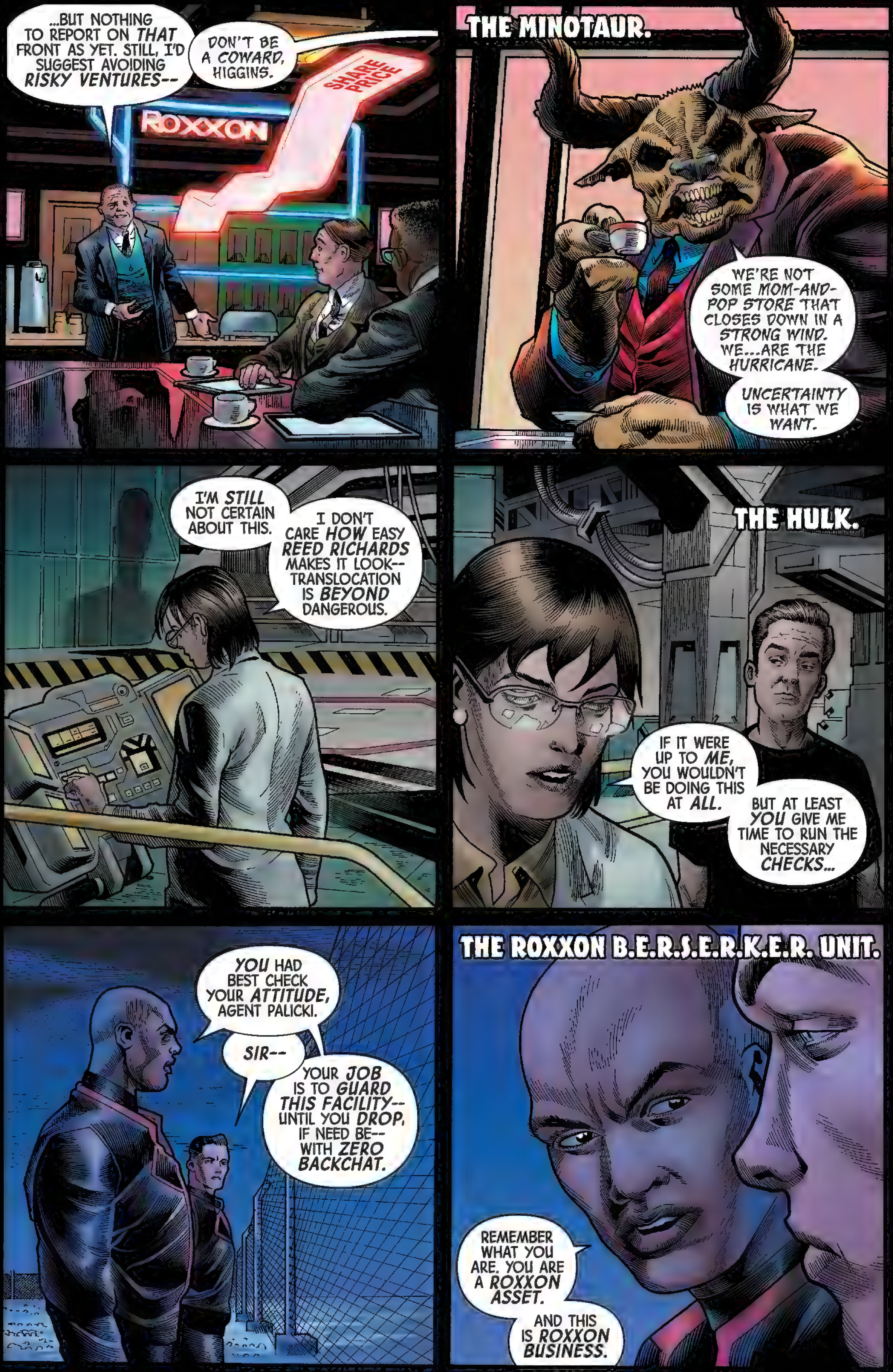

...AND I AM THE *MINOTAUR*.

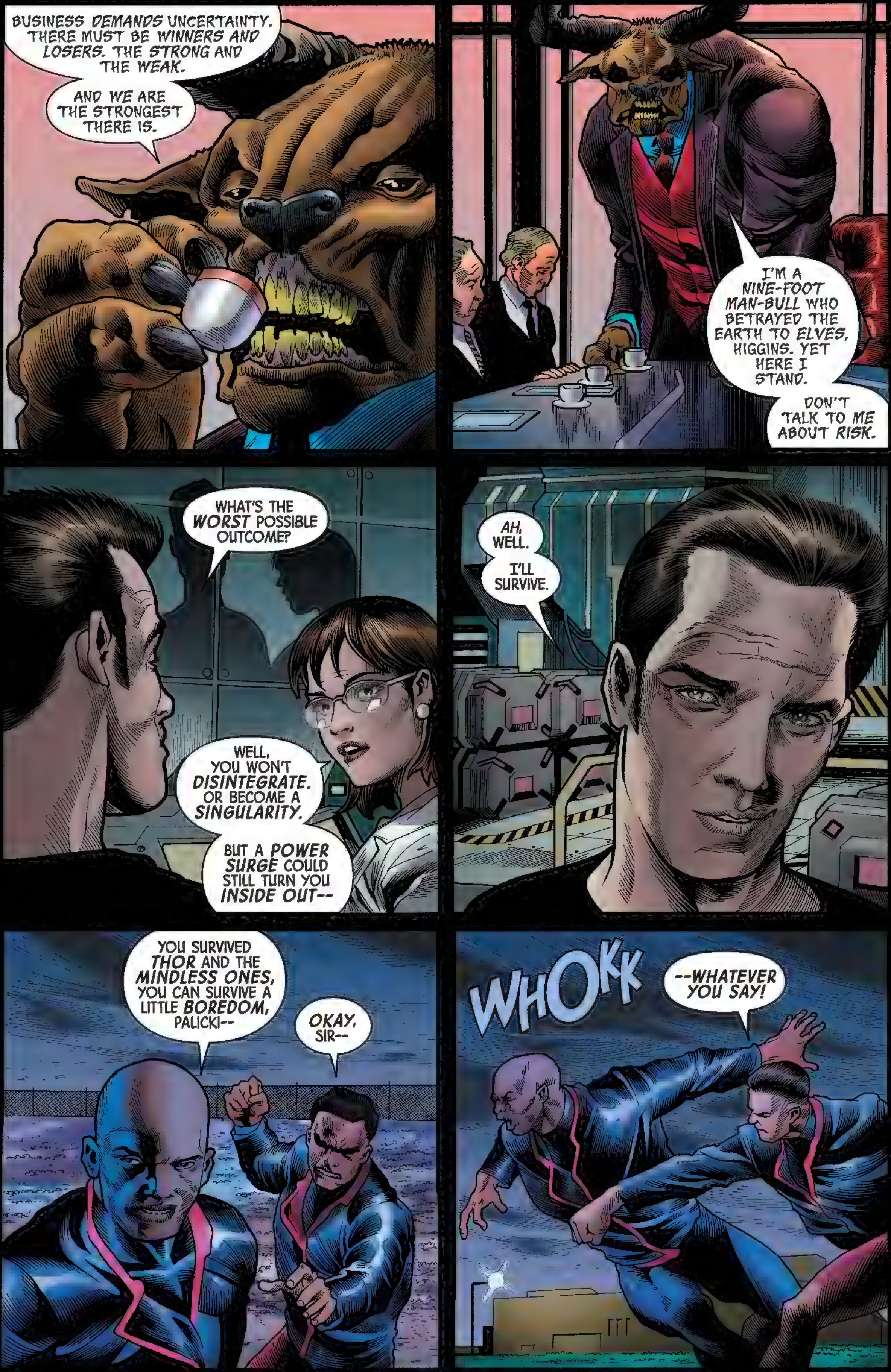
STATUS QUO ANTE

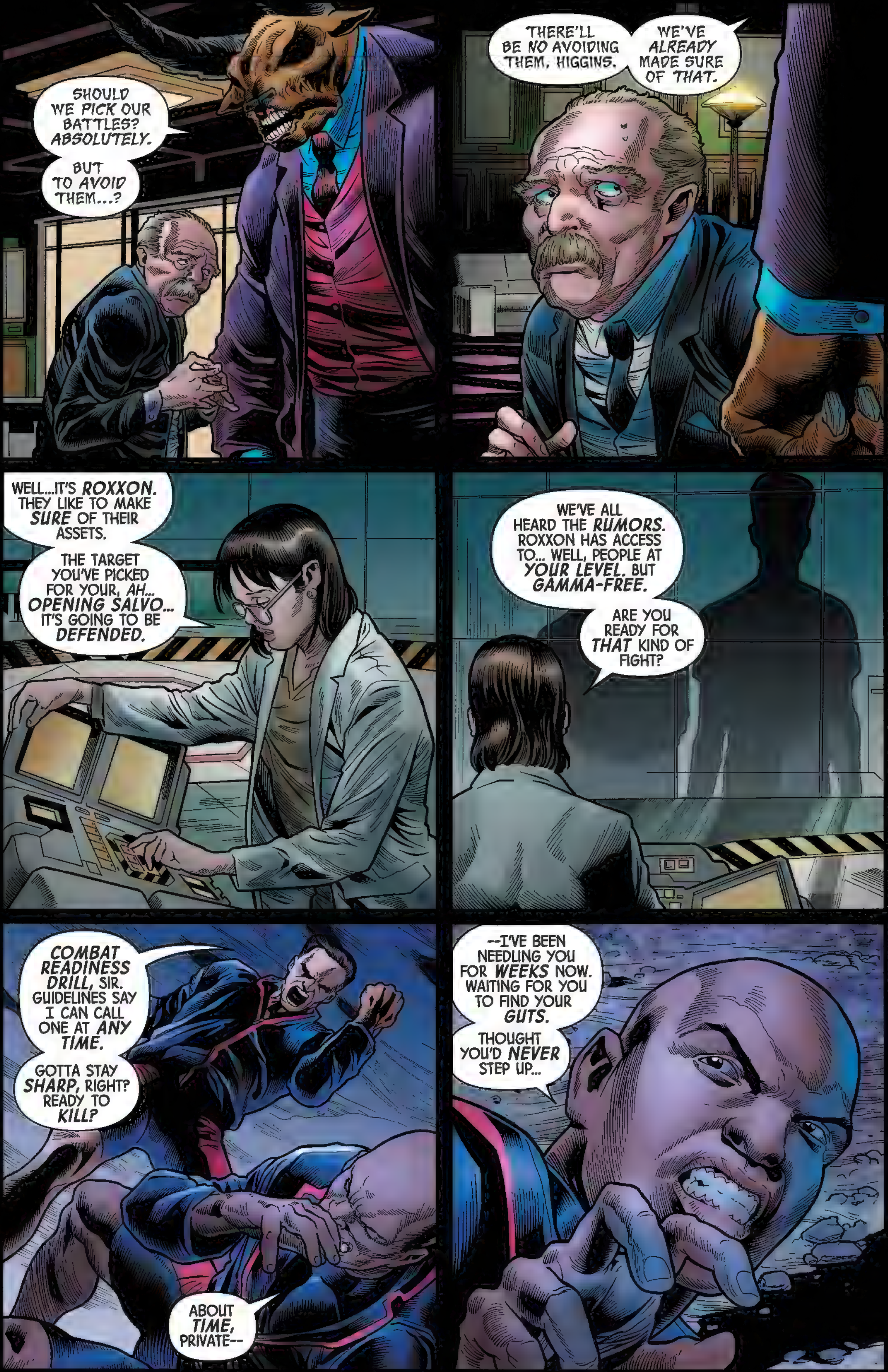
27

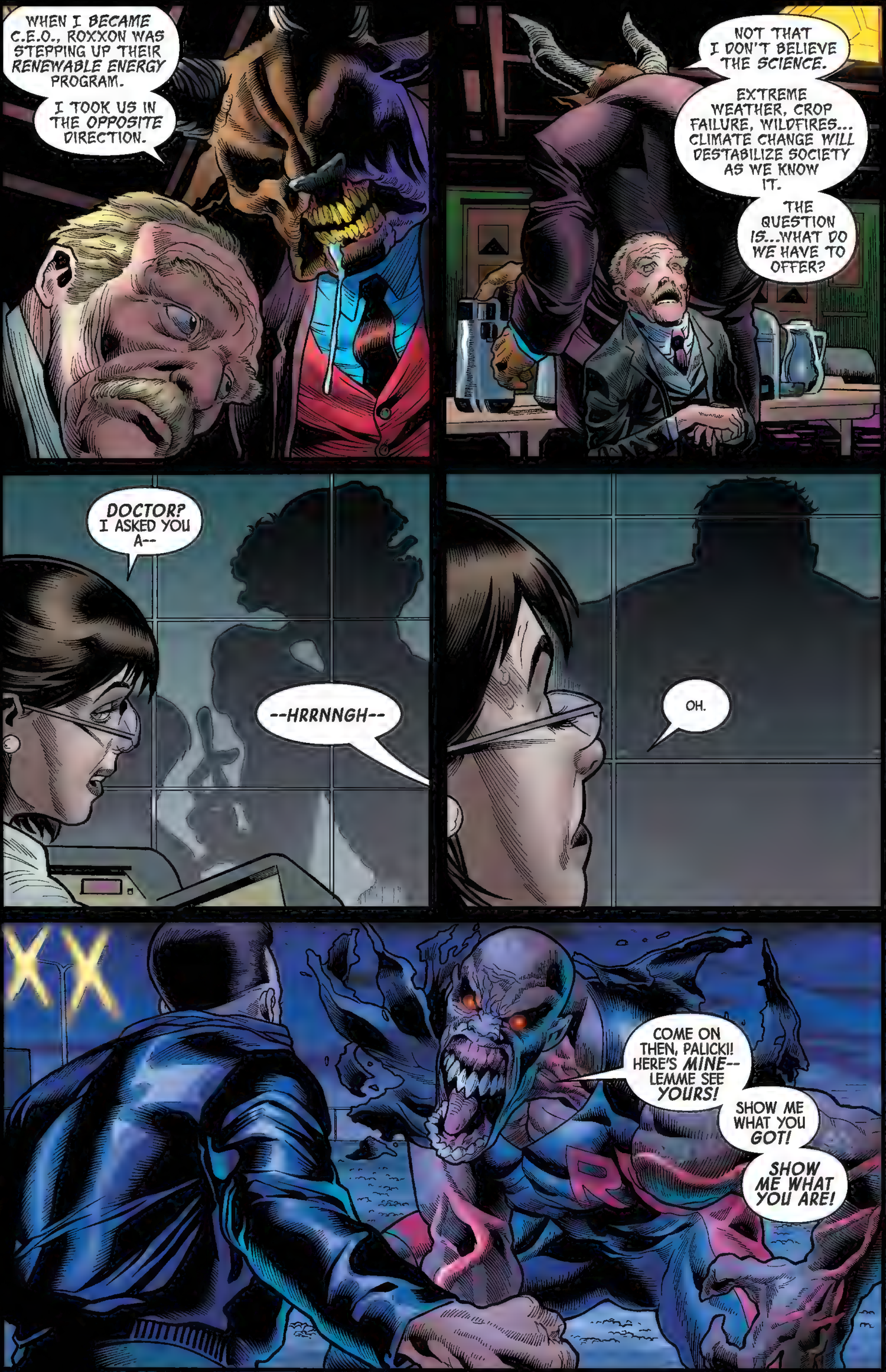
> "HE IS FINITE, THOUGH HE IS POWERFUL TO DO MUCH HARM AND SUFFERS NOT AS WE DO. BUT WE ARE STRONG, EACH IN OUR PURPOSE; AND WE ARE ALL MORE STRONG TOGETHER."
>
> – BRAM STOKER
> *DRACULA*

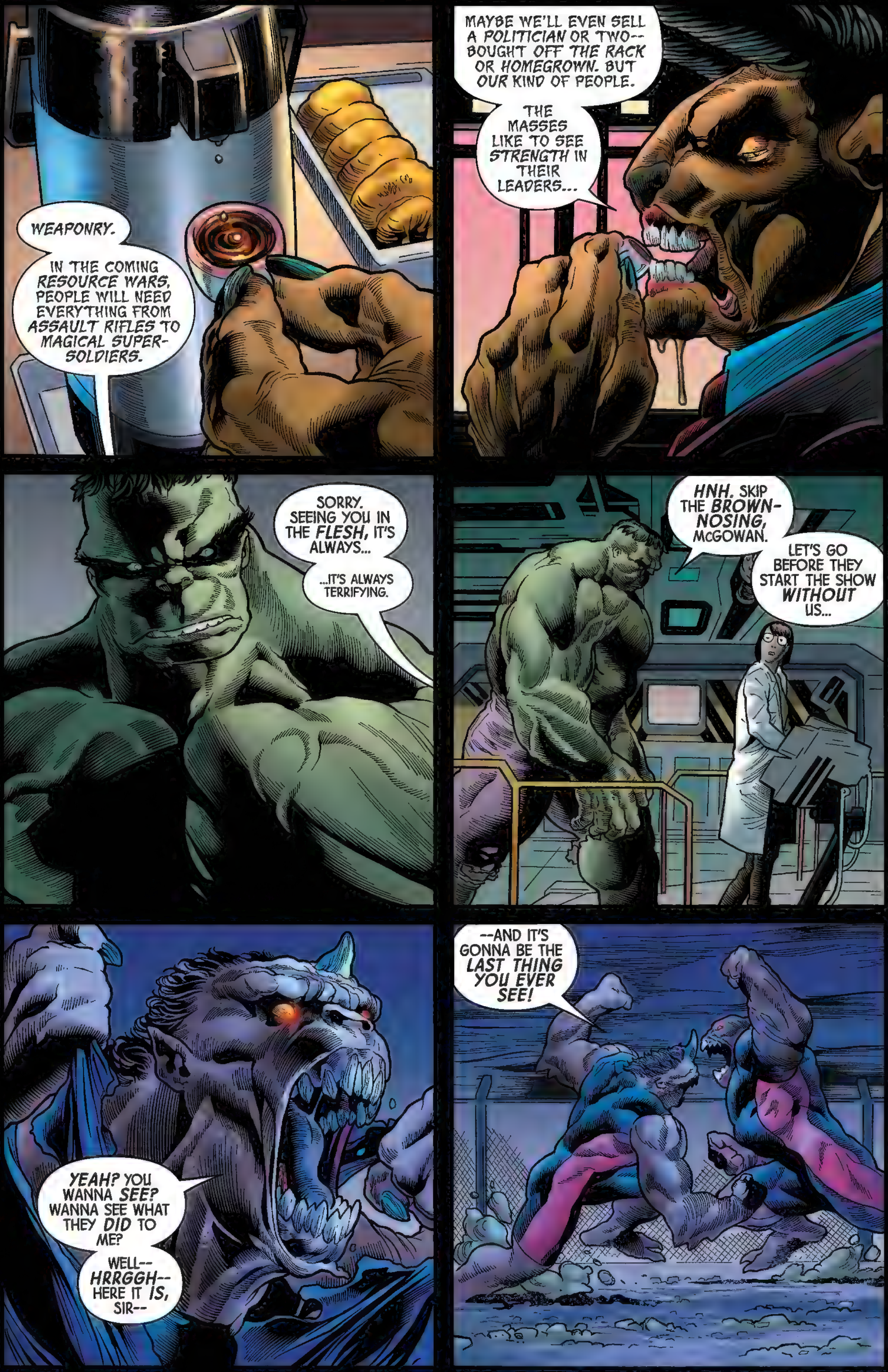

ROXXON PLAZA, NEW YORK.
8:45 A.M. FIRST MEETING OF THE DAY.
ROXXON
AS YOU CAN SEE, MR. AGGER, OUR SHARE PRICE *CONTINUES* TO RECOVER. WE'RE BACK AT *2018* LEVELS, AND *CLIMBING.*
GIVEN THE CURRENT *MARKET UNCERTAINTIES*, WE WERE READY FOR A *DOWNTURN*...
SHADOW BASE SITE G.
LOCATION AND TIME CURRENTLY UNKNOWN.
I THINK WE'RE FINALLY *READY*, DR. BANNER.
ROXXON WEST DATA CENTER, OREGON.
0545 HOURS.
READY FOR ANOTHER DAY OF *NOTHING*, COMMANDER?

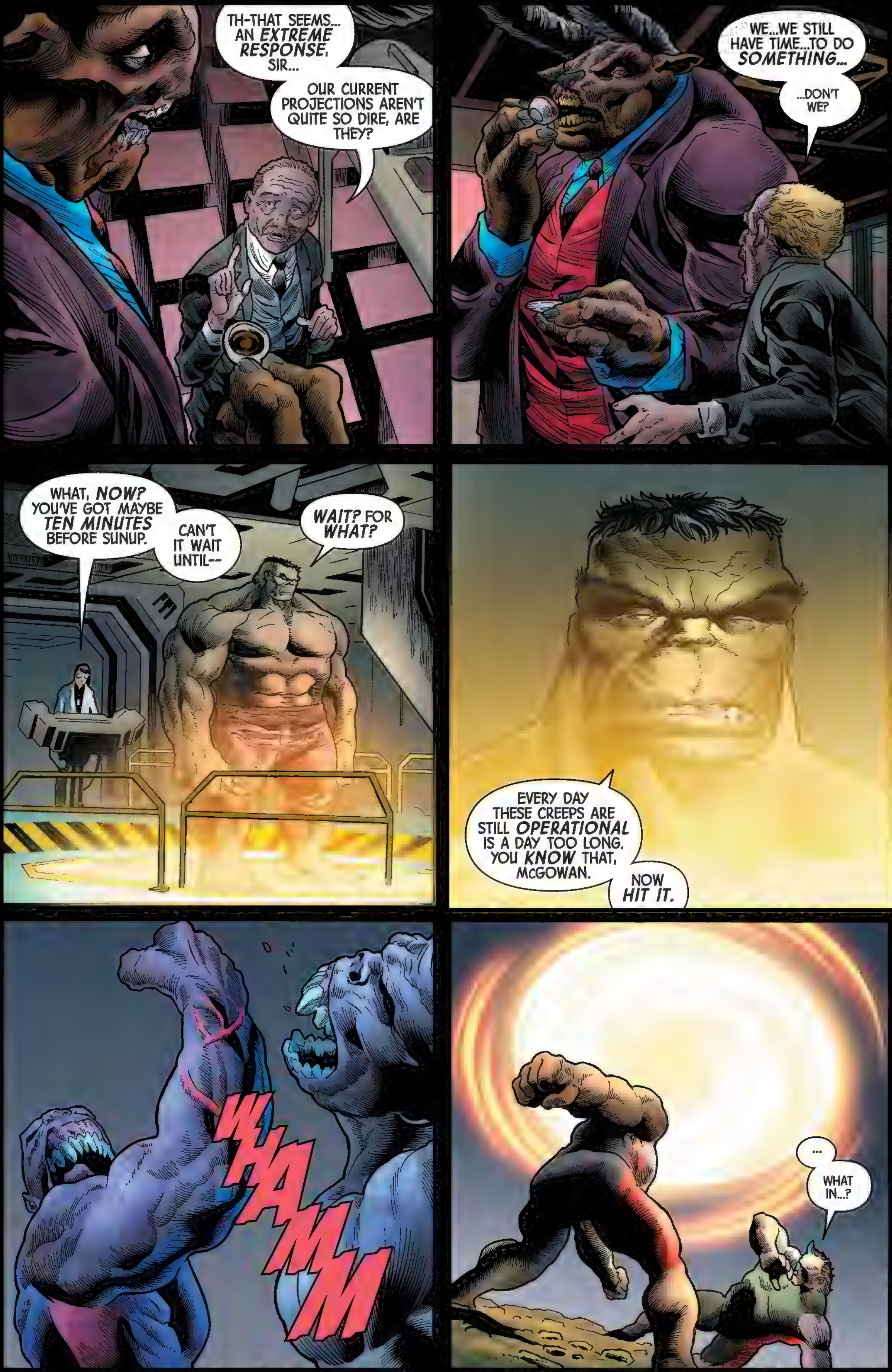

...BUT NOTHING TO REPORT ON *THAT* FRONT AS YET. STILL, I'D SUGGEST AVOIDING *RISKY VENTURES*--
DON'T BE A *COWARD*, HIGGINS.
ROXXON
SHARE PRICE
THE MINOTAUR.
WE'RE NOT SOME *MOM-AND-POP STORE* THAT CLOSES DOWN IN A *STRONG WIND*. WE...ARE THE *HURRICANE*.
UNCERTAINTY IS WHAT WE *WANT*.
I'M *STILL* NOT CERTAIN ABOUT THIS.
I DON'T CARE *HOW* EASY *REED RICHARDS* MAKES IT LOOK--TRANSLOCATION IS *BEYOND* DANGEROUS.
THE HULK.
IF IT WERE UP TO *ME*, YOU WOULDN'T BE DOING THIS AT *ALL*.
BUT AT LEAST *YOU* GIVE ME TIME TO RUN THE NECESSARY *CHECKS*...
YOU HAD BEST CHECK YOUR *ATTITUDE*, AGENT PALICKI.
SIR--
YOUR *JOB* IS TO *GUARD THIS FACILITY*--UNTIL YOU *DROP*, IF NEED BE--WITH *ZERO BACKCHAT*.
THE ROXXON B.E.R.S.E.R.K.E.R. UNIT.
REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE. YOU ARE A *ROXXON ASSET*.
AND THIS IS *ROXXON BUSINESS*.

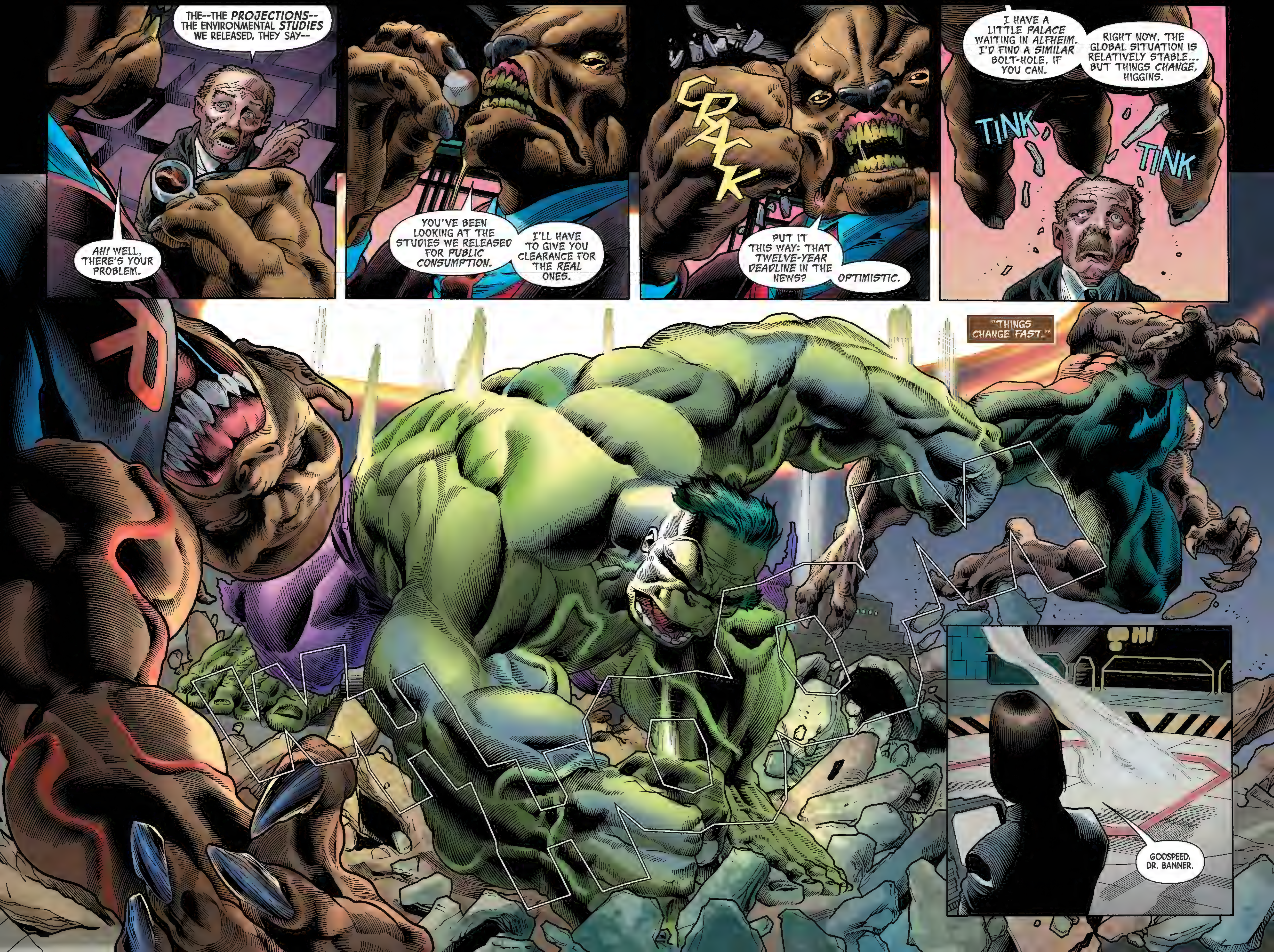

BUSINESS DEMANDS UNCERTAINTY. THERE MUST BE WINNERS AND LOSERS. THE STRONG AND THE WEAK.
AND WE ARE THE STRONGEST THERE IS.
I'M A NINE-FOOT MAN-BULL WHO BETRAYED THE EARTH TO ELVES, HIGGINS. YET HERE I STAND.
DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT RISK.
WHAT'S THE WORST POSSIBLE OUTCOME?
WELL, YOU WON'T DISINTEGRATE. OR BECOME A SINGULARITY.
BUT A POWER SURGE COULD STILL TURN YOU INSIDE OUT--
AH, WELL.
I'LL SURVIVE.
YOU SURVIVED THOR AND THE MINDLESS ONES, YOU CAN SURVIVE A LITTLE BOREDOM, PALICKI--
OKAY, SIR--
WHOKK
--WHATEVER YOU SAY!

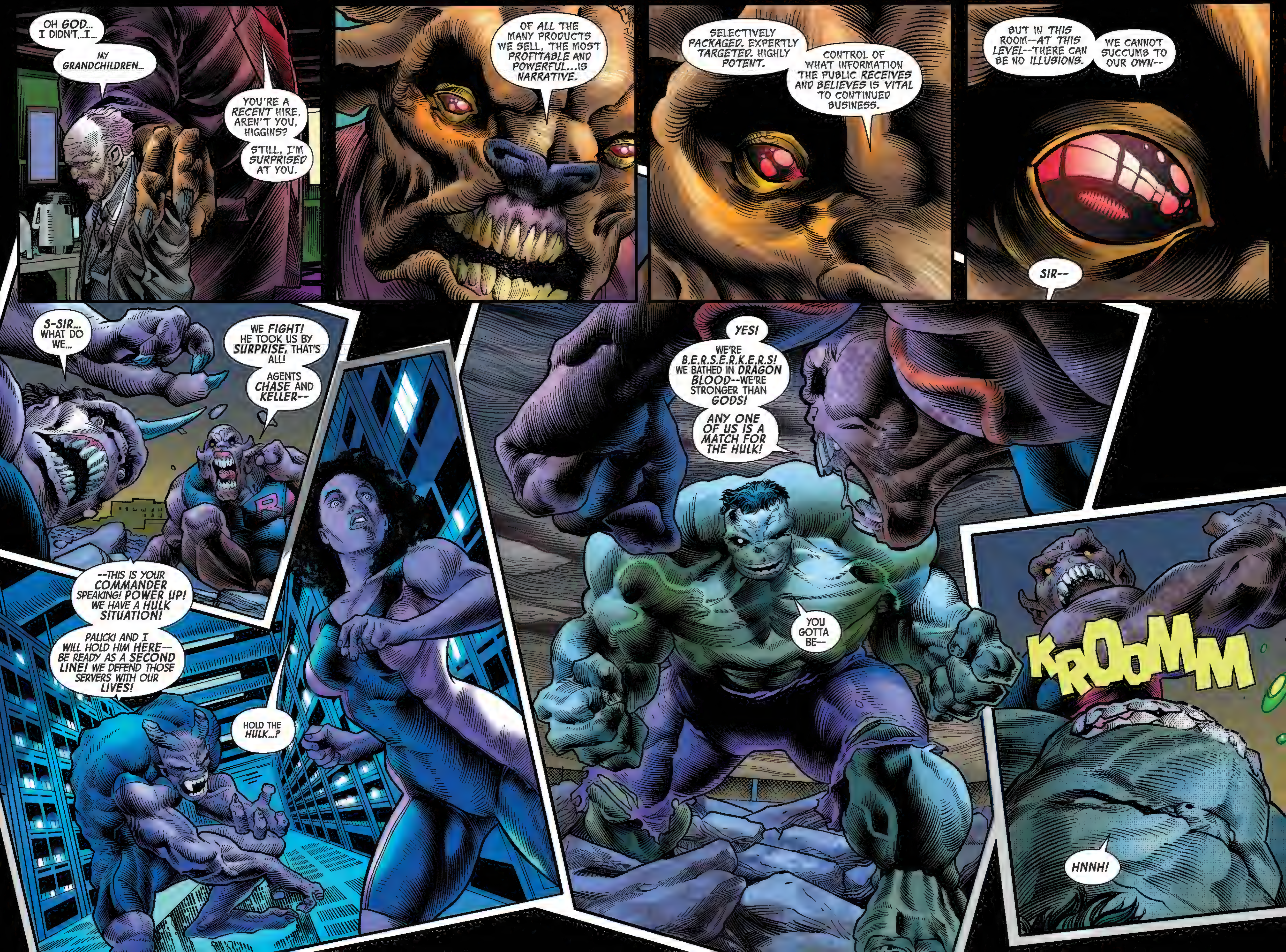

SHOULD WE *PICK* OUR BATTLES? *ABSOLUTELY.*
BUT *TO AVOID* THEM...?
THERE'LL BE *NO* AVOIDING THEM, HIGGINS.
WE'VE *ALREADY* MADE SURE OF *THAT.*
WELL...IT'S *ROXXON.* THEY LIKE TO MAKE *SURE* OF THEIR ASSETS.
THE TARGET YOU'VE PICKED FOR YOUR, *AH... OPENING SALVO...* IT'S GOING TO BE *DEFENDED.*
WE'VE ALL HEARD THE *RUMORS.* ROXXON HAS ACCESS TO... WELL, PEOPLE AT *YOUR LEVEL.* BUT *GAMMA-FREE.*
ARE YOU READY FOR *THAT* KIND OF FIGHT?
COMBAT READINESS DRILL, SIR. GUIDELINES SAY I CAN CALL ONE AT *ANY TIME.*
GOTTA STAY *SHARP,* RIGHT? READY TO *KILL?*
ABOUT *TIME,* PRIVATE--
--I'VE BEEN NEEDLING YOU FOR *WEEKS* NOW. WAITING FOR YOU TO FIND YOUR *GUTS.*
THOUGHT YOU'D *NEVER* STEP UP...

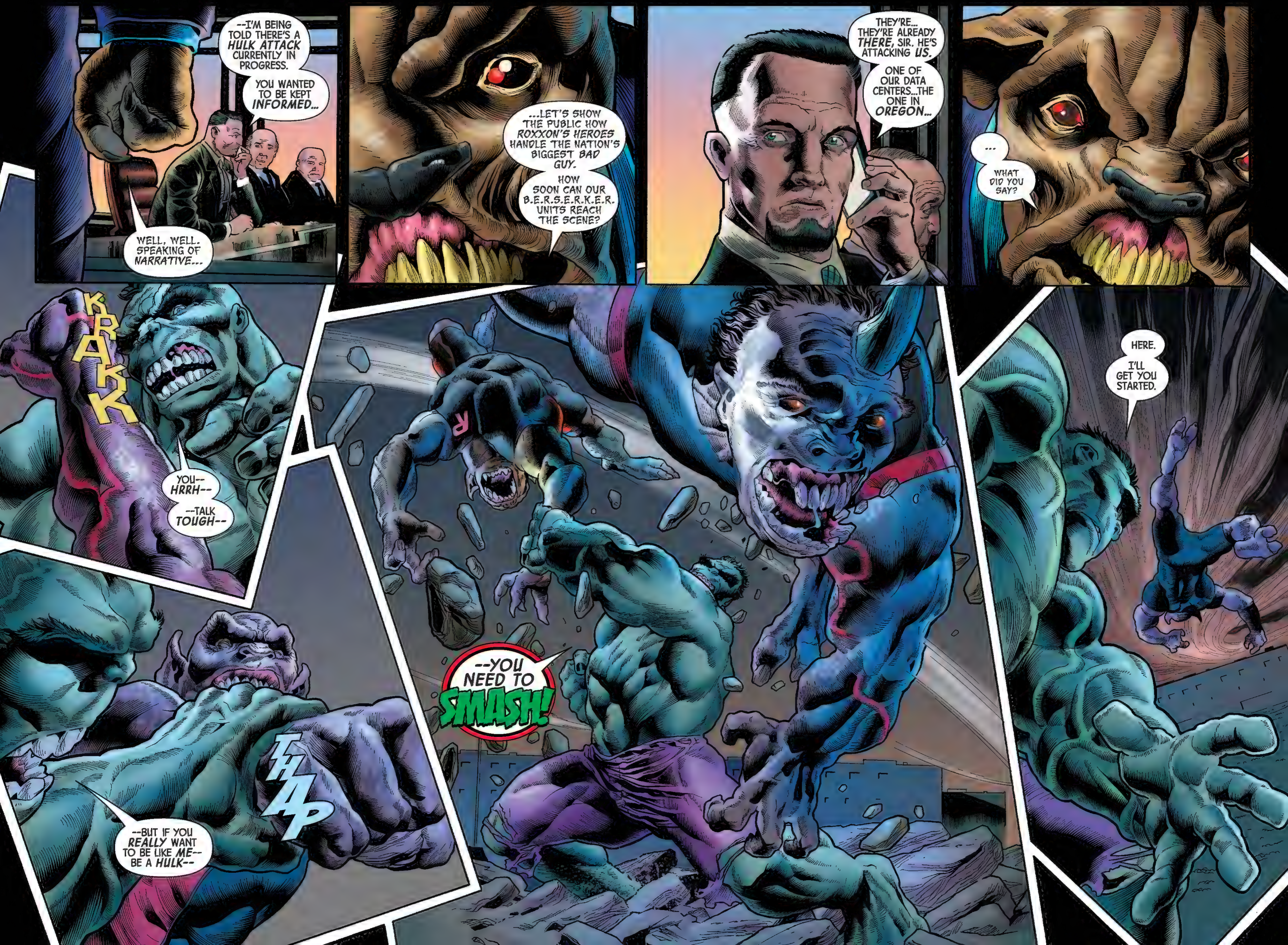

WHEN I BECAME C.E.O., ROXXON WAS STEPPING UP THEIR RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAM.
I TOOK US IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.
NOT THAT I DON'T BELIEVE THE SCIENCE.
EXTREME WEATHER, CROP FAILURE, WILDFIRES... CLIMATE CHANGE WILL DESTABILIZE SOCIETY AS WE KNOW IT.
THE QUESTION IS...WHAT DO WE HAVE TO OFFER?
DOCTOR? I ASKED YOU A--
--HRRNNGH--
OH.
COME ON THEN, PALICKI! HERE'S MINE-- LEMME SEE YOURS!
SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT!
SHOW ME WHAT YOU ARE!

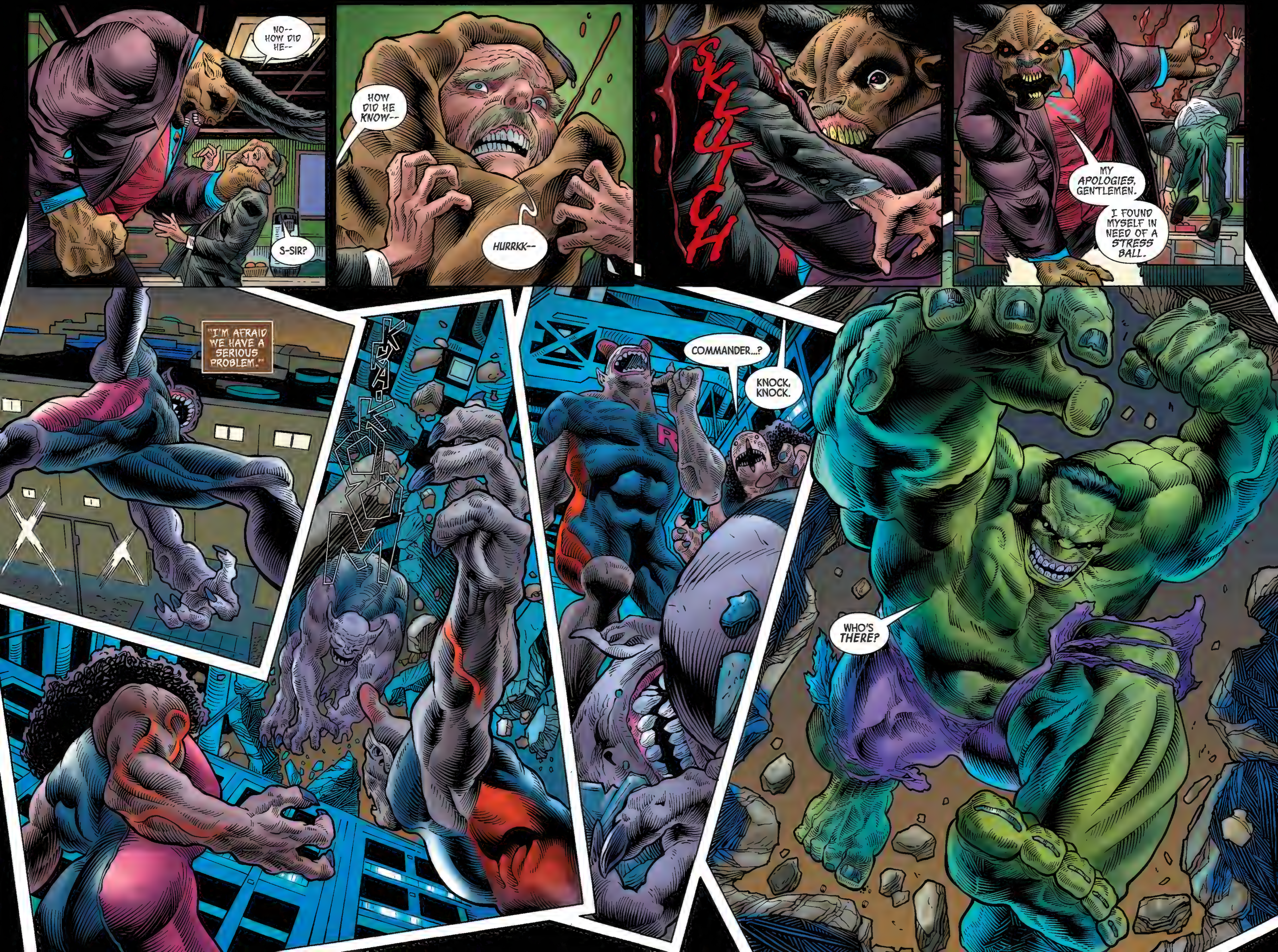

WEAPONRY.
IN THE COMING RESOURCE WARS, PEOPLE WILL NEED EVERYTHING FROM ASSAULT RIFLES TO MAGICAL SUPER-SOLDIERS.
MAYBE WE'LL EVEN SELL A POLITICIAN OR TWO-- BOUGHT OFF THE RACK OR HOMEGROWN. BUT OUR KIND OF PEOPLE.
THE MASSES LIKE TO SEE STRENGTH IN THEIR LEADERS...
SORRY. SEEING YOU IN THE FLESH, IT'S ALWAYS...
...IT'S ALWAYS TERRIFYING.
HNH. SKIP THE BROWN-NOSING, McGOWAN.
LET'S GO BEFORE THEY START THE SHOW WITHOUT US...
YEAH? YOU WANNA SEE? WANNA SEE WHAT THEY DID TO ME?
WELL-- HRRGGH-- HERE IT IS, SIR--
--AND IT'S GONNA BE THE LAST THING YOU EVER SEE!

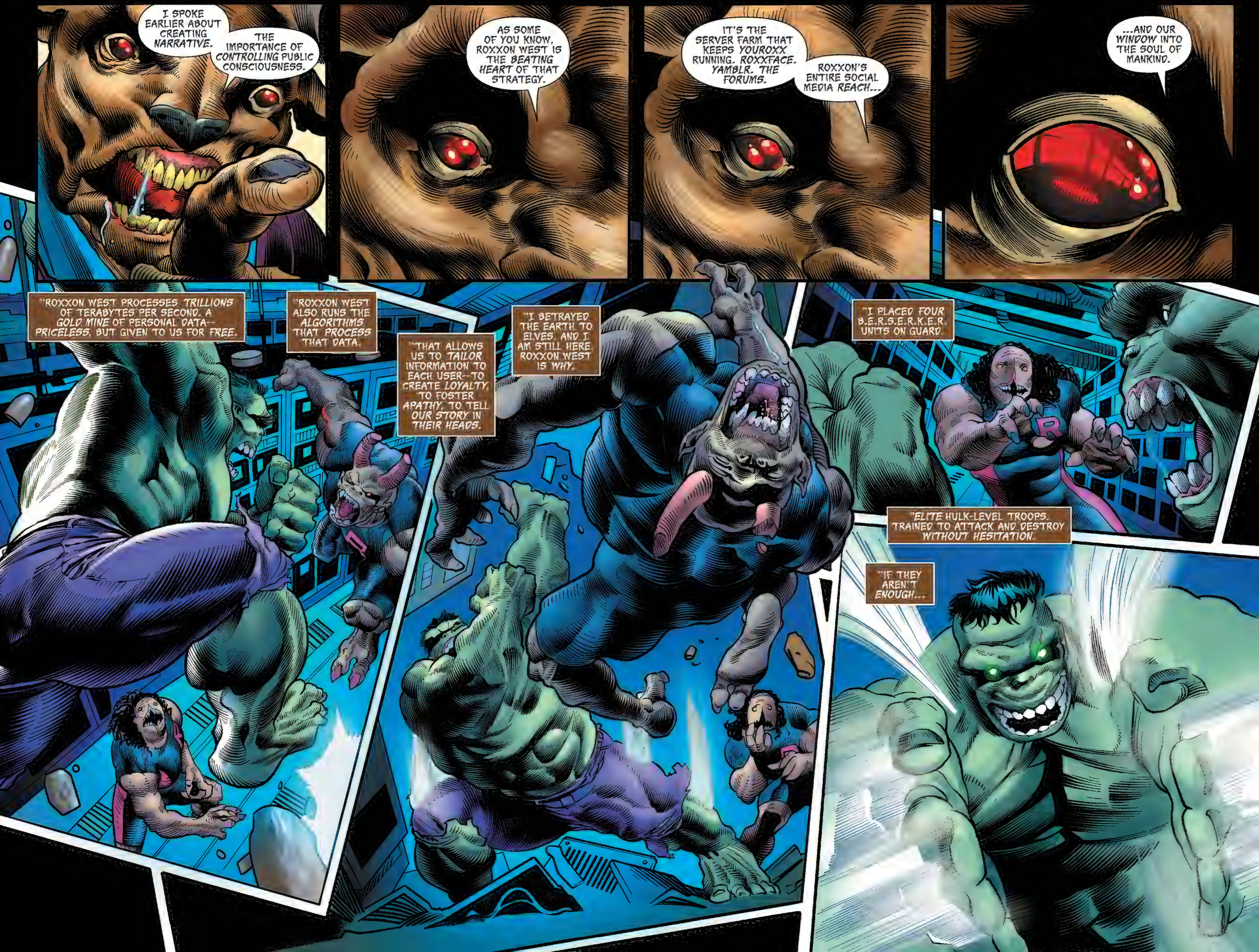

TH-THAT SEEMS... AN EXTREME RESPONSE, SIR...
OUR CURRENT PROJECTIONS AREN'T QUITE SO DIRE, ARE THEY?
WE...WE STILL HAVE TIME...TO DO SOMETHING...
...DON'T WE?
WHAT, NOW? YOU'VE GOT MAYBE TEN MINUTES BEFORE SUNUP.
CAN'T IT WAIT UNTIL--
WAIT? FOR WHAT?
EVERY DAY THESE CREEPS ARE STILL OPERATIONAL IS A DAY TOO LONG. YOU KNOW THAT, McGOWAN.
NOW HIT IT.
WHAMM
...
WHAT IN...?

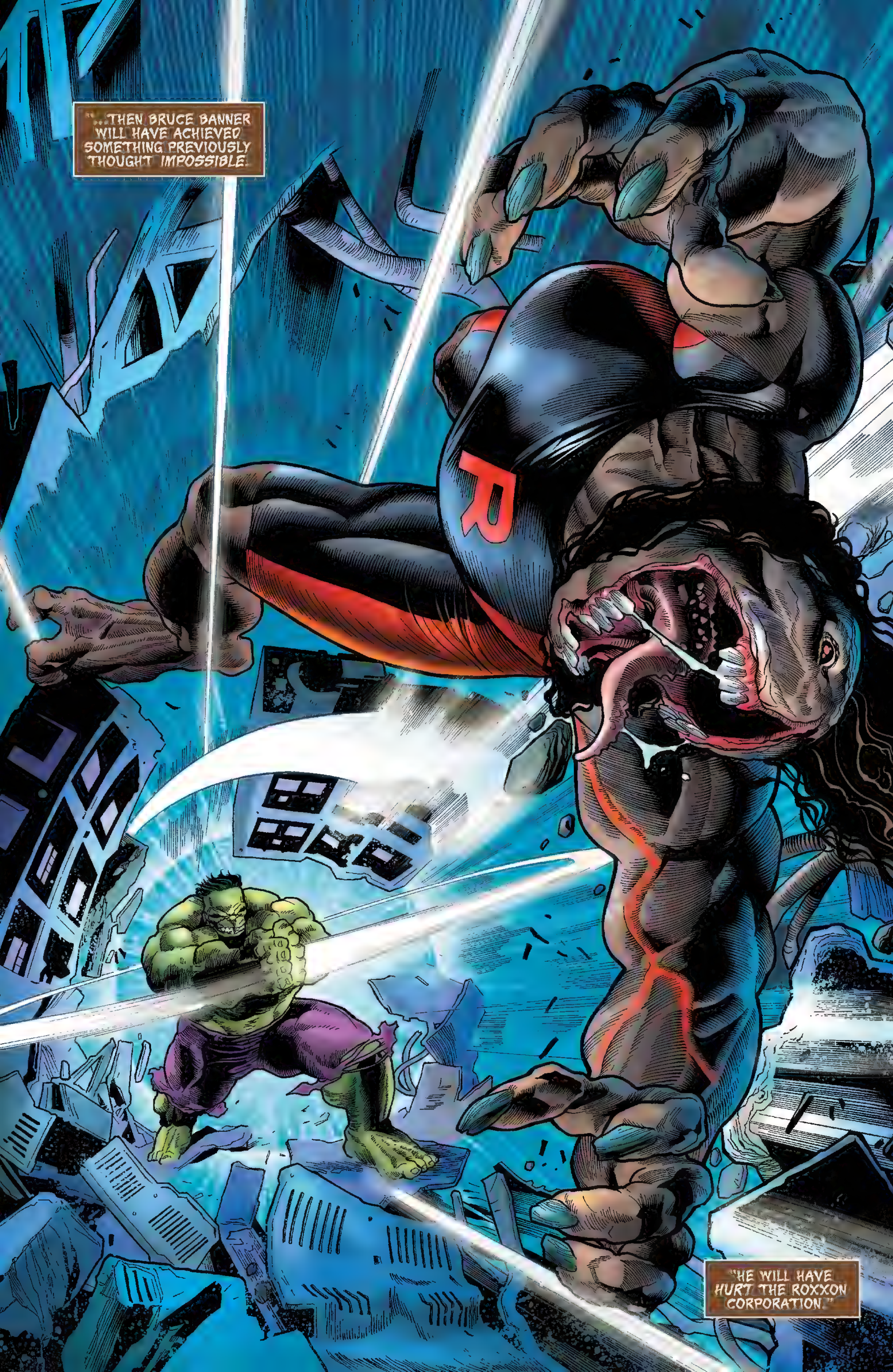

THE--THE *PROJECTIONS*-- THE ENVIRONMENTAL *STUDIES* WE RELEASED, THEY SAY--
AH! WELL, THERE'S YOUR PROBLEM.
YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING AT THE STUDIES WE RELEASED FOR *PUBLIC CONSUMPTION.*
I'LL HAVE TO GIVE YOU CLEARANCE FOR THE *REAL* ONES.
CRACK
PUT IT THIS WAY: THAT *TWELVE-YEAR* DEADLINE IN THE NEWS?
OPTIMISTIC.
I HAVE A LITTLE *PALACE* WAITING IN *ALFHEIM.* I'D FIND A *SIMILAR* BOLT-HOLE, IF YOU CAN.
RIGHT NOW, THE GLOBAL SITUATION IS RELATIVELY STABLE... BUT THINGS *CHANGE,* HIGGINS.
TINK
TINK
"THINGS CHANGE *FAST.*"
GODSPEED, DR. BANNER.

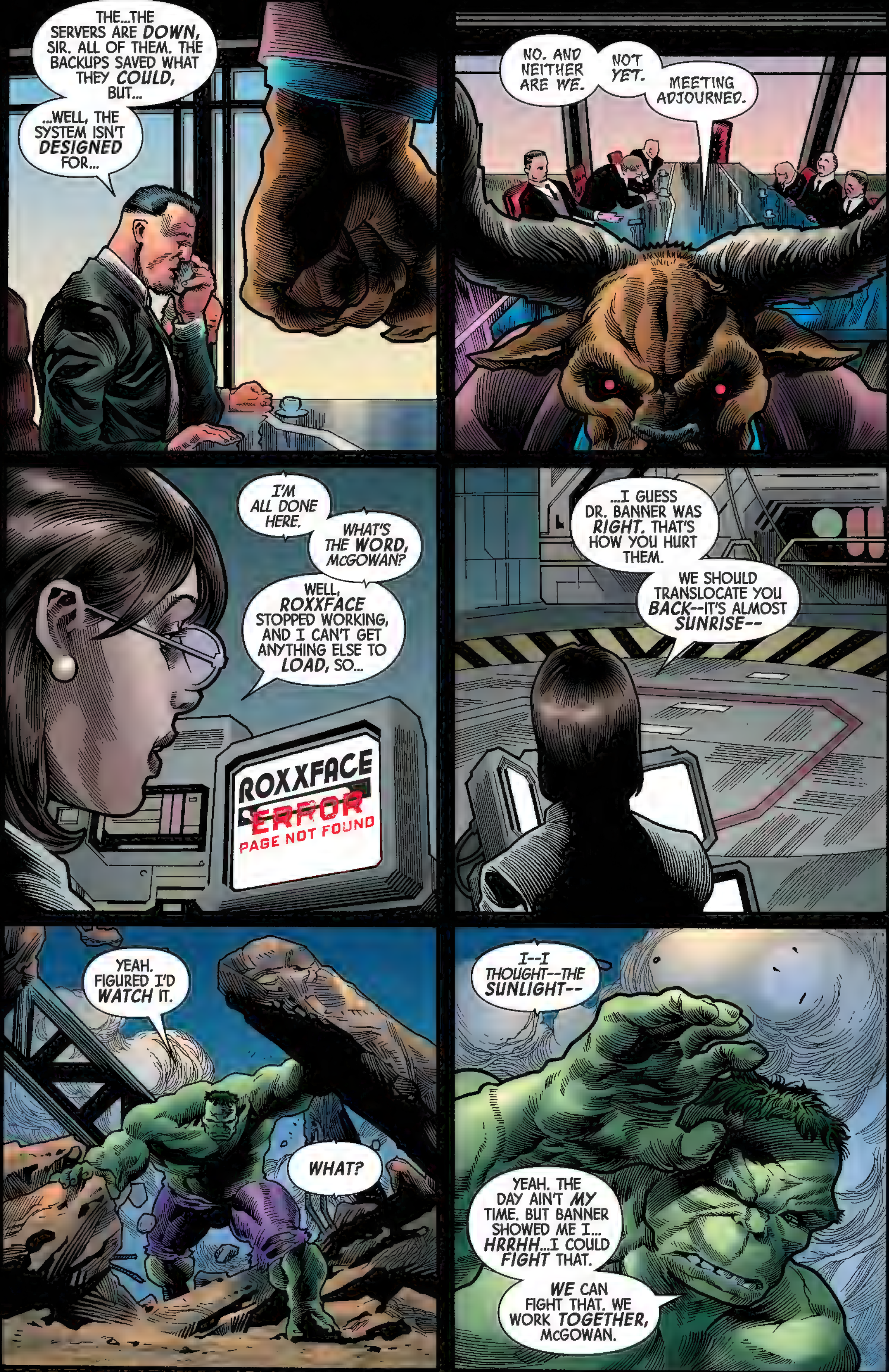

OH GOD... I DIDN'T...I...
MY GRANDCHILDREN...
YOU'RE A RECENT HIRE, AREN'T YOU, HIGGINS?
STILL, I'M SURPRISED AT YOU.
OF ALL THE MANY PRODUCTS WE SELL, THE MOST PROFITABLE AND POWERFUL...IS NARRATIVE.
SELECTIVELY PACKAGED. EXPERTLY TARGETED. HIGHLY POTENT.
CONTROL OF WHAT INFORMATION THE PUBLIC RECEIVES AND BELIEVES IS VITAL TO CONTINUED BUSINESS.
BUT IN THIS ROOM--AT THIS LEVEL--THERE CAN BE NO ILLUSIONS.
WE CANNOT SUCCUMB TO OUR OWN--
SIR--
S-SIR... WHAT DO WE...
WE FIGHT! HE TOOK US BY SURPRISE, THAT'S ALL!
AGENTS CHASE AND KELLER--
--THIS IS YOUR COMMANDER SPEAKING! POWER UP! WE HAVE A HULK SITUATION!
PALICKI AND I WILL HOLD HIM HERE--BE READY AS A SECOND LINE! WE DEFEND THOSE SERVERS WITH OUR LIVES!
HOLD THE HULK...?
YES!
WE'RE B.E.R.S.E.R.K.E.R.S! WE BATHED IN DRAGON BLOOD--WE'RE STRONGER THAN GODS!
ANY ONE OF US IS A MATCH FOR THE HULK!
YOU GOTTA BE--
KROOMMM
HNNH!

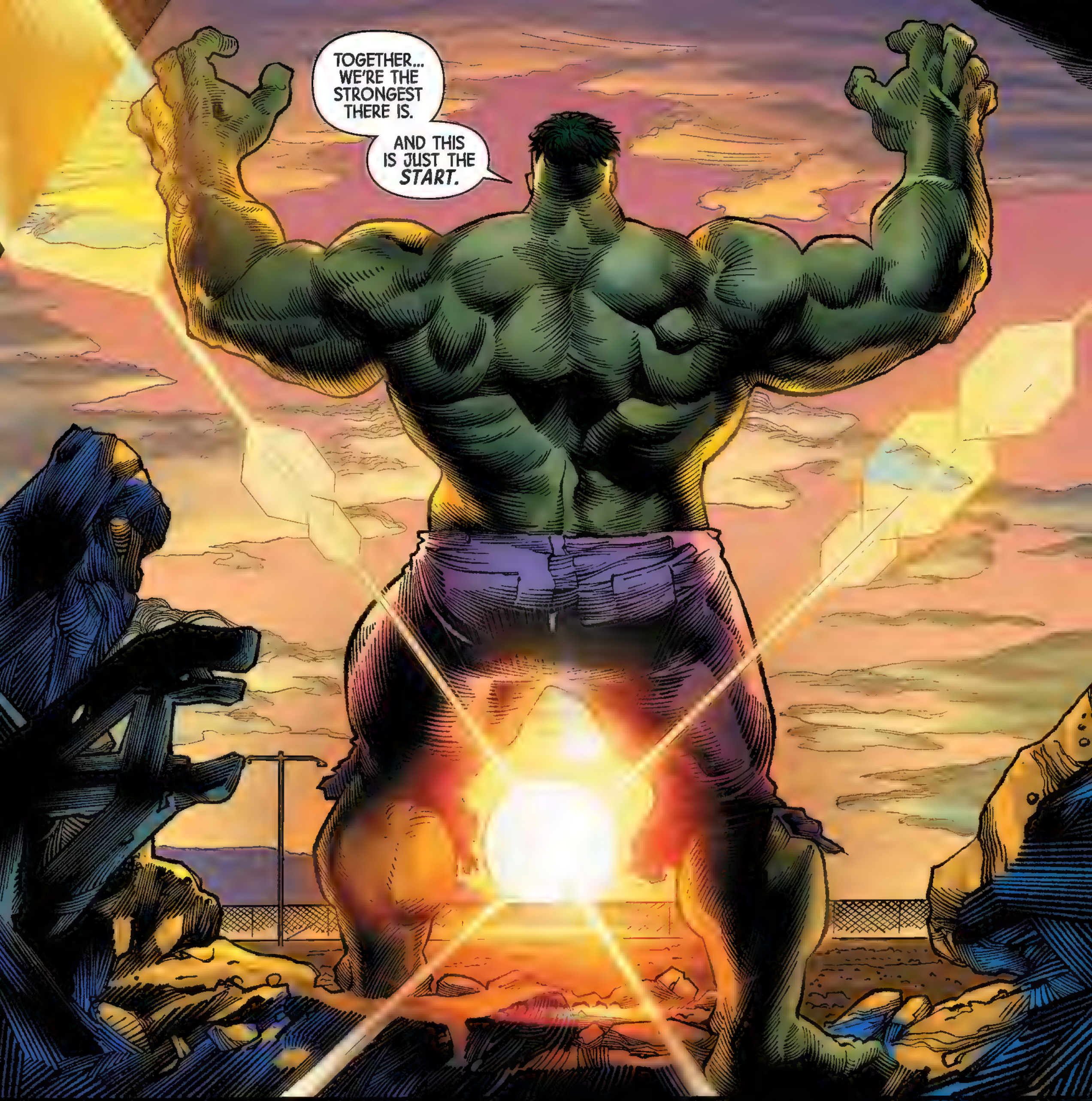

--I'M BEING TOLD THERE'S A HULK ATTACK CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS.
YOU WANTED TO BE KEPT INFORMED...
WELL, WELL. SPEAKING OF NARRATIVE...
...LET'S SHOW THE PUBLIC HOW ROXXON'S HEROES HANDLE THE NATION'S BIGGEST BAD GUY.
HOW SOON CAN OUR B.E.R.S.E.R.K.E.R. UNITS REACH THE SCENE?
THEY'RE... THEY'RE ALREADY THERE, SIR. HE'S ATTACKING US.
ONE OF OUR DATA CENTERS...THE ONE IN OREGON...
...
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
KRAKK
YOU-- HRRH--
--TALK TOUGH--
THAP
--BUT IF YOU REALLY WANT TO BE LIKE ME-- BE A HULK--
--YOU NEED TO SMASH!
HERE.
I'LL GET YOU STARTED.


NO-- HOW DID HE--
S-SIR?
HOW DID HE KNOW--
HURRKK--
SKLUTCH
MY APOLOGIES, GENTLEMEN.
I FOUND MYSELF IN NEED OF A STRESS BALL.
"I'M AFRAID WE HAVE A SERIOUS PROBLEM."
KRA-KOOOM
COMMANDER...?
KNOCK, KNOCK.
WHO'S THERE?


I SPOKE EARLIER ABOUT CREATING *NARRATIVE.*
THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTROLLING PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS.
AS SOME OF YOU KNOW, ROXXON WEST IS THE *BEATING HEART* OF THAT STRATEGY.
IT'S THE SERVER FARM THAT KEEPS *YOUROXX* RUNNING. *ROXXFACE. YAMBLR. THE FORUMS.*
ROXXON'S ENTIRE SOCIAL MEDIA REACH...
...AND OUR WINDOW INTO THE SOUL OF MANKIND.
"ROXXON WEST PROCESSES TRILLIONS OF TERABYTES PER SECOND. A *GOLD MINE* OF PERSONAL DATA-- *PRICELESS,* BUT GIVEN TO US FOR FREE.
"ROXXON WEST ALSO RUNS THE *ALGORITHMS* THAT PROCESS THAT DATA.
"THAT ALLOWS US TO *TAILOR* INFORMATION TO EACH USER--TO *CREATE LOYALTY,* TO FOSTER *APATHY,* TO TELL *OUR STORY* IN *THEIR HEADS.*
"I BETRAYED THE EARTH TO ELVES, AND I AM STILL HERE. ROXXON WEST IS WHY.
"I PLACED FOUR B.E.R.S.E.R.K.E.R. UNITS ON GUARD.
"ELITE HULK-LEVEL TROOPS. TRAINED TO ATTACK AND DESTROY WITHOUT HESITATION.
"IF THEY AREN'T *ENOUGH...*


"...THEN BRUCE BANNER WILL HAVE ACHIEVED SOMETHING PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT IMPOSSIBLE.
"HE WILL HAVE HURT THE ROXXON CORPORATION."


THE...THE SERVERS ARE *DOWN*, SIR. ALL OF THEM. THE BACKUPS SAVED WHAT THEY *COULD*, BUT...
...WELL, THE SYSTEM ISN'T *DESIGNED* FOR...
NO. AND NEITHER ARE WE.
NOT *YET*.
MEETING ADJOURNED.
I'M ALL DONE HERE.
WHAT'S THE **WORD**, *McGOWAN?*
WELL, *ROXXFACE* STOPPED WORKING, AND I CAN'T GET ANYTHING ELSE TO *LOAD*, SO...
ROXXFACE
ERROR
PAGE NOT FOUND
...I GUESS DR. BANNER WAS *RIGHT*. THAT'S HOW YOU HURT THEM.
WE SHOULD TRANSLOCATE YOU *BACK*--IT'S ALMOST *SUNRISE*--
YEAH. FIGURED I'D *WATCH* IT.
WHAT?
I--I THOUGHT--THE **SUNLIGHT**--
YEAH. THE DAY AIN'T *MY* TIME. BUT BANNER SHOWED ME I... *HRRHH*...I COULD *FIGHT* THAT.
WE CAN FIGHT THAT. WE WORK *TOGETHER*, McGOWAN.



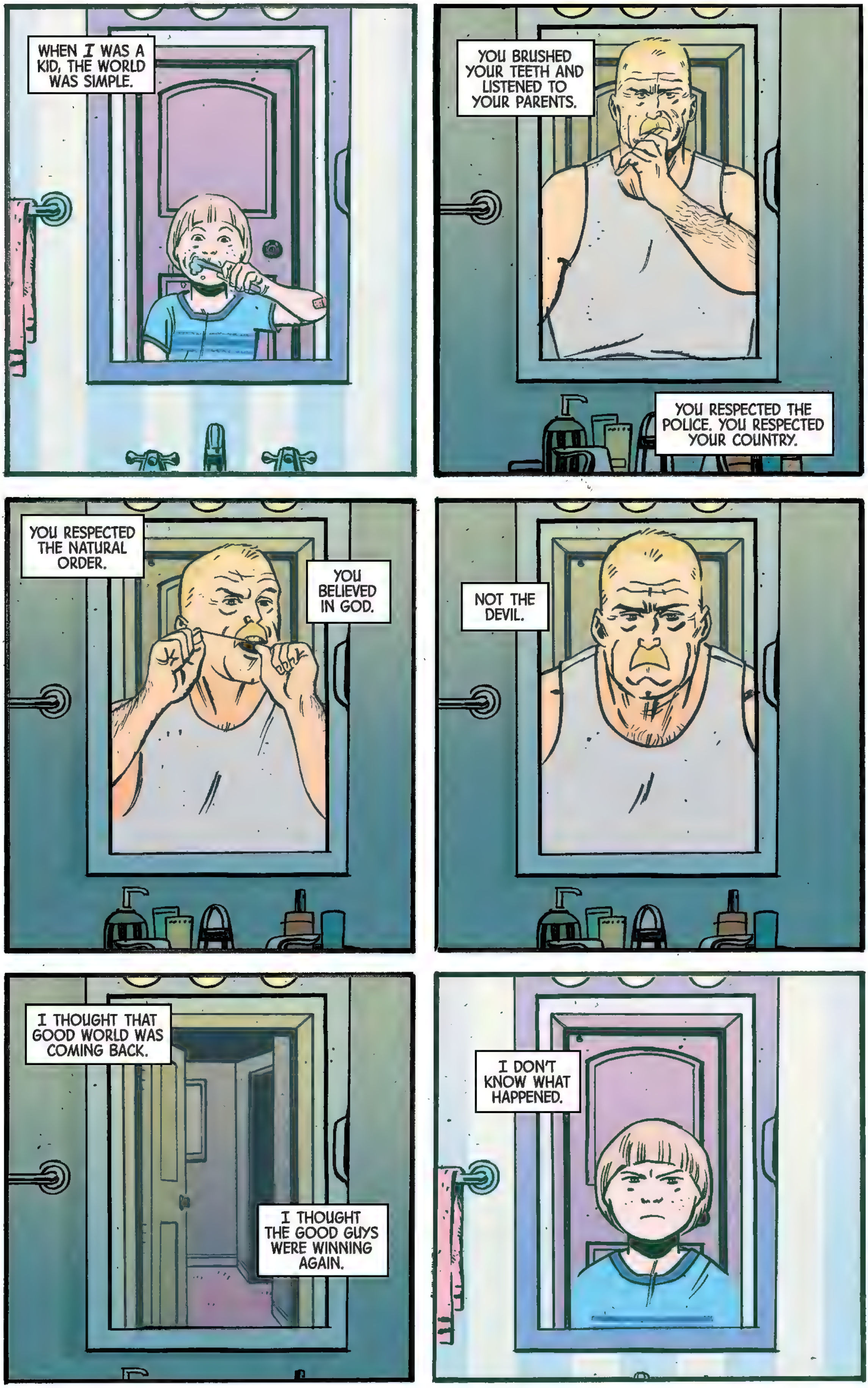
TOGETHER... WE'RE THE STRONGEST THERE IS.
AND THIS IS JUST THE *START.*

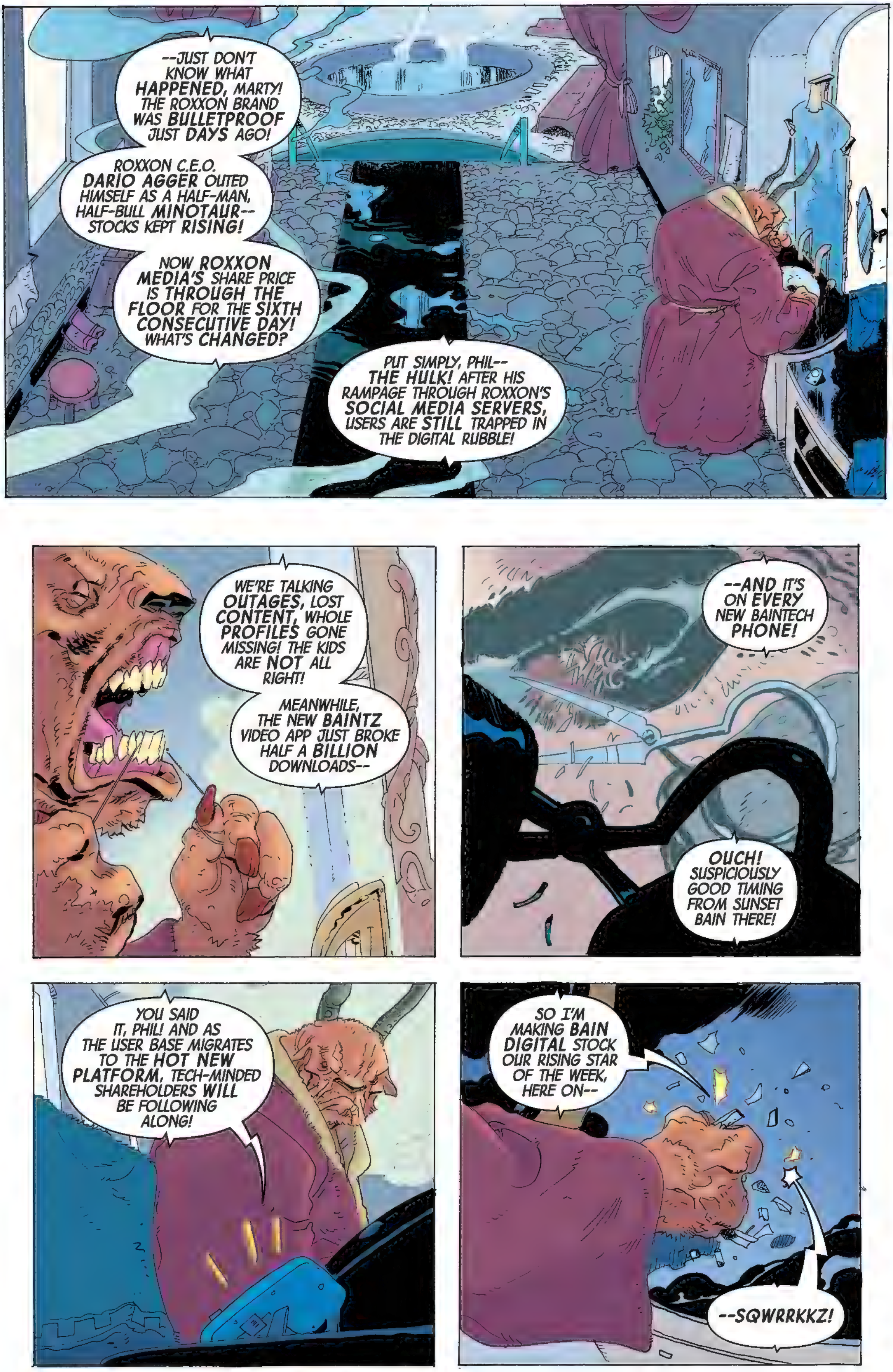
THIS IS THE
DAY

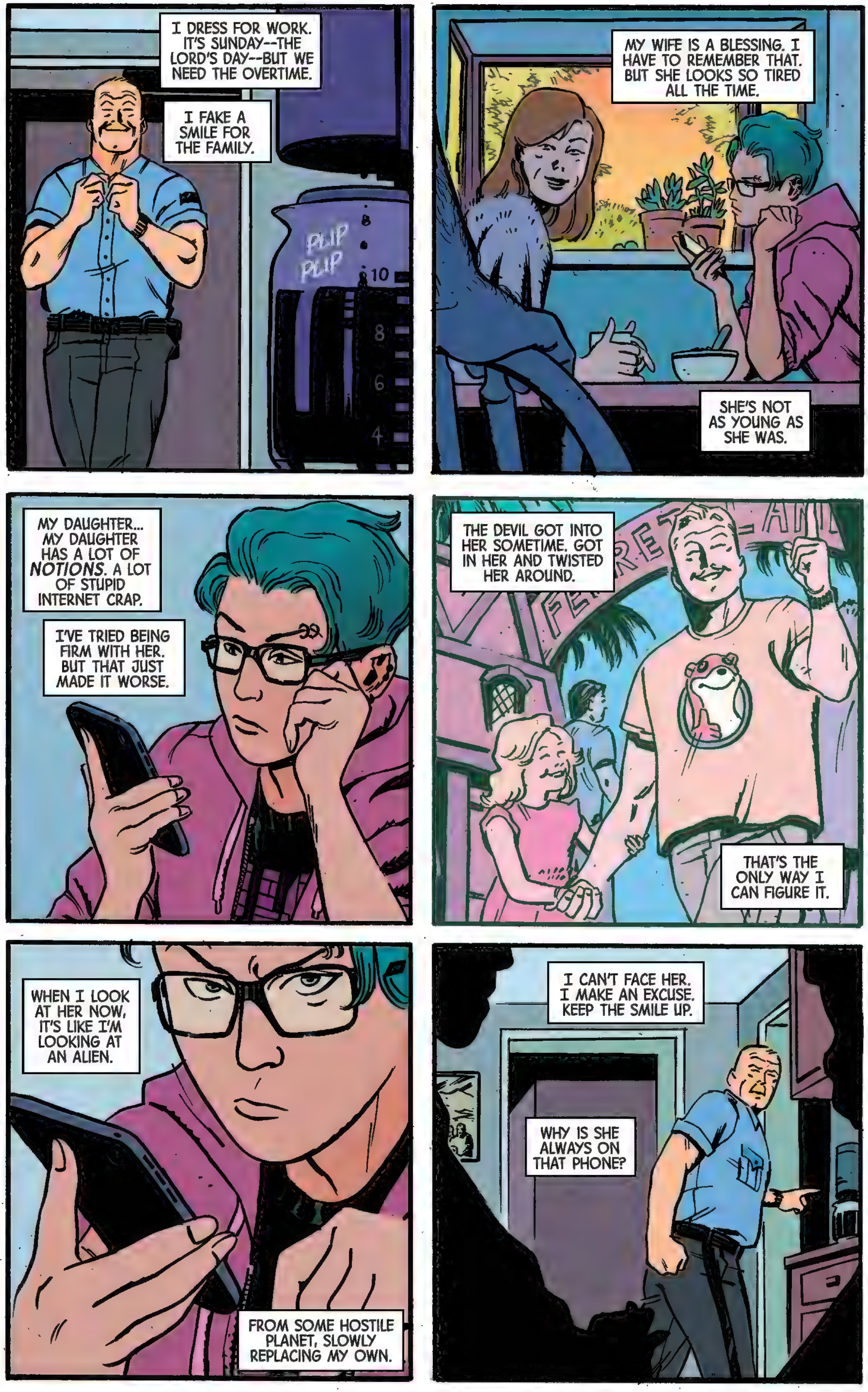
28
WANTED
BRUCE BANNER
HULK SMASH

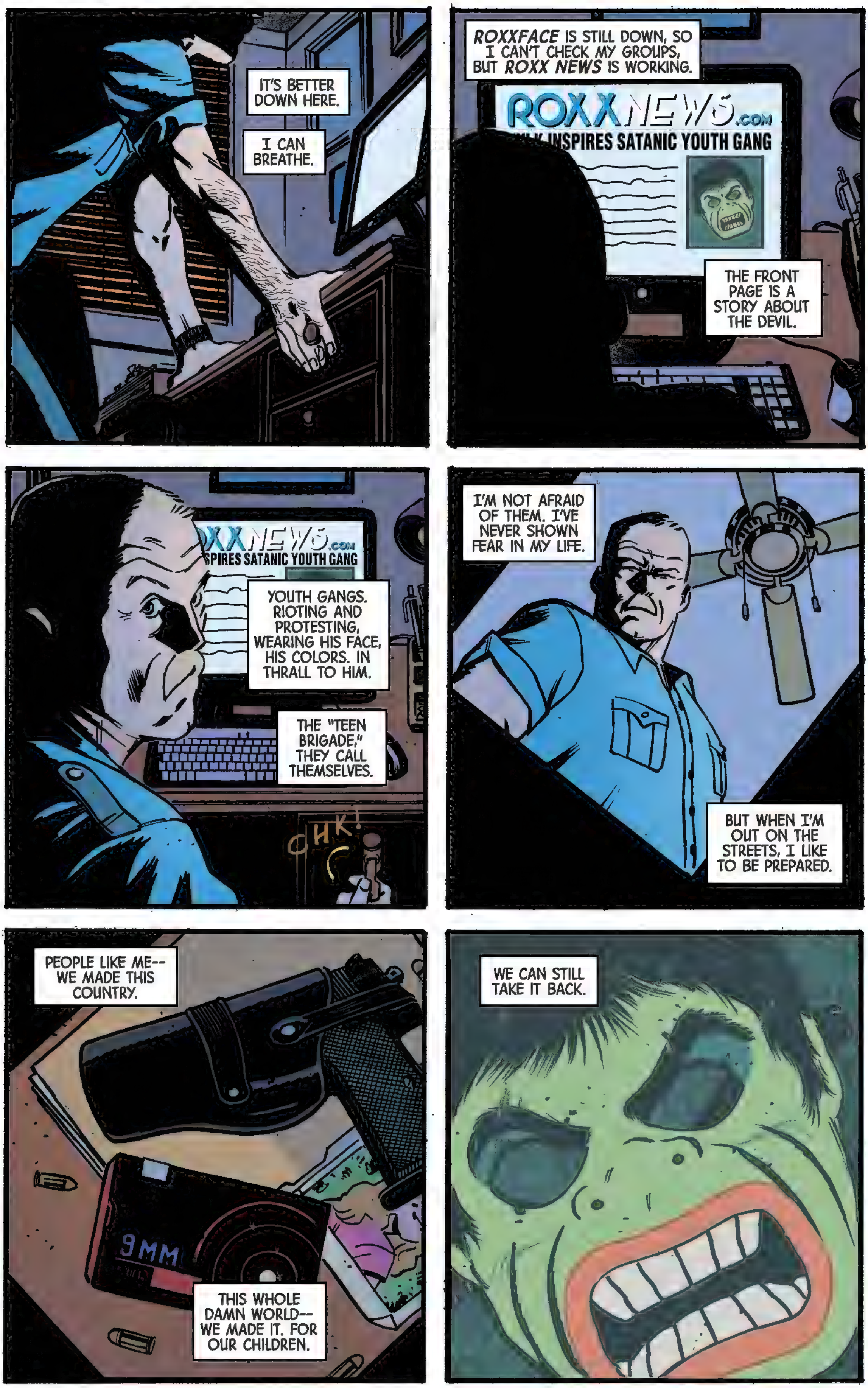
“WE CONSIDERED OURSELVES TO BE A POWERFUL CULTURE.”

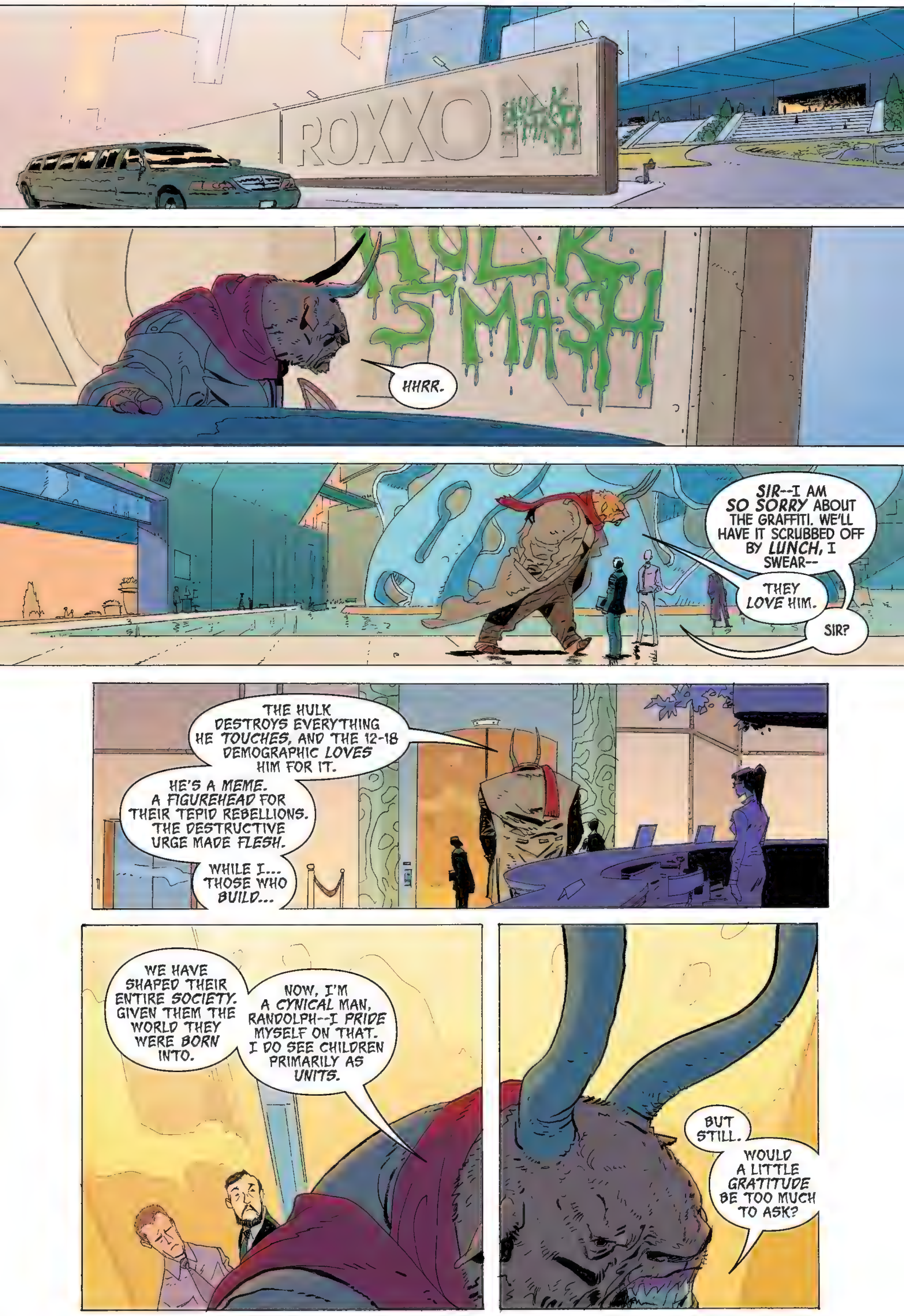
– U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

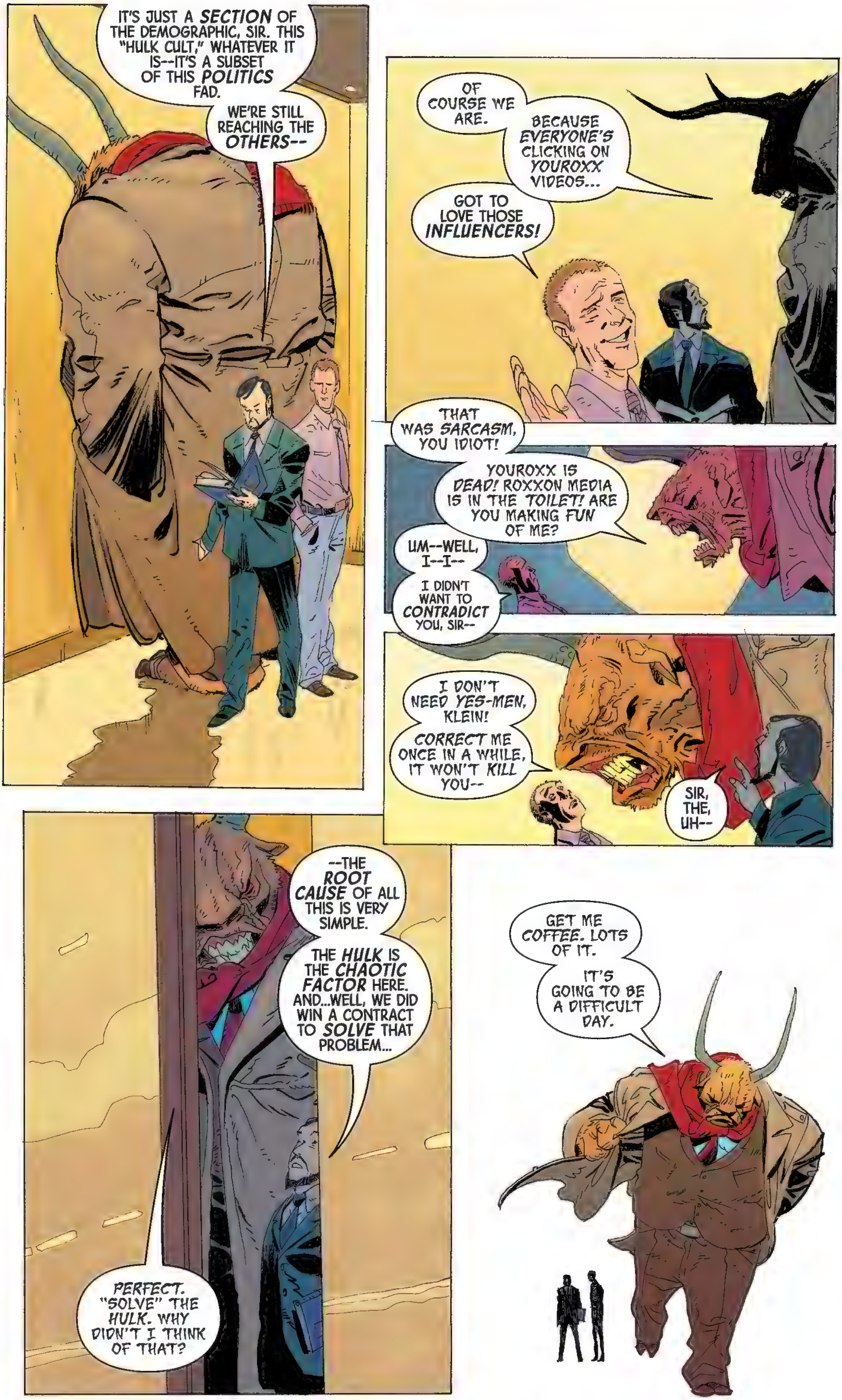

WHEN I WAS A KID, THE WORLD WAS SIMPLE.
YOU BRUSHED YOUR TEETH AND LISTENED TO YOUR PARENTS.
YOU RESPECTED THE POLICE. YOU RESPECTED YOUR COUNTRY.
YOU RESPECTED THE NATURAL ORDER.
YOU BELIEVED IN GOD.
NOT THE DEVIL.
I THOUGHT THAT GOOD WORLD WAS COMING BACK.
I THOUGHT THE GOOD GUYS WERE WINNING AGAIN.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.

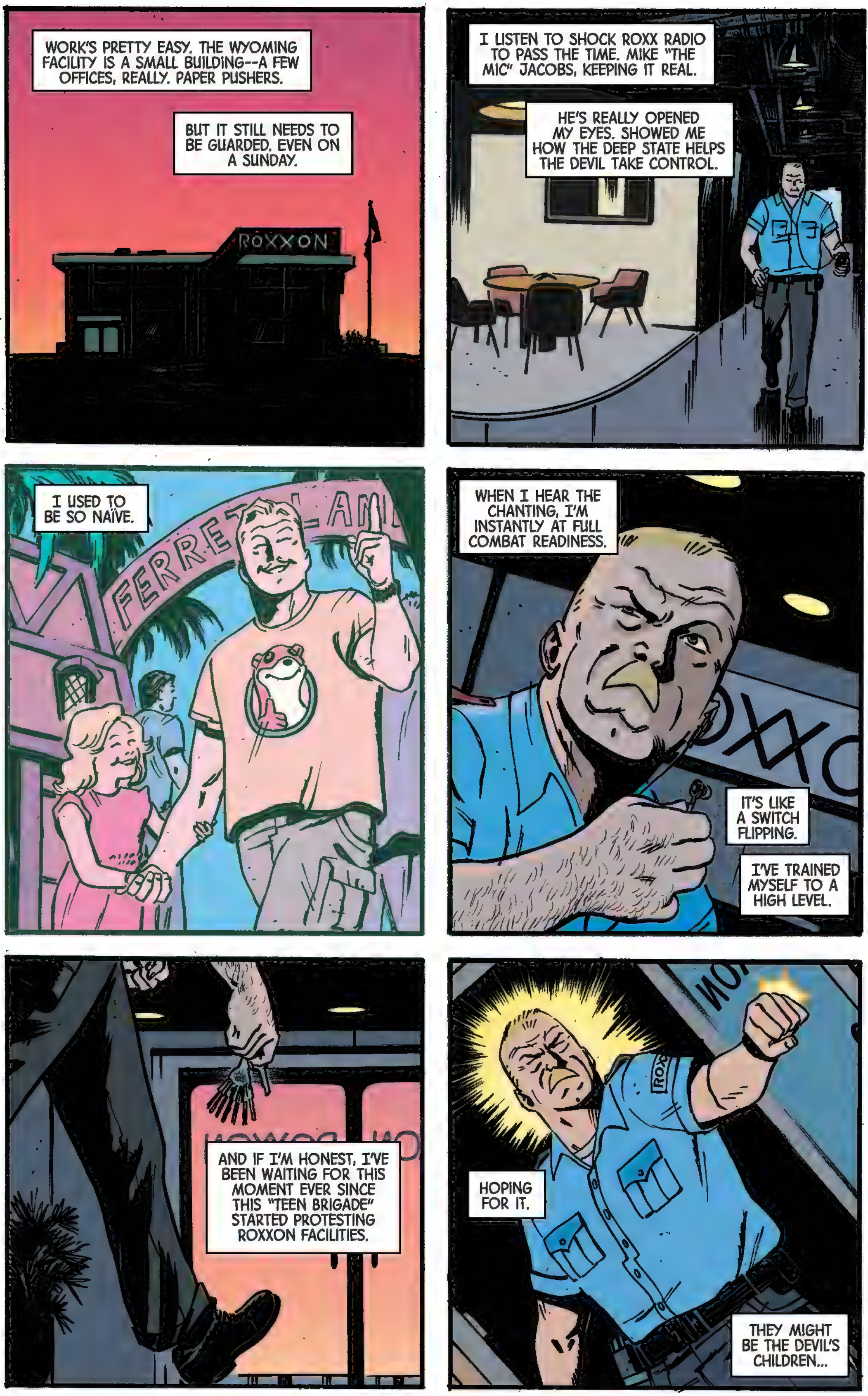

--JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, MARTY! THE ROXXON BRAND WAS BULLETPROOF JUST DAYS AGO!
ROXXON C.E.O. DARIO AGGER OUTED HIMSELF AS A HALF-MAN, HALF-BULL MINOTAUR-- STOCKS KEPT RISING!
NOW ROXXON MEDIA'S SHARE PRICE IS THROUGH THE FLOOR FOR THE SIXTH CONSECUTIVE DAY! WHAT'S CHANGED?
PUT SIMPLY, PHIL-- THE HULK! AFTER HIS RAMPAGE THROUGH ROXXON'S SOCIAL MEDIA SERVERS, USERS ARE STILL TRAPPED IN THE DIGITAL RUBBLE!
WE'RE TALKING OUTAGES, LOST CONTENT, WHOLE PROFILES GONE MISSING! THE KIDS ARE NOT ALL RIGHT!
MEANWHILE, THE NEW BAINTZ VIDEO APP JUST BROKE HALF A BILLION DOWNLOADS--
--AND IT'S ON EVERY NEW BAINTECH PHONE!
OUCH! SUSPICIOUSLY GOOD TIMING FROM SUNSET BAIN THERE!
YOU SAID IT, PHIL! AND AS THE USER BASE MIGRATES TO THE HOT NEW PLATFORM, TECH-MINDED SHAREHOLDERS WILL BE FOLLOWING ALONG!
SO I'M MAKING BAIN DIGITAL STOCK OUR RISING STAR OF THE WEEK, HERE ON--
--SQWRRKKZ!

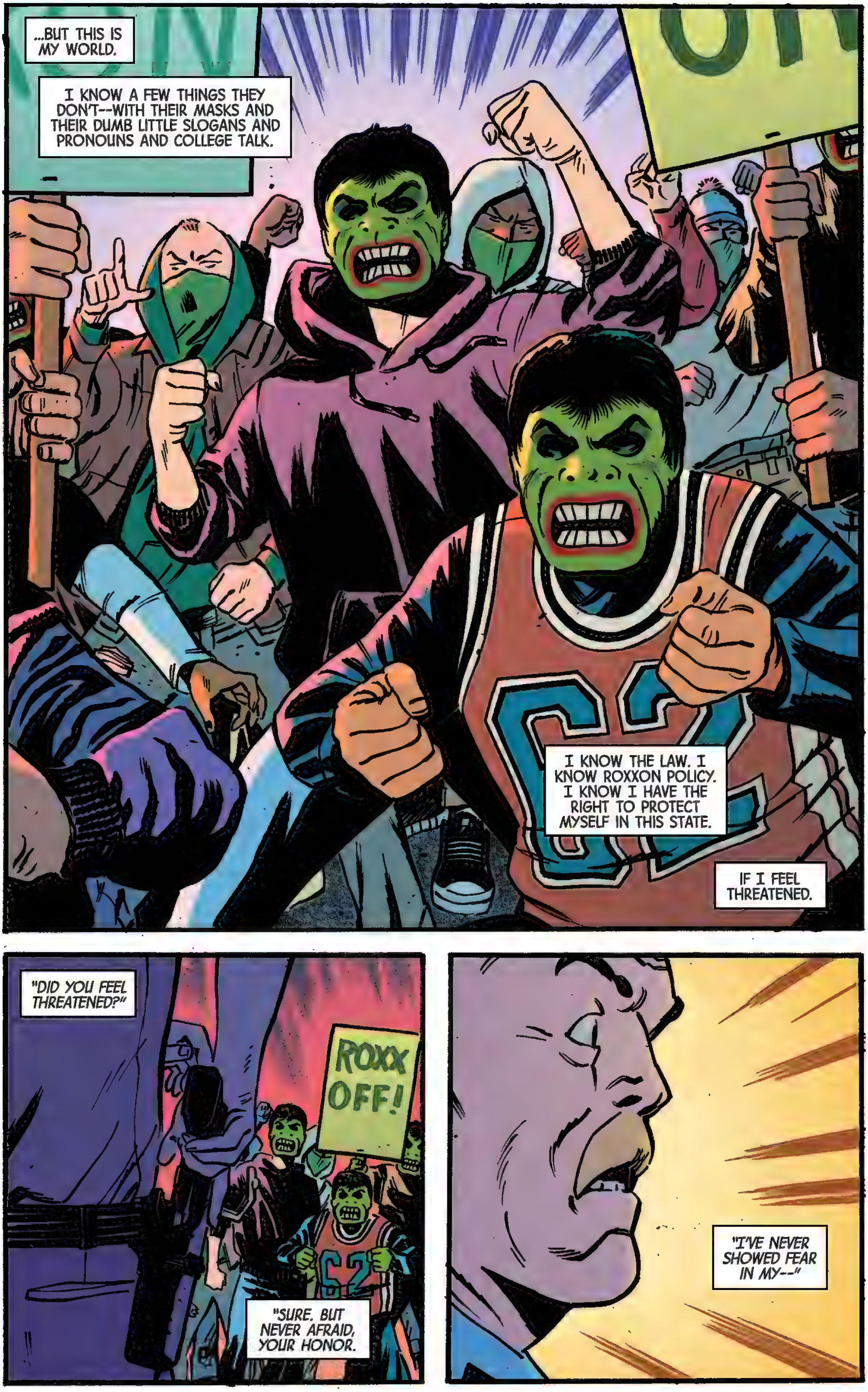

I DRESS FOR WORK. IT'S SUNDAY--THE LORD'S DAY--BUT WE NEED THE OVERTIME.
I FAKE A SMILE FOR THE FAMILY.
PLIP PLIP
MY WIFE IS A BLESSING. I HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT. BUT SHE LOOKS SO TIRED ALL THE TIME.
SHE'S NOT AS YOUNG AS SHE WAS.
MY DAUGHTER... MY DAUGHTER HAS A LOT OF *NOTIONS*. A LOT OF STUPID INTERNET CRAP.
I'VE TRIED BEING FIRM WITH HER. BUT THAT JUST MADE IT WORSE.
THE DEVIL GOT INTO HER SOMETIME. GOT IN HER AND TWISTED HER AROUND.
THAT'S THE ONLY WAY I CAN FIGURE IT.
WHEN I LOOK AT HER NOW, IT'S LIKE I'M LOOKING AT AN ALIEN.
FROM SOME HOSTILE PLANET, SLOWLY REPLACING MY OWN.
I CAN'T FACE HER. I MAKE AN EXCUSE. KEEP THE SMILE UP.
WHY IS SHE ALWAYS ON THAT PHONE?

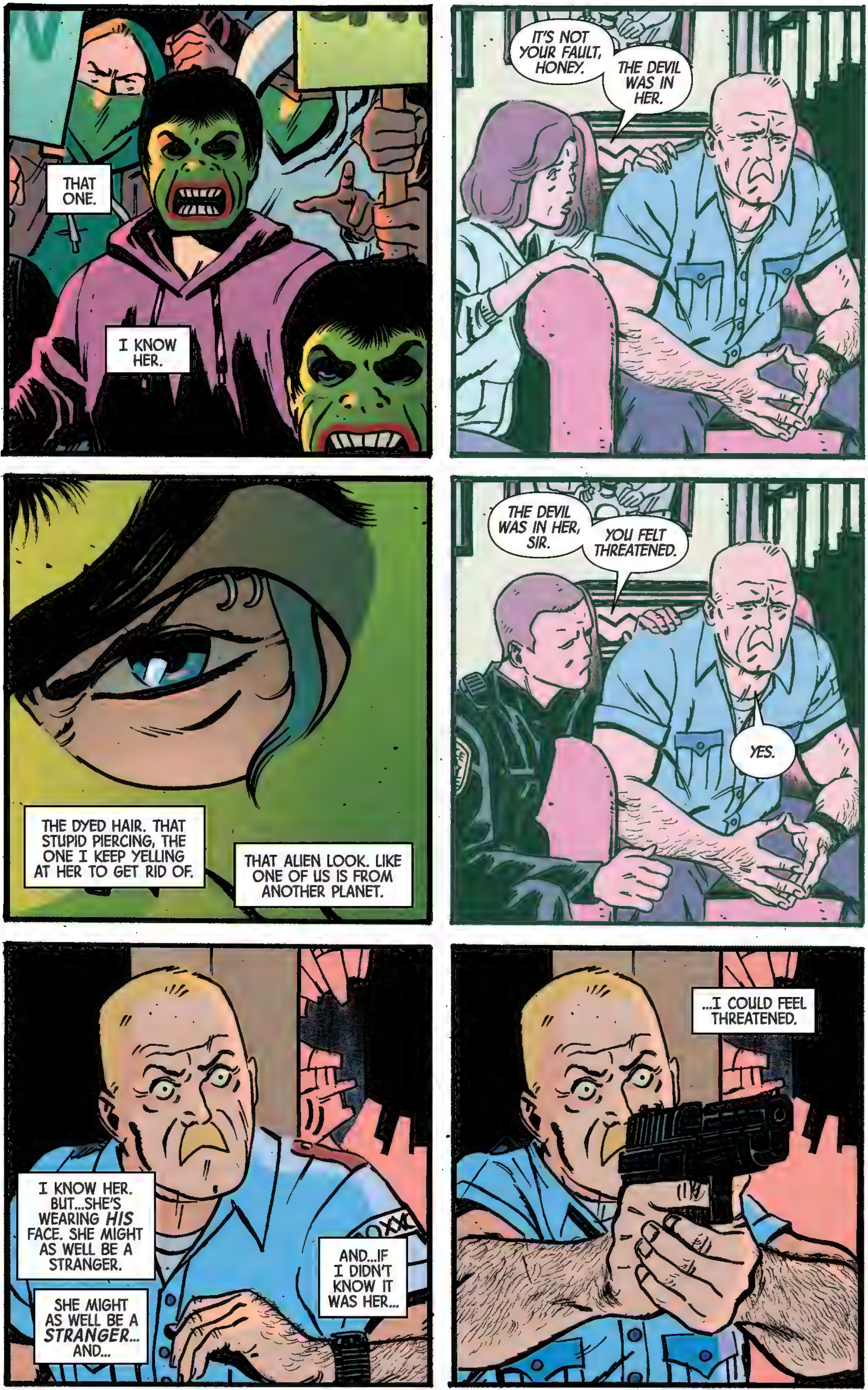

IT'S BETTER DOWN HERE.
I CAN BREATHE.
ROXXFACE IS STILL DOWN, SO I CAN'T CHECK MY GROUPS, BUT *ROXX NEWS* IS WORKING.
ROXXNEWS.COM
INSPIRES SATANIC YOUTH GANG
THE FRONT PAGE IS A STORY ABOUT THE DEVIL.
XXNEWS.COM
SPIRES SATANIC YOUTH GANG
YOUTH GANGS. RIOTING AND PROTESTING, WEARING HIS FACE, HIS COLORS. IN THRALL TO HIM.
THE "TEEN BRIGADE," THEY CALL THEMSELVES.
CHK!
I'M NOT AFRAID OF THEM. I'VE NEVER SHOWN FEAR IN MY LIFE.
BUT WHEN I'M OUT ON THE STREETS, I LIKE TO BE PREPARED.
PEOPLE LIKE ME-- WE MADE THIS COUNTRY.
9MM
THIS WHOLE DAMN WORLD-- WE MADE IT. FOR OUR CHILDREN.
WE CAN STILL TAKE IT BACK.

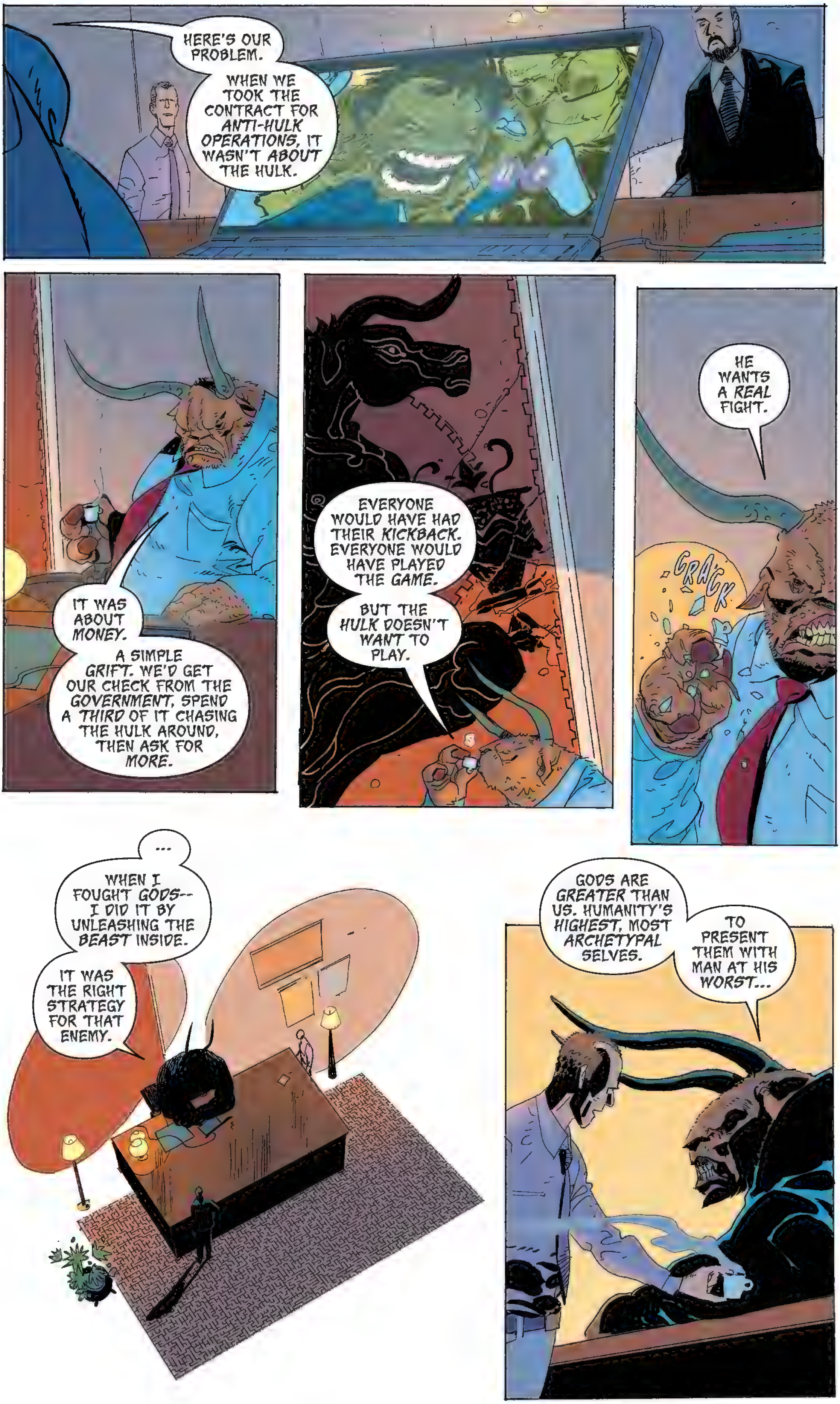

ROXXO
HULK SMASH
HHRR.
SIR--I AM SO SORRY ABOUT THE GRAFFITI. WE'LL HAVE IT SCRUBBED OFF BY LUNCH, I SWEAR--
THEY LOVE HIM.
SIR?
THE HULK DESTROYS EVERYTHING HE TOUCHES, AND THE 12-18 DEMOGRAPHIC LOVES HIM FOR IT.
HE'S A MEME. A FIGUREHEAD FOR THEIR TEPID REBELLIONS. THE DESTRUCTIVE URGE MADE FLESH.
WHILE I... THOSE WHO BUILD...
WE HAVE SHAPED THEIR ENTIRE SOCIETY. GIVEN THEM THE WORLD THEY WERE BORN INTO.
NOW, I'M A CYNICAL MAN, RANDOLPH--I PRIDE MYSELF ON THAT. I DO SEE CHILDREN PRIMARILY AS UNITS.
BUT STILL.
WOULD A LITTLE GRATITUDE BE TOO MUCH TO ASK?

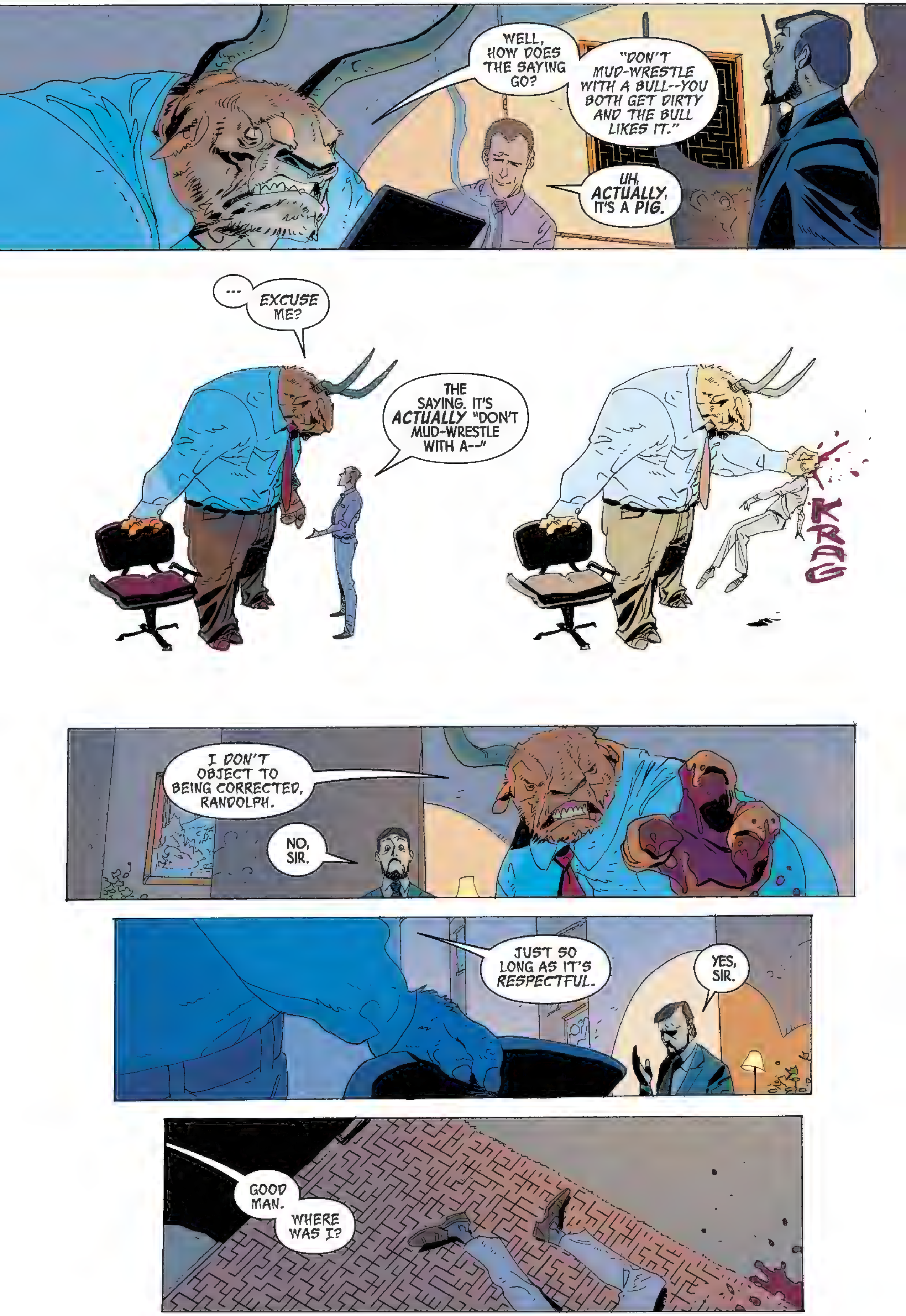

IT'S JUST A SECTION OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC, SIR. THIS "HULK CULT," WHATEVER IT IS--IT'S A SUBSET OF THIS POLITICS FAD.
WE'RE STILL REACHING THE OTHERS--
OF COURSE WE ARE.
BECAUSE EVERYONE'S CLICKING ON YOUROXX VIDEOS...
GOT TO LOVE THOSE INFLUENCERS!
THAT WAS SARCASM, YOU IDIOT!
YOUROXX IS DEAD! ROXXON MEDIA IS IN THE TOILET! ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME?
UM--WELL, I--I--
I DIDN'T WANT TO CONTRADICT YOU, SIR--
I DON'T NEED YES-MEN, KLEIN!
CORRECT ME ONCE IN A WHILE, IT WON'T KILL YOU--
SIR, THE, UH--
--THE ROOT CAUSE OF ALL THIS IS VERY SIMPLE.
THE HULK IS THE CHAOTIC FACTOR HERE. AND...WELL, WE DID WIN A CONTRACT TO SOLVE THAT PROBLEM...
PERFECT. "SOLVE" THE HULK. WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT?
GET ME COFFEE. LOTS OF IT.
IT'S GOING TO BE A DIFFICULT DAY.

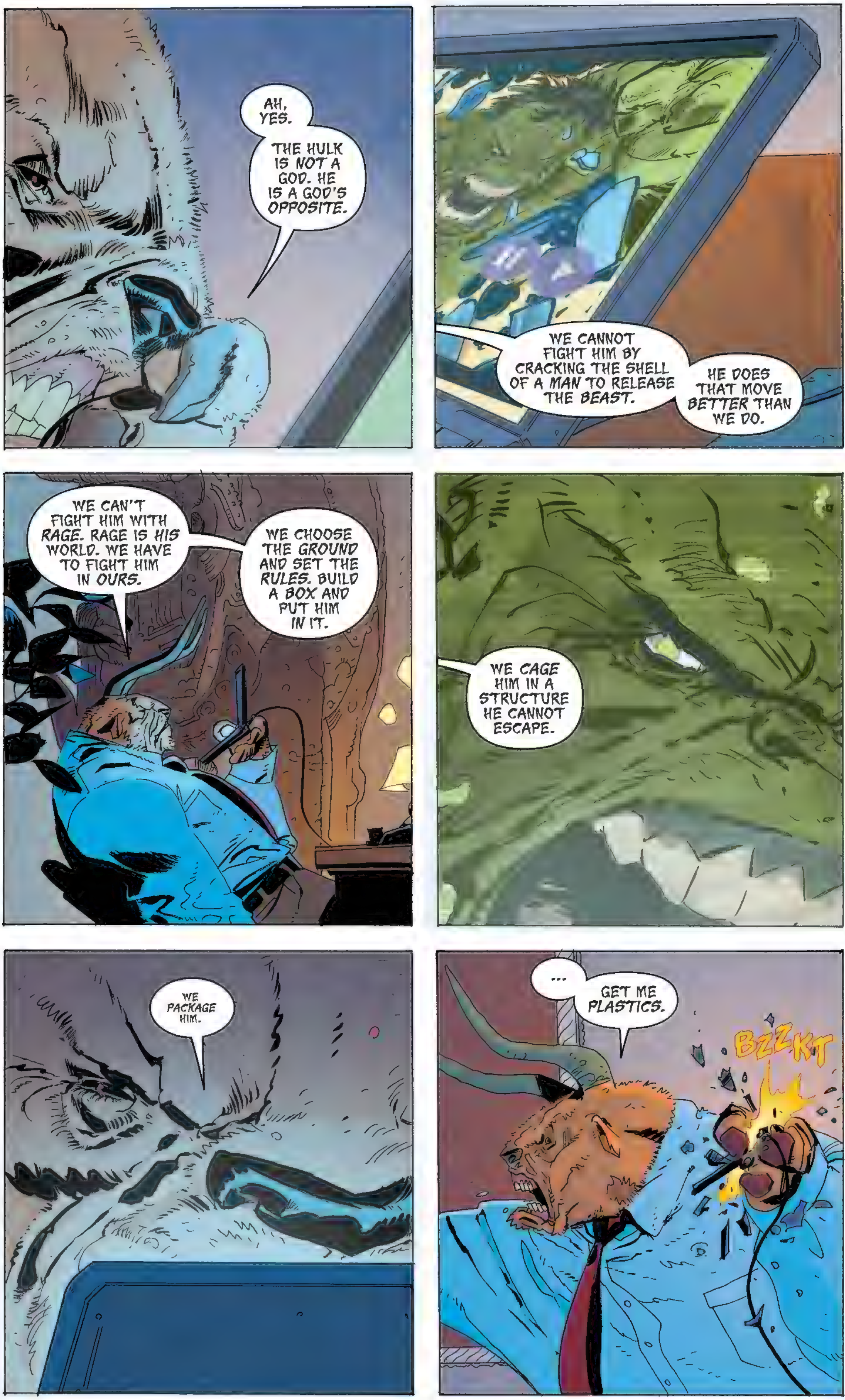

WORK'S PRETTY EASY. THE WYOMING FACILITY IS A SMALL BUILDING--A FEW OFFICES, REALLY. PAPER PUSHERS.
BUT IT STILL NEEDS TO BE GUARDED, EVEN ON A SUNDAY.
ROXXON
I LISTEN TO SHOCK ROXX RADIO TO PASS THE TIME. MIKE "THE MIC" JACOBS, KEEPING IT REAL.
HE'S REALLY OPENED MY EYES. SHOWED ME HOW THE DEEP STATE HELPS THE DEVIL TAKE CONTROL.
I USED TO BE SO NAÏVE.
FERRET LAND
WHEN I HEAR THE CHANTING, I'M INSTANTLY AT FULL COMBAT READINESS.
IT'S LIKE A SWITCH FLIPPING.
I'VE TRAINED MYSELF TO A HIGH LEVEL.
AND IF I'M HONEST, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT EVER SINCE THIS "TEEN BRIGADE" STARTED PROTESTING ROXXON FACILITIES.
HOPING FOR IT.
THEY MIGHT BE THE DEVIL'S CHILDREN...

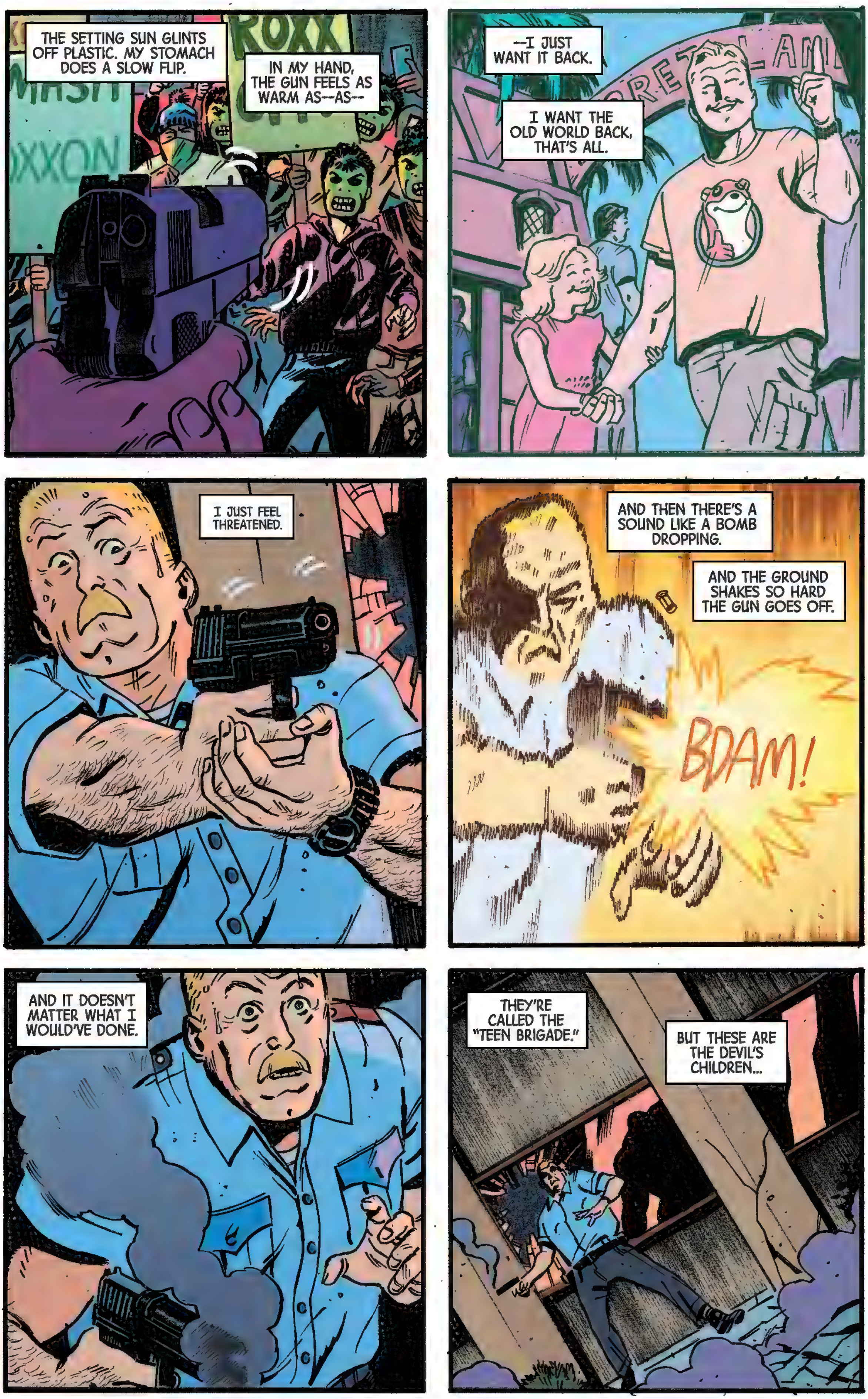

...BUT THIS IS MY WORLD.
I KNOW A FEW THINGS THEY DON'T--WITH THEIR MASKS AND THEIR DUMB LITTLE SLOGANS AND PRONOUNS AND COLLEGE TALK.
I KNOW THE LAW. I KNOW ROXXON POLICY. I KNOW I HAVE THE RIGHT TO PROTECT MYSELF IN THIS STATE.
IF I FEEL THREATENED.
"DID YOU FEEL THREATENED?"
ROXX OFF!
"SURE. BUT NEVER AFRAID, YOUR HONOR.
"I'VE NEVER SHOWED FEAR IN MY--"

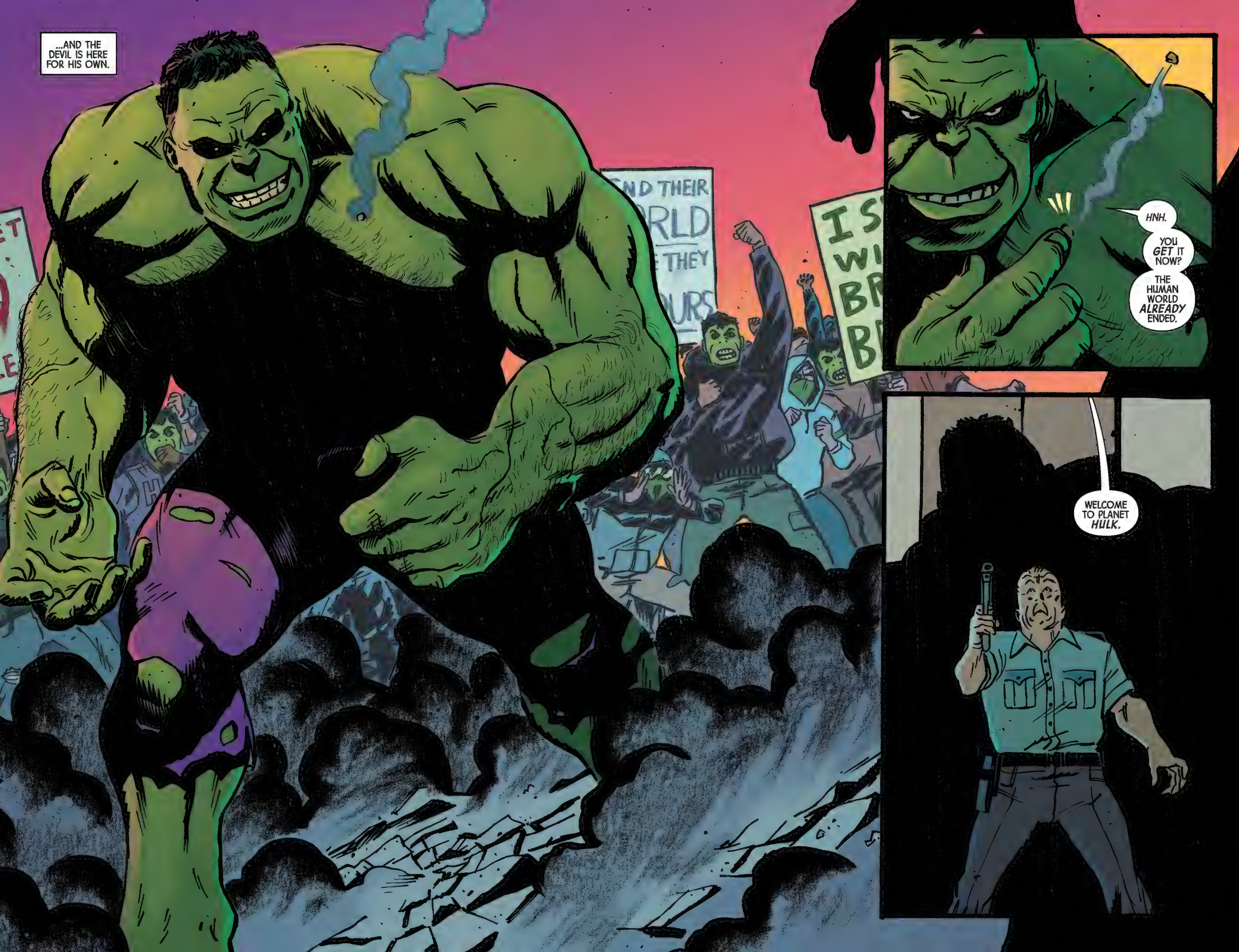

THAT ONE.
I KNOW HER.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, HONEY.
THE DEVIL WAS IN HER.
THE DYED HAIR. THAT STUPID PIERCING, THE ONE I KEEP YELLING AT HER TO GET RID OF.
THAT ALIEN LOOK. LIKE ONE OF US IS FROM ANOTHER PLANET.
THE DEVIL WAS IN HER, SIR.
YOU FELT THREATENED.
YES.
I KNOW HER. BUT...SHE'S WEARING *HIS* FACE. SHE MIGHT AS WELL BE A STRANGER.
SHE MIGHT AS WELL BE A *STRANGER*... AND...
AND...IF I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS HER...
...I COULD FEEL THREATENED.

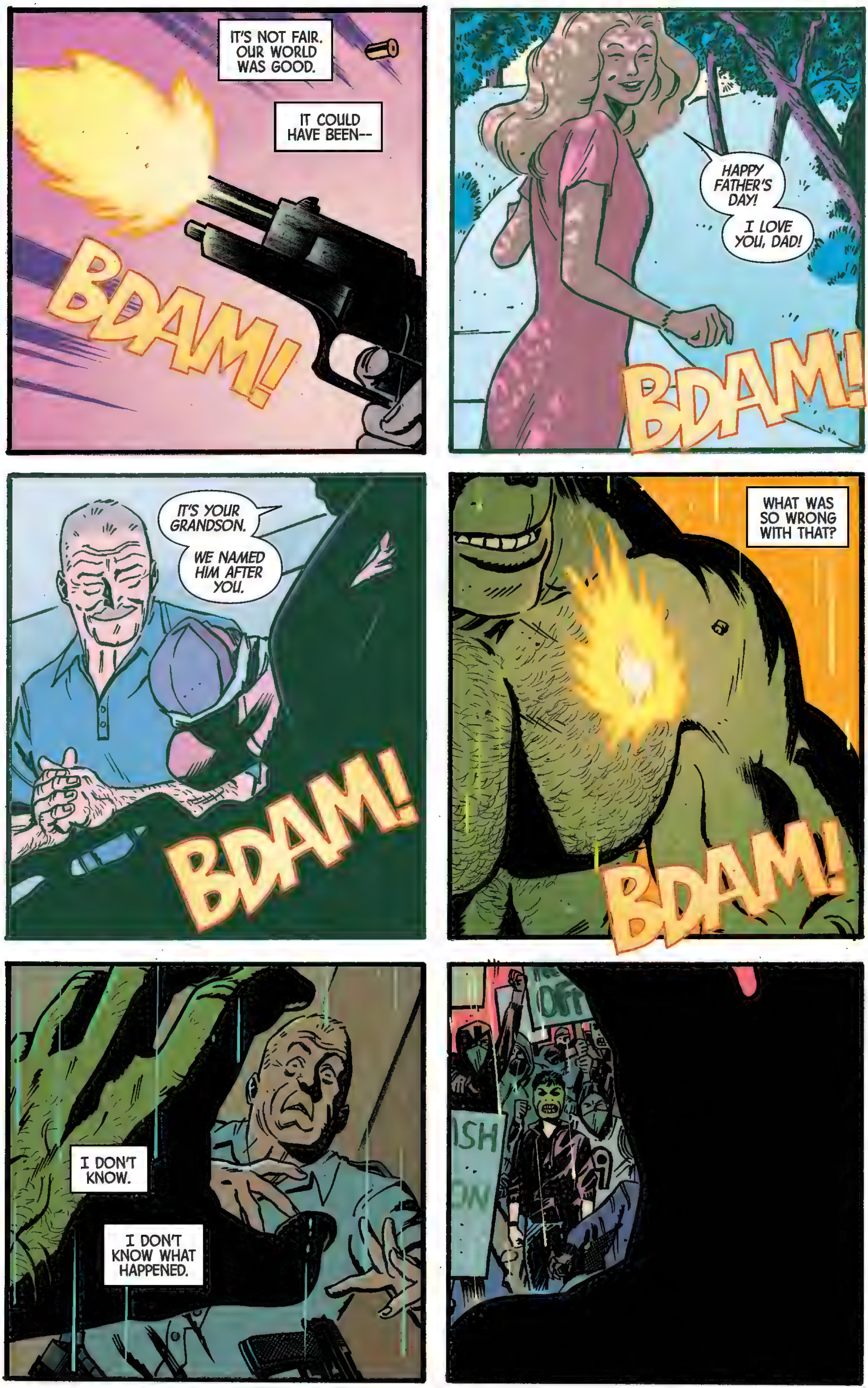

HERE'S OUR PROBLEM.
WHEN WE TOOK THE CONTRACT FOR *ANTI-HULK OPERATIONS*, IT *WASN'T ABOUT* THE HULK.
IT WAS ABOUT *MONEY*.
A SIMPLE *GRIFT*. WE'D GET OUR CHECK FROM THE *GOVERNMENT*, SPEND A *THIRD OF IT* CHASING THE HULK AROUND, THEN ASK FOR *MORE*.
EVERYONE WOULD HAVE HAD THEIR *KICKBACK*. EVERYONE WOULD HAVE PLAYED *THE GAME*.
BUT THE *HULK DOESN'T WANT* TO PLAY.
HE WANTS A *REAL* FIGHT.
CRACK
...
WHEN I FOUGHT *GODS*-- I DID IT BY UNLEASHING THE *BEAST* INSIDE.
IT WAS THE RIGHT STRATEGY FOR THAT ENEMY.
GODS ARE *GREATER THAN* US. HUMANITY'S *HIGHEST, MOST ARCHETYPAL* SELVES.
TO PRESENT THEM WITH MAN AT HIS *WORST...*

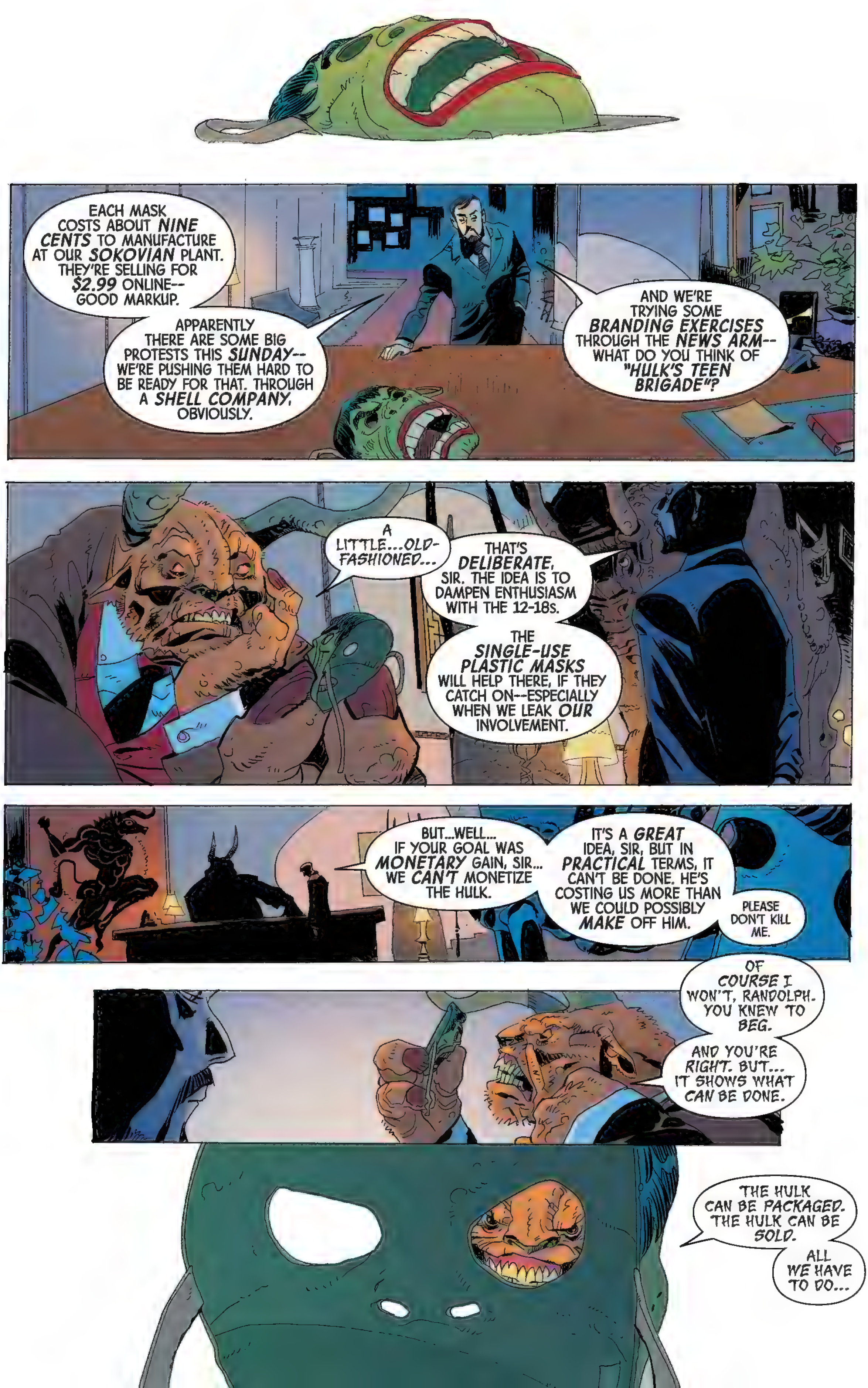

WELL, HOW DOES THE SAYING GO?
"DON'T MUD-WRESTLE WITH A BULL--YOU BOTH GET DIRTY AND THE BULL LIKES IT."
UH, ACTUALLY, IT'S A PIG.
...
EXCUSE ME?
THE SAYING. IT'S ACTUALLY "DON'T MUD-WRESTLE WITH A--"
KRAG
I DON'T OBJECT TO BEING CORRECTED, RANDOLPH.
NO, SIR.
JUST SO LONG AS IT'S RESPECTFUL.
YES, SIR.
GOOD MAN.
WHERE WAS I?

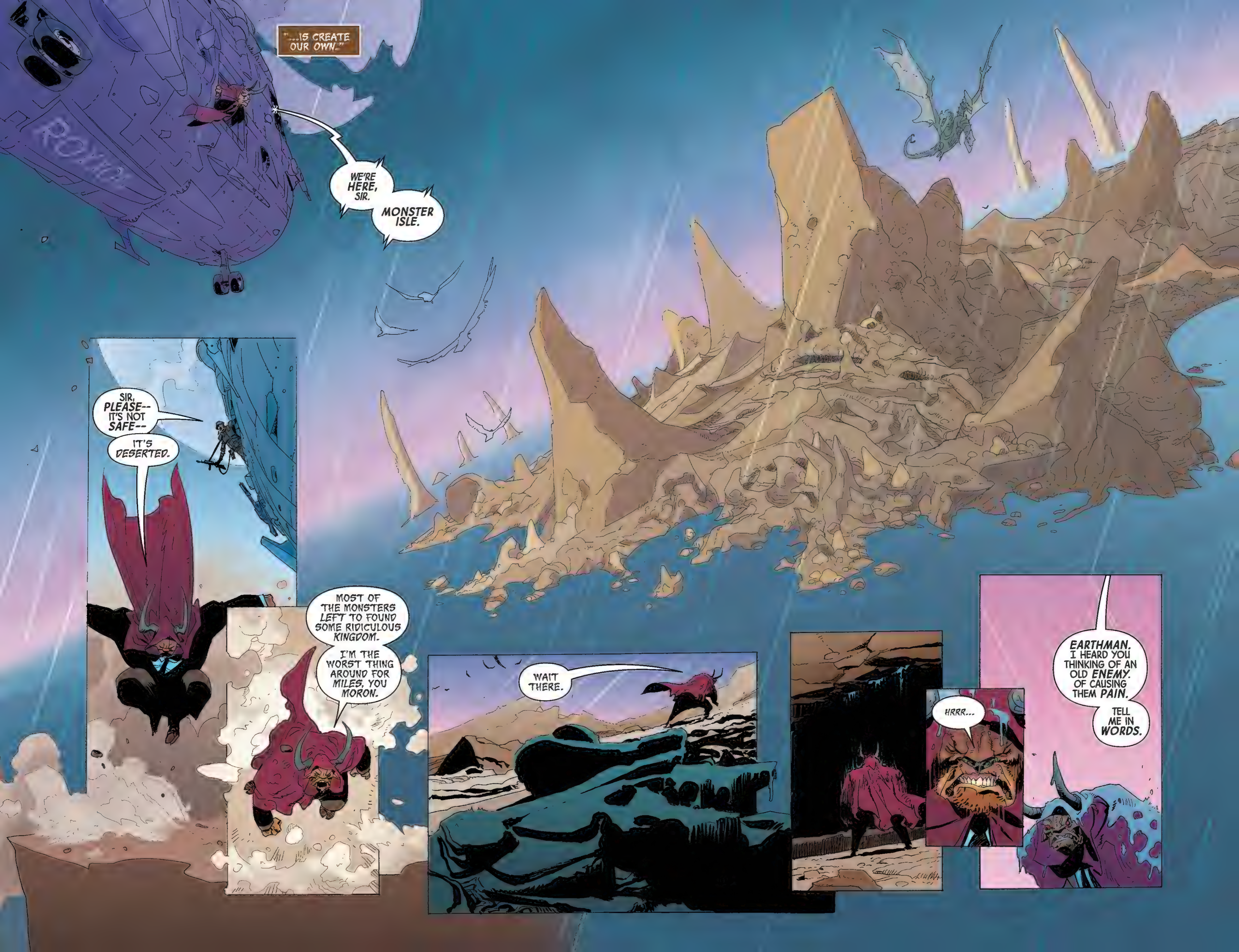

AH, YES.
THE HULK IS NOT A GOD. HE IS A GOD'S OPPOSITE.
WE CANNOT FIGHT HIM BY CRACKING THE SHELL OF A MAN TO RELEASE THE BEAST.
HE DOES THAT MOVE BETTER THAN WE DO.
WE CAN'T FIGHT HIM WITH RAGE. RAGE IS HIS WORLD. WE HAVE TO FIGHT HIM IN OURS.
WE CHOOSE THE GROUND AND SET THE RULES. BUILD A BOX AND PUT HIM IN IT.
WE CAGE HIM IN A STRUCTURE HE CANNOT ESCAPE.
WE PACKAGE HIM.
...
GET ME PLASTICS.
BZZKT

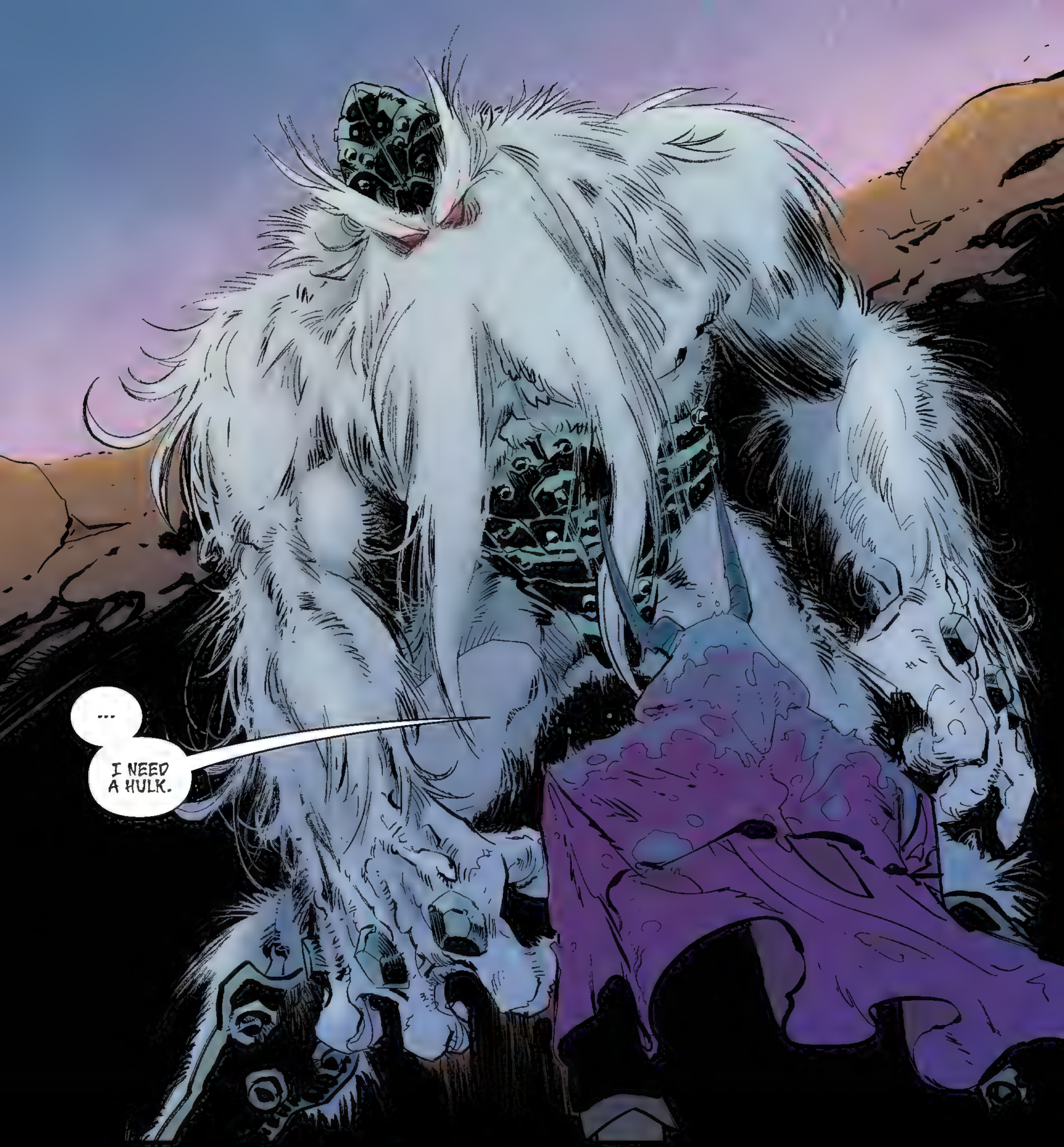

THE SETTING SUN GLINTS OFF PLASTIC. MY STOMACH DOES A SLOW FLIP.
ROXX
MASH
XXON
IN MY HAND, THE GUN FEELS AS WARM AS--AS--
--I JUST WANT IT BACK.
I WANT THE OLD WORLD BACK, THAT'S ALL.
I JUST FEEL THREATENED.
AND THEN THERE'S A SOUND LIKE A BOMB DROPPING.
AND THE GROUND SHAKES SO HARD THE GUN GOES OFF.
BDAM!
AND IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I WOULD'VE DONE.
THEY'RE CALLED THE "TEEN BRIGADE."
BUT THESE ARE THE DEVIL'S CHILDREN...


...AND THE DEVIL IS HERE FOR HIS OWN.
ND THEIR
RLD
THEY
OURS
HNH.
YOU *GET* IT NOW?
THE HUMAN WORLD *ALREADY* ENDED.
WELCOME TO PLANET *HULK*.


IT'S NOT FAIR. OUR WORLD WAS GOOD.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN--
BDAM!
HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!
I LOVE YOU, DAD!
BDAM!
IT'S YOUR GRANDSON.
WE NAMED HIM AFTER YOU.
BDAM!
WHAT WAS SO WRONG WITH THAT?
BDAM!
I DON'T KNOW.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.
OFF
ISH
ON


EACH MASK COSTS ABOUT NINE CENTS TO MANUFACTURE AT OUR SOKOVIAN PLANT. THEY'RE SELLING FOR $2.99 ONLINE-- GOOD MARKUP.
APPARENTLY THERE ARE SOME BIG PROTESTS THIS SUNDAY-- WE'RE PUSHING THEM HARD TO BE READY FOR THAT. THROUGH A SHELL COMPANY, OBVIOUSLY.
AND WE'RE TRYING SOME BRANDING EXERCISES THROUGH THE NEWS ARM-- WHAT DO YOU THINK OF "HULK'S TEEN BRIGADE"?
A LITTLE...OLD-FASHIONED...
THAT'S DELIBERATE, SIR. THE IDEA IS TO DAMPEN ENTHUSIASM WITH THE 12-18s.
THE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC MASKS WILL HELP THERE, IF THEY CATCH ON--ESPECIALLY WHEN WE LEAK OUR INVOLVEMENT.
BUT...WELL... IF YOUR GOAL WAS MONETARY GAIN, SIR... WE CAN'T MONETIZE THE HULK.
IT'S A GREAT IDEA, SIR, BUT IN PRACTICAL TERMS, IT CAN'T BE DONE. HE'S COSTING US MORE THAN WE COULD POSSIBLY MAKE OFF HIM.
PLEASE DON'T KILL ME.
OF COURSE I WON'T, RANDOLPH. YOU KNEW TO BEG.
AND YOU'RE RIGHT. BUT... IT SHOWS WHAT CAN BE DONE.
THE HULK CAN BE PACKAGED. THE HULK CAN BE SOLD.
ALL WE HAVE TO DO...


"...IS CREATE OUR OWN."
ROXXON
WE'RE HERE, SIR.
MONSTER ISLE.
SIR, PLEASE-- IT'S NOT SAFE--
IT'S DESERTED.
MOST OF THE MONSTERS LEFT TO FOUND SOME RIDICULOUS KINGDOM.
I'M THE WORST THING AROUND FOR MILES, YOU MORON.
WAIT THERE.
HRRR...
EARTHMAN. I HEARD YOU THINKING OF AN OLD ENEMY. OF CAUSING THEM PAIN.
TELL ME IN WORDS.

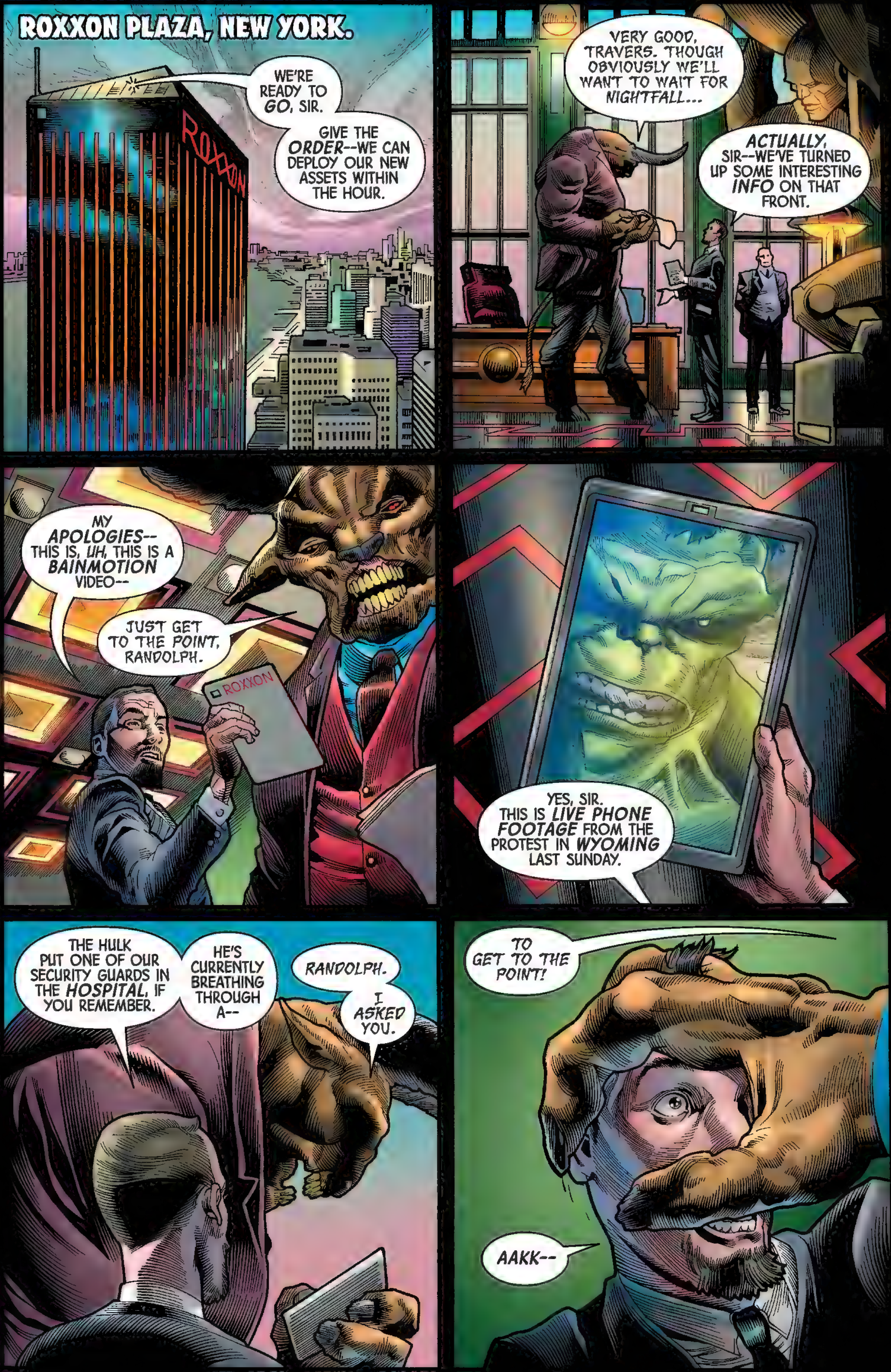

...
I NEED A HULK.

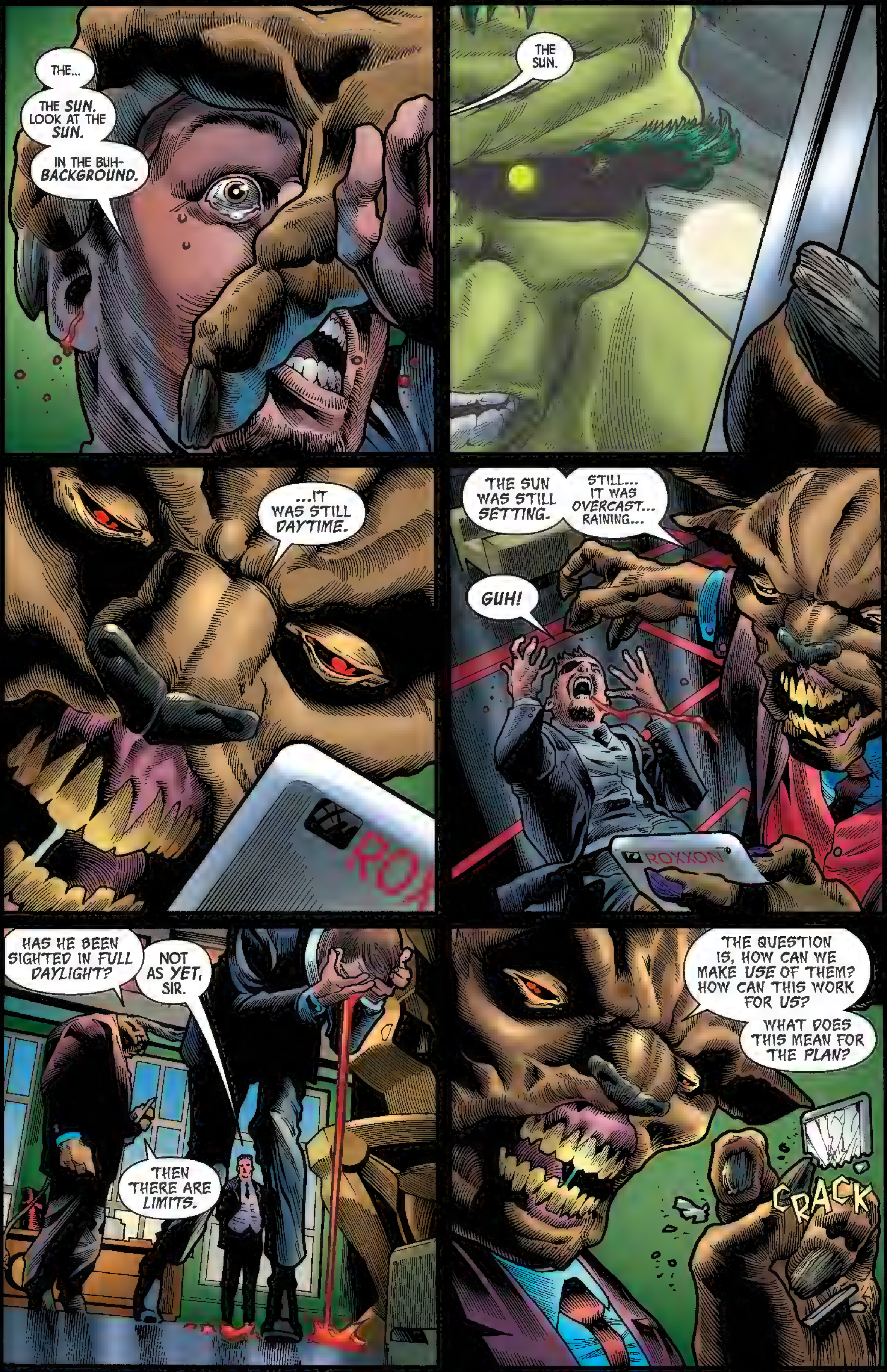
THE NEW WORLD

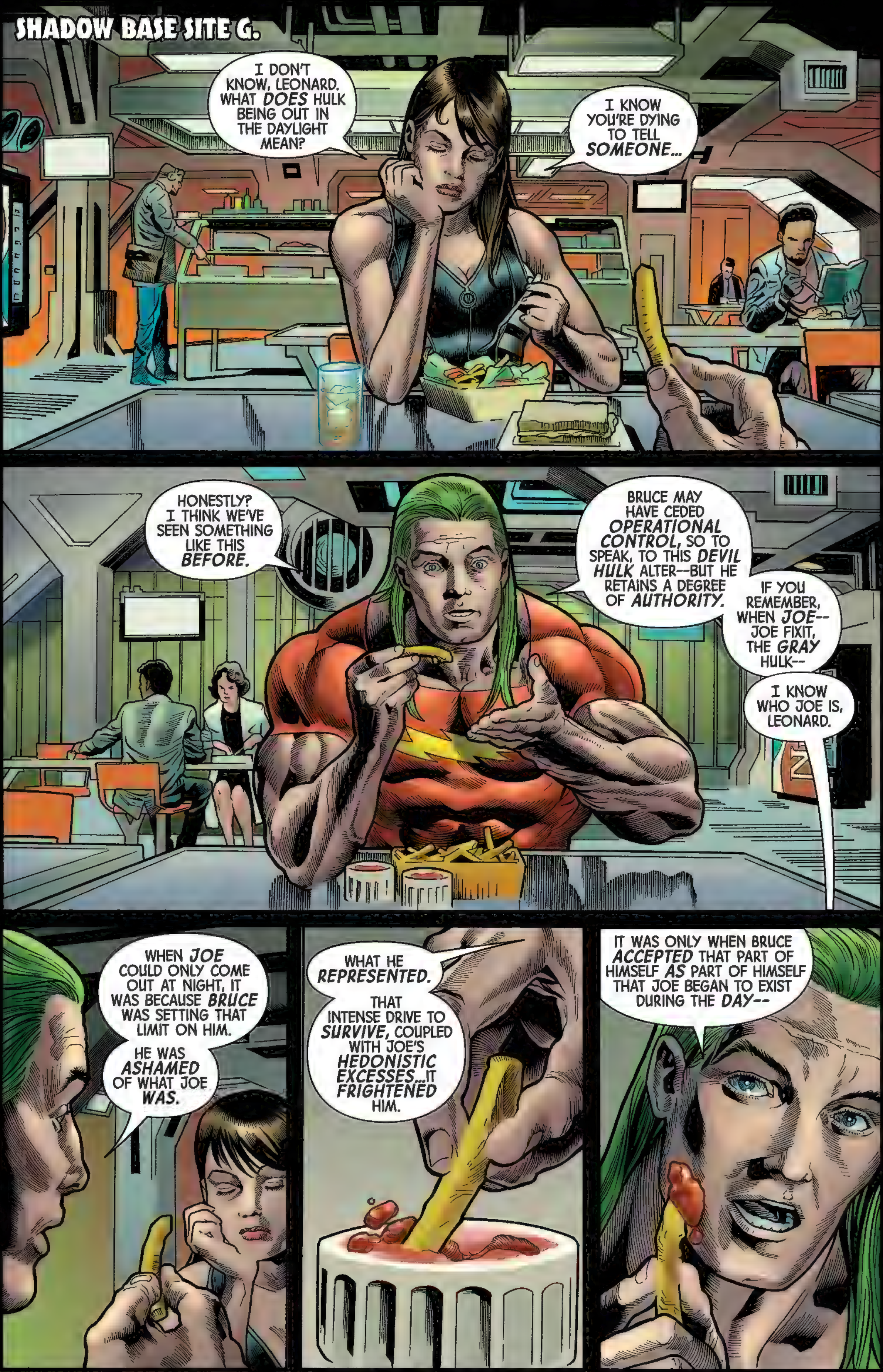
29

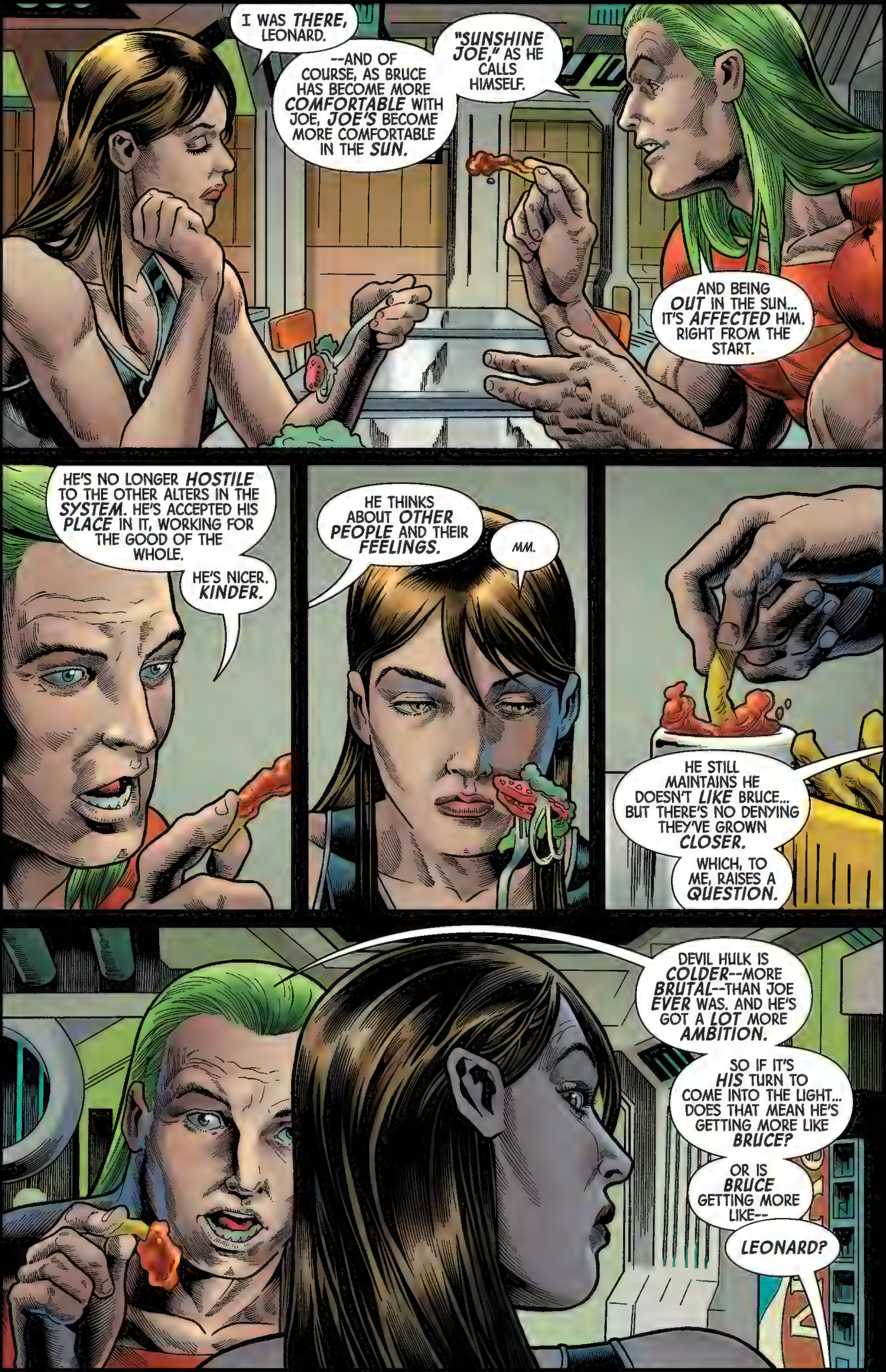
"SUCH IS THE CONDITION OF ORGANIC NATURE! WHOSE FIRST LAW MIGHT BE EXPRESSED IN THE WORDS 'EAT OR BE EATEN!' AND WHICH WOULD SEEM TO BE ONE GREAT SLAUGHTER-HOUSE, ONE UNIVERSAL SCENE OF RAPACITY AND INJUSTICE!"

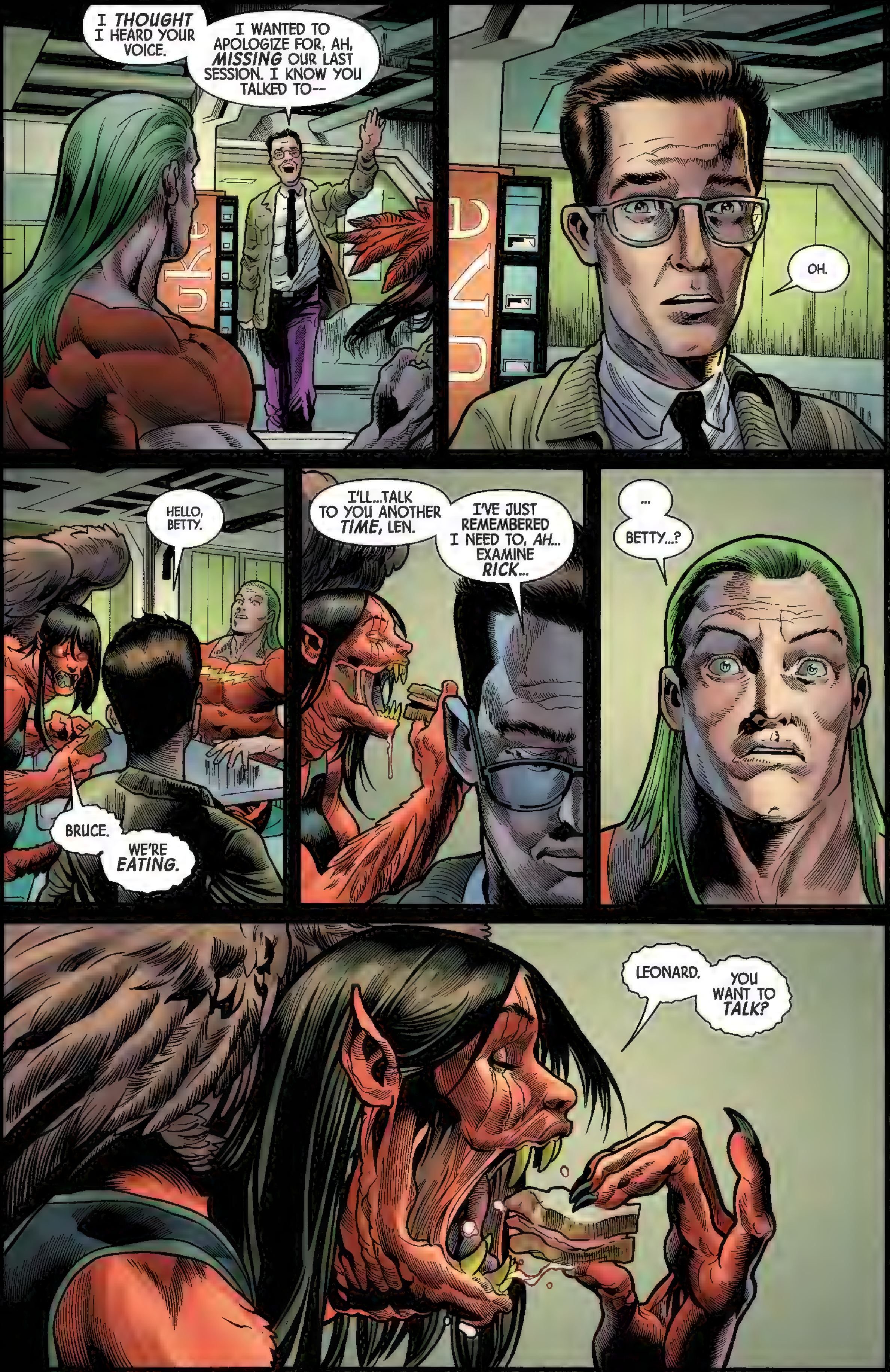
– ERASMUS DARWIN
PHYTOLOGIA

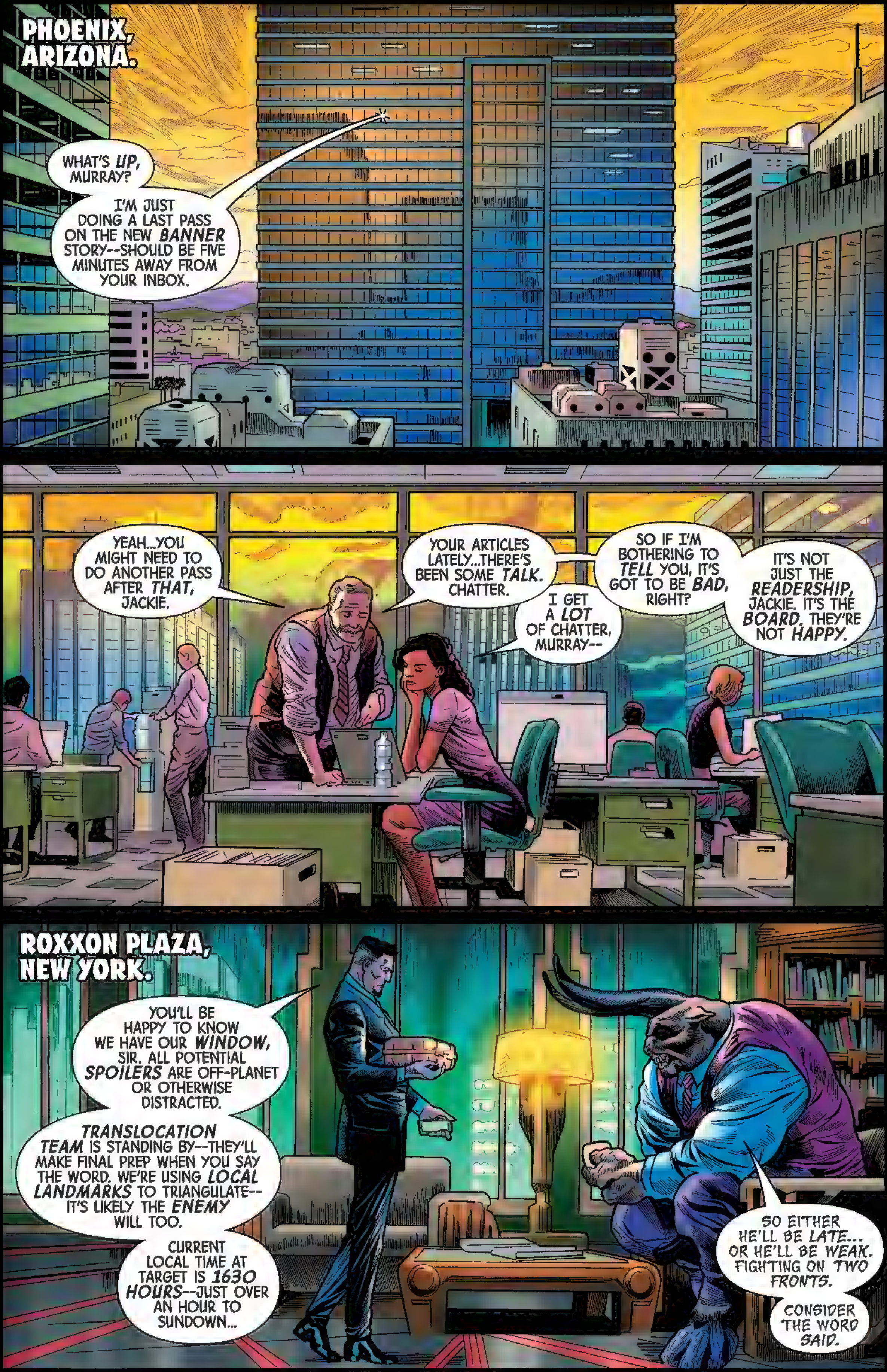

ROXXON PLAZA, NEW YORK.
ROXXON
WE'RE READY TO GO, SIR.
GIVE THE ORDER--WE CAN DEPLOY OUR NEW ASSETS WITHIN THE HOUR.
VERY GOOD, TRAVERS. THOUGH OBVIOUSLY WE'LL WANT TO WAIT FOR NIGHTFALL...
ACTUALLY, SIR--WE'VE TURNED UP SOME INTERESTING INFO ON THAT FRONT.
MY APOLOGIES-- THIS IS, UH, THIS IS A BAINMOTION VIDEO--
JUST GET TO THE POINT, RANDOLPH.
ROXXON
YES, SIR. THIS IS LIVE PHONE FOOTAGE FROM THE PROTEST IN WYOMING LAST SUNDAY.
THE HULK PUT ONE OF OUR SECURITY GUARDS IN THE HOSPITAL, IF YOU REMEMBER.
HE'S CURRENTLY BREATHING THROUGH A--
RANDOLPH.
I ASKED YOU.
TO GET TO THE POINT!
AAKK--

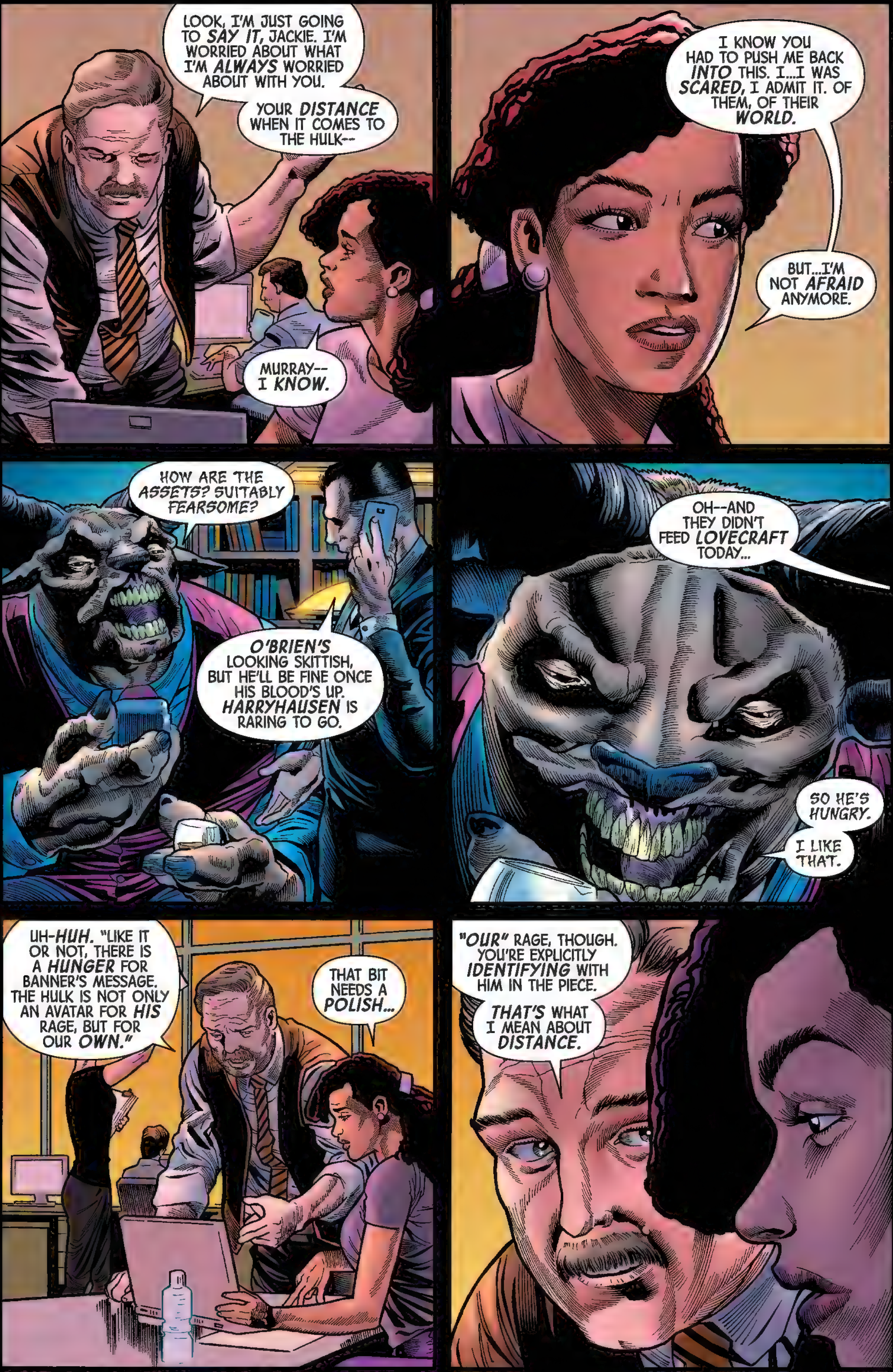

THE...
THE SUN. LOOK AT THE SUN.
IN THE BUH- BACKGROUND.
THE SUN.
...IT WAS STILL DAYTIME.
ROX
THE SUN WAS STILL SETTING.
STILL... IT WAS OVERCAST... RAINING...
GUH!
ROXXON
HAS HE BEEN SIGHTED IN FULL DAYLIGHT?
NOT AS YET, SIR.
THEN THERE ARE LIMITS.
THE QUESTION IS, HOW CAN WE MAKE USE OF THEM? HOW CAN THIS WORK FOR US?
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE PLAN?
CRACK

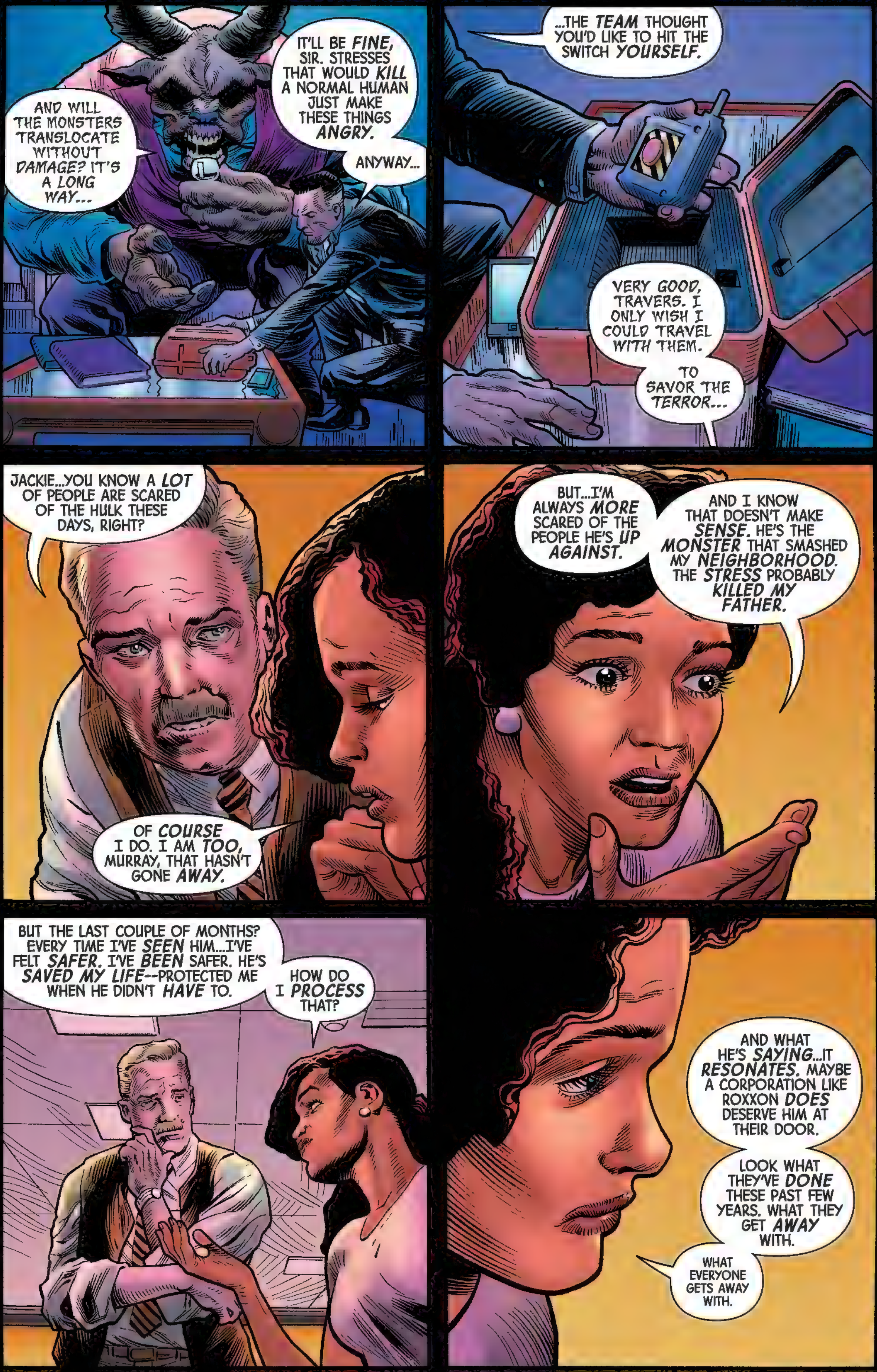

SHADOW BASE SITE G.
I DON'T KNOW, LEONARD. WHAT DOES HULK BEING OUT IN THE DAYLIGHT MEAN?
I KNOW YOU'RE DYING TO TELL SOMEONE...
HONESTLY? I THINK WE'VE SEEN SOMETHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.
BRUCE MAY HAVE CEDED OPERATIONAL CONTROL, SO TO SPEAK, TO THIS DEVIL HULK ALTER--BUT HE RETAINS A DEGREE OF AUTHORITY.
IF YOU REMEMBER, WHEN JOE-- JOE FIXIT, THE GRAY HULK--
I KNOW WHO JOE IS, LEONARD.
WHEN JOE COULD ONLY COME OUT AT NIGHT, IT WAS BECAUSE BRUCE WAS SETTING THAT LIMIT ON HIM.
HE WAS ASHAMED OF WHAT JOE WAS.
WHAT HE REPRESENTED.
THAT INTENSE DRIVE TO SURVIVE, COUPLED WITH JOE'S HEDONISTIC EXCESSES...IT FRIGHTENED HIM.
IT WAS ONLY WHEN BRUCE ACCEPTED THAT PART OF HIMSELF AS PART OF HIMSELF THAT JOE BEGAN TO EXIST DURING THE DAY--

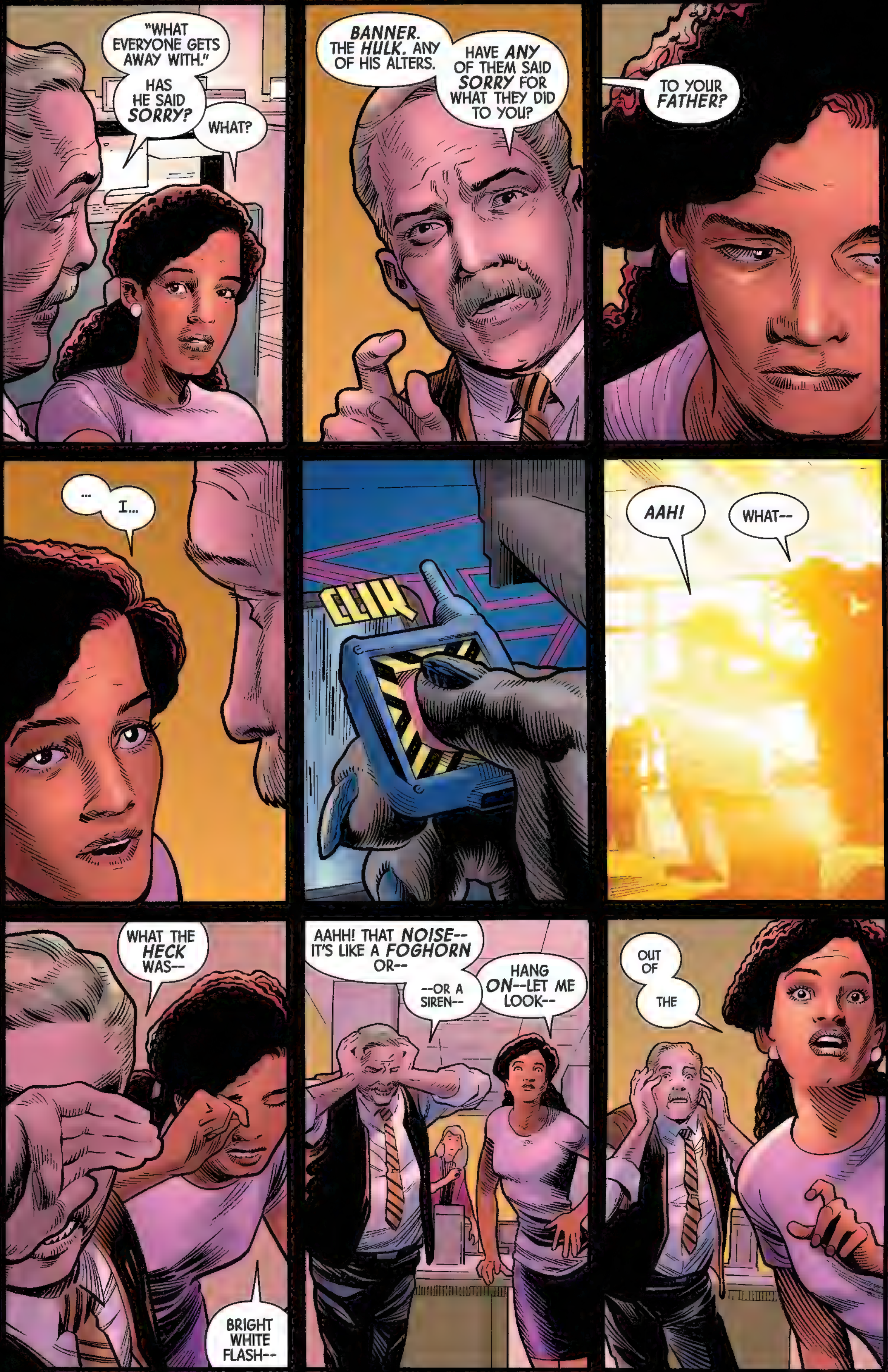

I WAS *THERE*, LEONARD.
--AND OF COURSE, AS BRUCE HAS BECOME MORE *COMFORTABLE* WITH JOE, *JOE'S* BECOME MORE COMFORTABLE IN THE *SUN.*
"SUNSHINE JOE," AS HE CALLS HIMSELF.
AND BEING *OUT* IN THE SUN... IT'S *AFFECTED* HIM. RIGHT FROM THE START.
HE'S NO LONGER *HOSTILE* TO THE OTHER ALTERS IN THE *SYSTEM*. HE'S ACCEPTED HIS *PLACE* IN IT, WORKING FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE.
HE'S NICER. *KINDER.*
HE THINKS ABOUT *OTHER PEOPLE* AND THEIR *FEELINGS.*
MM.
HE STILL MAINTAINS HE DOESN'T *LIKE* BRUCE... BUT THERE'S NO DENYING THEY'VE GROWN *CLOSER.*
WHICH, TO ME, RAISES A *QUESTION.*
DEVIL HULK IS *COLDER*--MORE *BRUTAL*--THAN JOE *EVER* WAS. AND HE'S GOT A *LOT* MORE *AMBITION.*
SO IF IT'S *HIS* TURN TO COME INTO THE LIGHT... DOES THAT MEAN HE'S GETTING MORE LIKE *BRUCE?*
OR IS *BRUCE* GETTING MORE LIKE--
LEONARD?

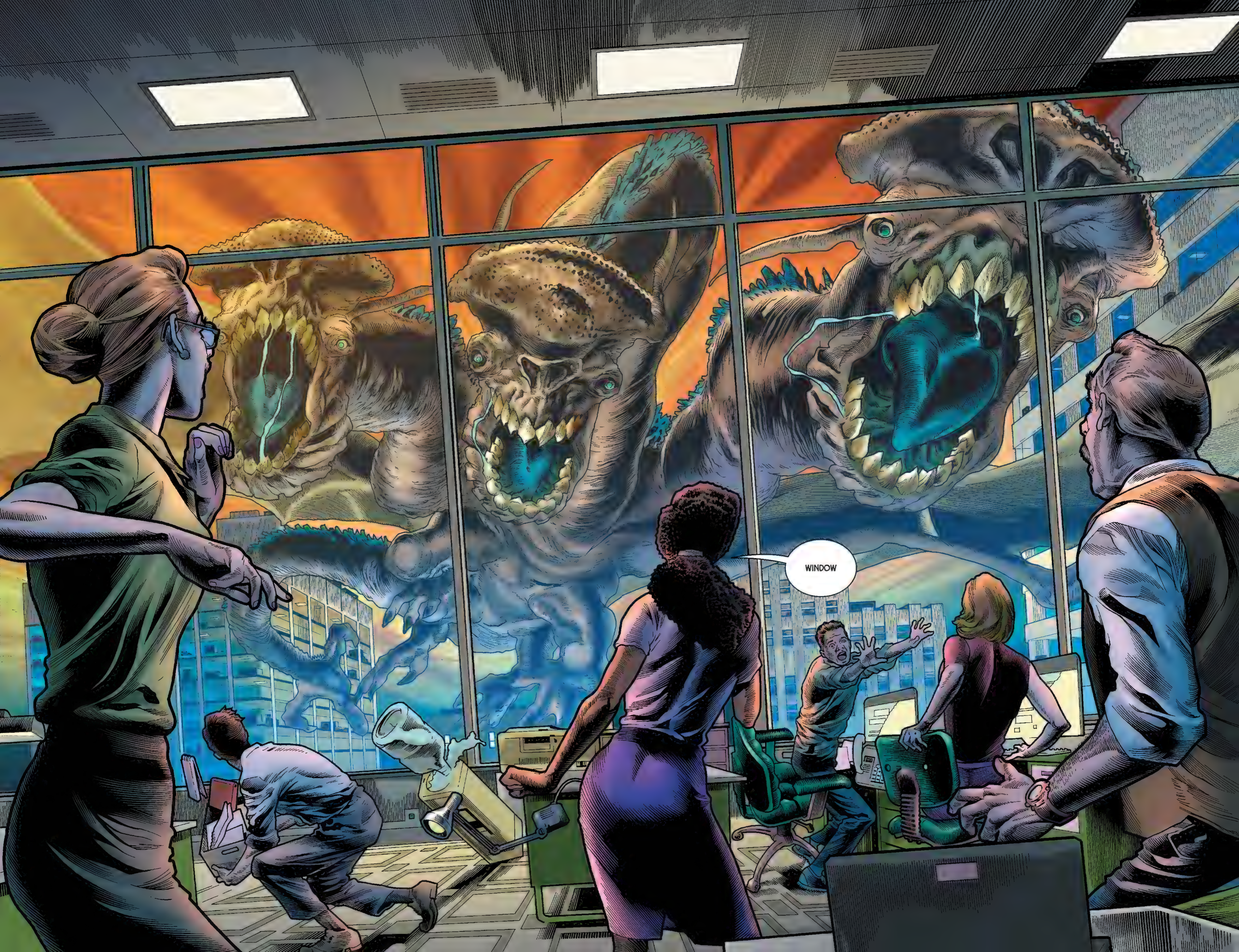

I *THOUGHT* I HEARD YOUR VOICE.
I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR, AH, *MISSING* OUR LAST SESSION. I KNOW YOU TALKED TO--
OH.
HELLO, BETTY.
BRUCE.
WE'RE *EATING.*
I'LL...TALK TO YOU ANOTHER *TIME,* LEN.
I'VE JUST REMEMBERED I NEED TO, *AH...* EXAMINE *RICK...*
...
BETTY...?
LEONARD.
YOU WANT TO *TALK?*

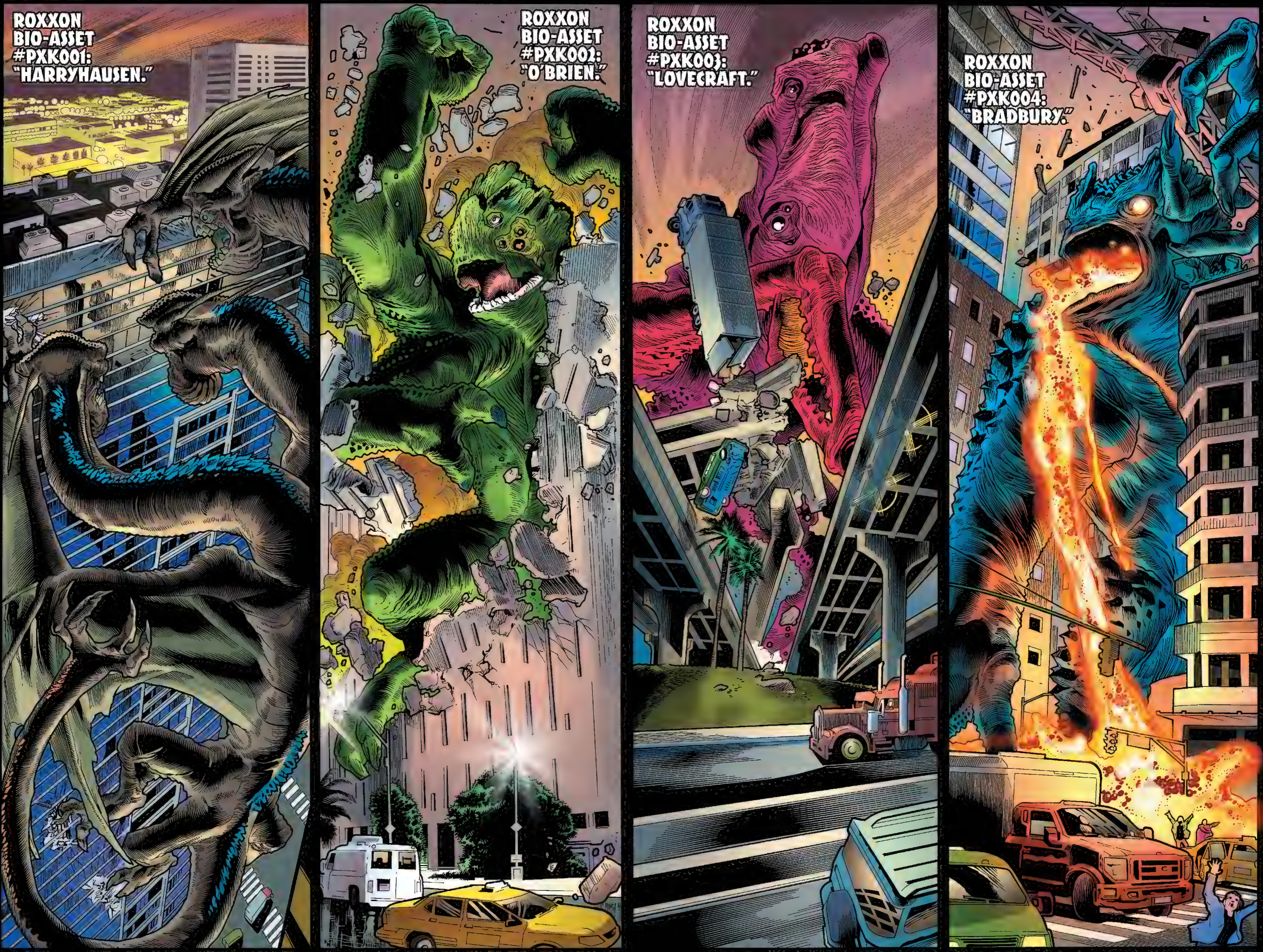

PHOENIX, ARIZONA.
WHAT'S *UP*, MURRAY?
I'M JUST DOING A LAST PASS ON THE NEW *BANNER* STORY--SHOULD BE FIVE MINUTES AWAY FROM YOUR INBOX.
YEAH...YOU MIGHT NEED TO DO ANOTHER PASS AFTER *THAT*, JACKIE.
YOUR ARTICLES LATELY...THERE'S BEEN SOME *TALK*. CHATTER.
I GET A *LOT* OF CHATTER, MURRAY--
SO IF I'M BOTHERING TO *TELL* YOU, IT'S GOT TO BE *BAD*, RIGHT?
IT'S NOT JUST THE *READERSHIP*, JACKIE. IT'S THE *BOARD*. THEY'RE NOT *HAPPY*.
ROXXON PLAZA, NEW YORK.
YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW WE HAVE OUR *WINDOW*, SIR. ALL POTENTIAL *SPOILERS* ARE OFF-PLANET OR OTHERWISE DISTRACTED.
TRANSLOCATION TEAM IS STANDING BY--THEY'LL MAKE FINAL PREP WHEN YOU SAY THE WORD. WE'RE USING *LOCAL LANDMARKS* TO TRIANGULATE--IT'S LIKELY THE *ENEMY* WILL TOO.
CURRENT LOCAL TIME AT TARGET IS *1630 HOURS*--JUST OVER AN HOUR TO SUNDOWN...
SO EITHER HE'LL BE *LATE*... OR HE'LL BE *WEAK*. FIGHTING ON *TWO* FRONTS.
CONSIDER THE WORD SAID.

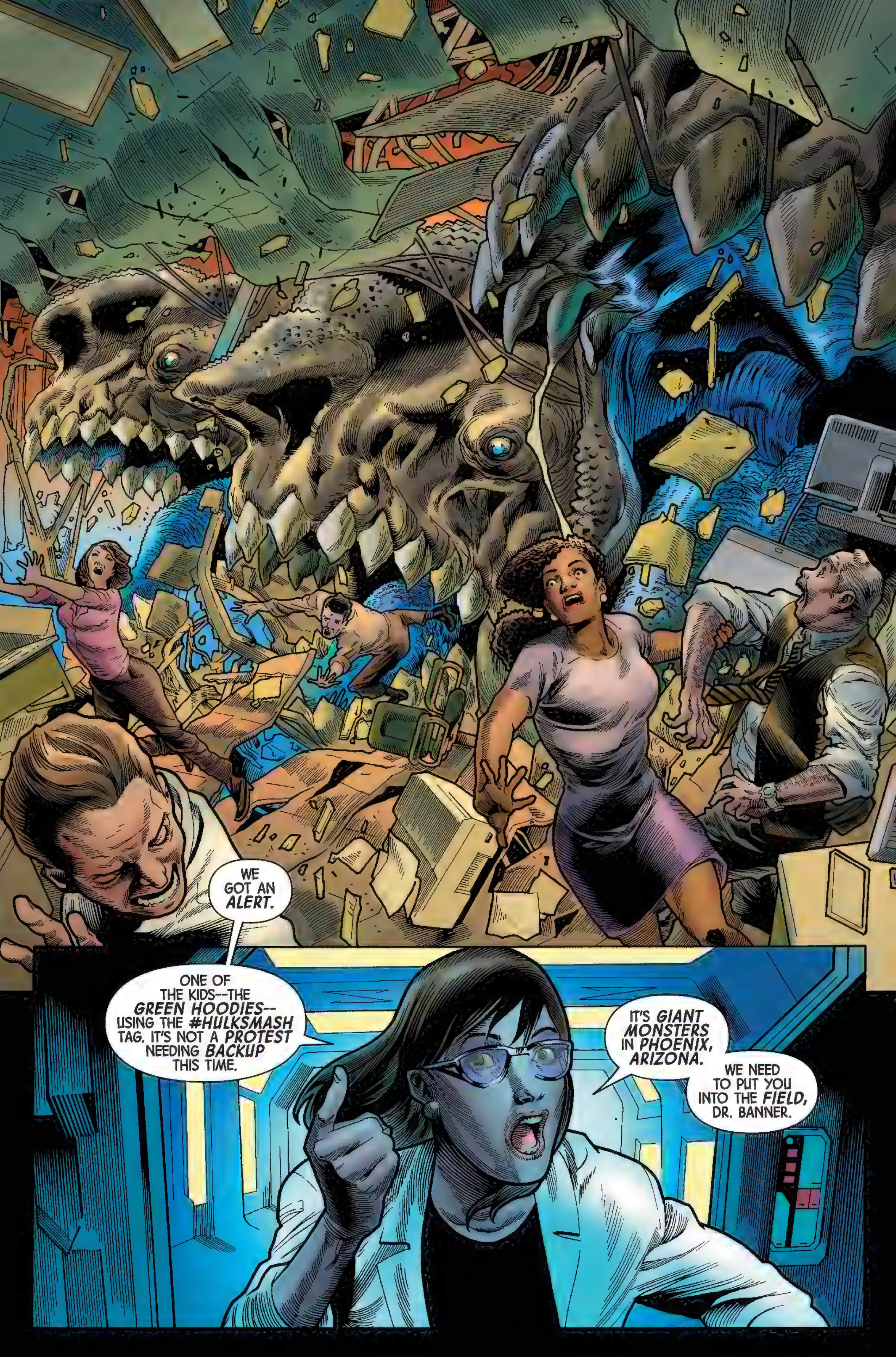

LOOK, I'M JUST GOING TO *SAY IT,* JACKIE. I'M WORRIED ABOUT WHAT I'M *ALWAYS* WORRIED ABOUT WITH YOU.
YOUR *DISTANCE* WHEN IT COMES TO THE HULK--
MURRAY-- I *KNOW.*
I KNOW YOU HAD TO PUSH ME BACK *INTO* THIS. I...I WAS *SCARED,* I ADMIT IT. OF THEM, OF THEIR *WORLD.*
BUT...I'M NOT *AFRAID* ANYMORE.
HOW ARE THE *ASSETS?* SUITABLY *FEARSOME?*
O'BRIEN'S LOOKING SKITTISH, BUT HE'LL BE FINE ONCE HIS BLOOD'S UP. *HARRYHAUSEN* IS RARING TO GO.
OH--AND THEY DIDN'T FEED *LOVECRAFT* TODAY...
SO HE'S *HUNGRY.*
I LIKE THAT.
UH-*HUH.* "LIKE IT OR NOT, THERE IS A *HUNGER* FOR BANNER'S MESSAGE. THE HULK IS NOT ONLY AN AVATAR FOR *HIS* RAGE, BUT FOR OUR *OWN.*"
THAT BIT NEEDS A *POLISH...*
"OUR" RAGE, THOUGH. YOU'RE EXPLICITLY *IDENTIFYING* WITH HIM IN THE PIECE.
THAT'S WHAT I MEAN ABOUT *DISTANCE.*

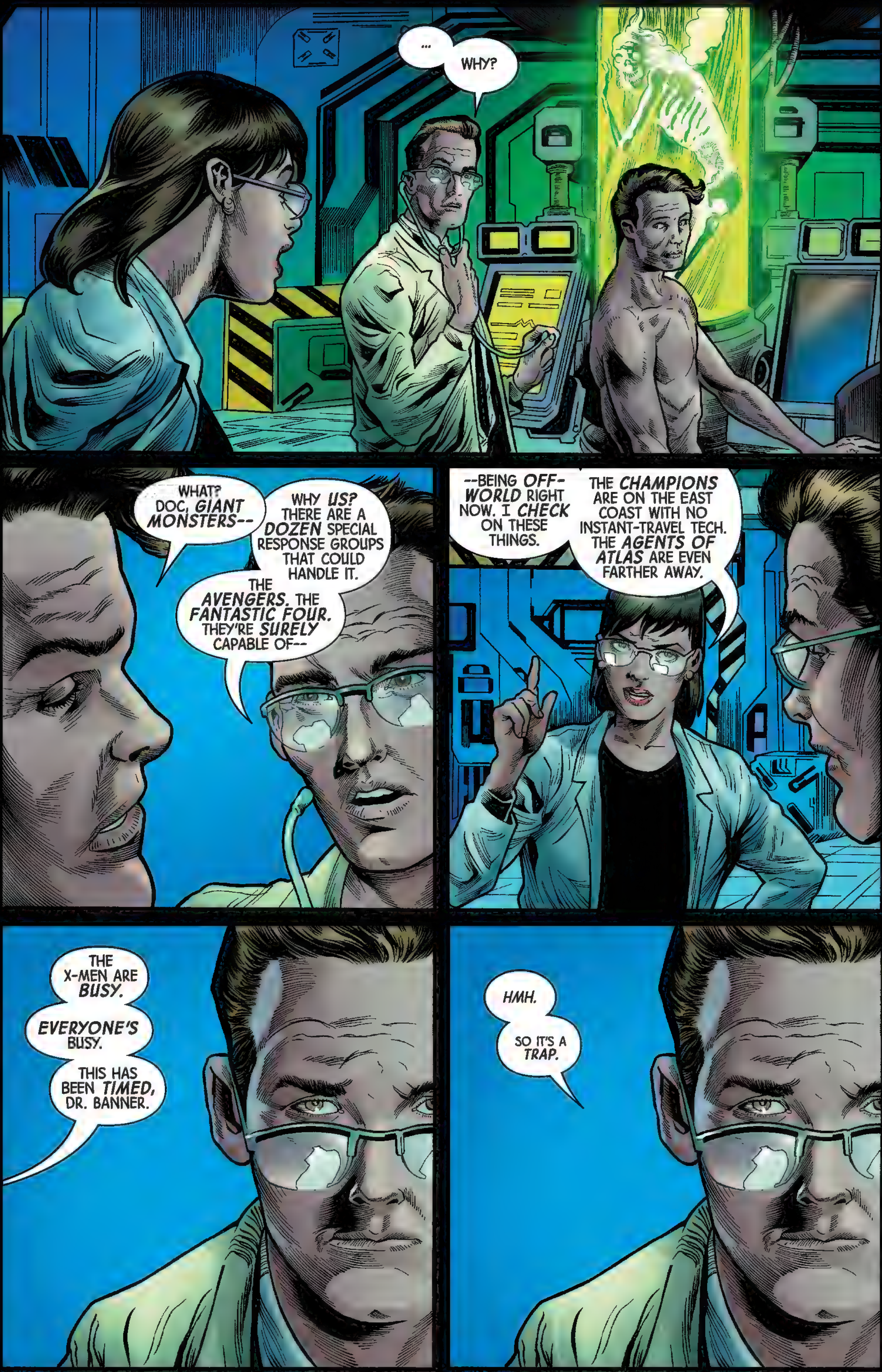

AND WILL THE MONSTERS TRANSLOCATE WITHOUT DAMAGE? IT'S A LONG WAY...
IT'LL BE FINE, SIR. STRESSES THAT WOULD KILL A NORMAL HUMAN JUST MAKE THESE THINGS ANGRY.
ANYWAY...
...THE TEAM THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO HIT THE SWITCH YOURSELF.
VERY GOOD, TRAVERS. I ONLY WISH I COULD TRAVEL WITH THEM.
TO SAVOR THE TERROR...
JACKIE...YOU KNOW A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE SCARED OF THE HULK THESE DAYS, RIGHT?
OF COURSE I DO. I AM TOO, MURRAY. THAT HASN'T GONE AWAY.
BUT...I'M ALWAYS MORE SCARED OF THE PEOPLE HE'S UP AGAINST.
AND I KNOW THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. HE'S THE MONSTER THAT SMASHED MY NEIGHBORHOOD. THE STRESS PROBABLY KILLED MY FATHER.
BUT THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS? EVERY TIME I'VE SEEN HIM...I'VE FELT SAFER. I'VE BEEN SAFER. HE'S SAVED MY LIFE--PROTECTED ME WHEN HE DIDN'T HAVE TO.
HOW DO I PROCESS THAT?
AND WHAT HE'S SAYING...IT RESONATES. MAYBE A CORPORATION LIKE ROXXON DOES DESERVE HIM AT THEIR DOOR.
LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE THESE PAST FEW YEARS. WHAT THEY GET AWAY WITH.
WHAT EVERYONE GETS AWAY WITH.

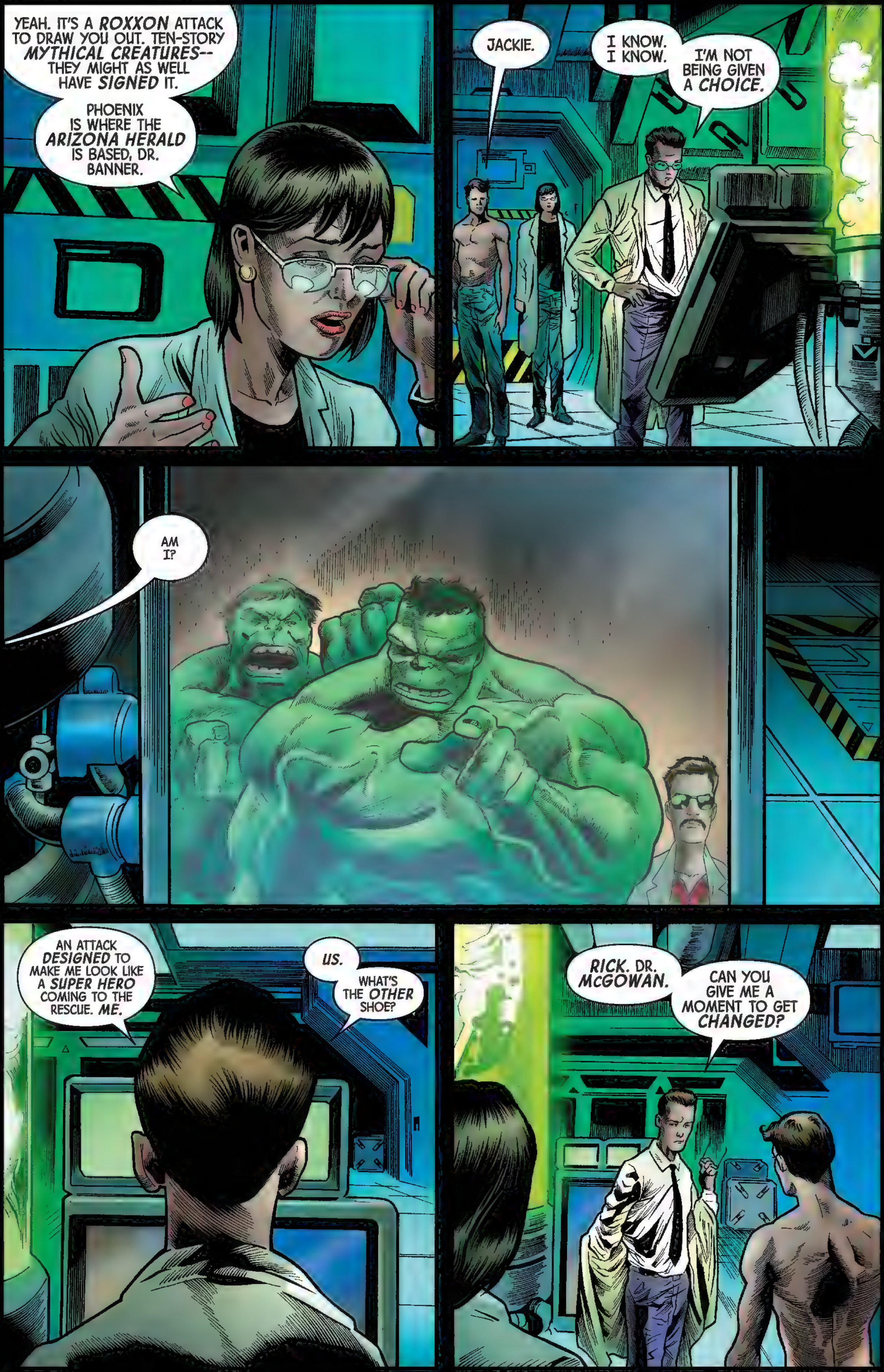

"WHAT EVERYONE GETS AWAY WITH."
HAS HE SAID SORRY?
WHAT?
BANNER. THE HULK. ANY OF HIS ALTERS.
HAVE ANY OF THEM SAID SORRY FOR WHAT THEY DID TO YOU?
TO YOUR FATHER?
...
I...
CLIK
AAH!
WHAT--
WHAT THE HECK WAS--
BRIGHT WHITE FLASH--
AAHH! THAT NOISE-- IT'S LIKE A FOGHORN OR--
--OR A SIREN--
HANG ON--LET ME LOOK--
OUT OF
THE

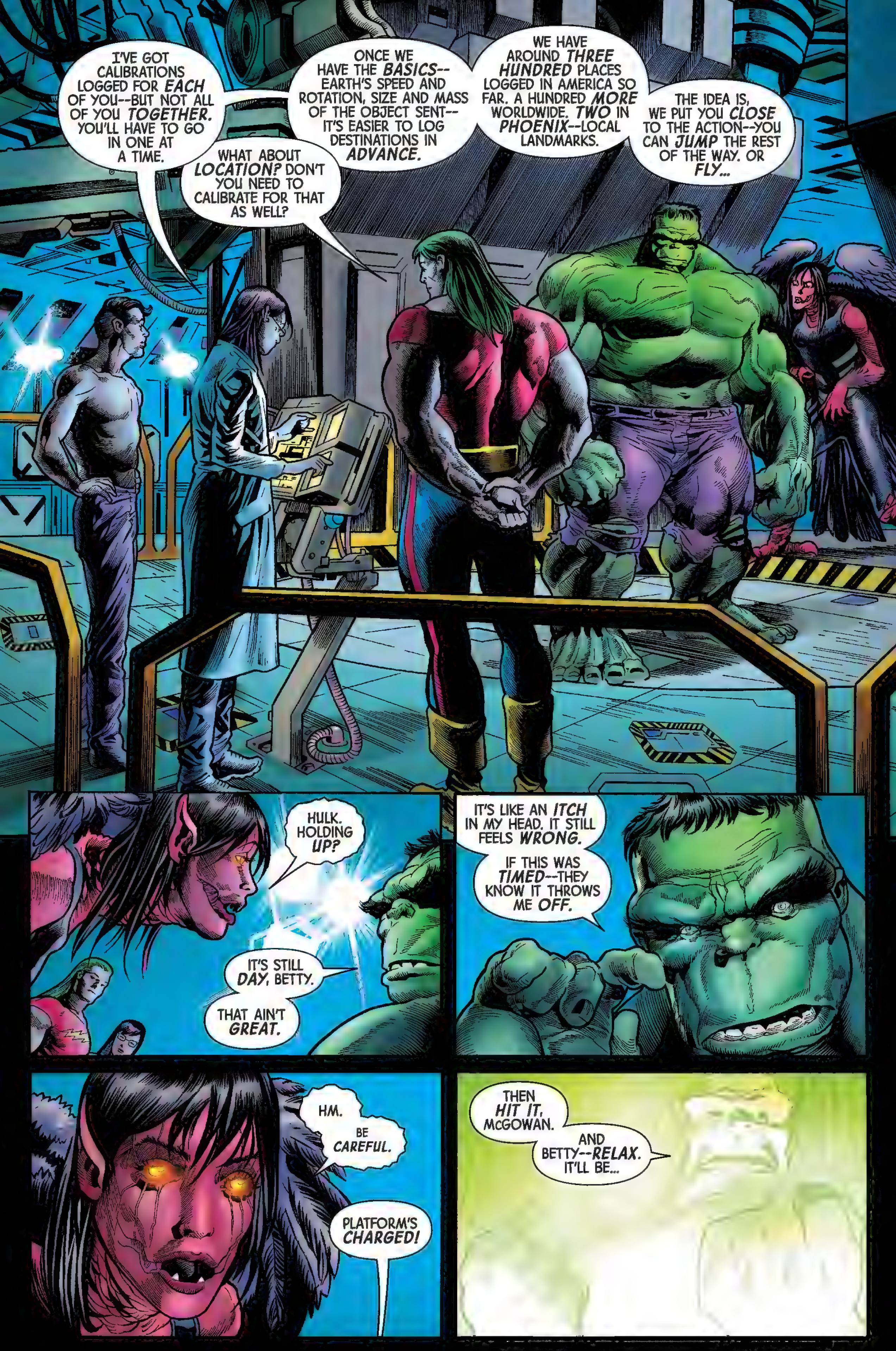

WINDOW

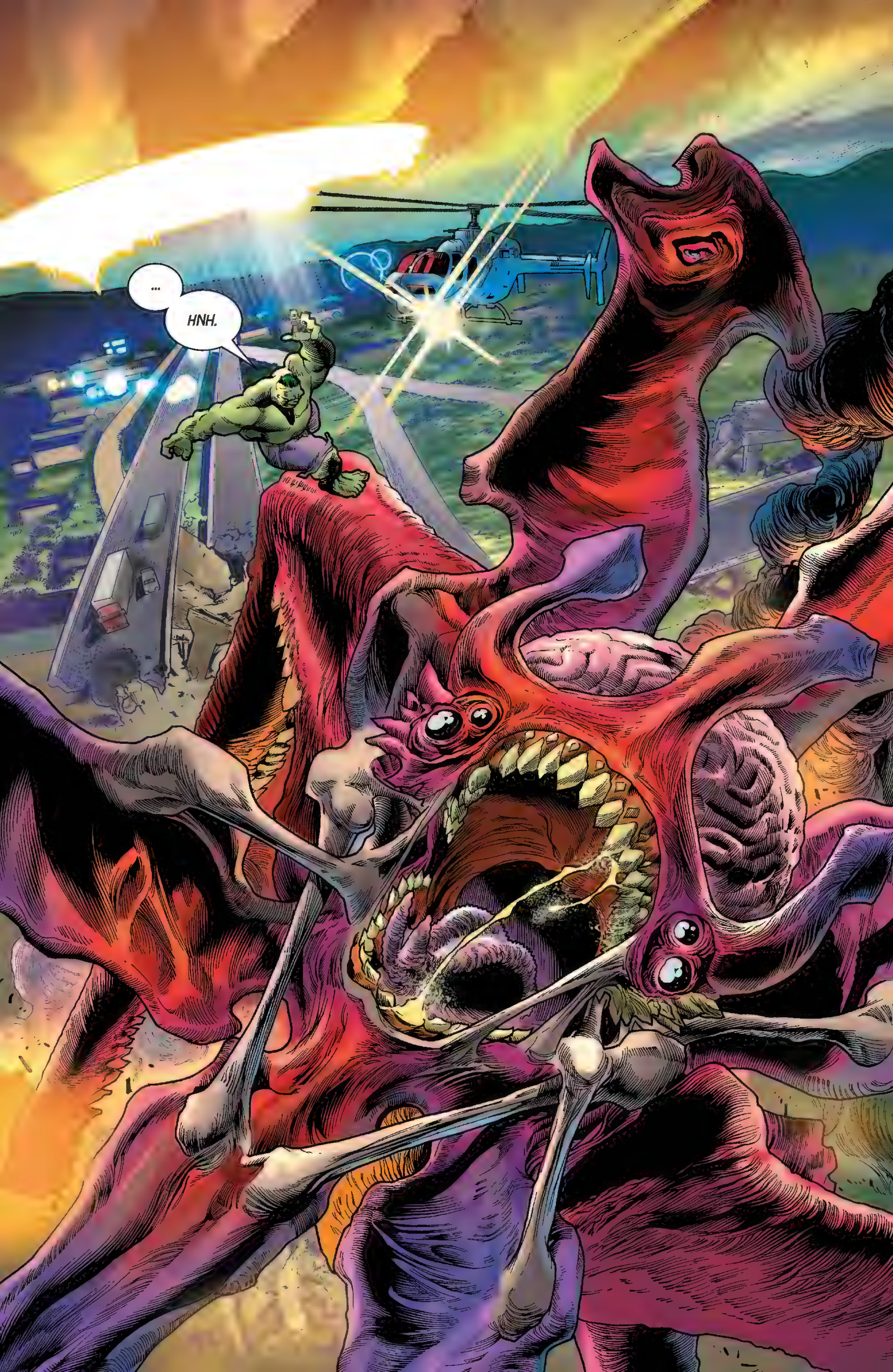

ROXXON BIO-ASSET #PXK001: "HARRYHAUSEN."
ROXXON BIO-ASSET #PXK002: "O'BRIEN."
ROXXON BIO-ASSET #PXK003: "LOVECRAFT."
ROXXON BIO-ASSET #PXK004: "BRADBURY."

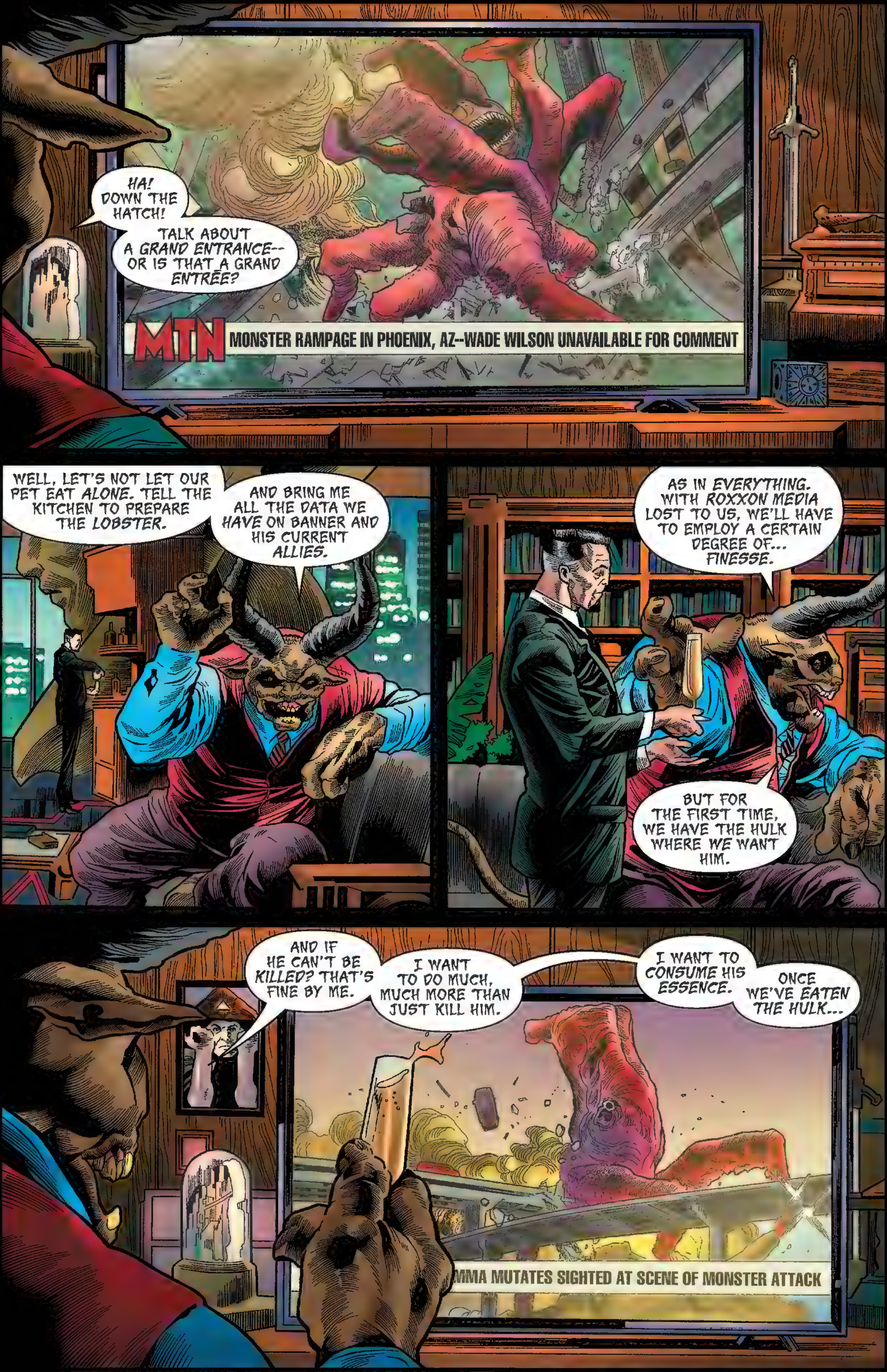

WE GOT AN *ALERT.*
ONE OF THE KIDS--THE *GREEN HOODIES*-- USING THE *#HULKSMASH* TAG. IT'S NOT A *PROTEST* NEEDING *BACKUP* THIS TIME.
IT'S *GIANT MONSTERS* IN *PHOENIX, ARIZONA.*
WE NEED TO PUT YOU INTO THE *FIELD,* DR. BANNER.

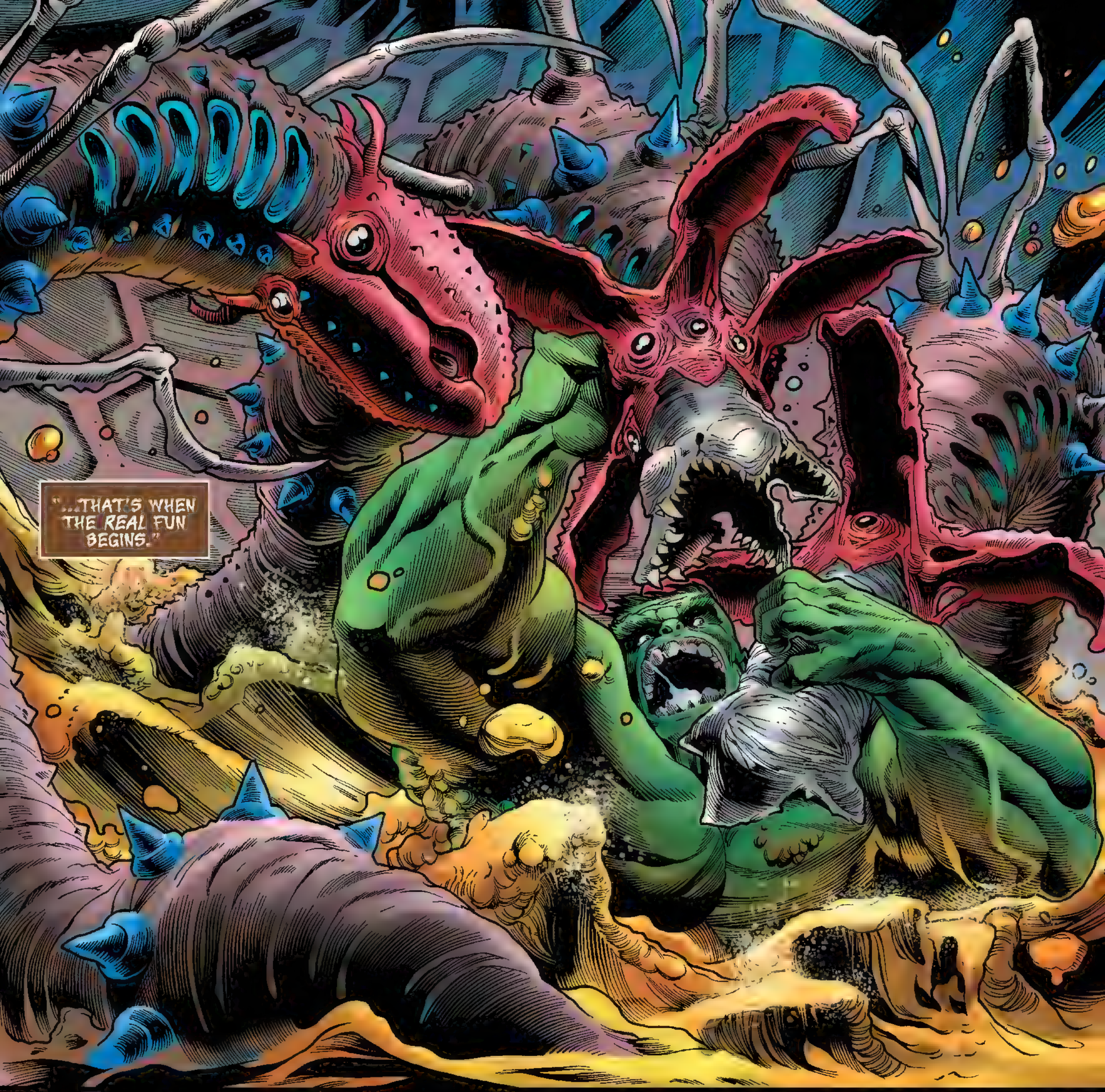

...
WHY?
WHAT? DOC, *GIANT MONSTERS*--
WHY *US?* THERE ARE A *DOZEN* SPECIAL RESPONSE GROUPS THAT COULD HANDLE IT.
THE *AVENGERS.* THE *FANTASTIC FOUR.* THEY'RE *SURELY* CAPABLE OF--
--BEING *OFF-WORLD* RIGHT NOW. I *CHECK* ON THESE THINGS.
THE *CHAMPIONS* ARE ON THE EAST COAST WITH NO INSTANT-TRAVEL TECH. THE *AGENTS OF ATLAS* ARE EVEN FARTHER AWAY.
THE X-MEN ARE *BUSY.*
EVERYONE'S BUSY.
THIS HAS BEEN *TIMED,* DR. BANNER.
HMH.
SO IT'S A *TRAP.*


YEAH. IT'S A ROXXON ATTACK TO DRAW YOU OUT. TEN-STORY MYTHICAL CREATURES-- THEY MIGHT AS WELL HAVE SIGNED IT.
PHOENIX IS WHERE THE ARIZONA HERALD IS BASED, DR. BANNER.
JACKIE.
I KNOW. I KNOW.
I'M NOT BEING GIVEN A CHOICE.
AM I?
AN ATTACK DESIGNED TO MAKE ME LOOK LIKE A SUPER HERO COMING TO THE RESCUE. ME.
US.
WHAT'S THE OTHER SHOE?
RICK. DR. McGOWAN.
CAN YOU GIVE ME A MOMENT TO GET CHANGED?


I'VE GOT CALIBRATIONS LOGGED FOR *EACH* OF YOU--BUT NOT ALL OF YOU *TOGETHER*. YOU'LL HAVE TO GO IN ONE AT A TIME.
WHAT ABOUT *LOCATION?* DON'T YOU NEED TO CALIBRATE FOR THAT AS WELL?
ONCE WE HAVE THE *BASICS*--EARTH'S SPEED AND ROTATION, SIZE AND MASS OF THE OBJECT SENT--IT'S EASIER TO LOG DESTINATIONS IN *ADVANCE*.
WE HAVE AROUND *THREE HUNDRED* PLACES LOGGED IN AMERICA SO FAR. A HUNDRED *MORE* WORLDWIDE. *TWO* IN *PHOENIX*--LOCAL LANDMARKS.
THE IDEA IS, WE PUT YOU *CLOSE* TO THE ACTION--YOU CAN *JUMP* THE REST OF THE WAY. OR *FLY*...
HULK. HOLDING *UP?*
IT'S STILL *DAY*, BETTY.
THAT AIN'T *GREAT*.
IT'S LIKE AN *ITCH* IN MY HEAD. IT STILL FEELS *WRONG*.
IF THIS WAS *TIMED*--THEY KNOW IT THROWS ME *OFF*.
HM.
BE *CAREFUL*.
PLATFORM'S *CHARGED!*
THEN *HIT IT*, McGOWAN.
AND BETTY--*RELAX*. IT'LL BE...


...
HNH.


HA! DOWN THE HATCH!
TALK ABOUT A GRAND ENTRANCE-- OR IS THAT A GRAND ENTRÉE?
MTN
MONSTER RAMPAGE IN PHOENIX, AZ--WADE WILSON UNAVAILABLE FOR COMMENT
WELL, LET'S NOT LET OUR PET EAT *ALONE*. TELL THE KITCHEN TO PREPARE THE *LOBSTER*.
AND BRING ME ALL THE DATA WE *HAVE* ON BANNER AND HIS CURRENT ALLIES.
AS IN *EVERYTHING*. WITH *ROXXON MEDIA* LOST TO US, WE'LL HAVE TO EMPLOY A CERTAIN DEGREE OF... FINESSE.
BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE HAVE THE HULK WHERE *WE* WANT HIM.
AND IF HE CAN'T BE *KILLED*? THAT'S FINE BY ME.
I WANT TO DO MUCH, MUCH MORE THAN JUST KILL HIM.
I WANT TO CONSUME HIS *ESSENCE*.
ONCE WE'VE EATEN THE HULK...
MMA MUTATES SIGHTED AT SCENE OF MONSTER ATTACK

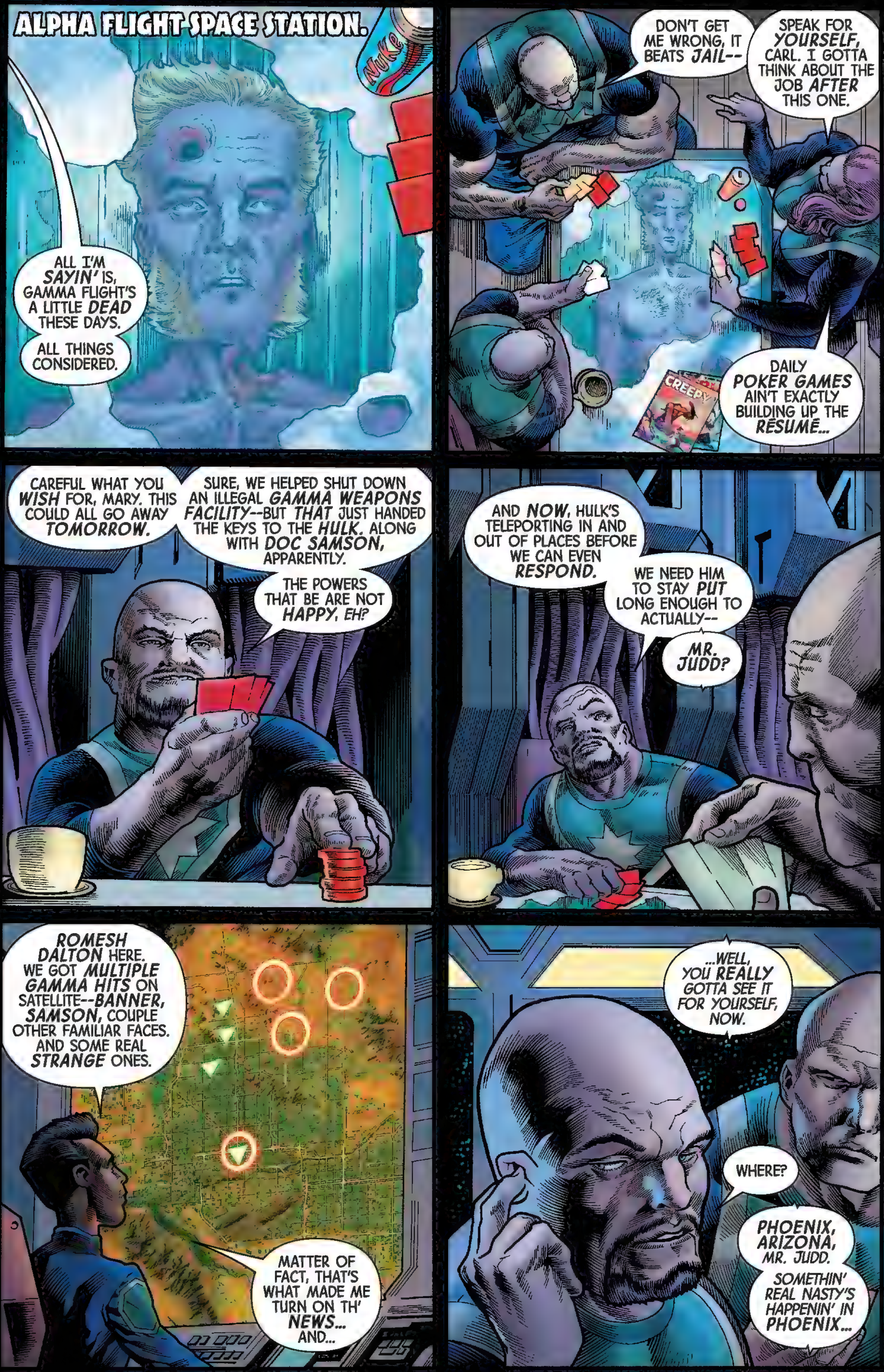

"...THAT'S WHEN THE REAL FUN BEGINS."

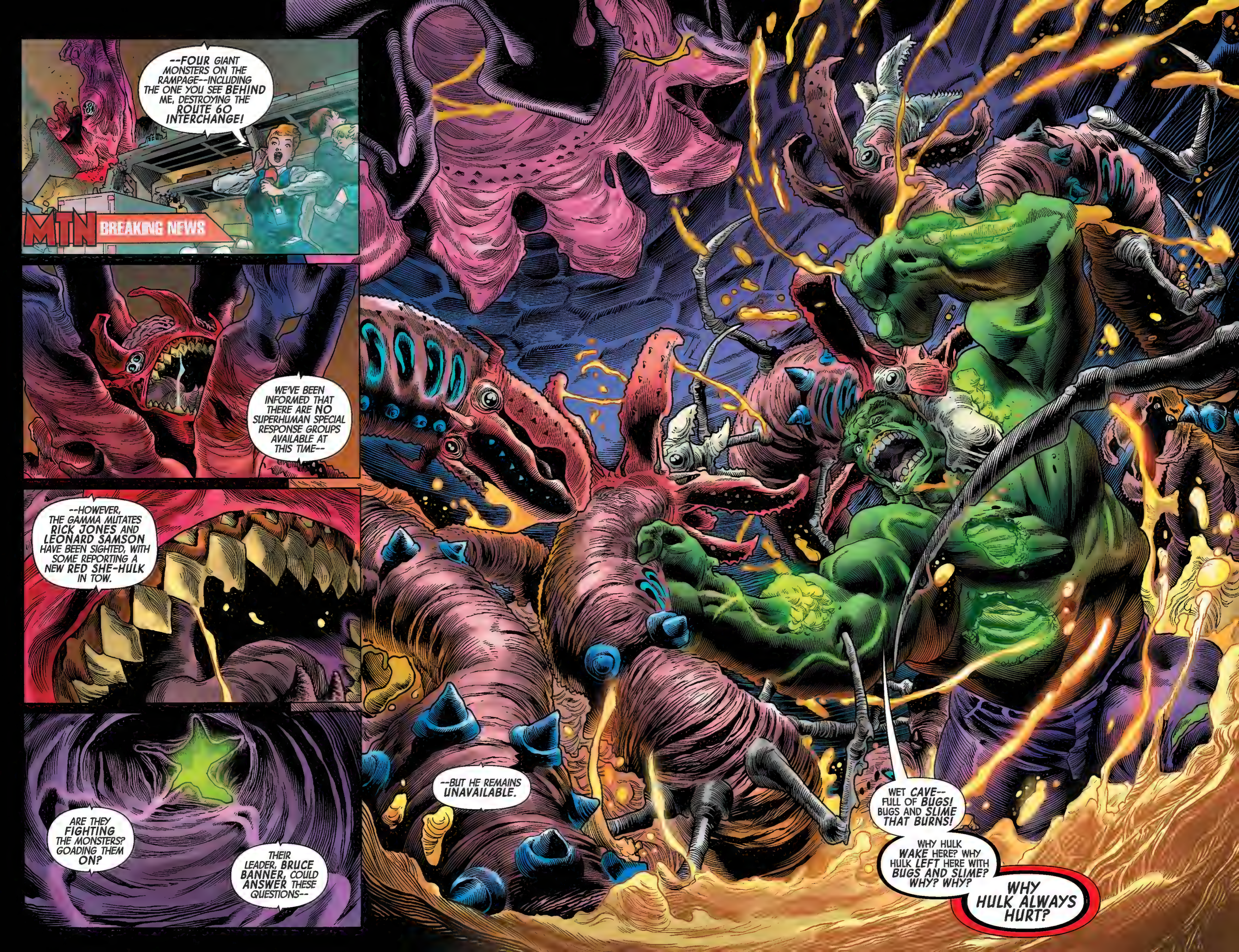
EAT OR BE EATEN

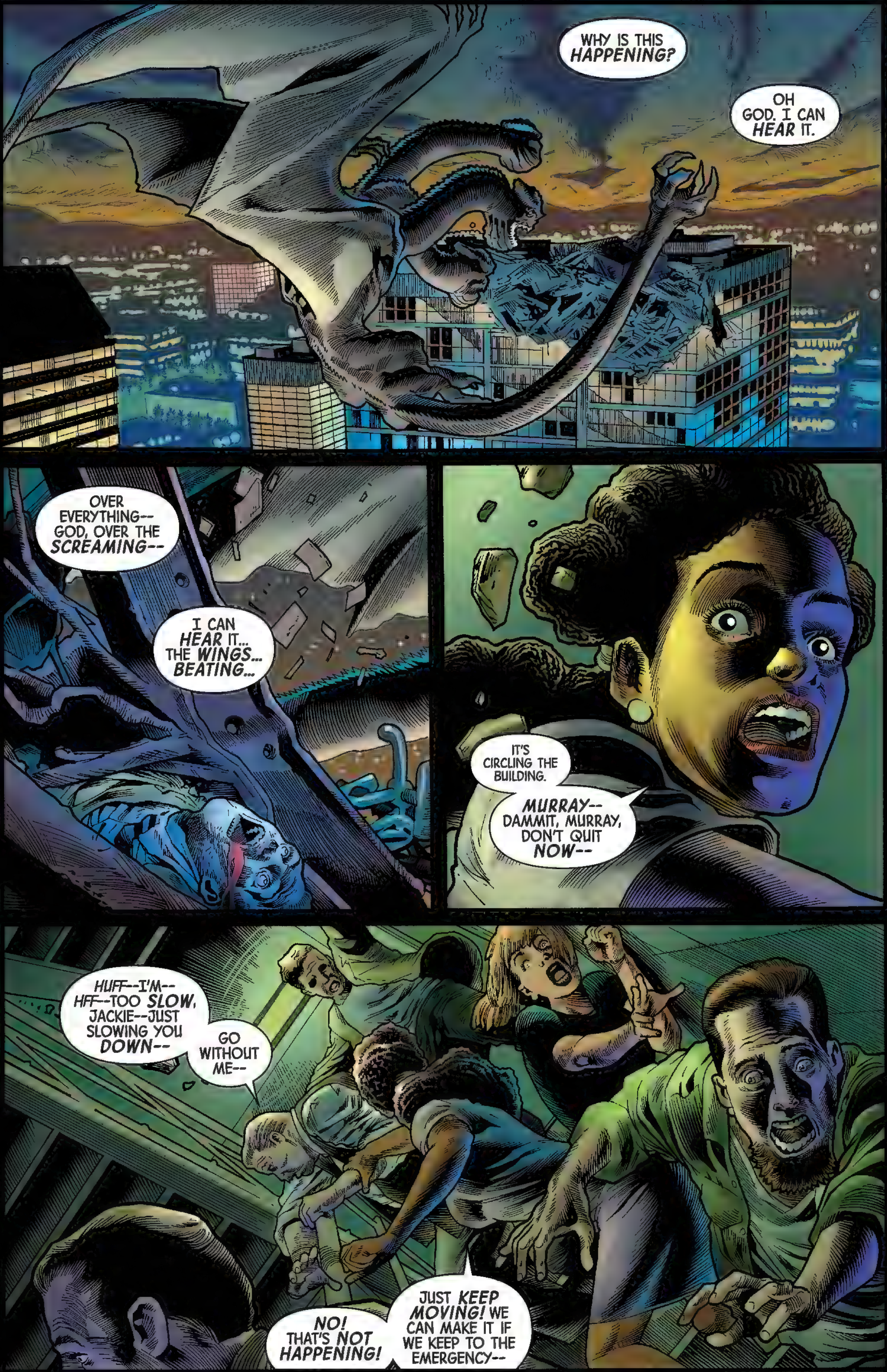
30

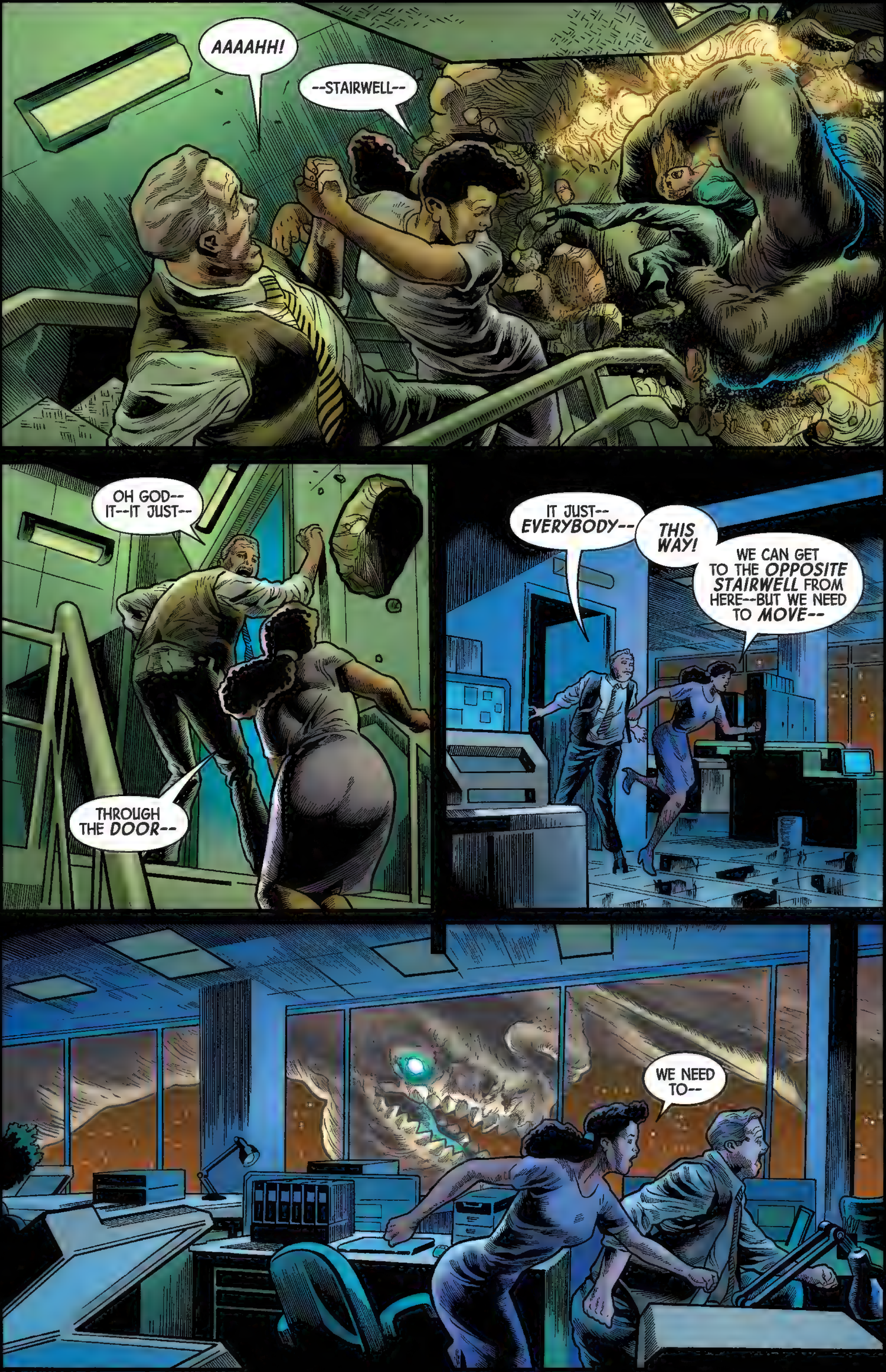
"WATCH THEREFORE: FOR YE KNOW NOT WHAT HOUR YOUR LORD DOTH COME."

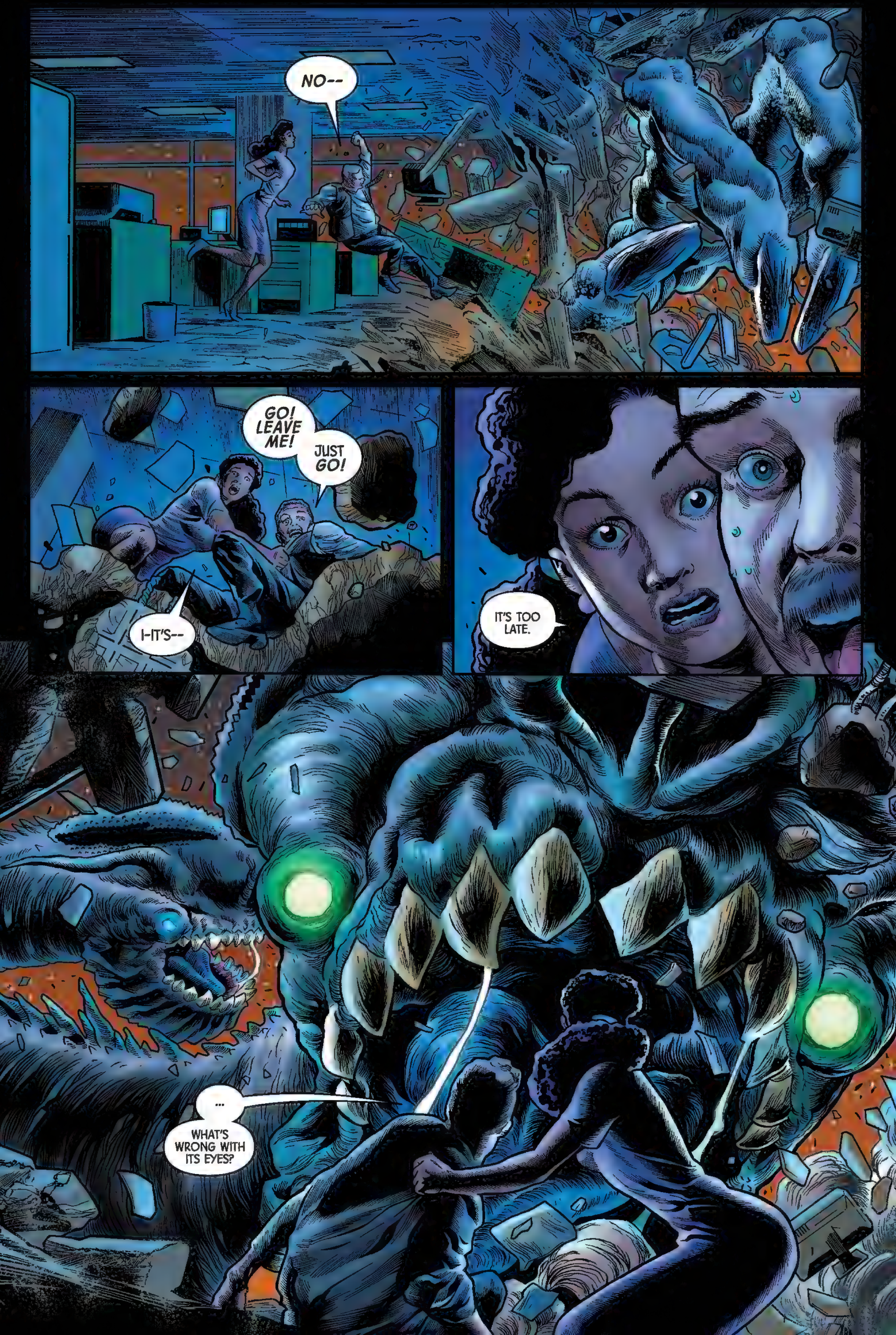
– MATTHEW 24:42

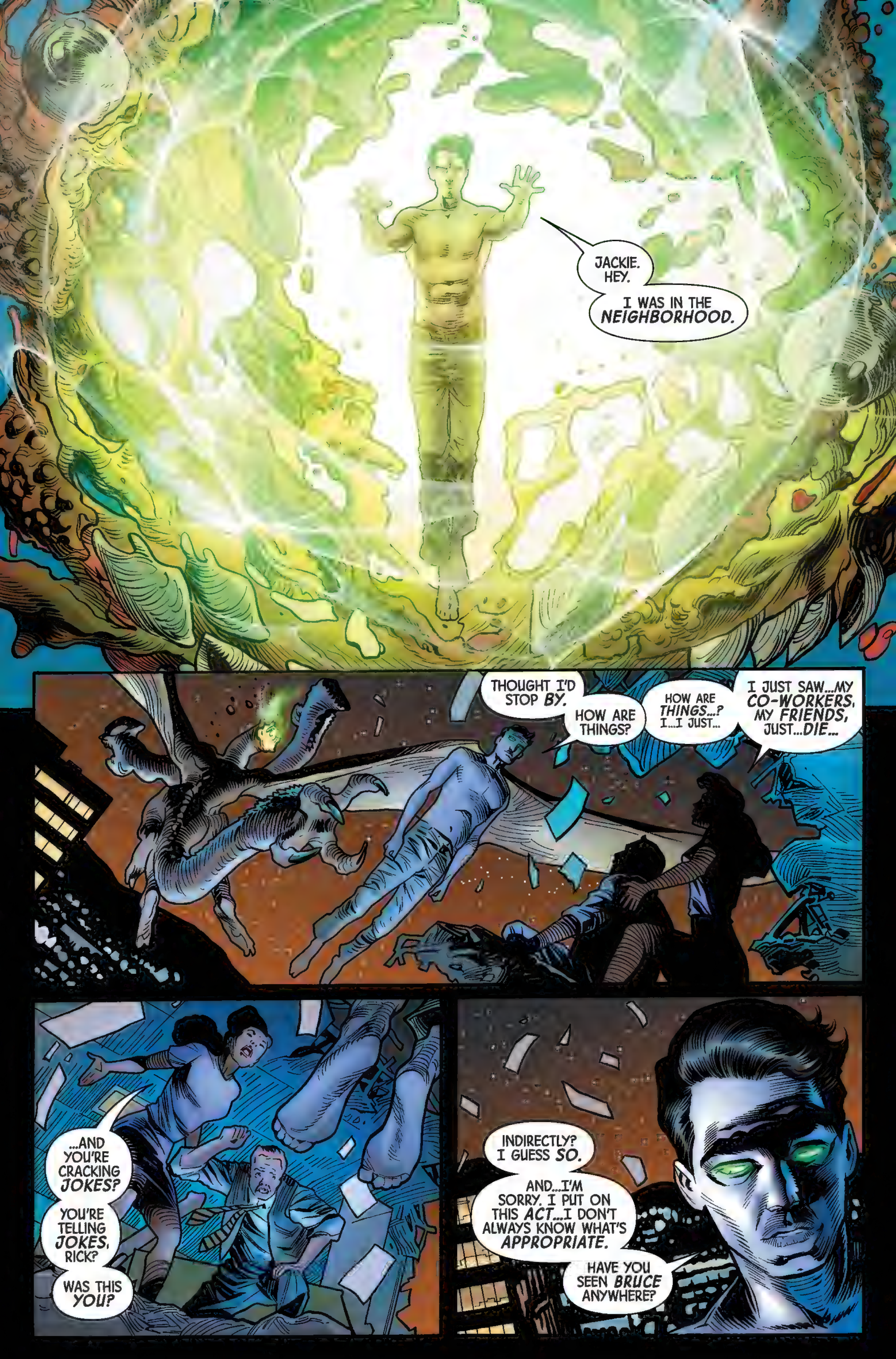

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
Nuke
ALL I'M *SAYIN'* IS, GAMMA FLIGHT'S A LITTLE *DEAD* THESE DAYS.
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.
DON'T GET ME WRONG, IT BEATS *JAIL*--
SPEAK FOR *YOURSELF*, CARL. I GOTTA THINK ABOUT THE JOB *AFTER* THIS ONE.
CREEPY
DAILY *POKER GAMES* AIN'T EXACTLY BUILDING UP THE *RÉSUMÉ*...
CAREFUL WHAT YOU *WISH* FOR, MARY. THIS COULD ALL GO AWAY *TOMORROW*.
SURE, WE HELPED SHUT DOWN AN ILLEGAL *GAMMA WEAPONS FACILITY*--BUT *THAT* JUST HANDED THE KEYS TO THE *HULK*. ALONG WITH *DOC SAMSON*, APPARENTLY.
THE POWERS THAT BE ARE NOT *HAPPY*, EH?
AND *NOW*, HULK'S TELEPORTING IN AND OUT OF PLACES BEFORE WE CAN EVEN *RESPOND*.
WE NEED HIM TO STAY *PUT* LONG ENOUGH TO ACTUALLY--
MR. JUDD?
ROMESH DALTON HERE. WE GOT *MULTIPLE GAMMA HITS* ON SATELLITE--*BANNER*, *SAMSON*, COUPLE OTHER FAMILIAR FACES. AND SOME REAL *STRANGE* ONES.
MATTER OF FACT, THAT'S WHAT MADE ME TURN ON TH' *NEWS*... AND...
...WELL, YOU *REALLY* GOTTA SEE IT FOR YOURSELF, NOW.
WHERE?
PHOENIX, ARIZONA, MR. JUDD.
SOMETHIN' REAL NASTY'S HAPPENIN' IN *PHOENIX*...

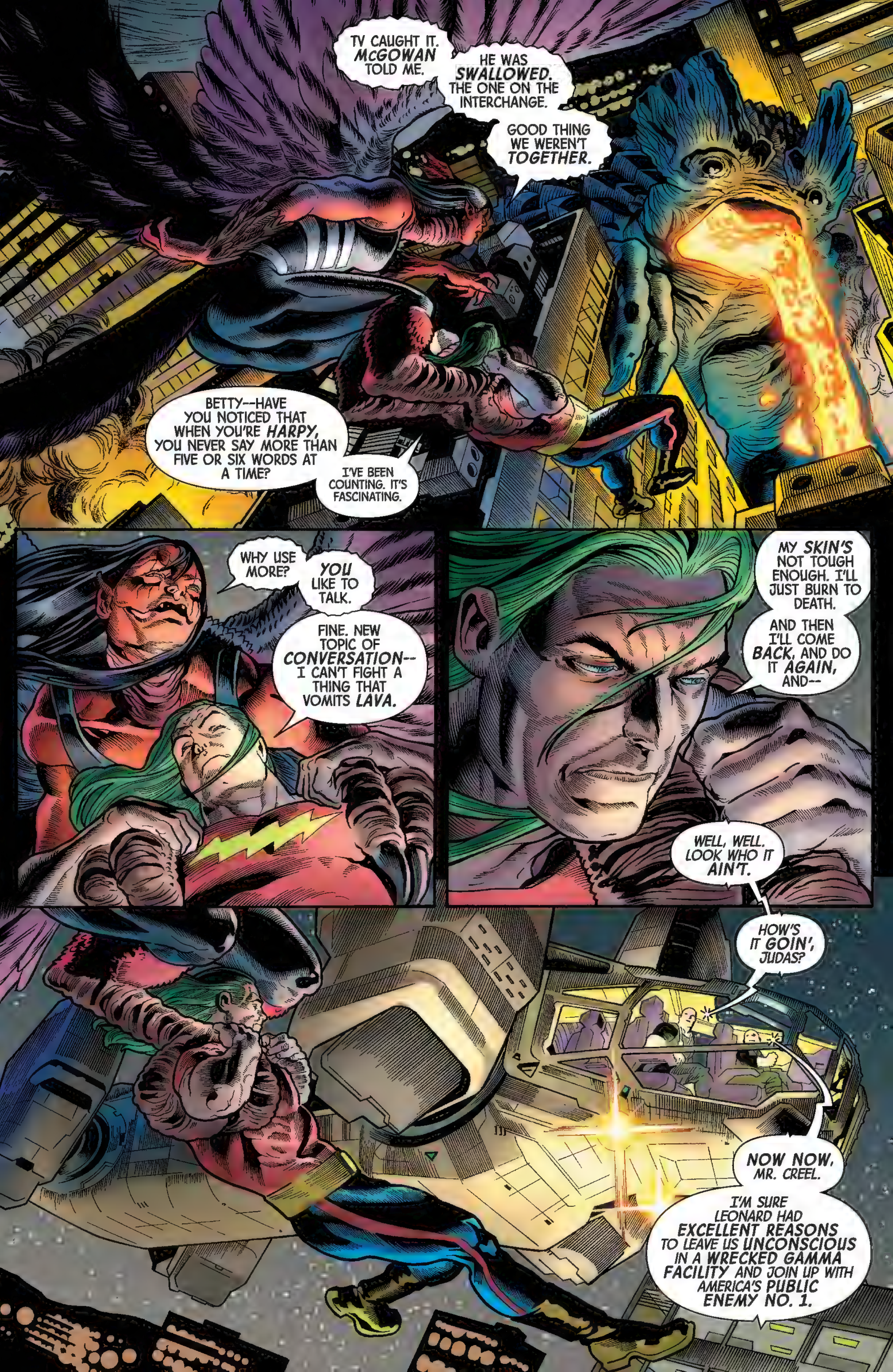

--FOUR GIANT MONSTERS ON THE RAMPAGE--INCLUDING THE ONE YOU SEE BEHIND ME, DESTROYING THE ROUTE 60 INTERCHANGE!
MTN BREAKING NEWS
WE'VE BEEN INFORMED THAT THERE ARE NO SUPERHUMAN SPECIAL RESPONSE GROUPS AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME--
--HOWEVER, THE GAMMA MUTATES RICK JONES AND LEONARD SAMSON HAVE BEEN SIGHTED, WITH SOME REPORTING A NEW RED SHE-HULK IN TOW.
ARE THEY FIGHTING THE MONSTERS? GOADING THEM ON?
THEIR LEADER, BRUCE BANNER, COULD ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS--
--BUT HE REMAINS UNAVAILABLE.
WET CAVE-- FULL OF BUGS! BUGS AND SLIME THAT BURNS!
WHY HULK WAKE HERE? WHY HULK LEFT HERE WITH BUGS AND SLIME? WHY? WHY?
WHY HULK ALWAYS HURT?

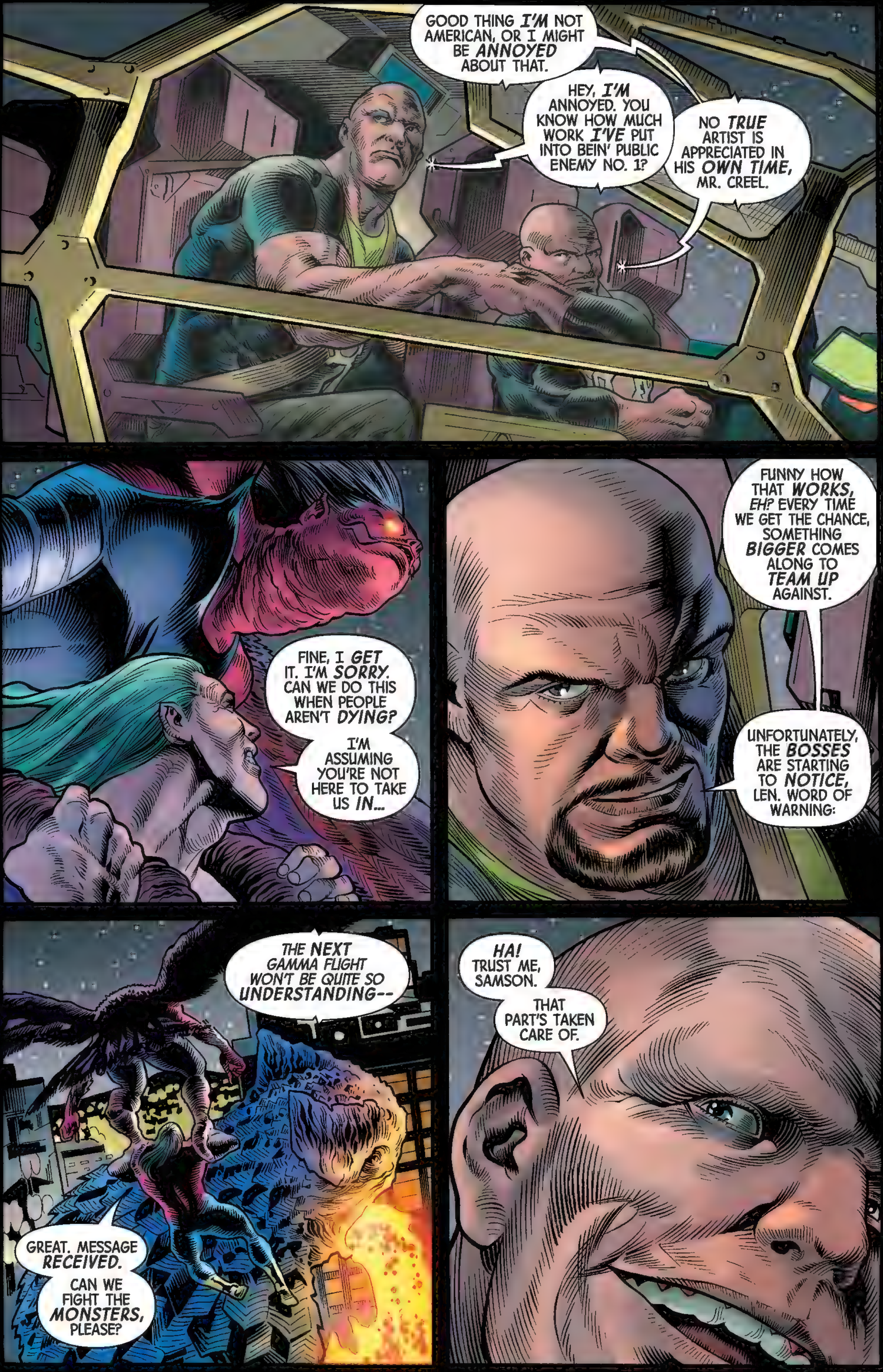

WHY IS THIS *HAPPENING?*
OH GOD. I CAN *HEAR* IT.
OVER EVERYTHING-- GOD, OVER THE *SCREAMING--*
I CAN *HEAR* IT... THE *WINGS...* *BEATING...*
IT'S CIRCLING THE BUILDING.
MURRAY-- DAMMIT, MURRAY, DON'T QUIT *NOW--*
HUFF--I'M-- HFF--TOO *SLOW,* JACKIE--JUST SLOWING YOU *DOWN--*
GO WITHOUT ME--
NO! THAT'S *NOT HAPPENING!*
JUST *KEEP MOVING!* WE CAN MAKE IT IF WE KEEP TO THE EMERGENCY--

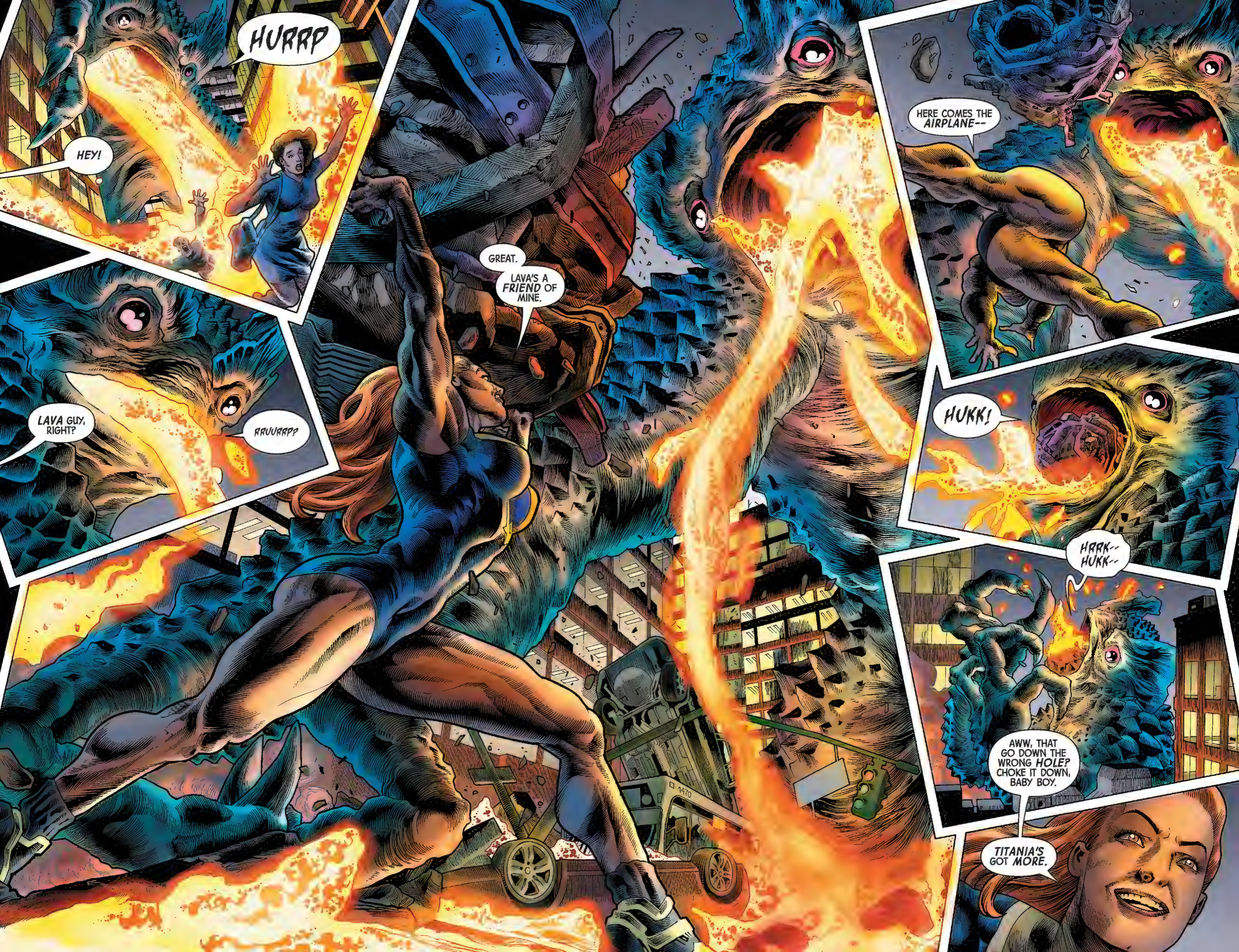

AAAAHH!
--STAIRWELL--
OH GOD-- IT--IT JUST--
THROUGH THE *DOOR*--
IT JUST-- *EVERYBODY*--
THIS WAY!
WE CAN GET TO THE *OPPOSITE STAIRWELL* FROM HERE--BUT WE NEED TO *MOVE*--
WE NEED TO--

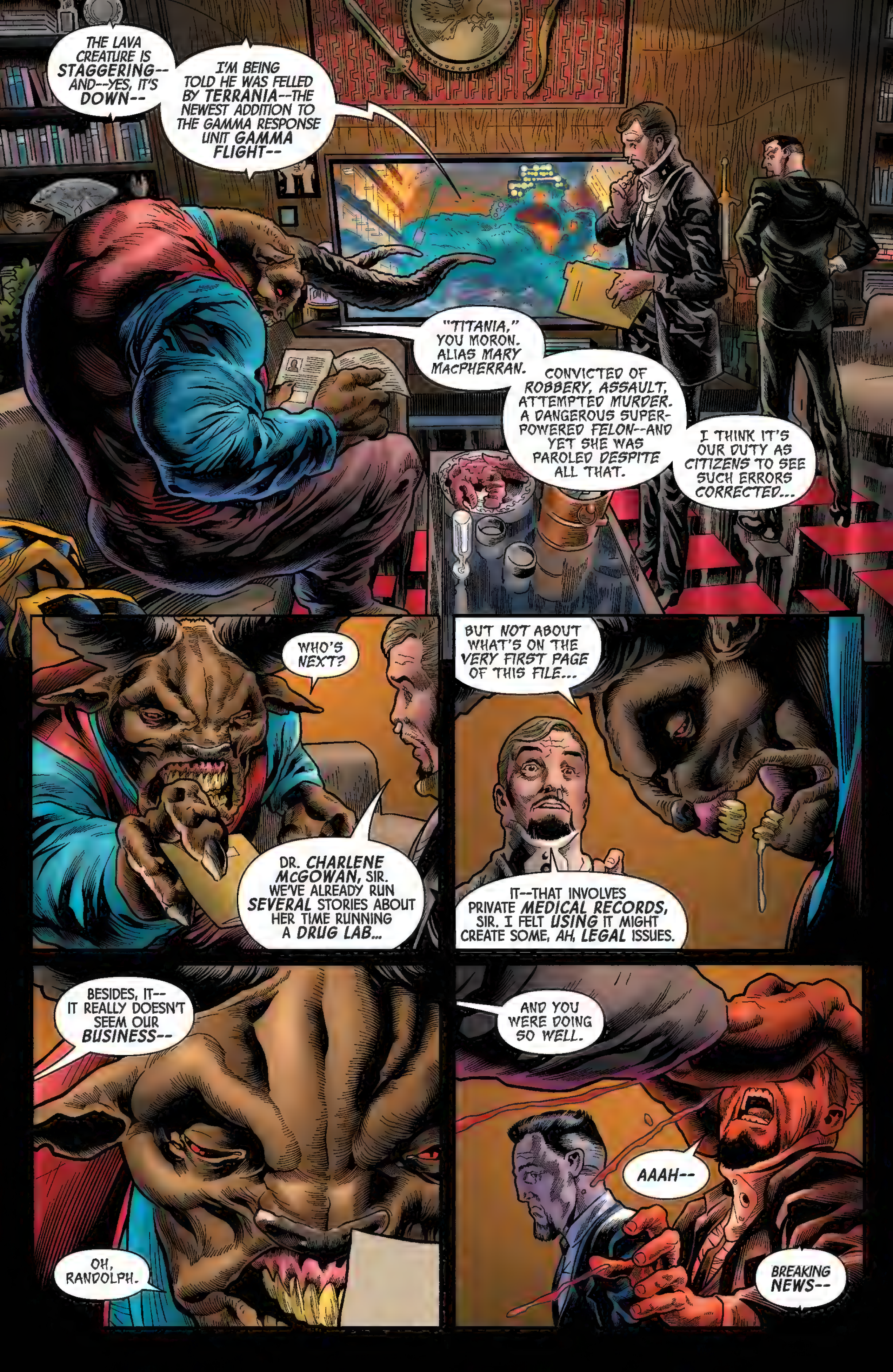

NO--
GO! LEAVE ME!
JUST GO!
I-IT'S--
IT'S TOO LATE.
...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ITS EYES?

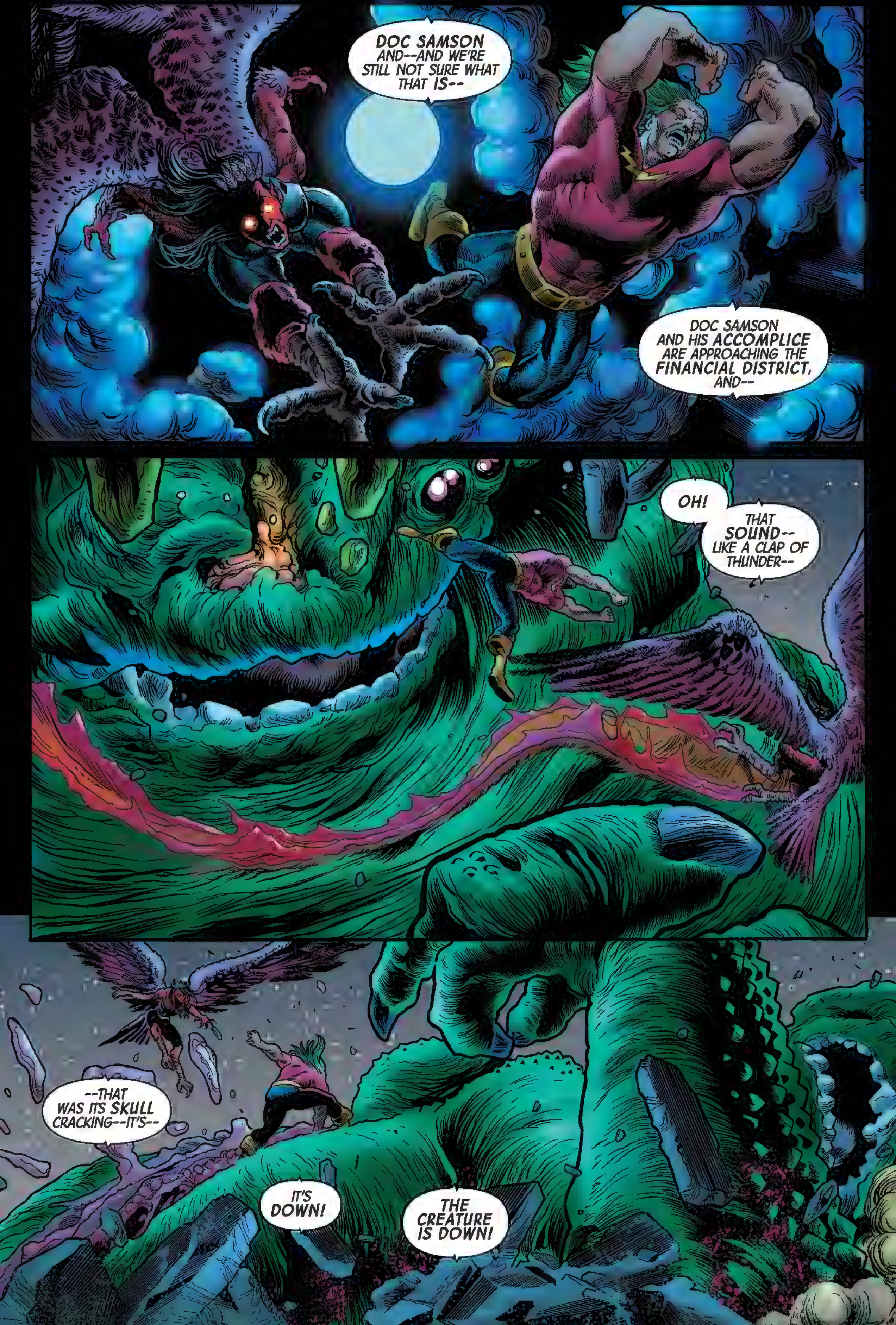

JACKIE. HEY.
I WAS IN THE *NEIGHBORHOOD.*
THOUGHT I'D STOP *BY.*
HOW ARE THINGS?
HOW ARE *THINGS...?* I...I JUST...
I JUST SAW...MY *CO-WORKERS,* MY *FRIENDS,* JUST...*DIE...*
...AND YOU'RE CRACKING *JOKES?*
YOU'RE TELLING *JOKES,* RICK?
WAS THIS *YOU?*
INDIRECTLY? I GUESS *SO.*
AND...I'M SORRY. I PUT ON THIS *ACT*...I DON'T ALWAYS KNOW WHAT'S *APPROPRIATE.*
HAVE YOU SEEN *BRUCE* ANYWHERE?

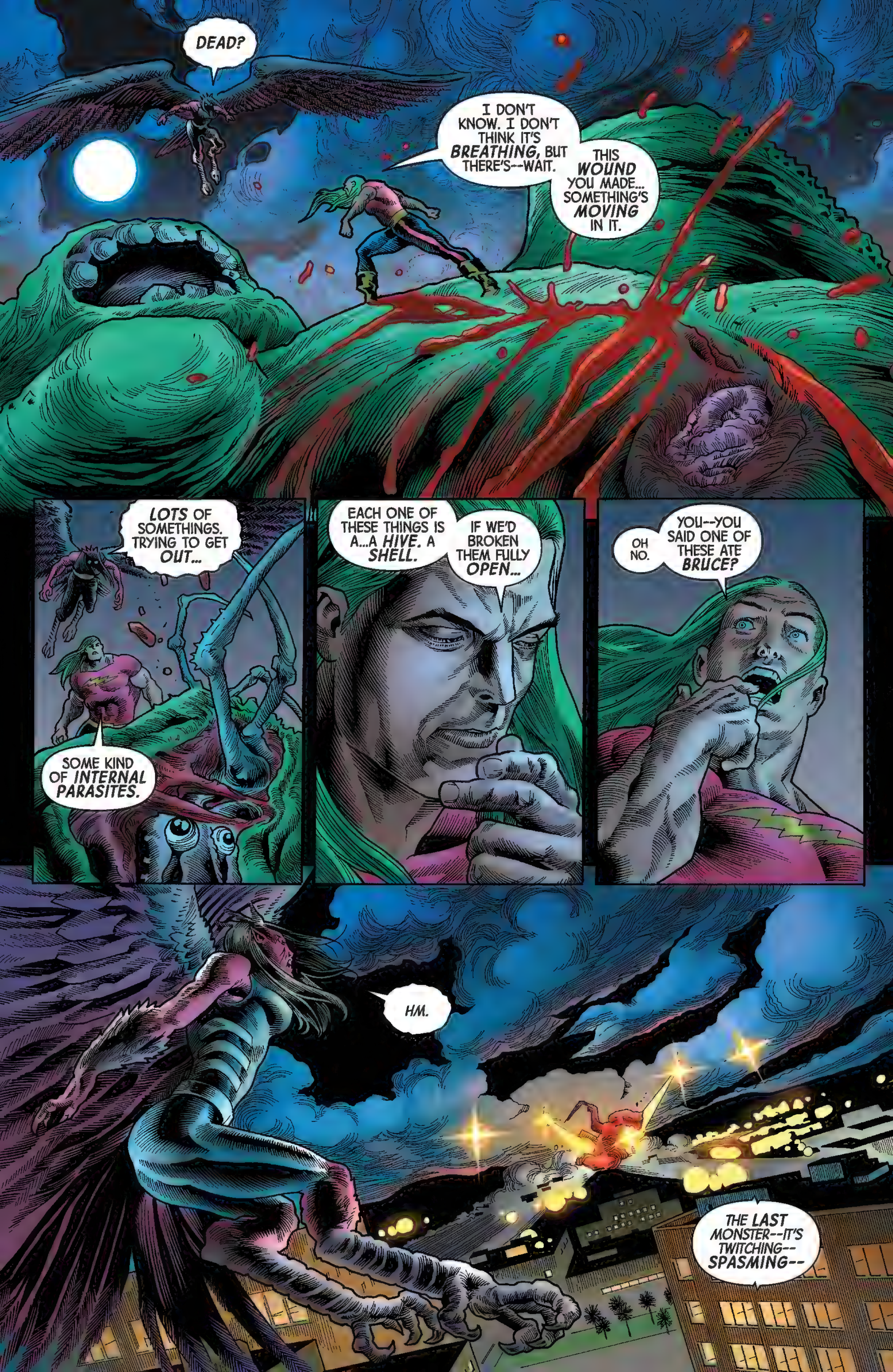

TV CAUGHT IT. *McGOWAN* TOLD ME.
HE WAS *SWALLOWED.* THE ONE ON THE INTERCHANGE.
GOOD THING WE WEREN'T *TOGETHER.*
BETTY--HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT WHEN YOU'RE *HARPY,* YOU NEVER SAY MORE THAN FIVE OR SIX WORDS AT A TIME?
I'VE BEEN COUNTING. IT'S FASCINATING.
WHY USE MORE?
YOU LIKE TO TALK.
FINE. NEW TOPIC OF *CONVERSATION*-- I CAN'T FIGHT A THING THAT VOMITS *LAVA.*
MY *SKIN'S* NOT TOUGH ENOUGH. I'LL JUST BURN TO DEATH.
AND THEN I'LL COME *BACK*, AND DO IT *AGAIN*, AND--
WELL, WELL. LOOK WHO IT *AIN'T.*
HOW'S IT *GOIN'*, JUDAS?
NOW NOW, MR. CREEL.
I'M SURE LEONARD HAD **EXCELLENT REASONS** TO LEAVE US **UNCONSCIOUS** IN A **WRECKED GAMMA FACILITY** AND JOIN UP WITH AMERICA'S **PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1.**

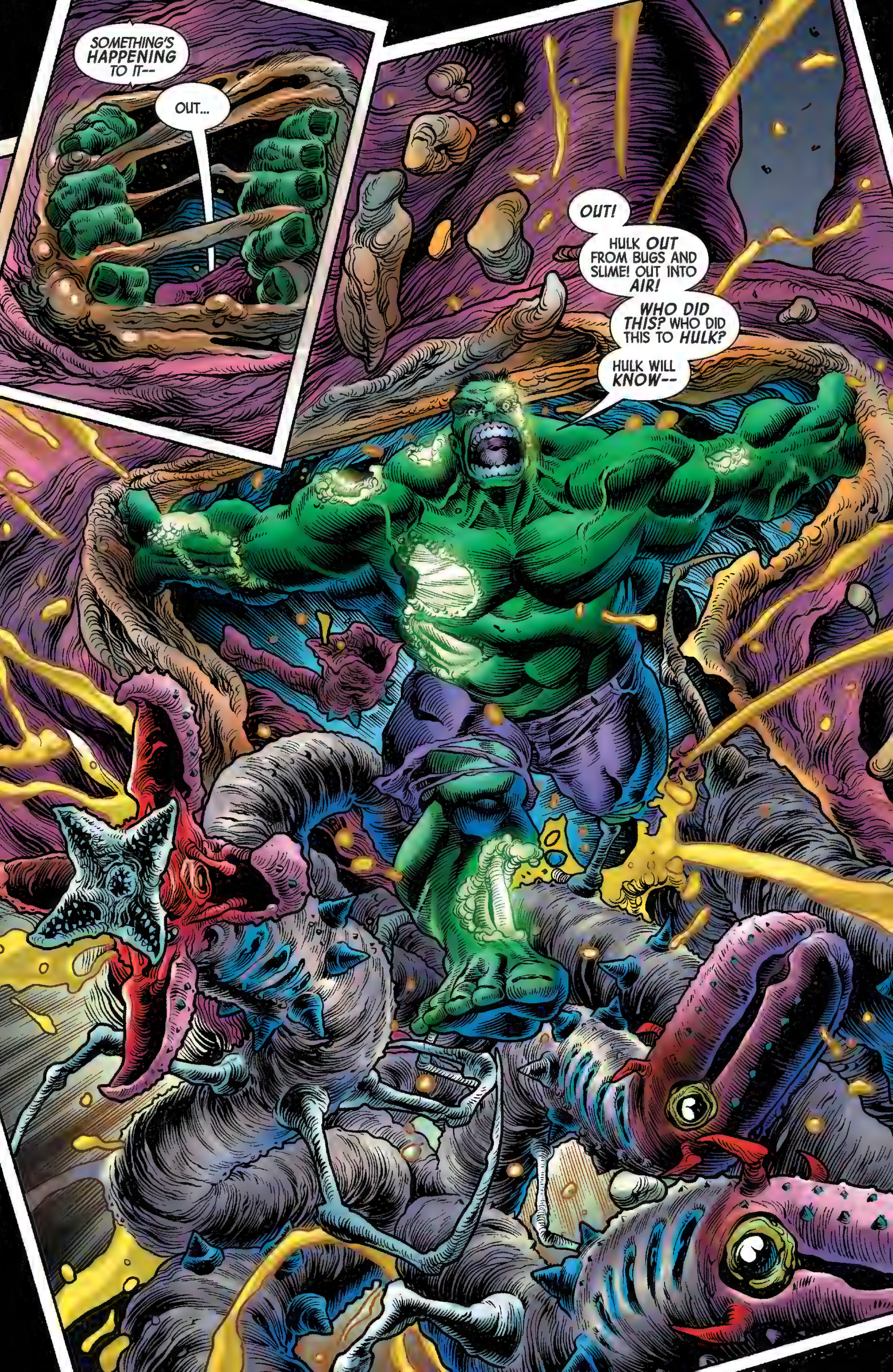

GOOD THING *I'M* NOT AMERICAN, OR I MIGHT BE *ANNOYED* ABOUT THAT.
HEY, *I'M* ANNOYED. YOU KNOW HOW MUCH WORK *I'VE* PUT INTO BEIN' PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1?
NO *TRUE* ARTIST IS APPRECIATED IN HIS *OWN TIME,* MR. CREEL.
FINE, I *GET* IT. I'M *SORRY.* CAN WE DO THIS WHEN PEOPLE AREN'T *DYING?*
I'M ASSUMING YOU'RE NOT HERE TO TAKE US *IN*...
FUNNY HOW THAT *WORKS, EH?* EVERY TIME WE GET THE CHANCE, SOMETHING *BIGGER* COMES ALONG TO *TEAM UP* AGAINST.
UNFORTUNATELY, THE *BOSSES* ARE STARTING TO *NOTICE,* LEN. WORD OF WARNING:
THE NEXT GAMMA FLIGHT WON'T BE QUITE SO UNDERSTANDING--
GREAT. MESSAGE *RECEIVED.*
CAN WE FIGHT THE *MONSTERS,* PLEASE?
HA! TRUST ME, SAMSON.
THAT PART'S TAKEN CARE OF.

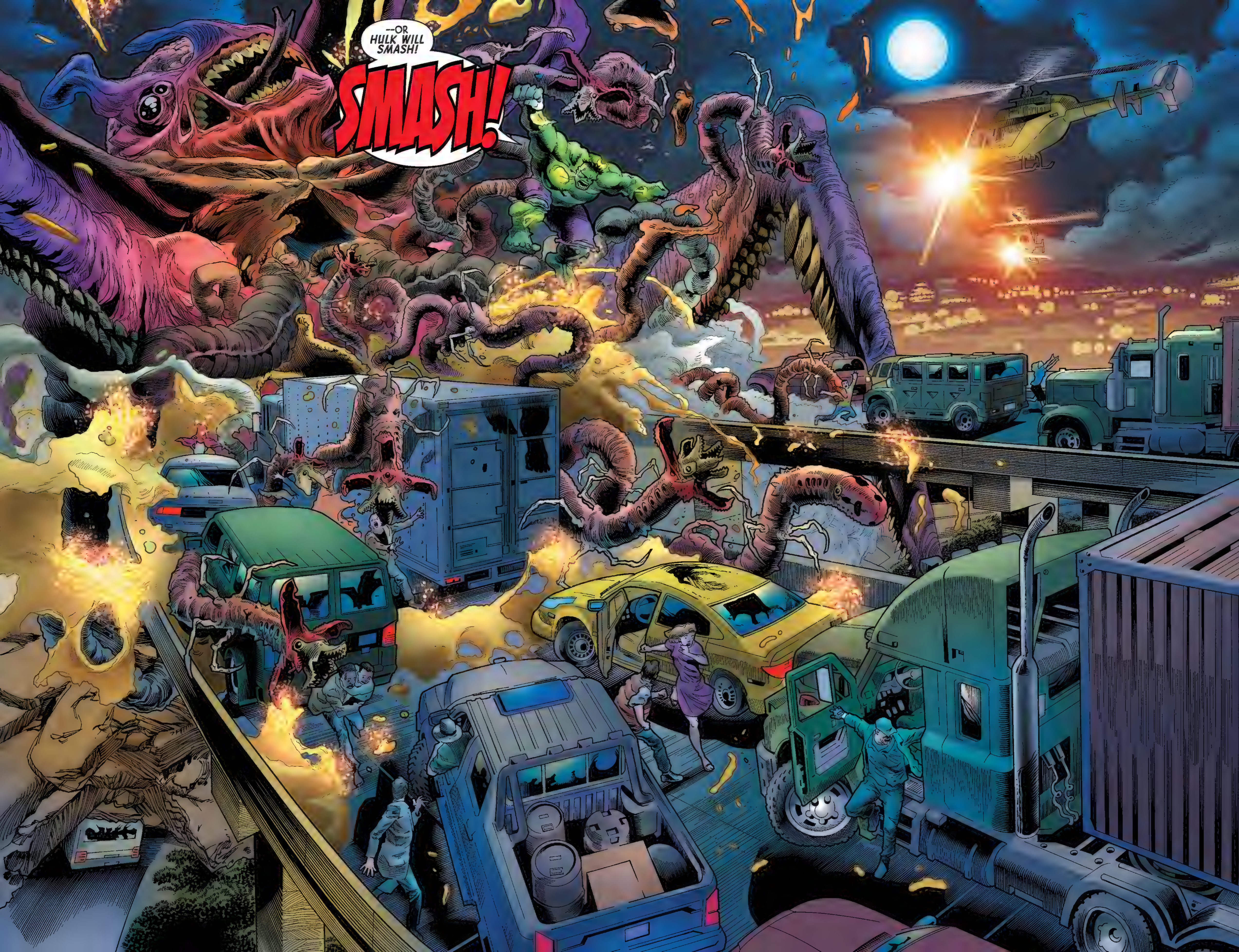

HURRP
HEY!
LAVA GUY, RIGHT?
RRUURRP?
GREAT.
LAVA'S A FRIEND OF MINE.
HERE COMES THE AIRPLANE--
HUKK!
HRRK-- HUKK--
AWW, THAT GO DOWN THE WRONG HOLE? CHOKE IT DOWN, BABY BOY.
TITANIA'S GOT MORE.

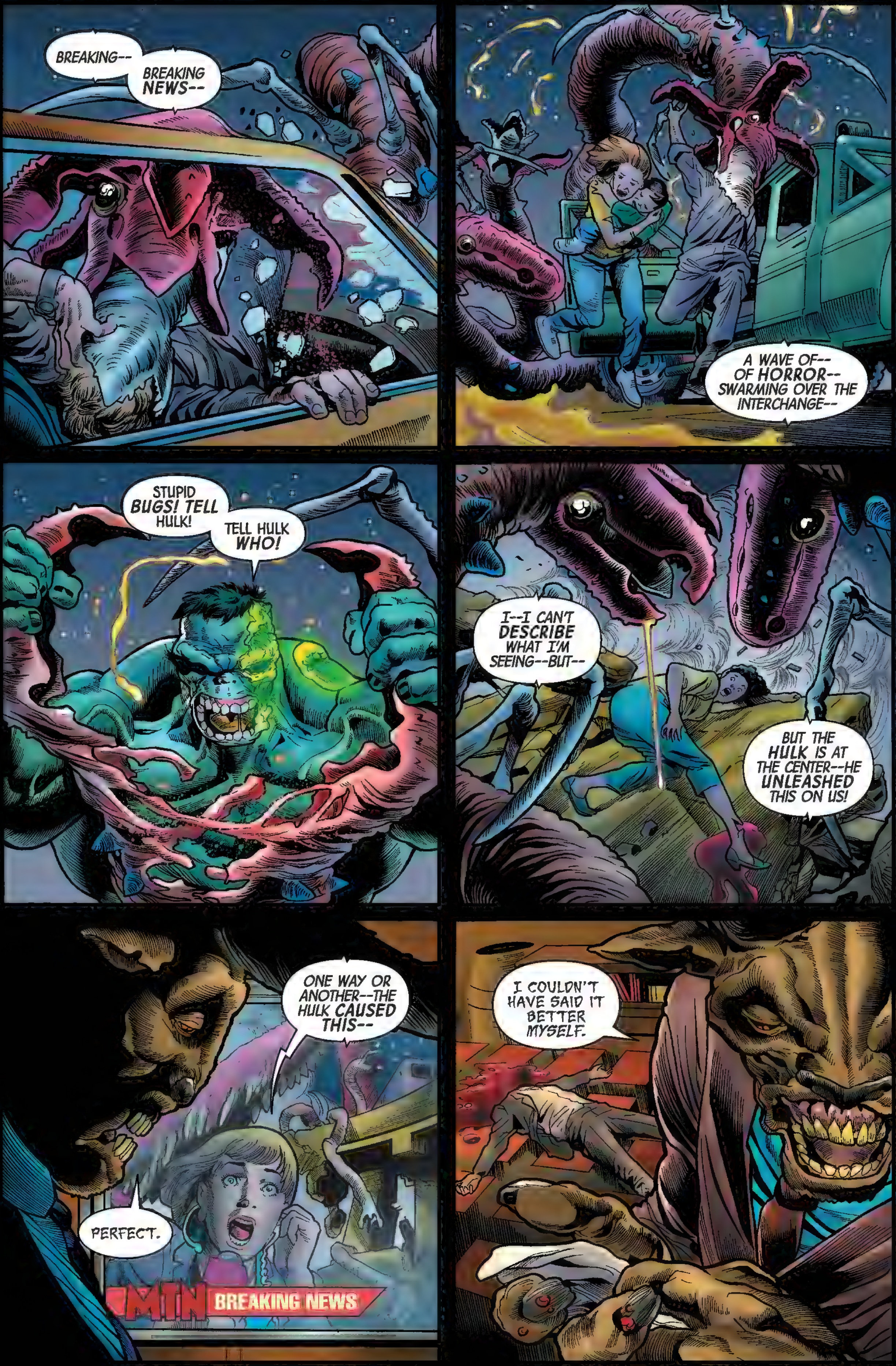

THE LAVA CREATURE IS STAGGERING-- AND--YES, IT'S DOWN--
I'M BEING TOLD HE WAS FELLED BY TERRANIA--THE NEWEST ADDITION TO THE GAMMA RESPONSE UNIT GAMMA FLIGHT--
"TITANIA," YOU MORON. ALIAS MARY MACPHERRAN.
CONVICTED OF ROBBERY, ASSAULT, ATTEMPTED MURDER. A DANGEROUS SUPER-POWERED FELON--AND YET SHE WAS PAROLED DESPITE ALL THAT.
I THINK IT'S OUR DUTY AS CITIZENS TO SEE SUCH ERRORS CORRECTED...
WHO'S NEXT?
DR. CHARLENE McGOWAN, SIR. WE'VE ALREADY RUN SEVERAL STORIES ABOUT HER TIME RUNNING A DRUG LAB...
BUT NOT ABOUT WHAT'S ON THE VERY FIRST PAGE OF THIS FILE...
IT--THAT INVOLVES PRIVATE MEDICAL RECORDS, SIR. I FELT USING IT MIGHT CREATE SOME, AH, LEGAL ISSUES.
BESIDES, IT-- IT REALLY DOESN'T SEEM OUR BUSINESS--
OH, RANDOLPH.
AND YOU WERE DOING SO WELL.
AAAH--
BREAKING NEWS--

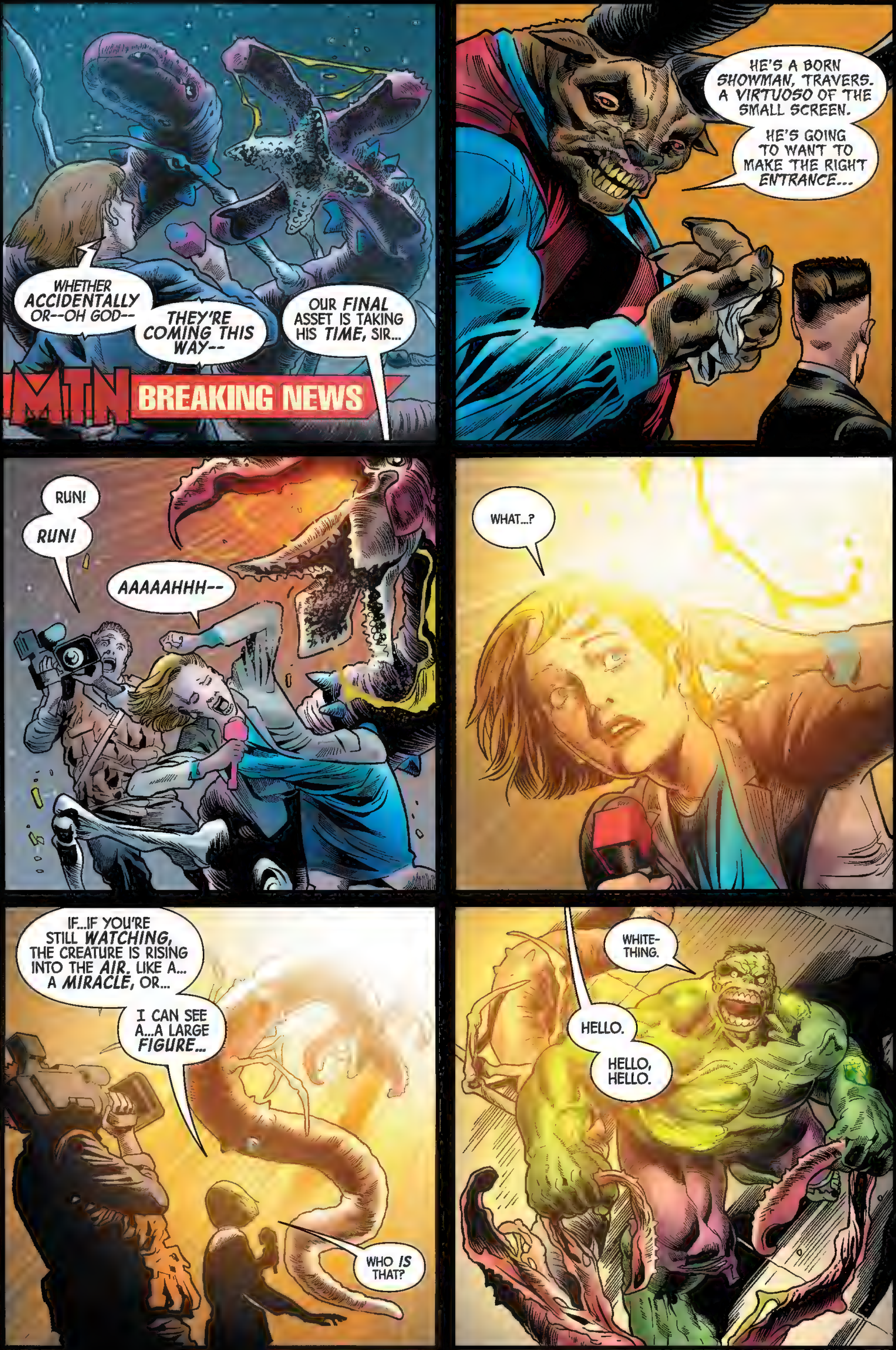

DOC SAMSON AND--AND WE'RE STILL NOT SURE WHAT THAT IS--
DOC SAMSON AND HIS ACCOMPLICE ARE APPROACHING THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT, AND--
OH!
THAT SOUND-- LIKE A CLAP OF THUNDER--
--THAT WAS ITS SKULL CRACKING--IT'S--
IT'S DOWN!
THE CREATURE IS DOWN!

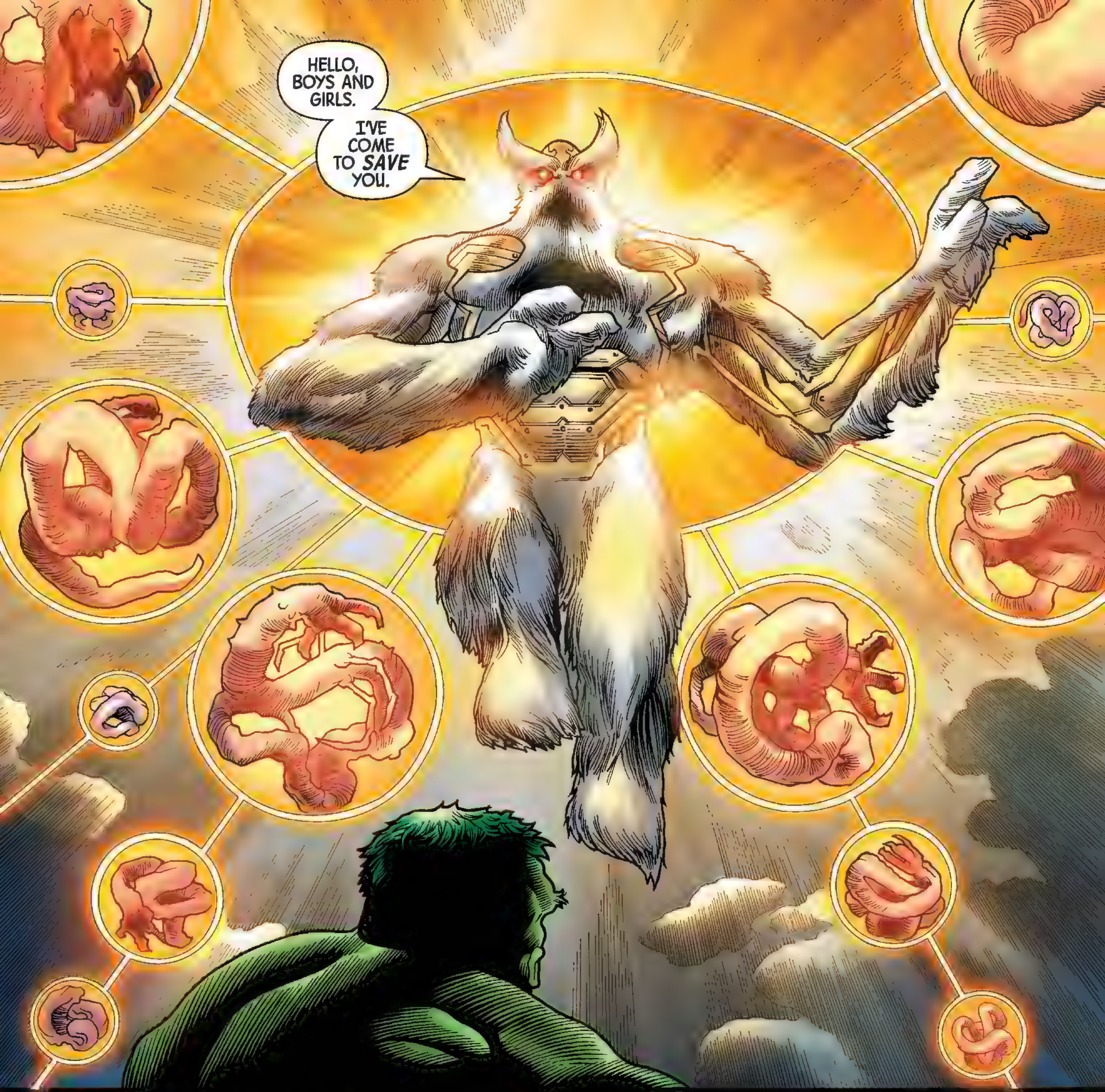

DEAD?
I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T THINK IT'S *BREATHING,* BUT THERE'S--WAIT.
THIS *WOUND* YOU MADE... SOMETHING'S *MOVING* IN IT.
LOTS OF SOMETHINGS. TRYING TO GET *OUT...*
SOME KIND OF *INTERNAL PARASITES.*
EACH ONE OF THESE THINGS IS A...A *HIVE.* A *SHELL.*
IF WE'D BROKEN THEM FULLY *OPEN...*
OH NO.
YOU--YOU SAID ONE OF THESE ATE *BRUCE?*
HM.
THE LAST MONSTER--IT'S TWITCHING--SPASMING--


SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO IT--
OUT...
OUT!
HULK OUT FROM BUGS AND SLIME! OUT INTO AIR!
WHO DID THIS? WHO DID THIS TO HULK?
HULK WILL KNOW--


--OR HULK WILL SMASH!
SMASH!


BREAKING--
BREAKING NEWS--
A WAVE OF-- OF HORROR-- SWARMING OVER THE INTERCHANGE--
STUPID BUGS! TELL HULK!
TELL HULK WHO!
I--I CAN'T DESCRIBE WHAT I'M SEEING--BUT--
BUT THE HULK IS AT THE CENTER--HE UNLEASHED THIS ON US!
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER--THE HULK CAUSED THIS--
PERFECT.
MTN BREAKING NEWS
I COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER MYSELF.


WHETHER ACCIDENTALLY OR--OH GOD--
THEY'RE COMING THIS WAY--
OUR FINAL ASSET IS TAKING HIS TIME, SIR...
MTN BREAKING NEWS
HE'S A BORN SHOWMAN, TRAVERS. A VIRTUOSO OF THE SMALL SCREEN.
HE'S GOING TO WANT TO MAKE THE RIGHT ENTRANCE...
RUN!
RUN!
AAAAAHHH--
WHAT...?
IF...IF YOU'RE STILL WATCHING, THE CREATURE IS RISING INTO THE AIR, LIKE A... A MIRACLE, OR...
I CAN SEE A...A LARGE FIGURE...
WHO IS THAT?
WHITE-THING.
HELLO.
HELLO, HELLO.


HELLO, BOYS AND GIRLS.
I'VE COME TO *SAVE* YOU.

COMETH THE HOUR

31
XEMNU
XEMNU
XEMNU
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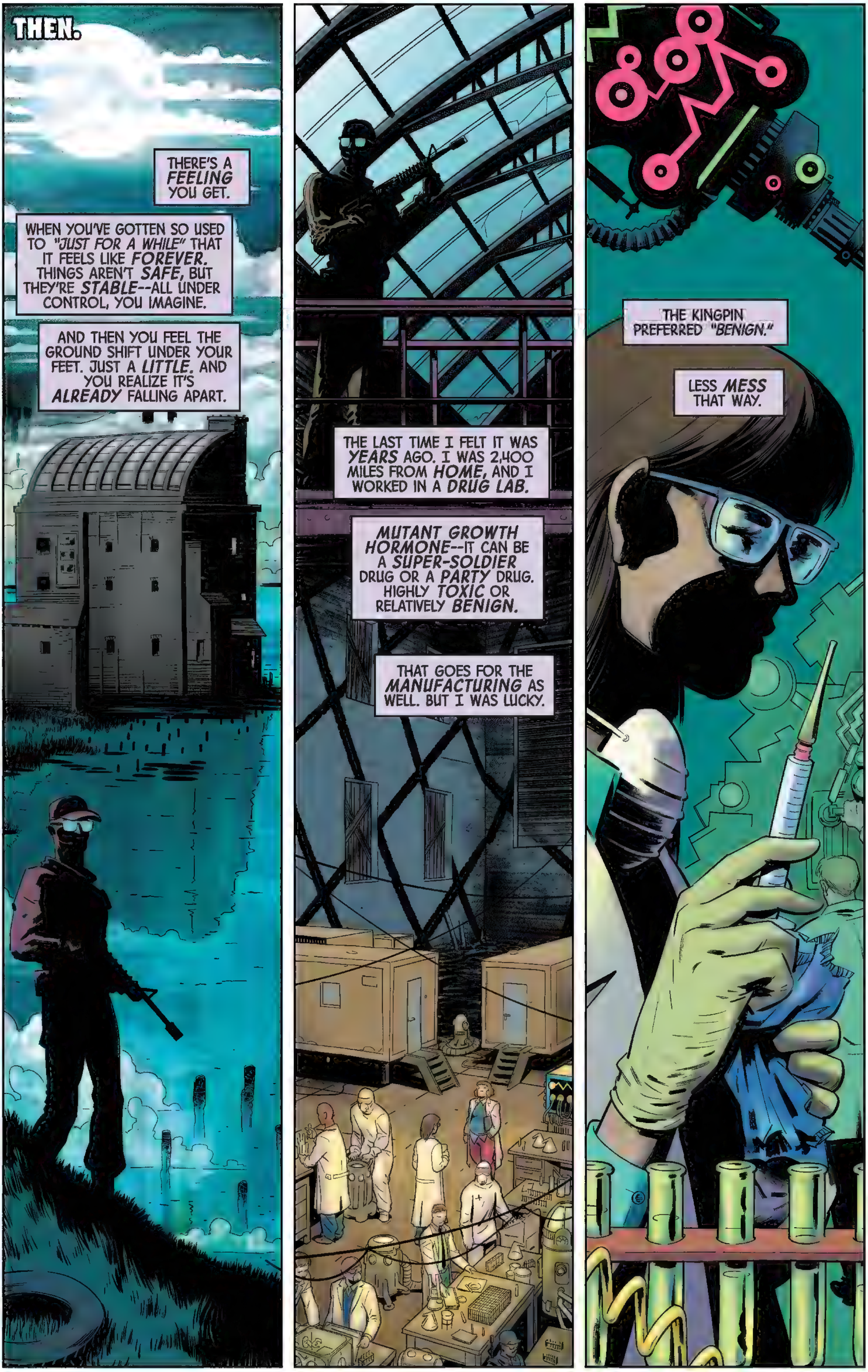
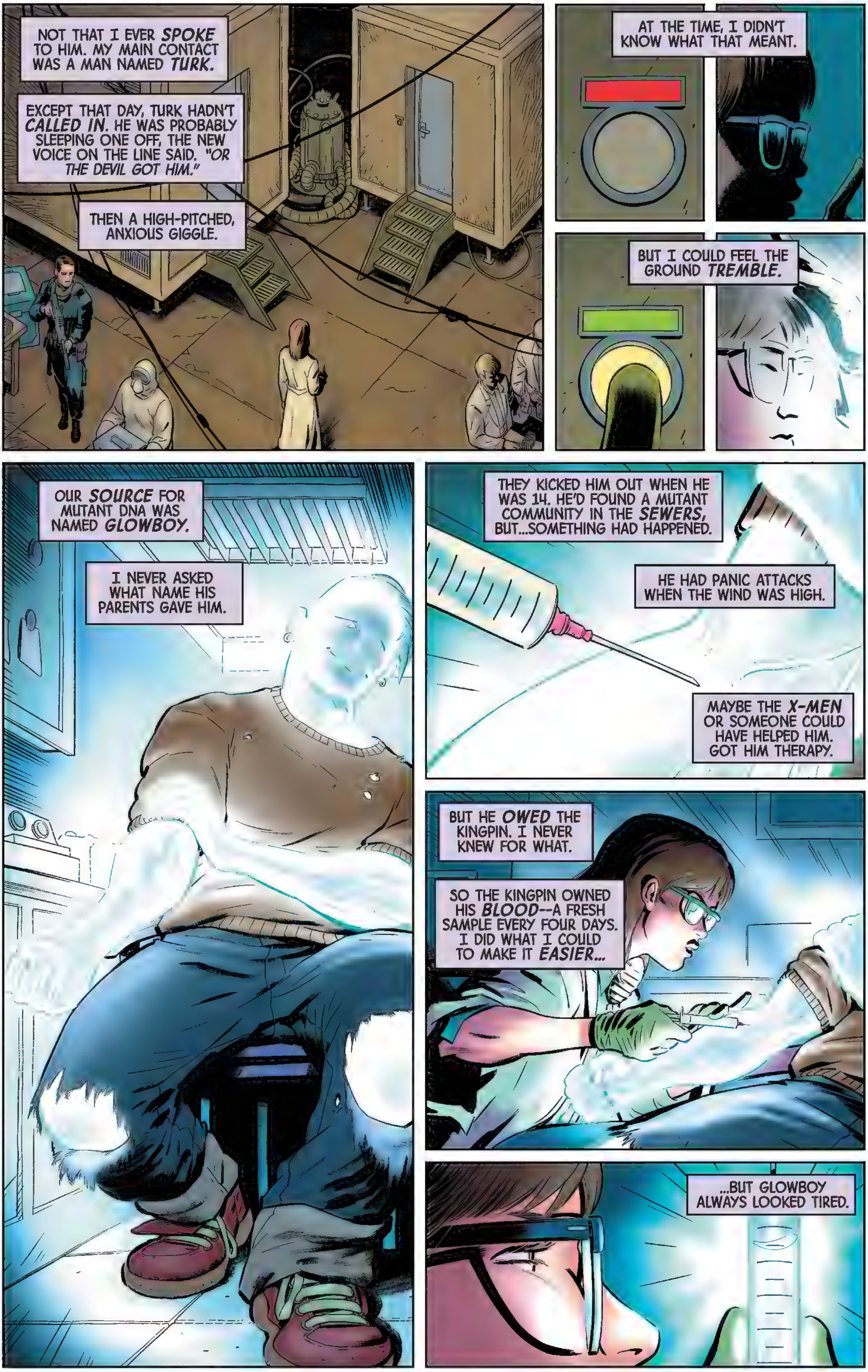
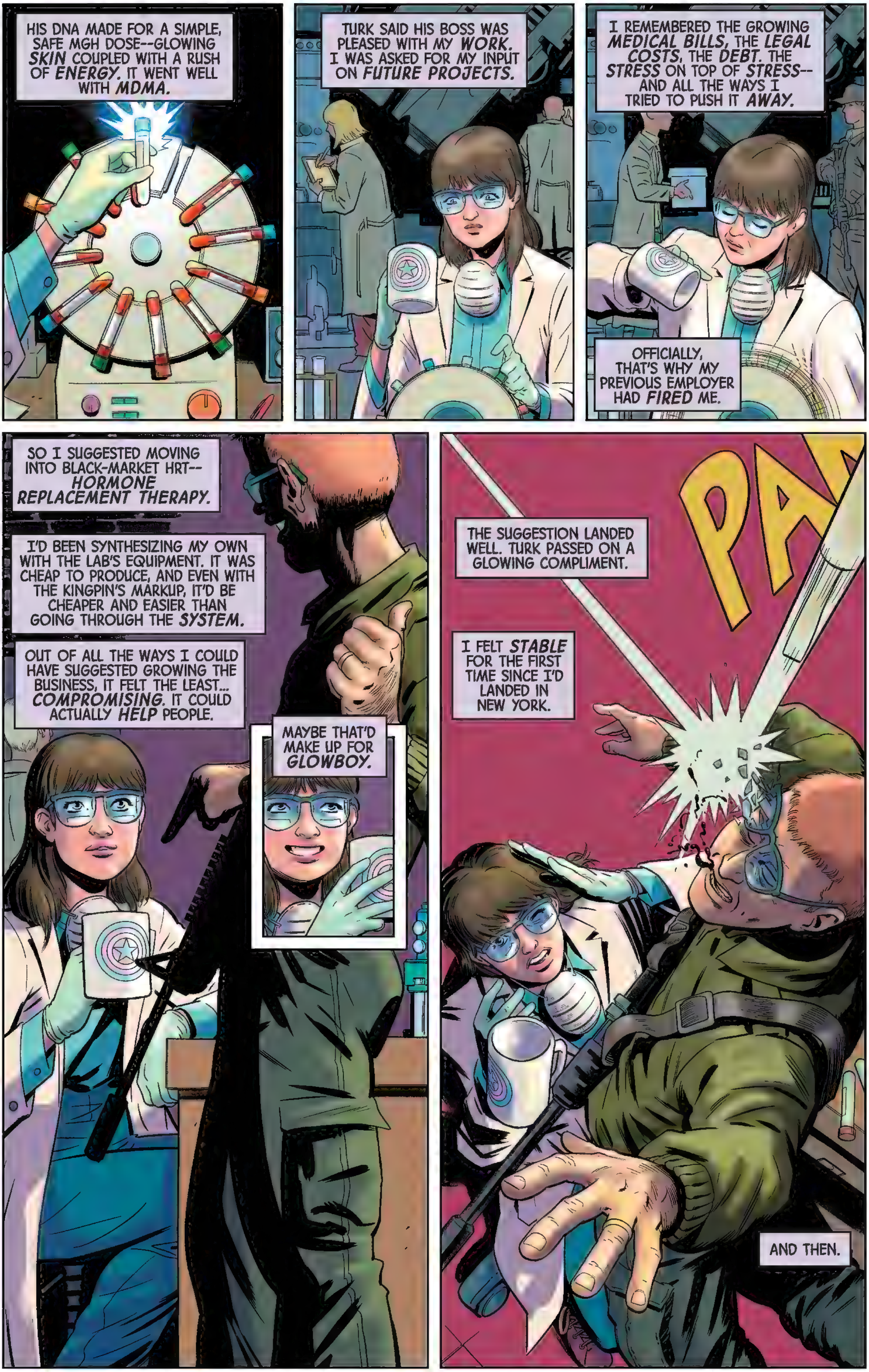
Xemnu
Driv

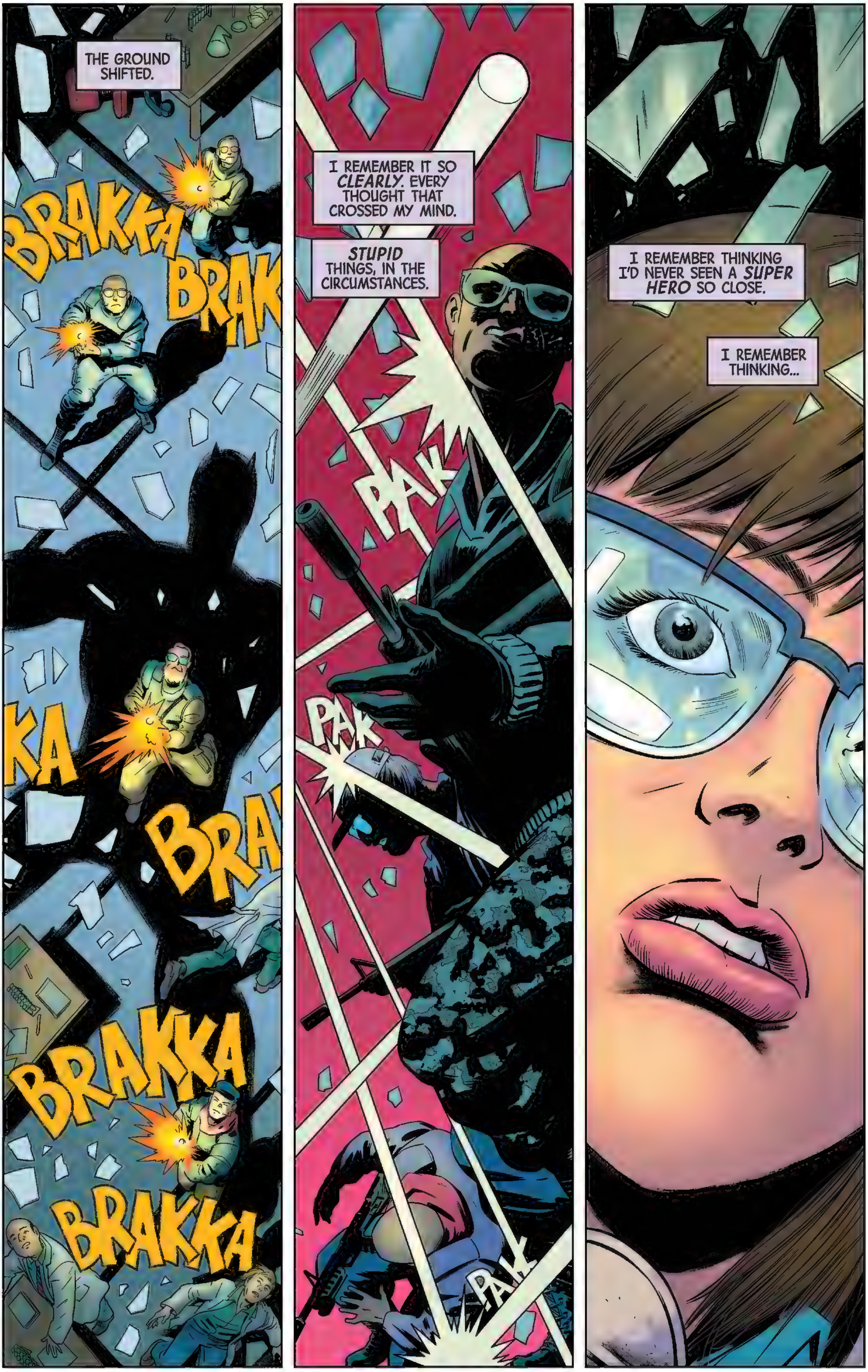
"THOU COMEST AS THE
MEMORY OF A DREAM,
WHICH NOW IS SAD BECAUSE
IT HATH BEEN SWEET."

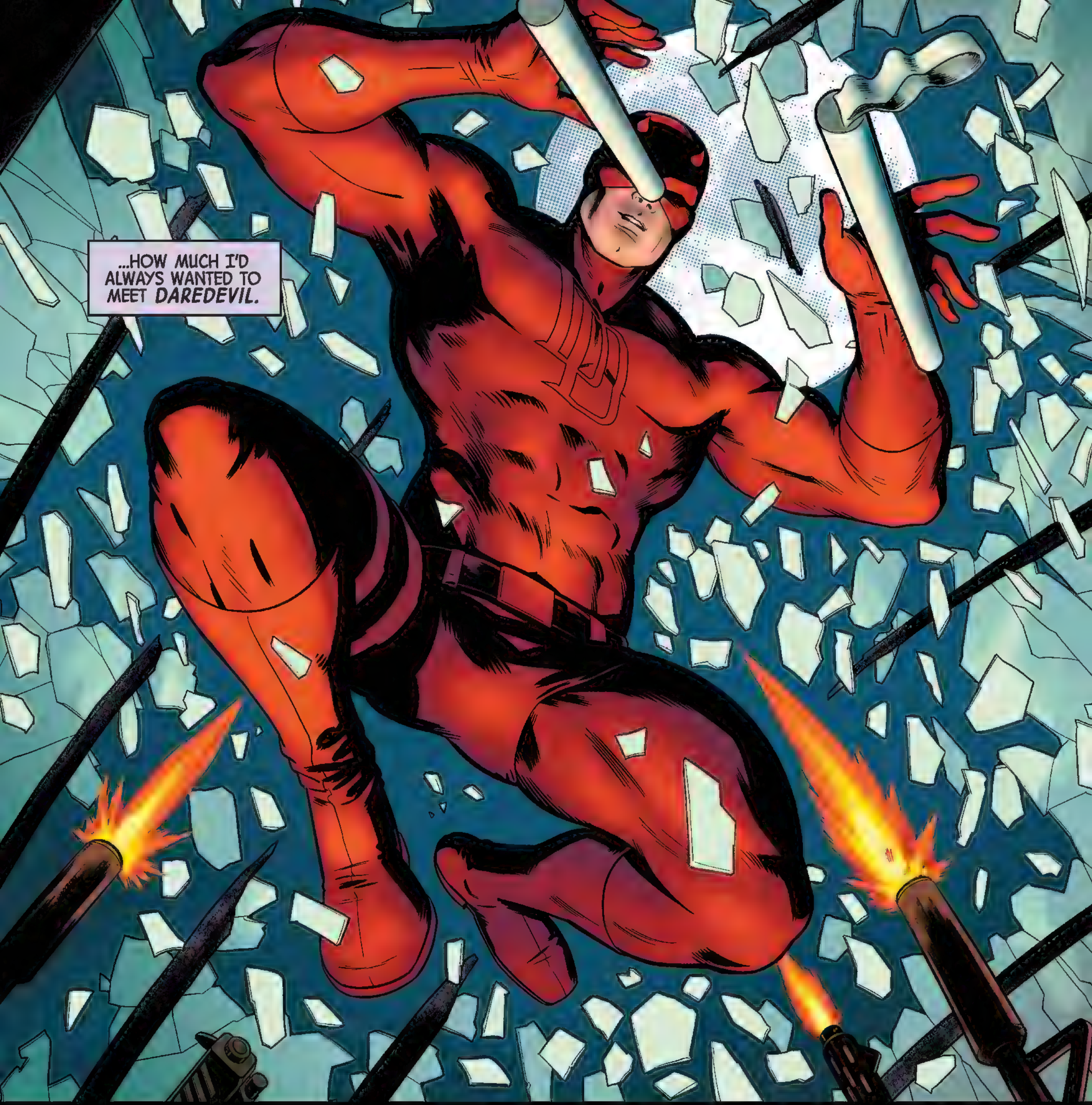
– PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

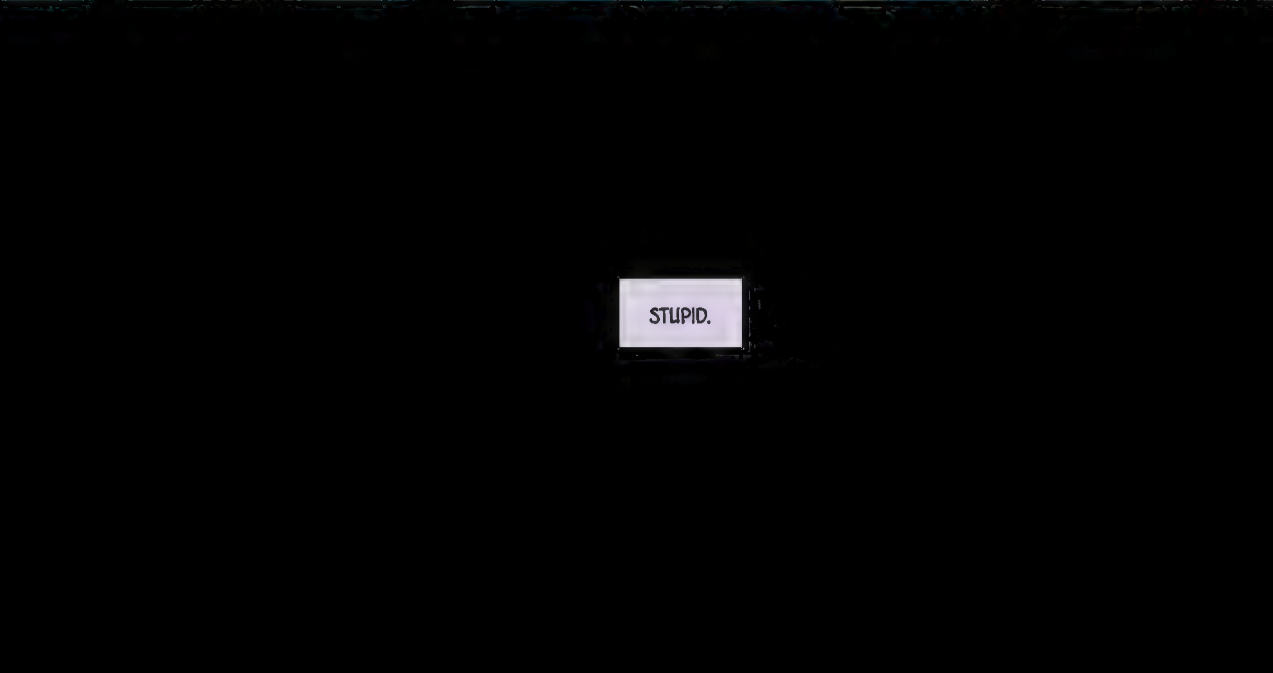

THEN.
THERE'S A *FEELING* YOU GET.
WHEN YOU'VE GOTTEN SO USED TO *"JUST FOR A WHILE"* THAT IT FEELS LIKE *FOREVER*. THINGS AREN'T *SAFE*, BUT THEY'RE *STABLE*--ALL UNDER CONTROL, YOU IMAGINE.
AND THEN YOU FEEL THE GROUND SHIFT UNDER YOUR FEET. JUST A *LITTLE*. AND YOU REALIZE IT'S *ALREADY* FALLING APART.
THE LAST TIME I FELT IT WAS *YEARS* AGO. I WAS 2,400 MILES FROM *HOME*, AND I WORKED IN A *DRUG LAB*.
MUTANT GROWTH HORMONE--IT CAN BE A *SUPER-SOLDIER* DRUG OR A *PARTY* DRUG. HIGHLY *TOXIC* OR RELATIVELY *BENIGN*.
THAT GOES FOR THE *MANUFACTURING* AS WELL. BUT I WAS LUCKY.
THE KINGPIN PREFERRED *"BENIGN."*
LESS *MESS* THAT WAY.

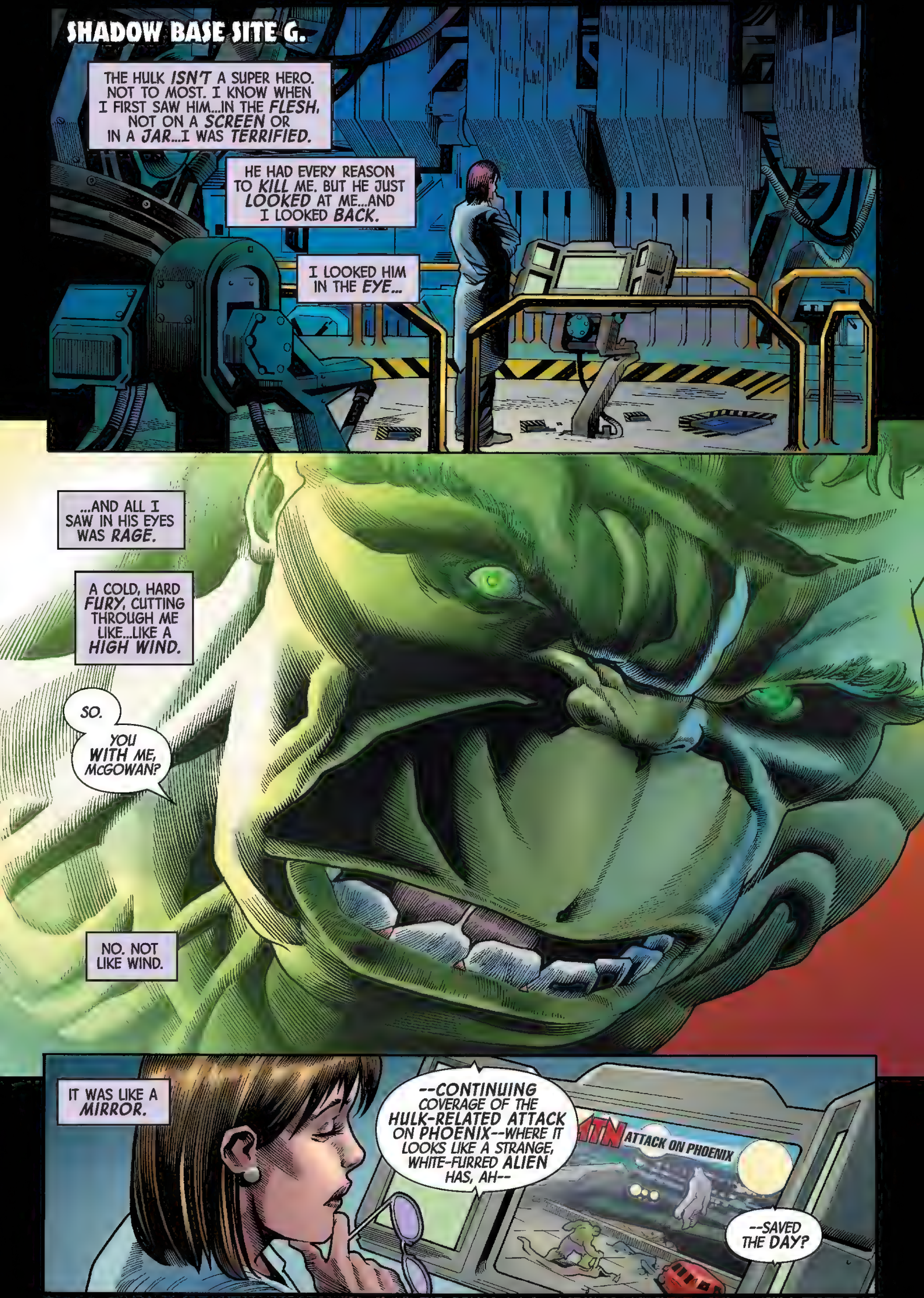

NOT THAT I EVER *SPOKE* TO HIM. MY MAIN CONTACT WAS A MAN NAMED *TURK.*
EXCEPT THAT DAY, TURK HADN'T *CALLED IN.* HE WAS PROBABLY SLEEPING ONE OFF, THE NEW VOICE ON THE LINE SAID. *"OR THE DEVIL GOT HIM."*
THEN A HIGH-PITCHED, ANXIOUS GIGGLE.
AT THE TIME, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANT.
BUT I COULD FEEL THE GROUND *TREMBLE.*
OUR *SOURCE* FOR MUTANT DNA WAS NAMED *GLOWBOY.*
I NEVER ASKED WHAT NAME HIS PARENTS GAVE HIM.
THEY KICKED HIM OUT WHEN HE WAS 14. HE'D FOUND A MUTANT COMMUNITY IN THE *SEWERS,* BUT...SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED.
HE HAD PANIC ATTACKS WHEN THE WIND WAS HIGH.
MAYBE THE *X-MEN* OR SOMEONE COULD HAVE HELPED HIM. GOT HIM THERAPY.
BUT HE *OWED* THE KINGPIN. I NEVER KNEW FOR WHAT.
SO THE KINGPIN OWNED HIS *BLOOD*--A FRESH SAMPLE EVERY FOUR DAYS. I DID WHAT I COULD TO MAKE IT *EASIER...*
...BUT GLOWBOY ALWAYS LOOKED TIRED.

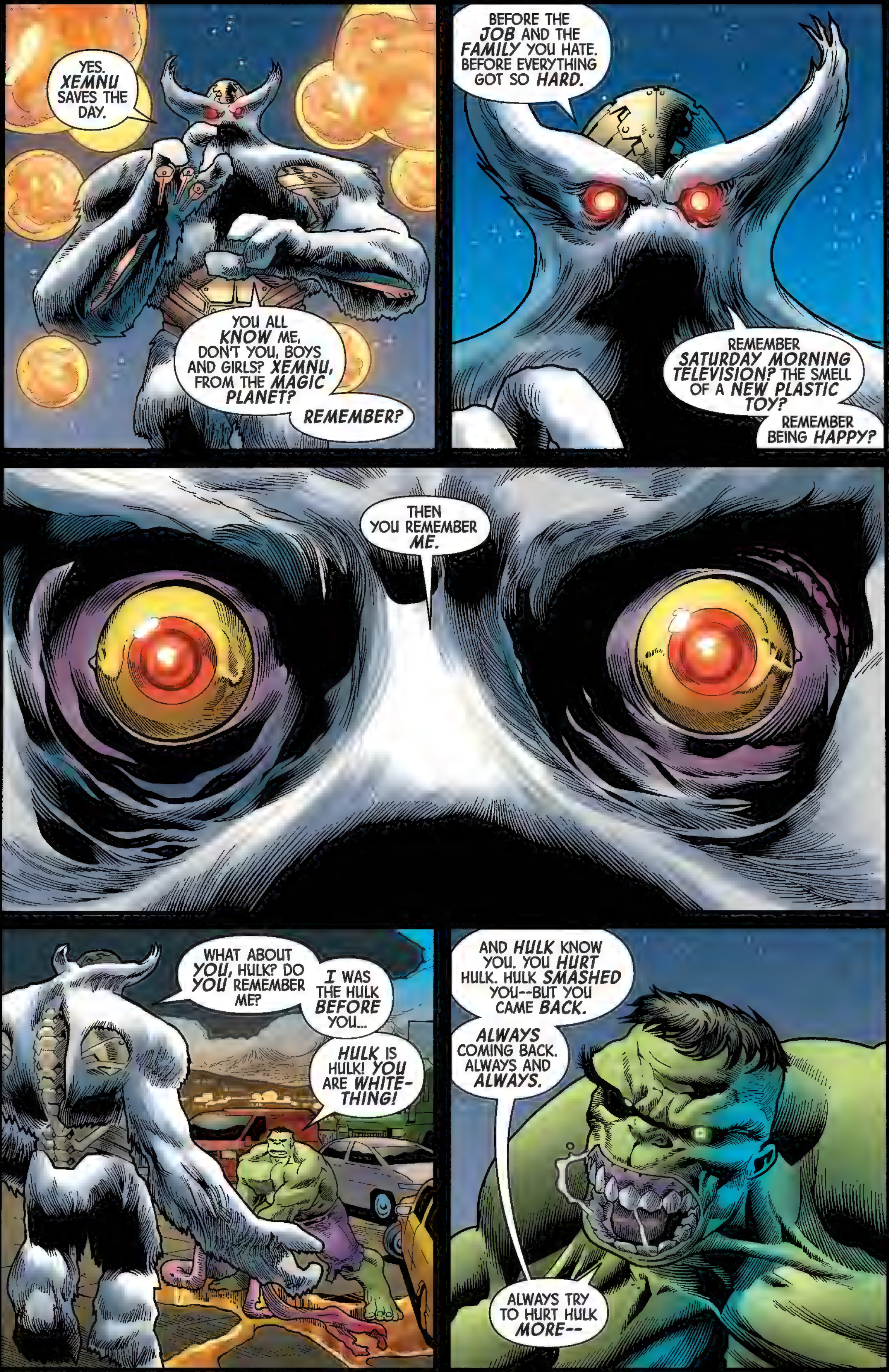

HIS DNA MADE FOR A SIMPLE, SAFE MGH DOSE--GLOWING *SKIN* COUPLED WITH A RUSH OF *ENERGY*. IT WENT WELL WITH *MDMA*.
TURK SAID HIS BOSS WAS PLEASED WITH MY *WORK*. I WAS ASKED FOR MY INPUT ON *FUTURE PROJECTS*.
I REMEMBERED THE GROWING *MEDICAL BILLS*, THE *LEGAL COSTS*, THE *DEBT*, THE *STRESS* ON TOP OF *STRESS*--AND ALL THE WAYS I TRIED TO PUSH IT *AWAY*.
OFFICIALLY, THAT'S WHY MY PREVIOUS EMPLOYER HAD *FIRED* ME.
SO I SUGGESTED MOVING INTO BLACK-MARKET HRT--*HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY*.
I'D BEEN SYNTHESIZING MY OWN WITH THE LAB'S EQUIPMENT. IT WAS CHEAP TO PRODUCE, AND EVEN WITH THE KINGPIN'S MARKUP, IT'D BE CHEAPER AND EASIER THAN GOING THROUGH THE *SYSTEM*.
OUT OF ALL THE WAYS I COULD HAVE SUGGESTED GROWING THE BUSINESS, IT FELT THE LEAST... *COMPROMISING*. IT COULD ACTUALLY *HELP* PEOPLE.
MAYBE THAT'D MAKE UP FOR *GLOWBOY*.
THE SUGGESTION LANDED WELL. TURK PASSED ON A GLOWING COMPLIMENT.
PA
I FELT *STABLE* FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE I'D LANDED IN NEW YORK.
AND THEN.

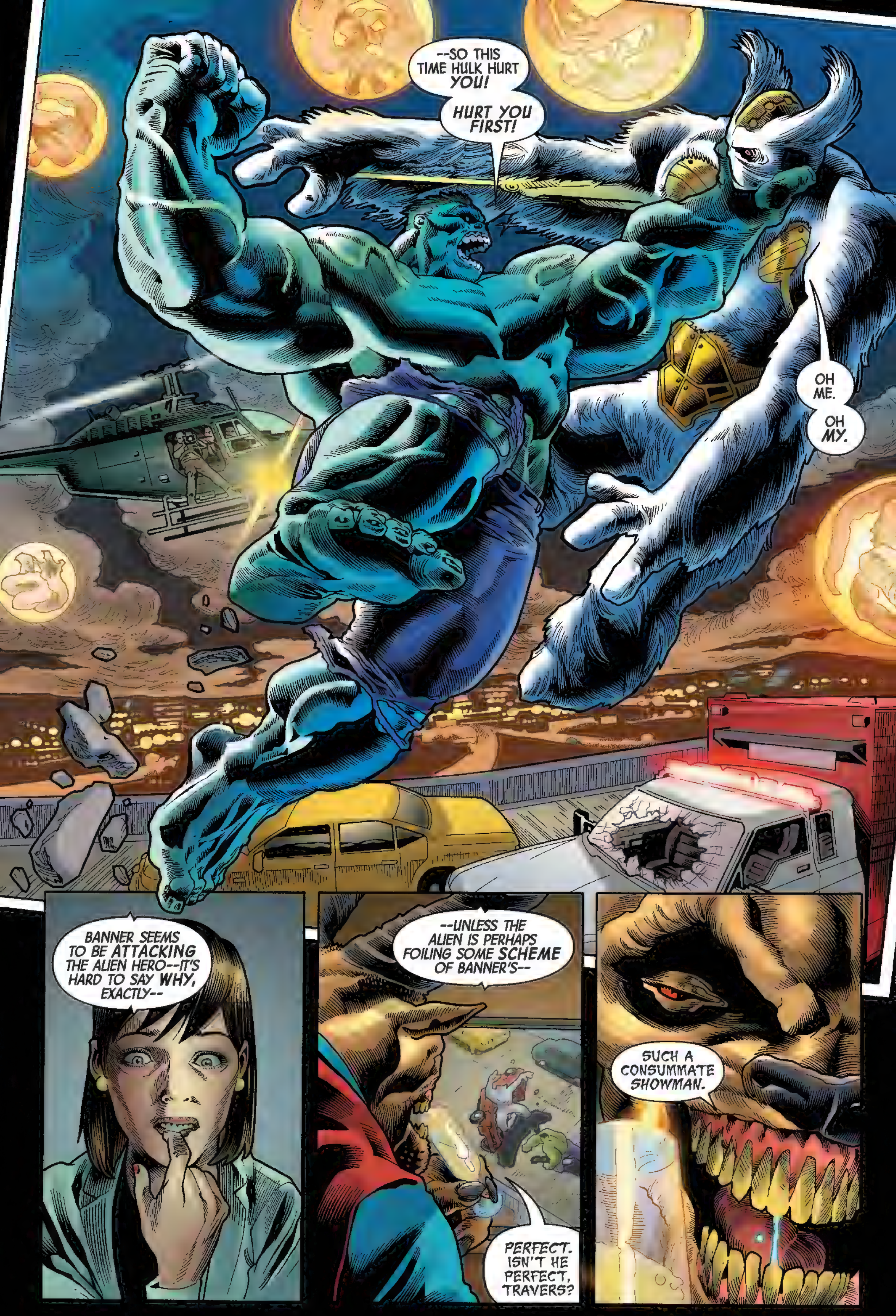

THE GROUND SHIFTED.
BRAKKA
BRAK
KA
BRA
BRAKKA
BRAKKA
I REMEMBER IT SO *CLEARLY*. EVERY THOUGHT THAT CROSSED MY MIND.
STUPID THINGS, IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES.
PAK
PAK
PAK
I REMEMBER THINKING I'D NEVER SEEN A *SUPER HERO* SO CLOSE.
I REMEMBER THINKING...

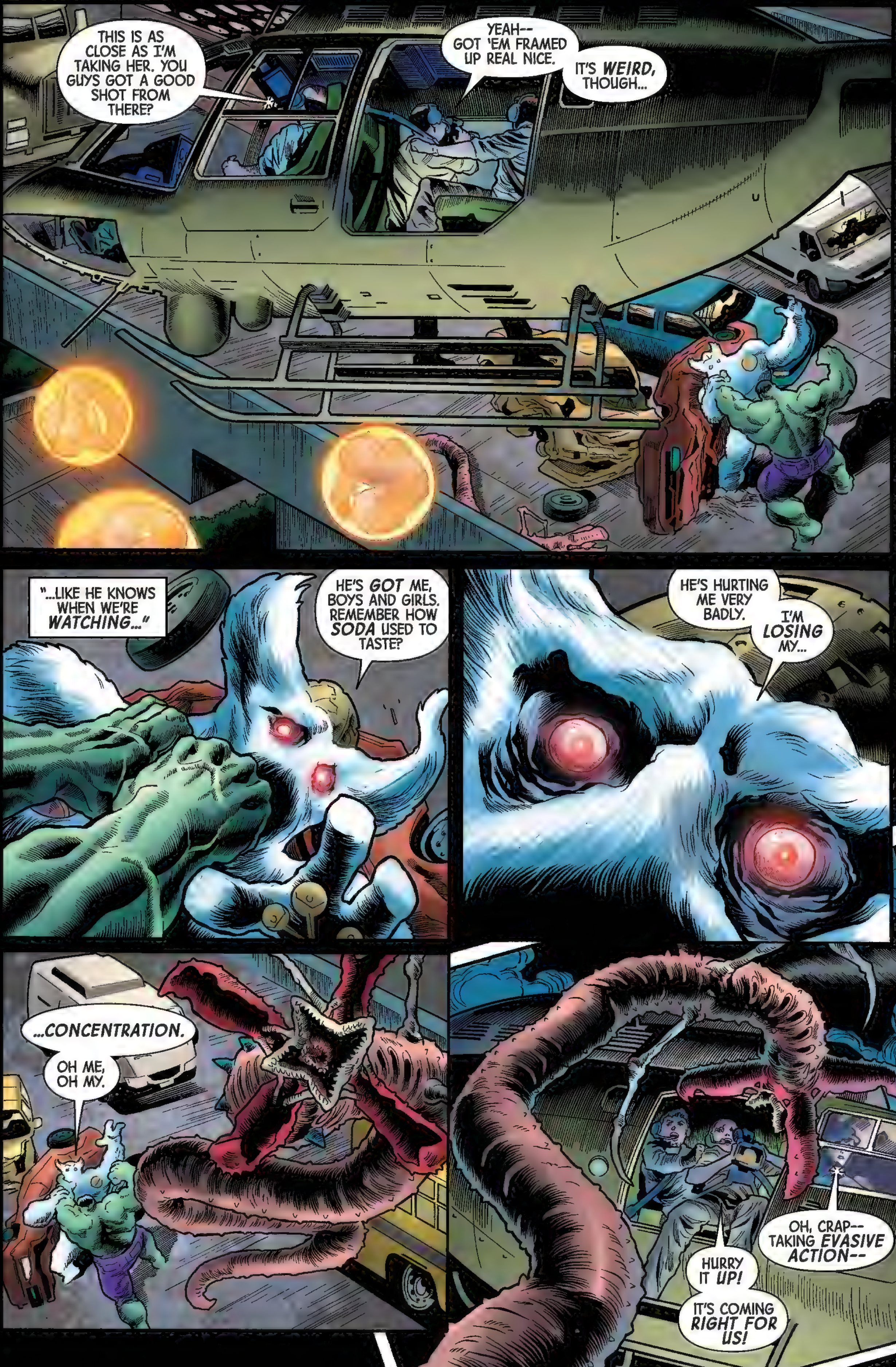

...HOW MUCH I'D ALWAYS WANTED TO MEET *DAREDEVIL*.

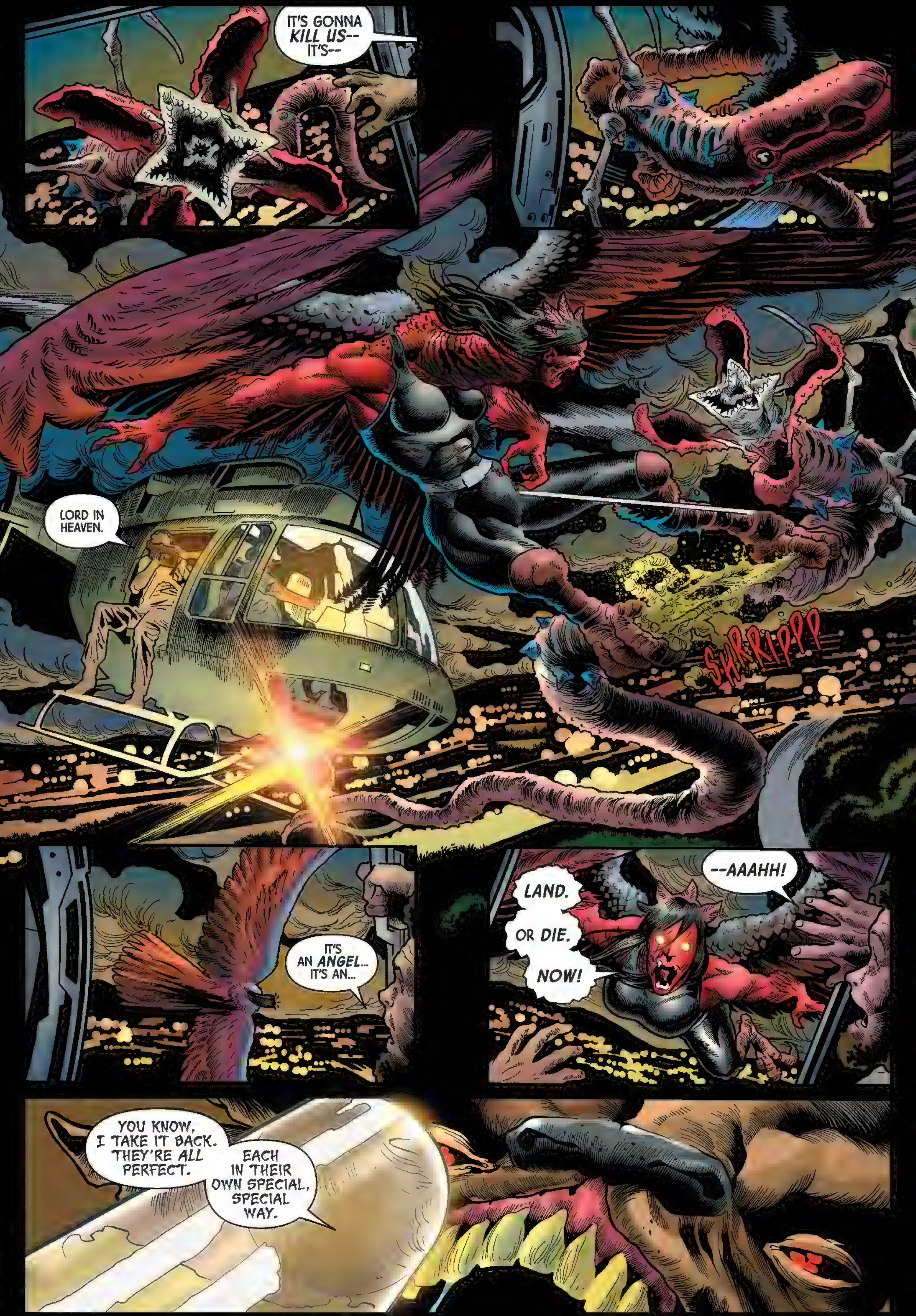

STUPID.

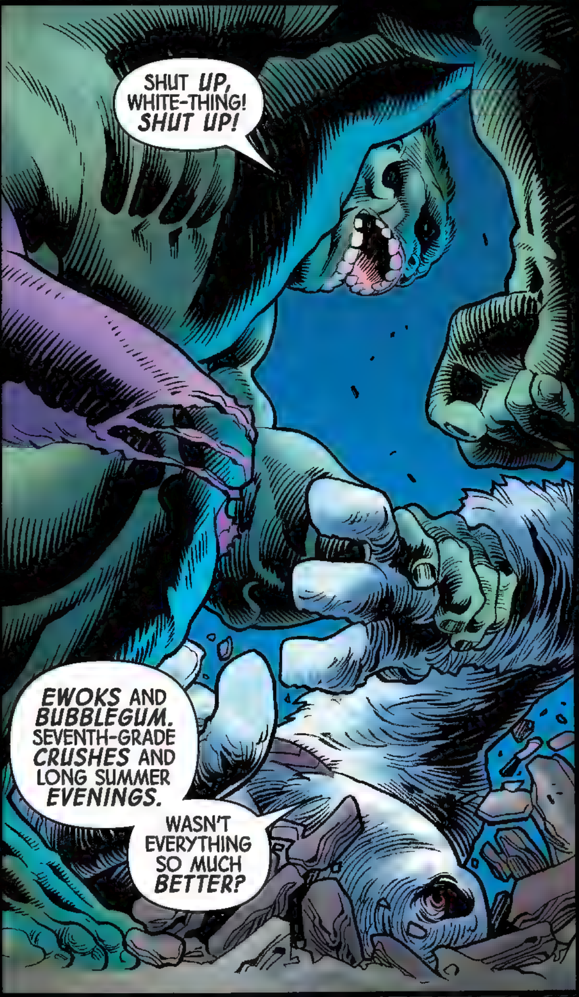

SHADOW BASE SITE G.
THE HULK ISN'T A SUPER HERO. NOT TO MOST. I KNOW WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM...IN THE FLESH, NOT ON A SCREEN OR IN A JAR...I WAS TERRIFIED.
HE HAD EVERY REASON TO KILL ME. BUT HE JUST LOOKED AT ME...AND I LOOKED BACK.
I LOOKED HIM IN THE EYE...
...AND ALL I SAW IN HIS EYES WAS RAGE.
A COLD, HARD FURY, CUTTING THROUGH ME LIKE...LIKE A HIGH WIND.
SO.
YOU WITH ME, McGOWAN?
NO. NOT LIKE WIND.
IT WAS LIKE A MIRROR.
--CONTINUING COVERAGE OF THE HULK-RELATED ATTACK ON PHOENIX--WHERE IT LOOKS LIKE A STRANGE, WHITE-FURRED ALIEN HAS, AH--
ATN ATTACK ON PHOENIX
--SAVED THE DAY?

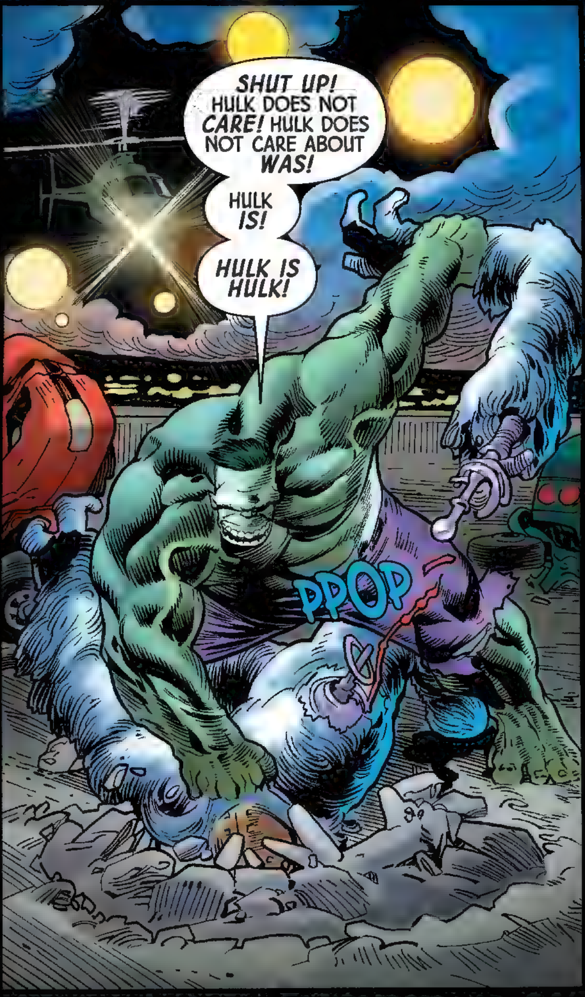

YES. XEMNU SAVES THE DAY.
YOU ALL KNOW ME, DON'T YOU, BOYS AND GIRLS? XEMNU, FROM THE MAGIC PLANET?
REMEMBER?
BEFORE THE JOB AND THE FAMILY YOU HATE. BEFORE EVERYTHING GOT SO HARD.
REMEMBER SATURDAY MORNING TELEVISION? THE SMELL OF A NEW PLASTIC TOY?
REMEMBER BEING HAPPY?
THEN YOU REMEMBER ME.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, HULK? DO YOU REMEMBER ME?
I WAS THE HULK BEFORE YOU...
HULK IS HULK! YOU ARE WHITE-THING!
AND HULK KNOW YOU. YOU HURT HULK. HULK SMASHED YOU--BUT YOU CAME BACK.
ALWAYS COMING BACK. ALWAYS AND ALWAYS.
ALWAYS TRY TO HURT HULK MORE--

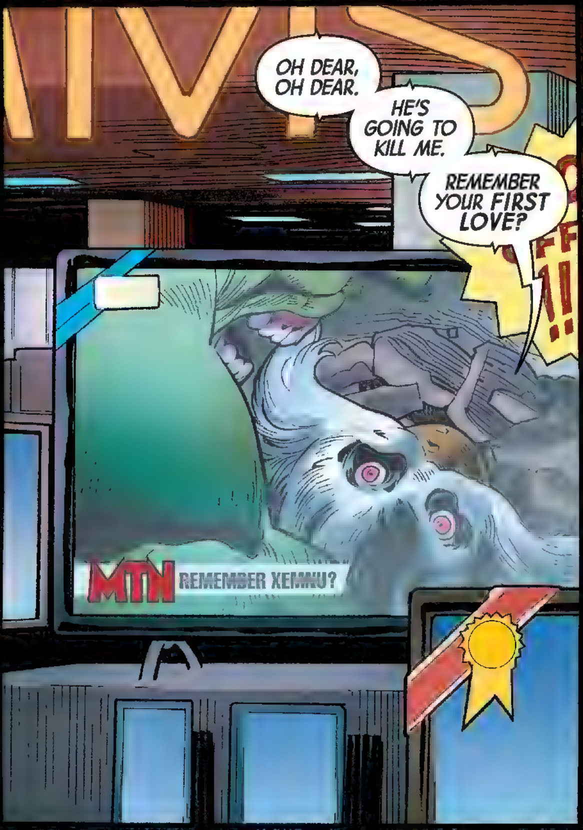

--SO THIS TIME HULK HURT YOU!
HURT YOU FIRST!
OH ME.
OH MY.
BANNER SEEMS TO BE ATTACKING THE ALIEN HERO--IT'S HARD TO SAY WHY, EXACTLY--
--UNLESS THE ALIEN IS PERHAPS FOILING SOME SCHEME OF BANNER'S--
PERFECT. ISN'T HE PERFECT, TRAVERS?
SUCH A CONSUMMATE SHOWMAN.

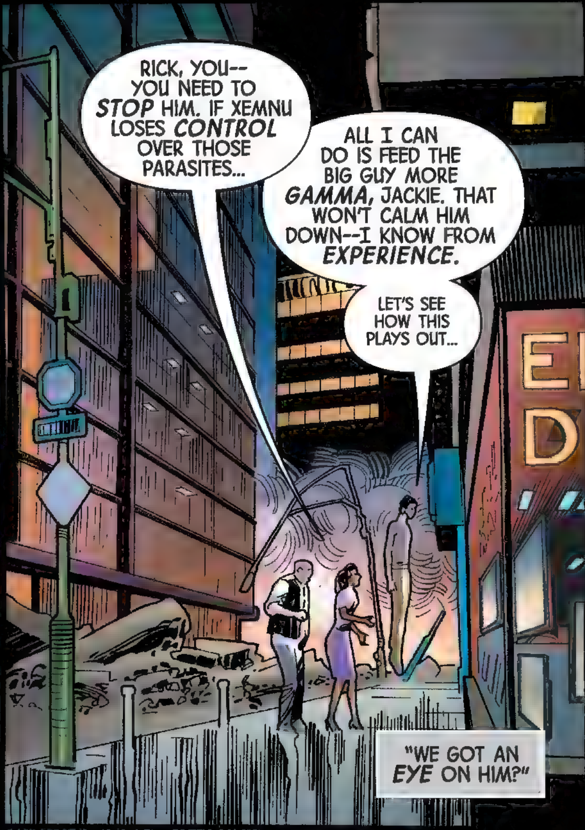

THIS IS AS CLOSE AS I'M TAKING HER. YOU GUYS GOT A GOOD SHOT FROM THERE?
YEAH-- GOT 'EM FRAMED UP REAL NICE.
IT'S *WEIRD,* THOUGH...
"...LIKE HE KNOWS WHEN WE'RE *WATCHING...*"
HE'S *GOT* ME, BOYS AND GIRLS. REMEMBER HOW *SODA* USED TO TASTE?
HE'S HURTING ME VERY BADLY.
I'M *LOSING* MY...
...CONCENTRATION.
OH ME, OH MY.
OH, CRAP-- TAKING *EVASIVE ACTION--*
HURRY IT *UP!*
IT'S COMING *RIGHT FOR US!*

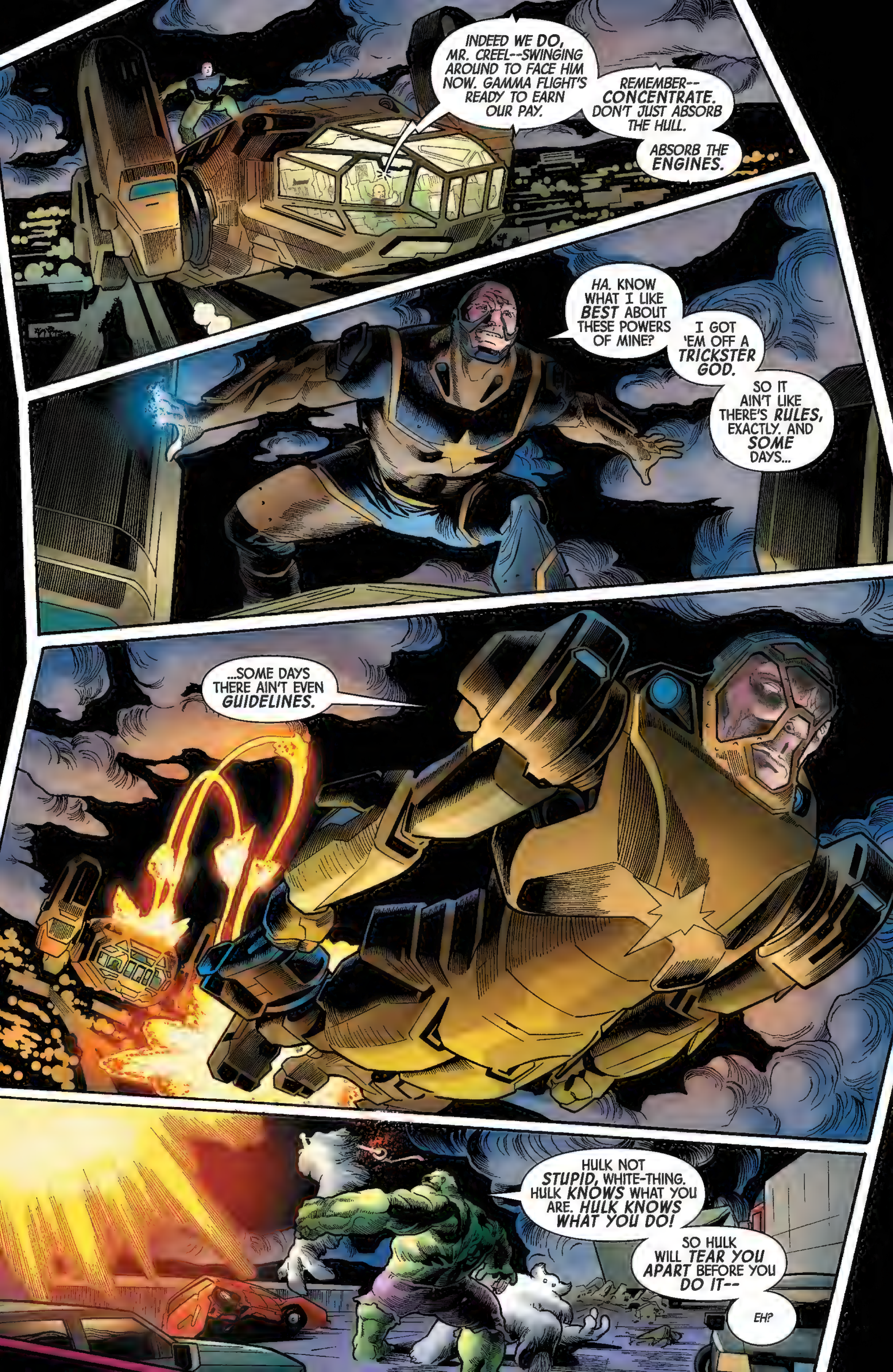

IT'S GONNA *KILL US*-- IT'S--
LORD IN HEAVEN.
SHRIPPP
IT'S AN *ANGEL*... IT'S AN...
LAND.
OR *DIE*.
NOW!
--AAAHH!
YOU KNOW, I TAKE IT BACK. THEY'RE *ALL* PERFECT.
EACH IN THEIR OWN SPECIAL, SPECIAL WAY.

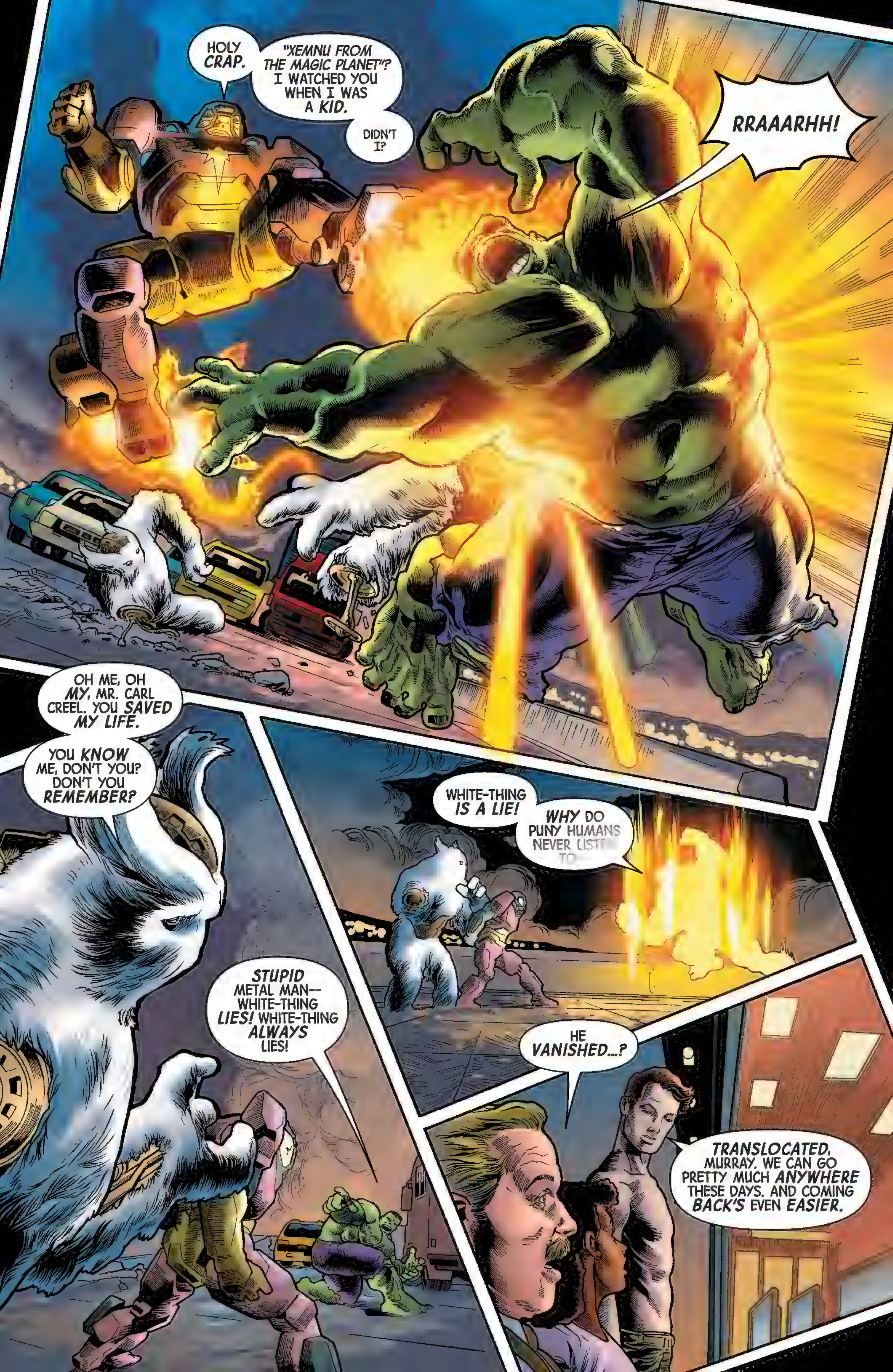

SHUT UP, WHITE-THING! SHUT UP!
EWOKS AND BUBBLEGUM. SEVENTH-GRADE CRUSHES AND LONG SUMMER EVENINGS.
WASN'T EVERYTHING SO MUCH BETTER?

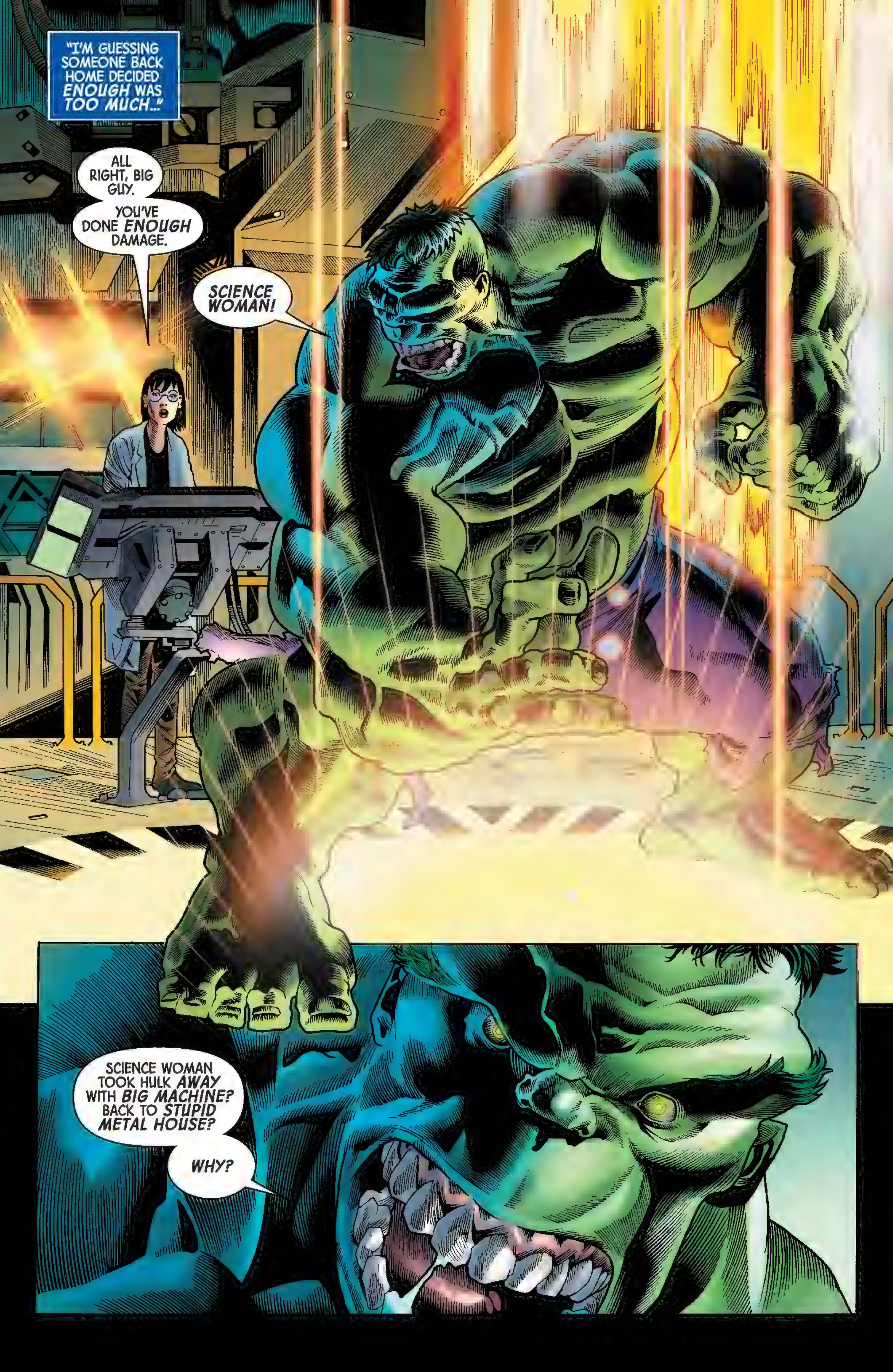

SHUT UP! HULK DOES NOT CARE! HULK DOES NOT CARE ABOUT WAS!
HULK IS!
HULK IS HULK!
PPOP

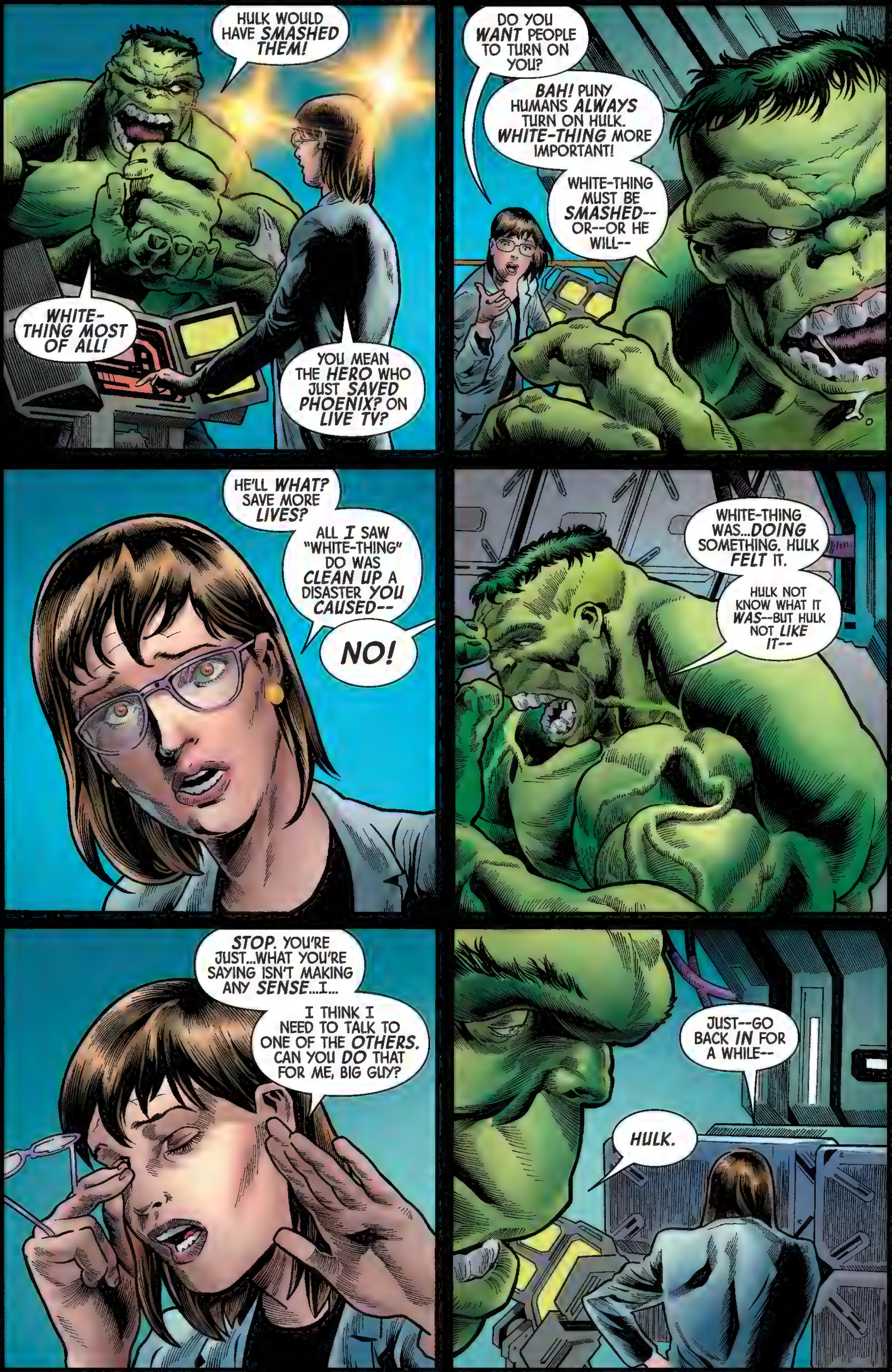

OH DEAR, OH DEAR.
HE'S GOING TO KILL ME.
REMEMBER YOUR FIRST LOVE?
MTN REMEMBER XEMNU?

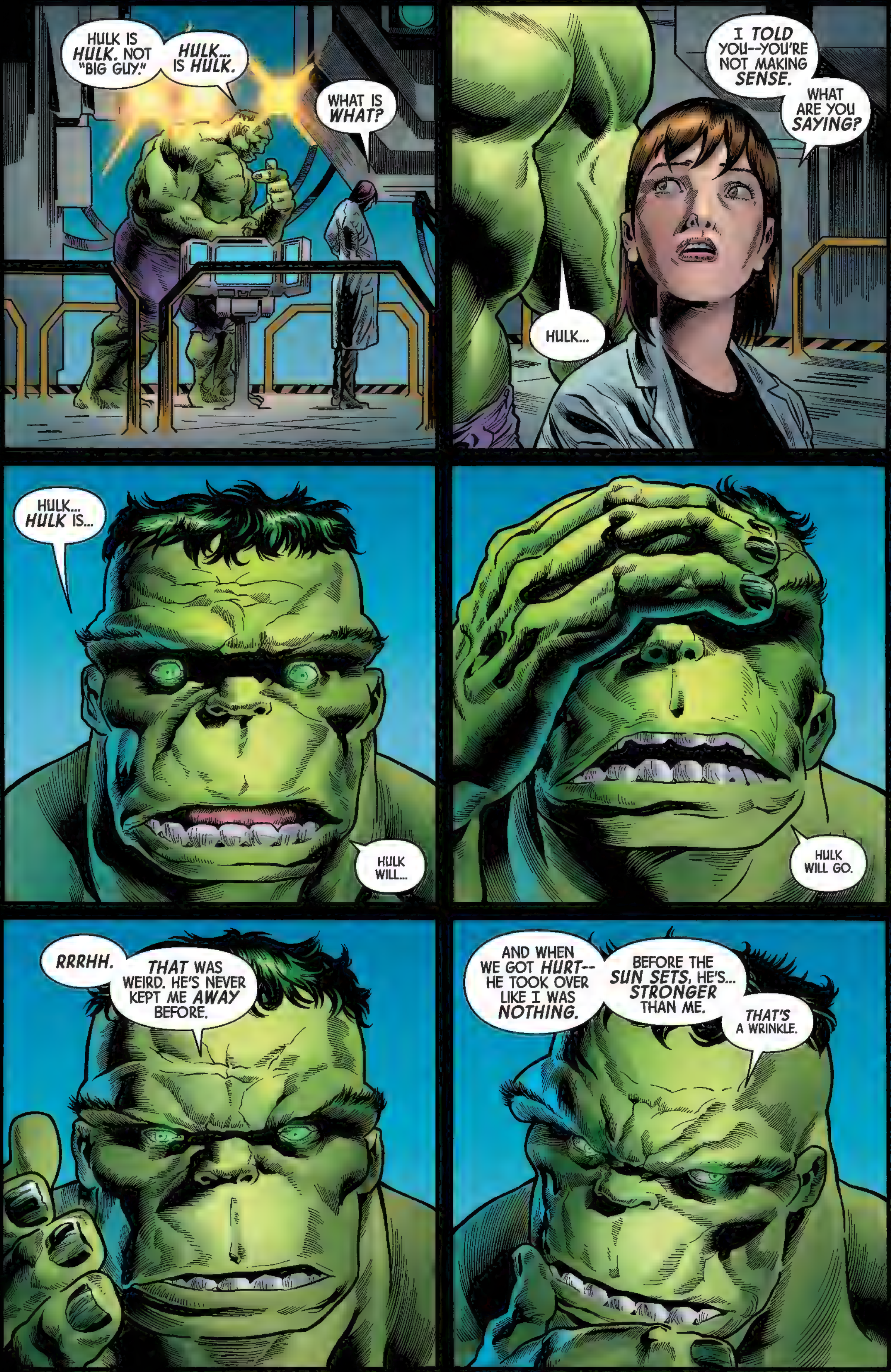

RICK, YOU-- YOU NEED TO STOP HIM. IF XEMNU LOSES CONTROL OVER THOSE PARASITES...
ALL I CAN DO IS FEED THE BIG GUY MORE GAMMA, JACKIE. THAT WON'T CALM HIM DOWN--I KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE.
LET'S SEE HOW THIS PLAYS OUT...
"WE GOT AN EYE ON HIM?"

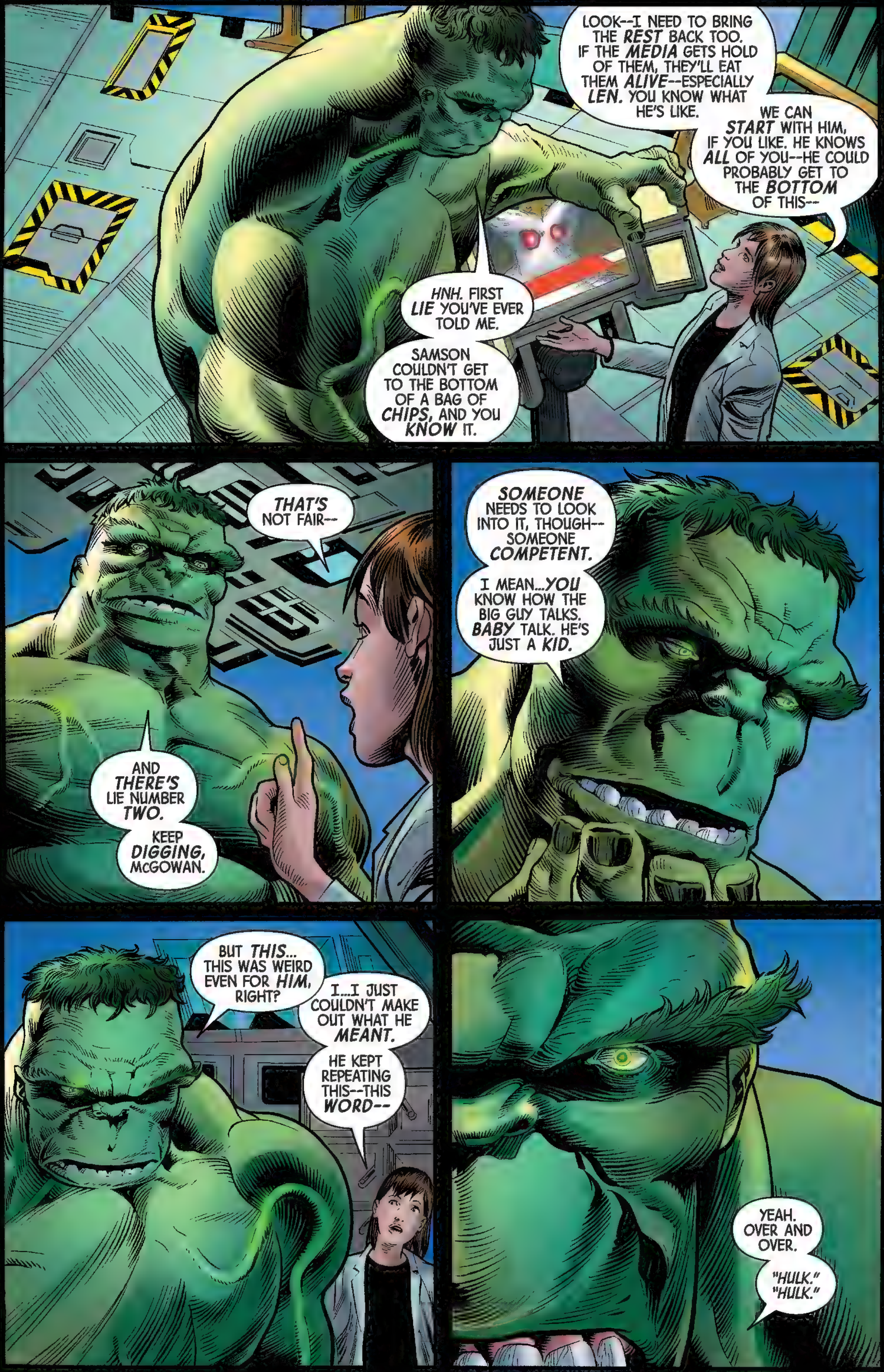

INDEED WE DO, MR. CREEL--SWINGING AROUND TO FACE HIM NOW. GAMMA FLIGHT'S READY TO EARN OUR PAY.
REMEMBER--CONCENTRATE. DON'T JUST ABSORB THE HULL.
ABSORB THE ENGINES.
HA. KNOW WHAT I LIKE BEST ABOUT THESE POWERS OF MINE?
I GOT 'EM OFF A TRICKSTER GOD.
SO IT AIN'T LIKE THERE'S RULES, EXACTLY. AND SOME DAYS...
...SOME DAYS THERE AIN'T EVEN GUIDELINES.
HULK NOT STUPID, WHITE-THING. HULK KNOWS WHAT YOU ARE. HULK KNOWS WHAT YOU DO!
SO HULK WILL TEAR YOU APART BEFORE YOU DO IT--
EH?

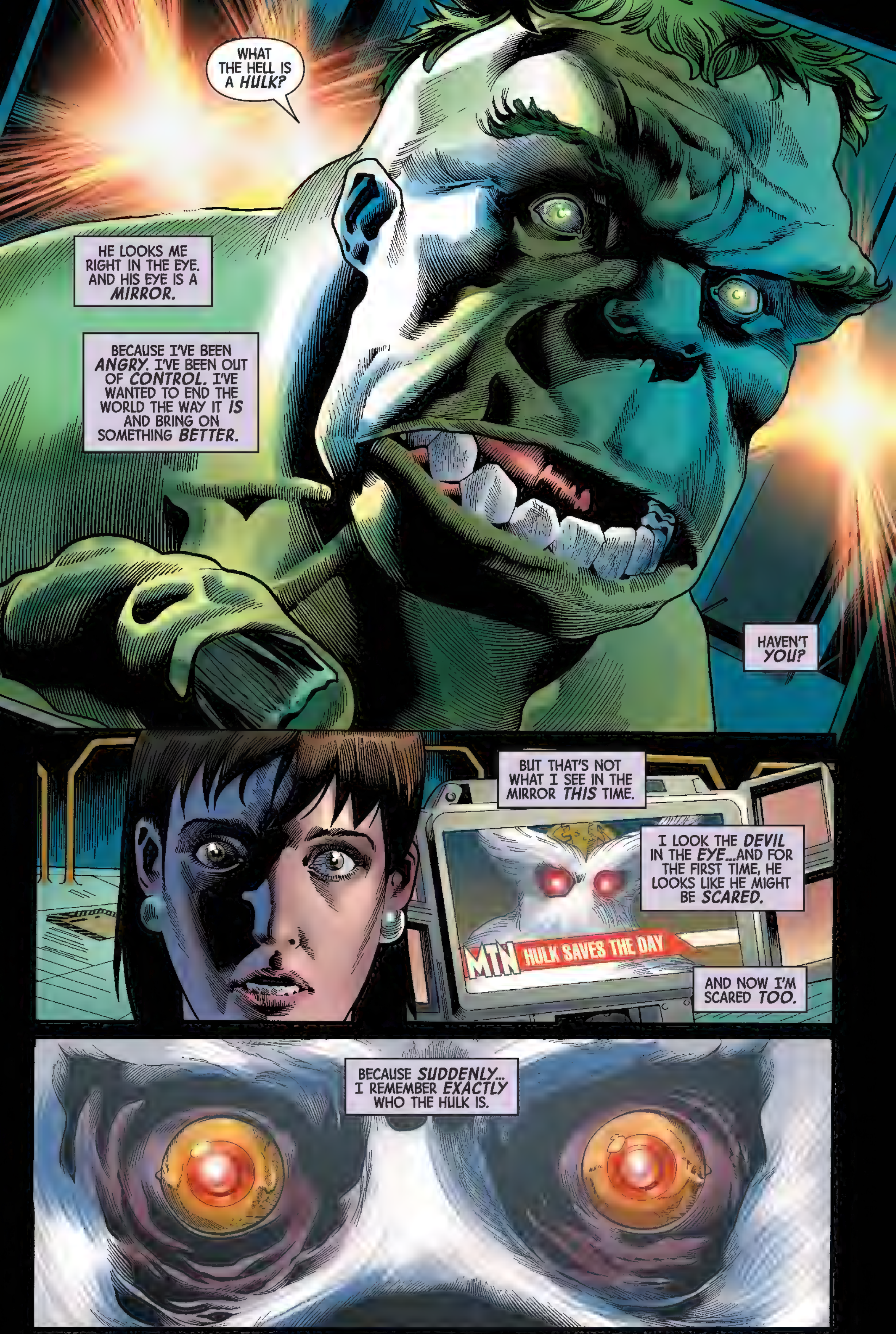

HOLY CRAP.
"XEMNU FROM THE MAGIC PLANET"? I WATCHED YOU WHEN I WAS A KID.
DIDN'T I?
RRAAARHH!
OH ME, OH MY, MR. CARL CREEL. YOU SAVED MY LIFE.
YOU KNOW ME, DON'T YOU? DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
STUPID METAL MAN-- WHITE-THING LIES! WHITE-THING ALWAYS LIES!
WHITE-THING IS A LIE!
WHY DO PUNY HUMANS NEVER LISTEN TO--
HE VANISHED...?
TRANSLOCATED, MURRAY. WE CAN GO PRETTY MUCH ANYWHERE THESE DAYS. AND COMING BACK'S EVEN EASIER.

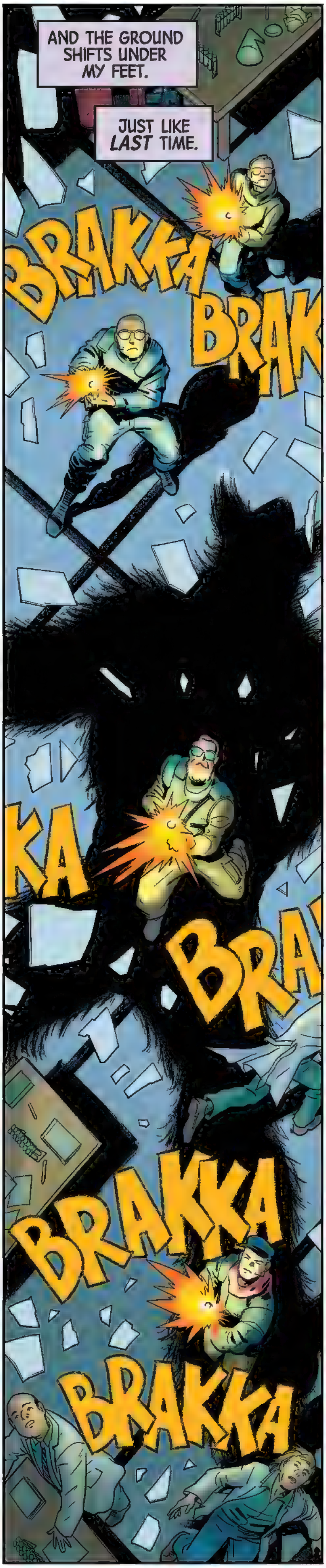

"I'M GUESSING SOMEONE BACK HOME DECIDED *ENOUGH* WAS *TOO MUCH*..."
ALL RIGHT, BIG GUY.
YOU'VE DONE *ENOUGH* DAMAGE.
SCIENCE WOMAN!
SCIENCE WOMAN TOOK HULK *AWAY* WITH *BIG MACHINE?* BACK TO *STUPID METAL HOUSE?*
WHY?

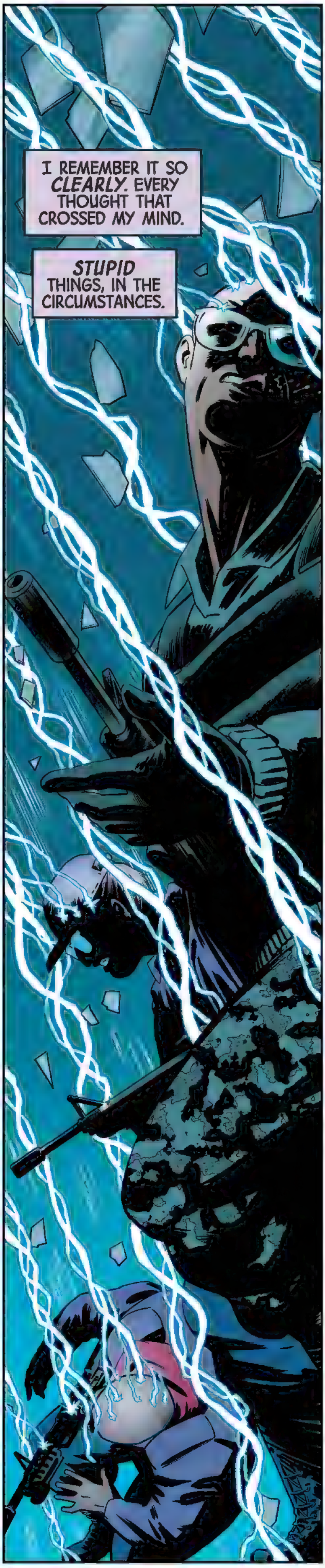

HULK WOULD HAVE *SMASHED THEM!*
WHITE-THING MOST OF ALL!
YOU MEAN THE *HERO* WHO JUST *SAVED PHOENIX?* ON *LIVE TV?*
DO YOU *WANT* PEOPLE TO TURN ON YOU?
BAH! PUNY HUMANS *ALWAYS* TURN ON HULK. *WHITE-THING* MORE IMPORTANT!
WHITE-THING MUST BE *SMASHED*--OR--OR HE WILL--
HE'LL *WHAT?* SAVE MORE *LIVES?*
ALL *I* SAW "WHITE-THING" DO WAS *CLEAN UP* A DISASTER *YOU CAUSED*--
NO!
WHITE-THING WAS...*DOING* SOMETHING. HULK *FELT* IT.
HULK NOT KNOW WHAT IT *WAS*--BUT HULK NOT *LIKE* IT--
STOP. YOU'RE JUST...WHAT YOU'RE SAYING ISN'T MAKING ANY *SENSE*...I...
I THINK I NEED TO TALK TO ONE OF THE *OTHERS.* CAN YOU *DO* THAT FOR ME, BIG GUY?
JUST--GO BACK *IN* FOR A WHILE--
HULK.

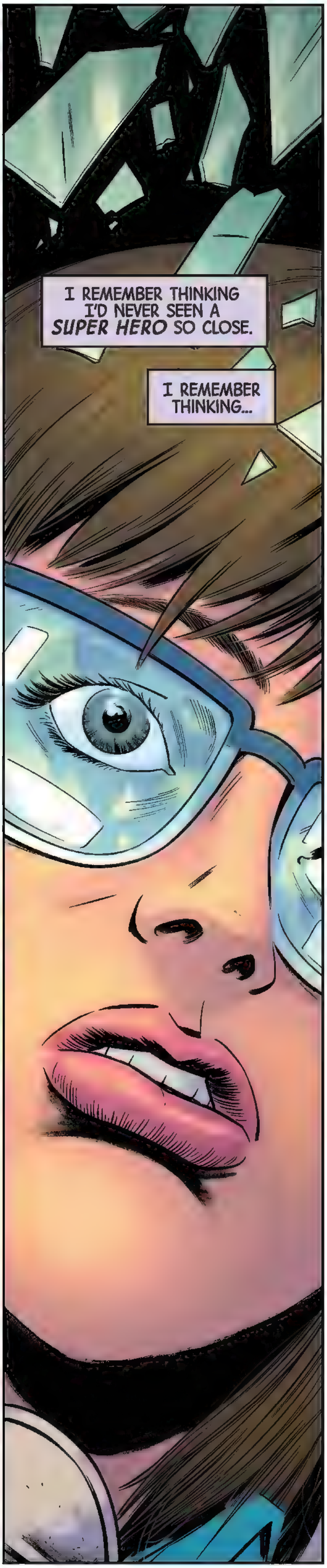

HULK IS *HULK.* NOT "BIG GUY."
HULK... IS *HULK.*
WHAT IS *WHAT?*
I *TOLD* YOU--YOU'RE NOT MAKING *SENSE.*
WHAT ARE YOU *SAYING?*
HULK...
HULK... *HULK* IS...
HULK WILL...
HULK WILL GO.
RRRHH.
THAT WAS WEIRD. HE'S NEVER KEPT ME *AWAY* BEFORE.
AND WHEN WE GOT *HURT*-- HE TOOK OVER LIKE I WAS *NOTHING.*
BEFORE THE *SUN SETS,* HE'S... *STRONGER* THAN ME.
THAT'S A WRINKLE.

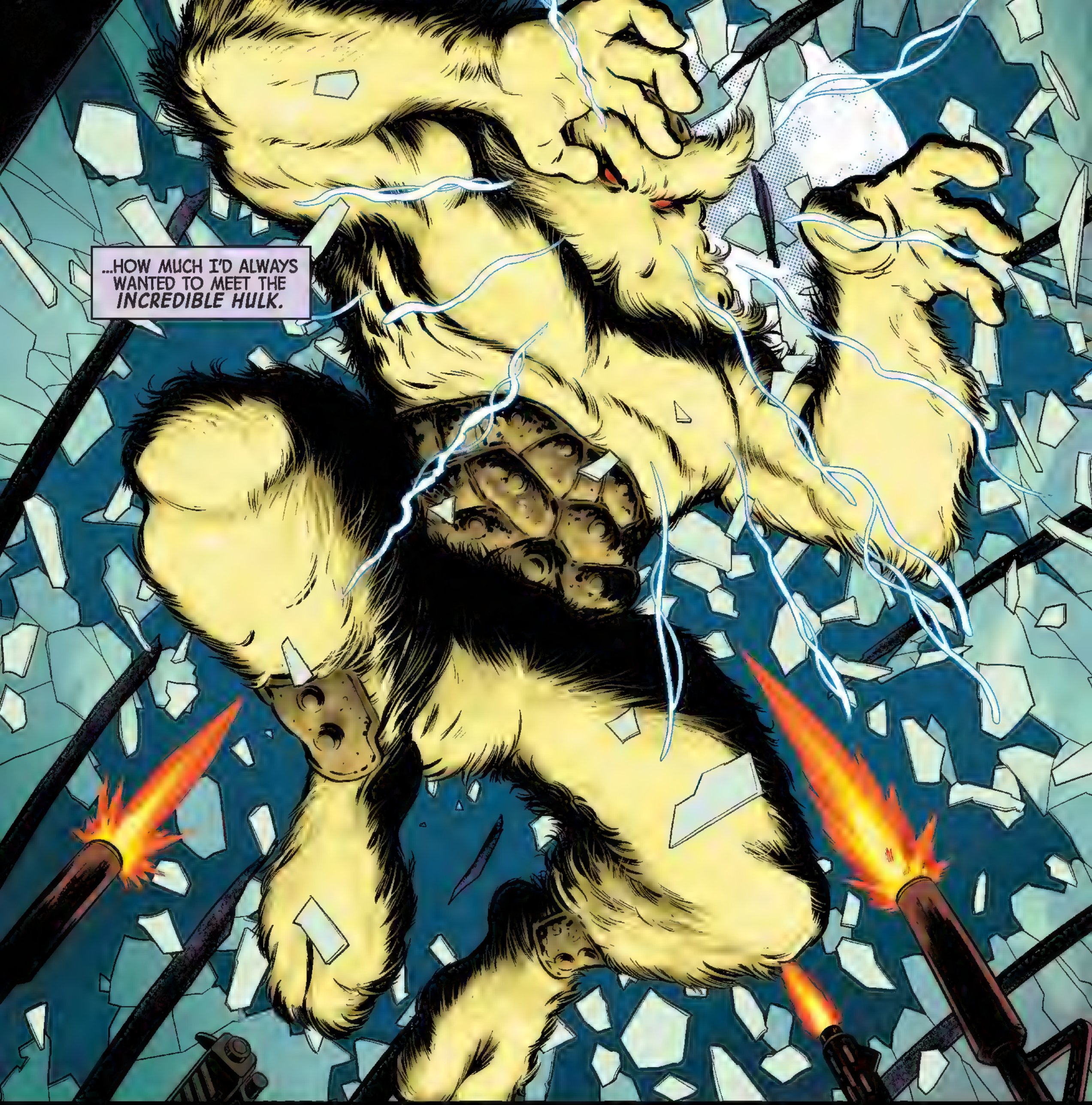

LOOK--I NEED TO BRING THE *REST* BACK TOO. IF THE *MEDIA* GETS HOLD OF THEM, THEY'LL EAT THEM *ALIVE*--ESPECIALLY *LEN.* YOU KNOW WHAT HE'S LIKE.
WE CAN *START* WITH HIM, IF YOU LIKE. HE KNOWS *ALL* OF YOU--HE COULD PROBABLY GET TO THE *BOTTOM* OF THIS--
HNH. FIRST *LIE* YOU'VE EVER TOLD ME.
SAMSON COULDN'T GET TO THE BOTTOM OF A BAG OF *CHIPS,* AND YOU *KNOW* IT.
THAT'S NOT FAIR--
AND *THERE'S* LIE NUMBER *TWO.*
KEEP *DIGGING,* McGOWAN.
SOMEONE NEEDS TO LOOK INTO IT, THOUGH--SOMEONE *COMPETENT.*
I MEAN...*YOU* KNOW HOW THE BIG GUY TALKS. *BABY* TALK. HE'S JUST A *KID.*
BUT *THIS*... THIS WAS WEIRD EVEN FOR *HIM,* RIGHT?
I...I JUST COULDN'T MAKE OUT WHAT HE *MEANT.*
HE KEPT REPEATING THIS--THIS *WORD*--
YEAH. OVER AND OVER.
"HULK." "HULK."


WHAT THE HELL IS A *HULK?*
HE LOOKS ME RIGHT IN THE EYE. AND HIS EYE IS A *MIRROR.*
BECAUSE I'VE BEEN *ANGRY.* I'VE BEEN OUT OF *CONTROL.* I'VE WANTED TO END THE WORLD THE WAY IT *IS* AND BRING ON SOMETHING *BETTER.*
HAVEN'T *YOU?*
BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I SEE IN THE MIRROR *THIS* TIME.
I LOOK THE *DEVIL* IN THE *EYE*...AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE LOOKS LIKE HE MIGHT BE *SCARED.*
MTN
HULK SAVES THE DAY
AND NOW I'M SCARED *TOO.*
BECAUSE *SUDDENLY*... I REMEMBER *EXACTLY* WHO THE HULK IS.

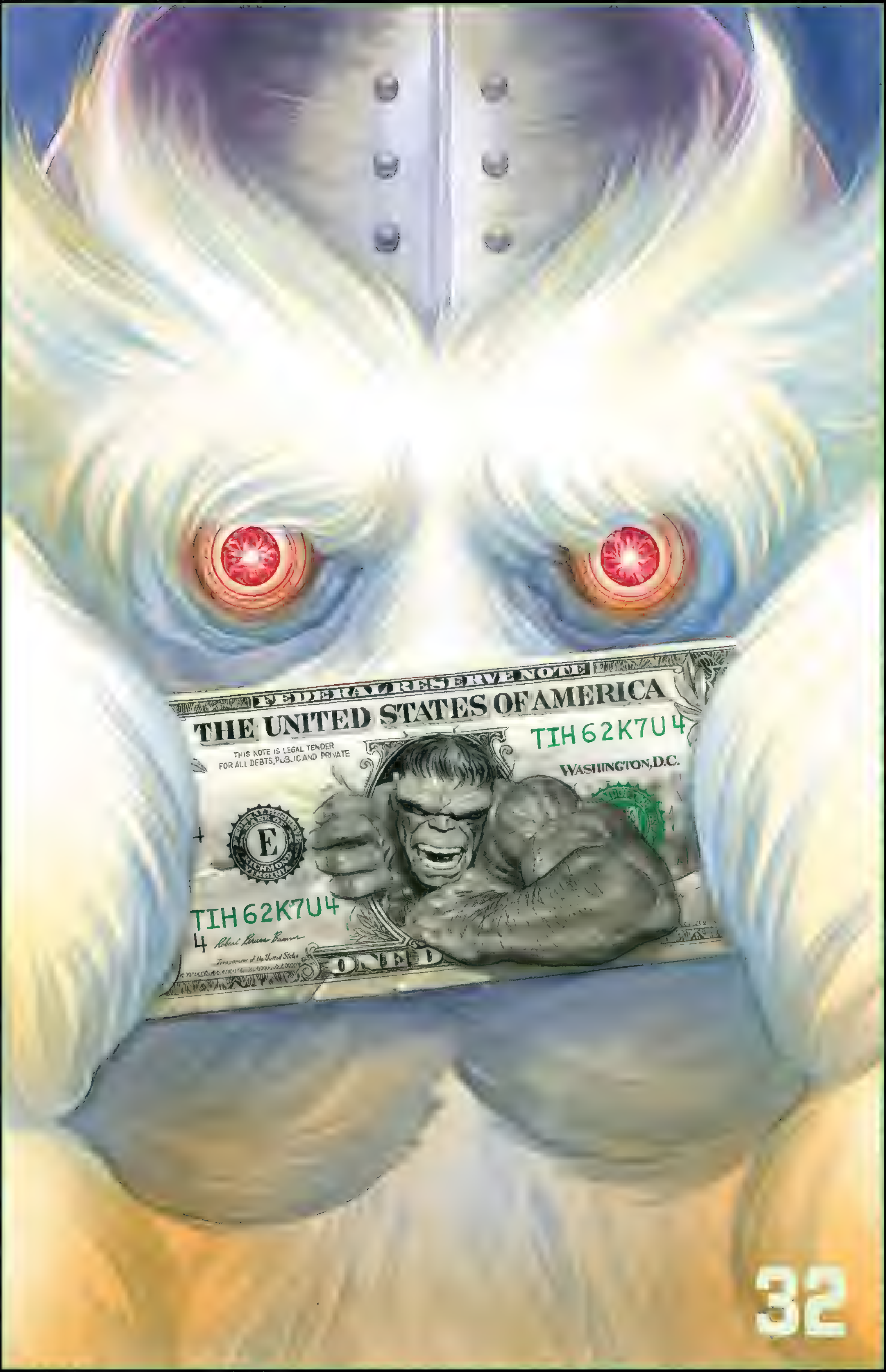

AND THE GROUND SHIFTS UNDER MY FEET.
JUST LIKE *LAST* TIME.
BRAKKA
BRAK
KA
BRA
BRAKKA
BRAKKA


I REMEMBER IT SO *CLEARLY.* EVERY THOUGHT THAT CROSSED MY MIND.
STUPID THINGS, IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES.


I REMEMBER THINKING I'D NEVER SEEN A *SUPER HERO* SO CLOSE.
I REMEMBER THINKING...

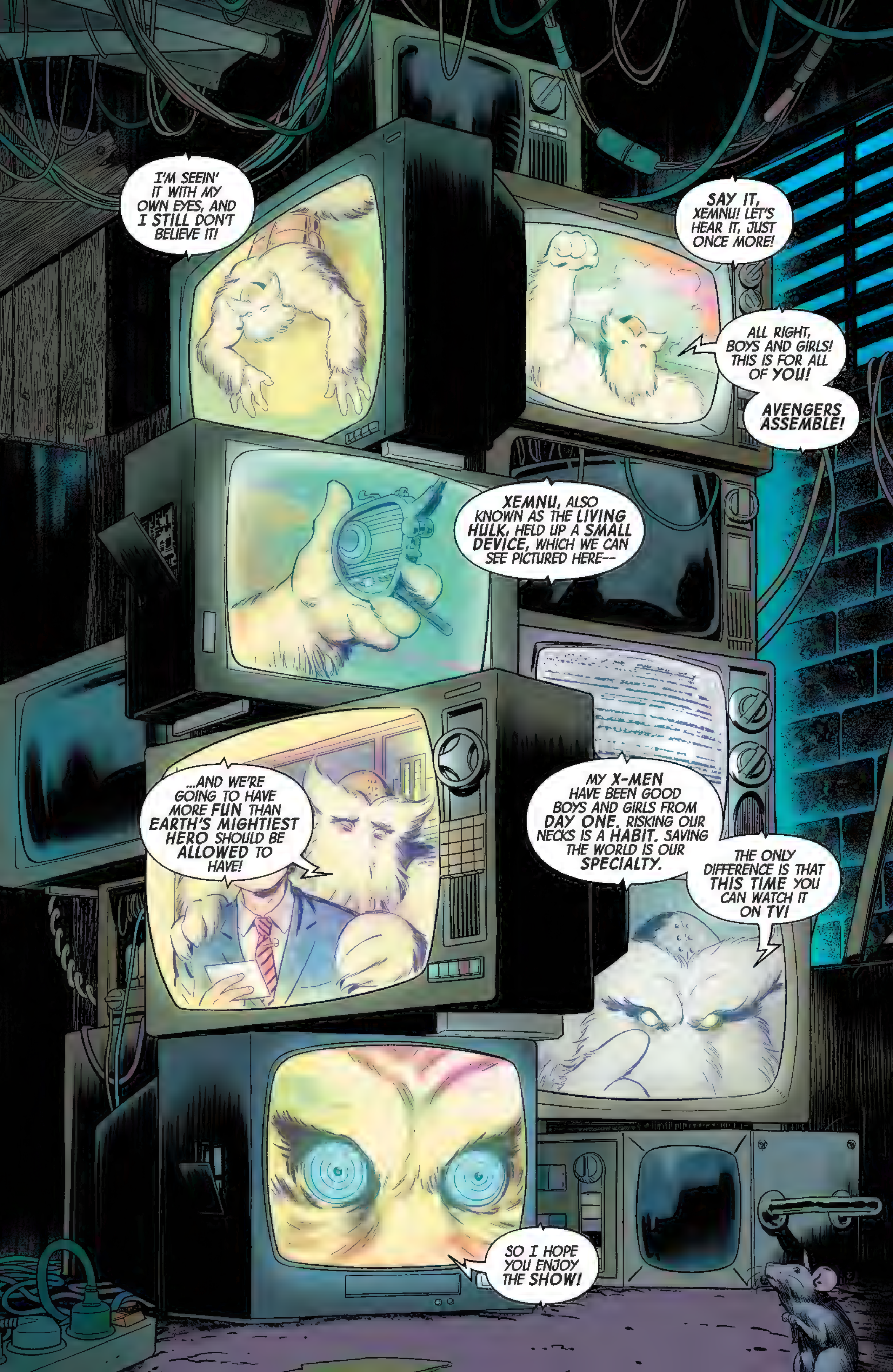

...HOW MUCH I'D ALWAYS WANTED TO MEET THE *INCREDIBLE HULK.*

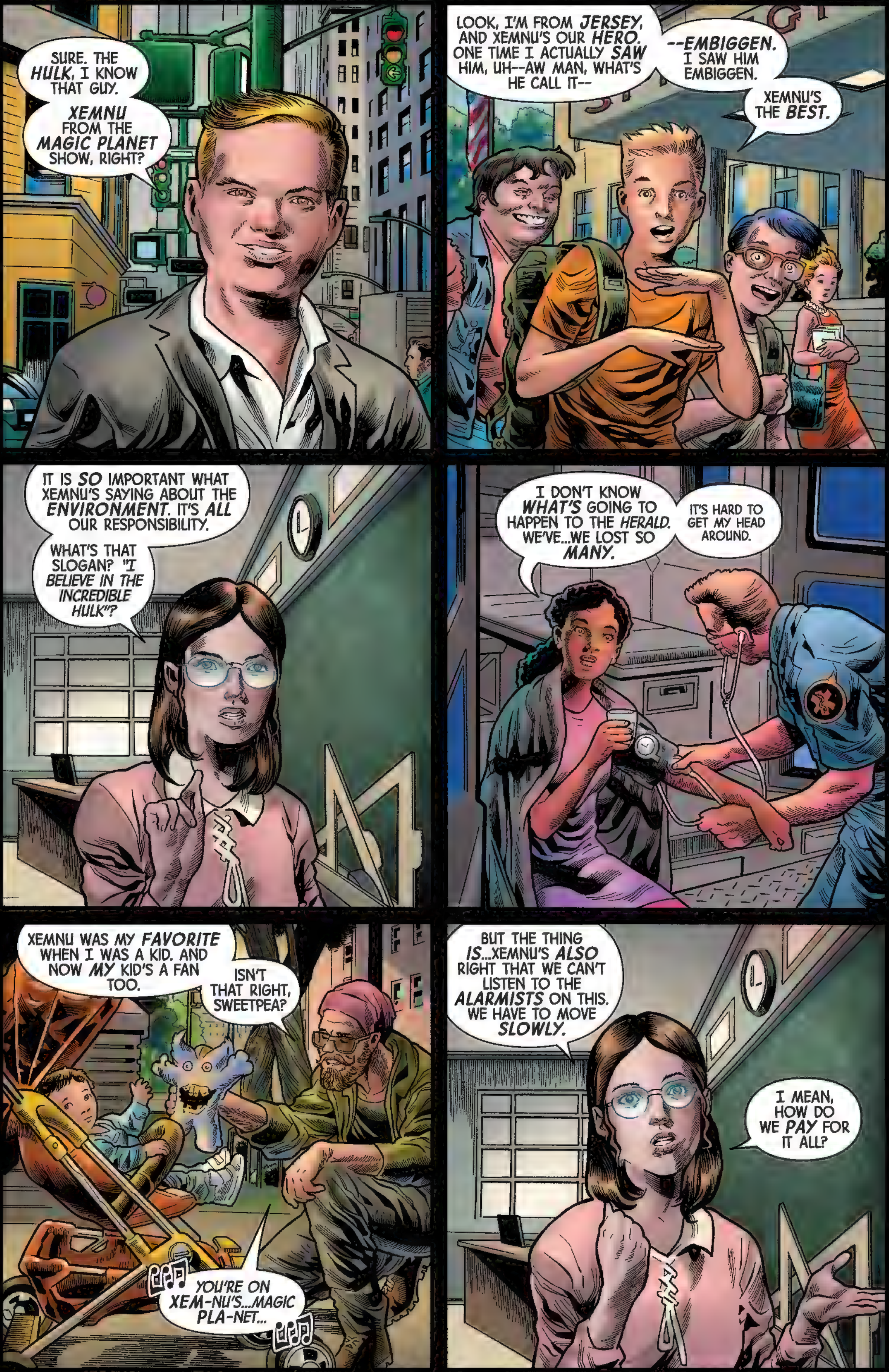
REMEMBER?

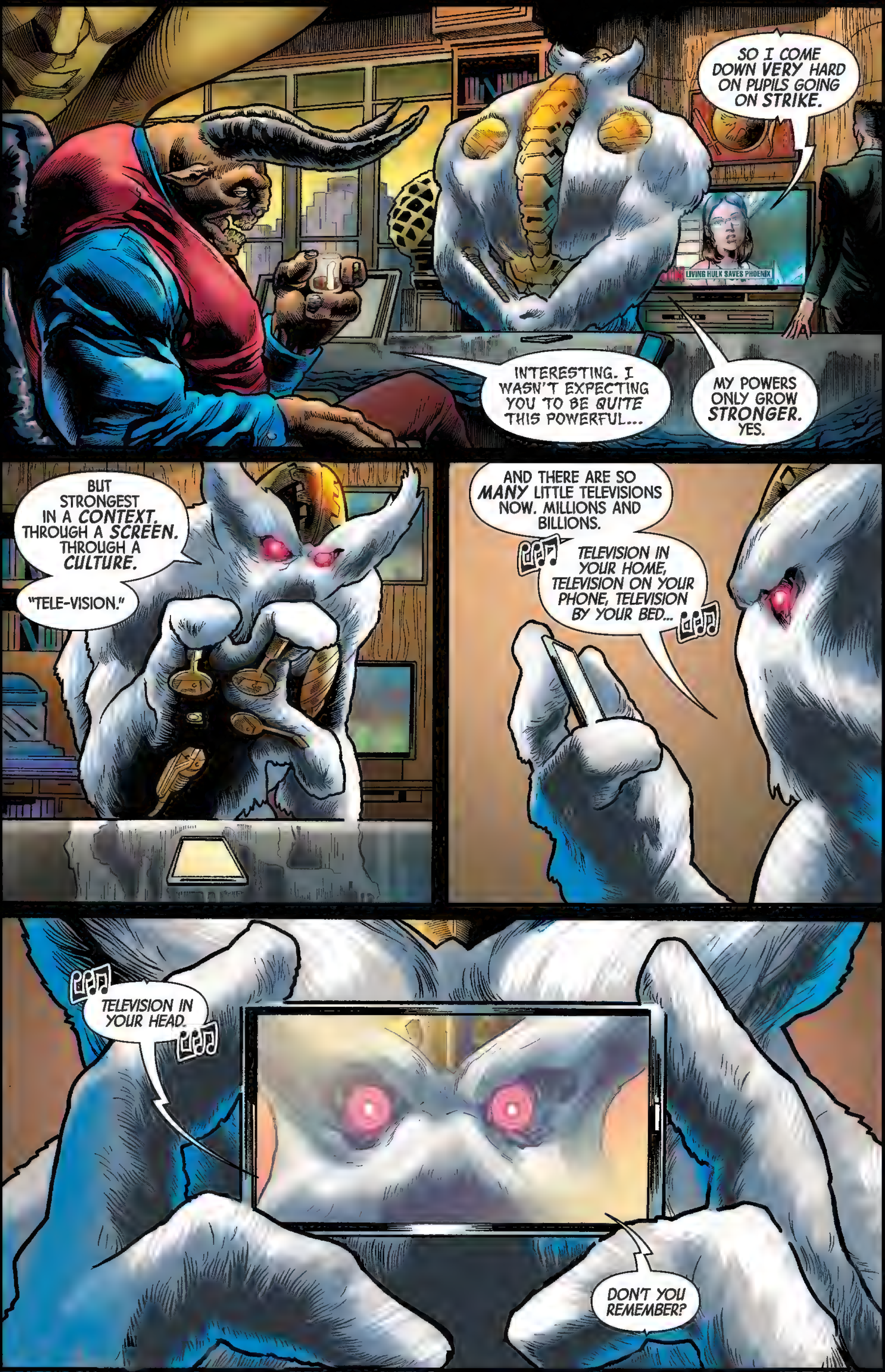

FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TIH62K7U4
THIS NOTE IS LEGAL TENDER FOR ALL DEBTS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
E
RICHMOND VIRGINIA
TIH62K7U4
4
Robert Bruce Banner
Treasurer of the United States
ONE
32

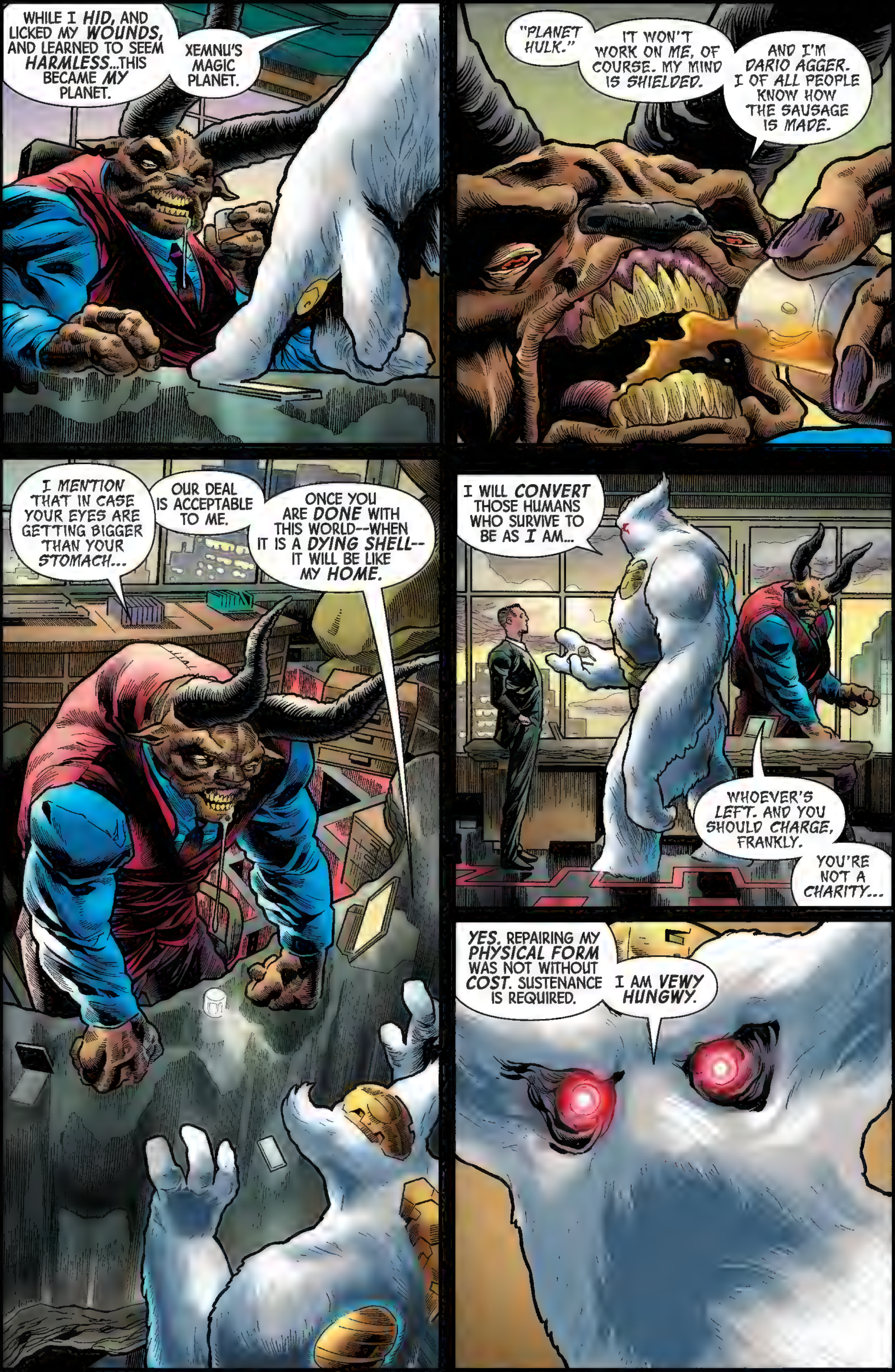
"AND FROM THIS MIND I WILL NOT FLEE,
BUT TO YOU ALL THAT MISJUDGE ME,
I DO PROTEST AS YE MAY SEE,
THAT I AM AS I AM AND SO WILL I BE."

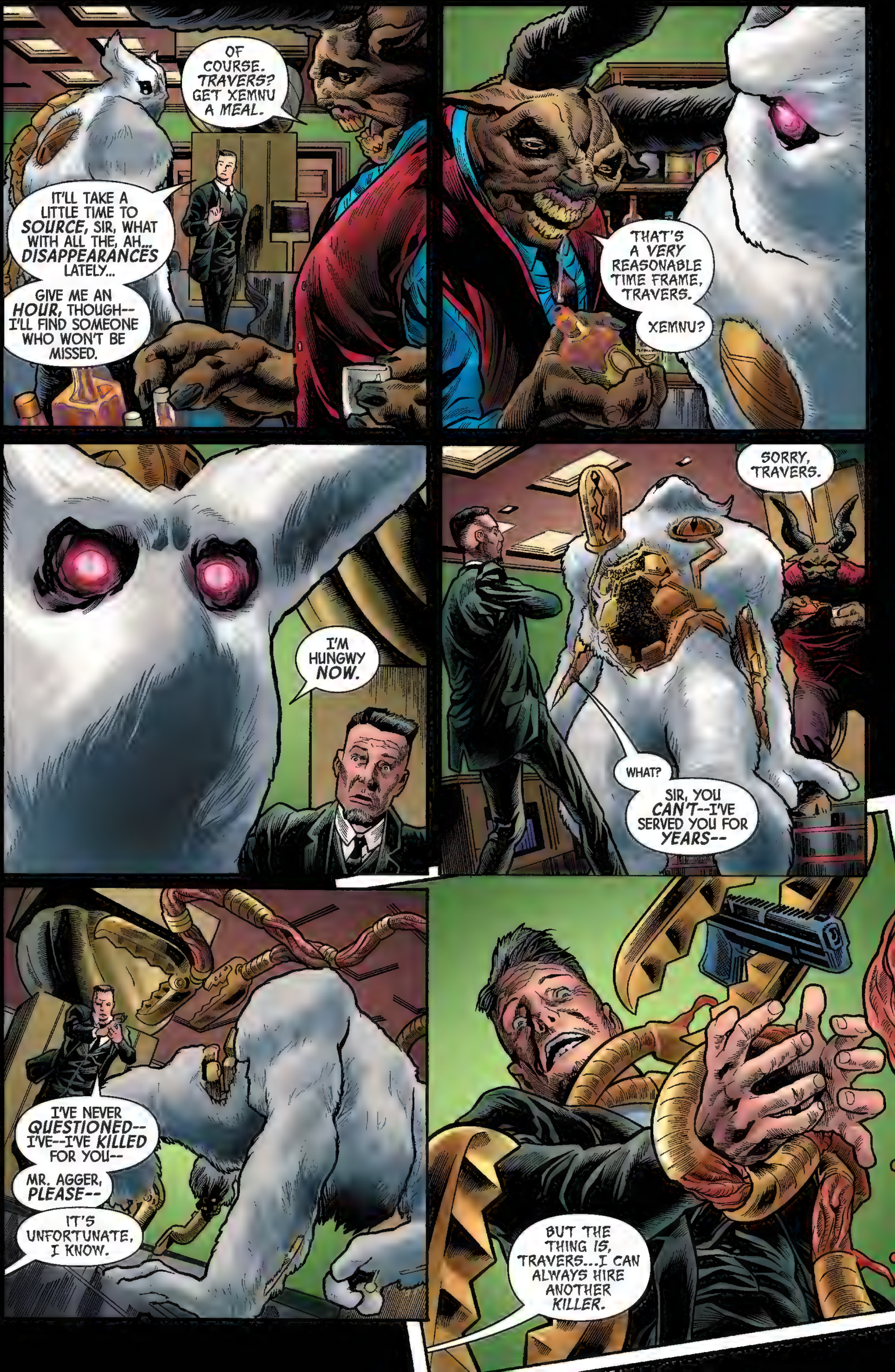
– SIR THOMAS WYATT
"I AM AS I AM"

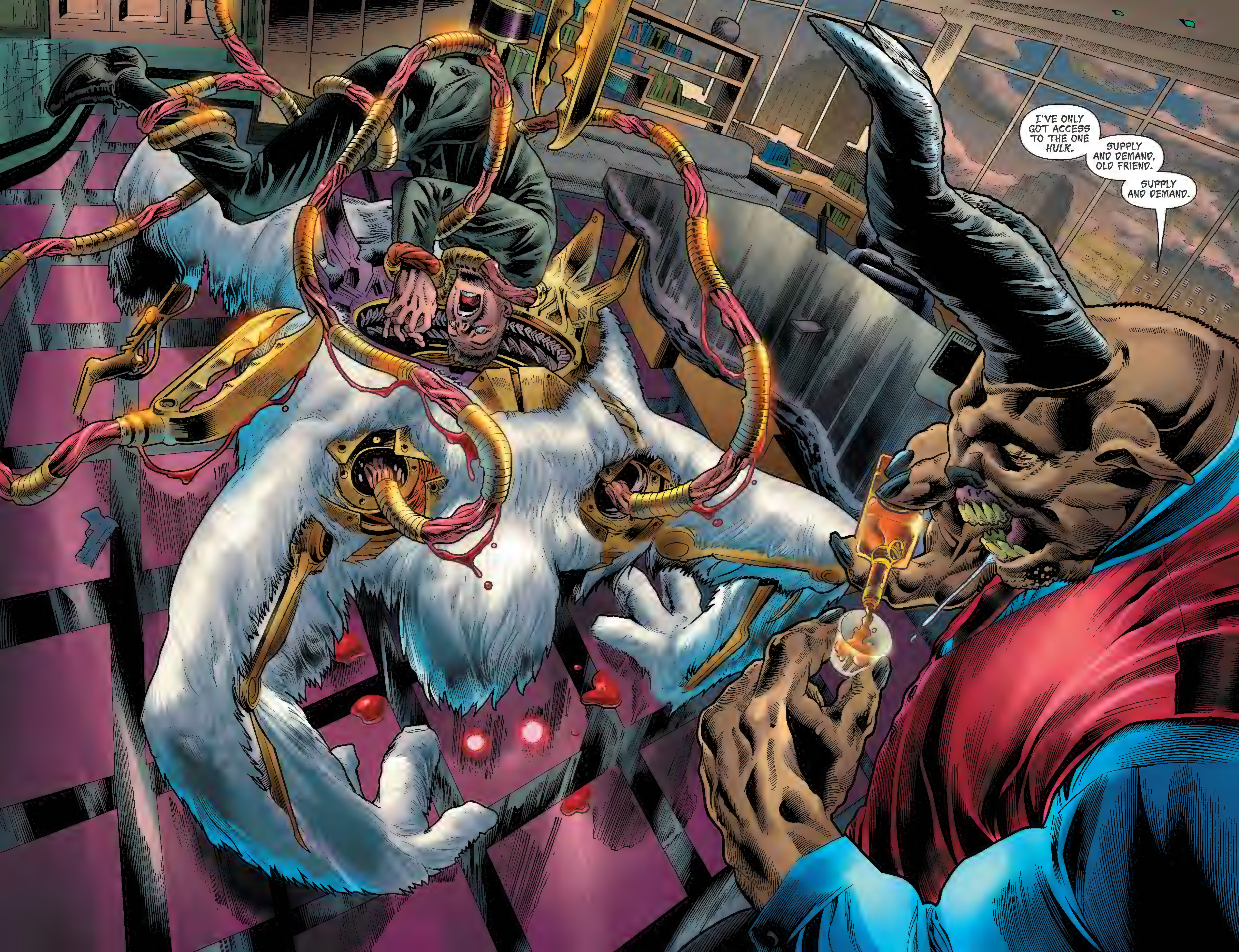

I'M SEEIN' IT WITH MY OWN EYES, AND I STILL DON'T BELIEVE IT!
SAY IT, XEMNU! LET'S HEAR IT, JUST ONCE MORE!
ALL RIGHT, BOYS AND GIRLS! THIS IS FOR ALL OF YOU!
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!
XEMNU, ALSO KNOWN AS THE LIVING HULK, HELD UP A SMALL DEVICE, WHICH WE CAN SEE PICTURED HERE--
...AND WE'RE GOING TO HAVE MORE FUN THAN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HERO SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO HAVE!
MY X-MEN HAVE BEEN GOOD BOYS AND GIRLS FROM DAY ONE. RISKING OUR NECKS IS A HABIT. SAVING THE WORLD IS OUR SPECIALTY.
THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT THIS TIME YOU CAN WATCH IT ON TV!
SO I HOPE YOU ENJOY THE SHOW!

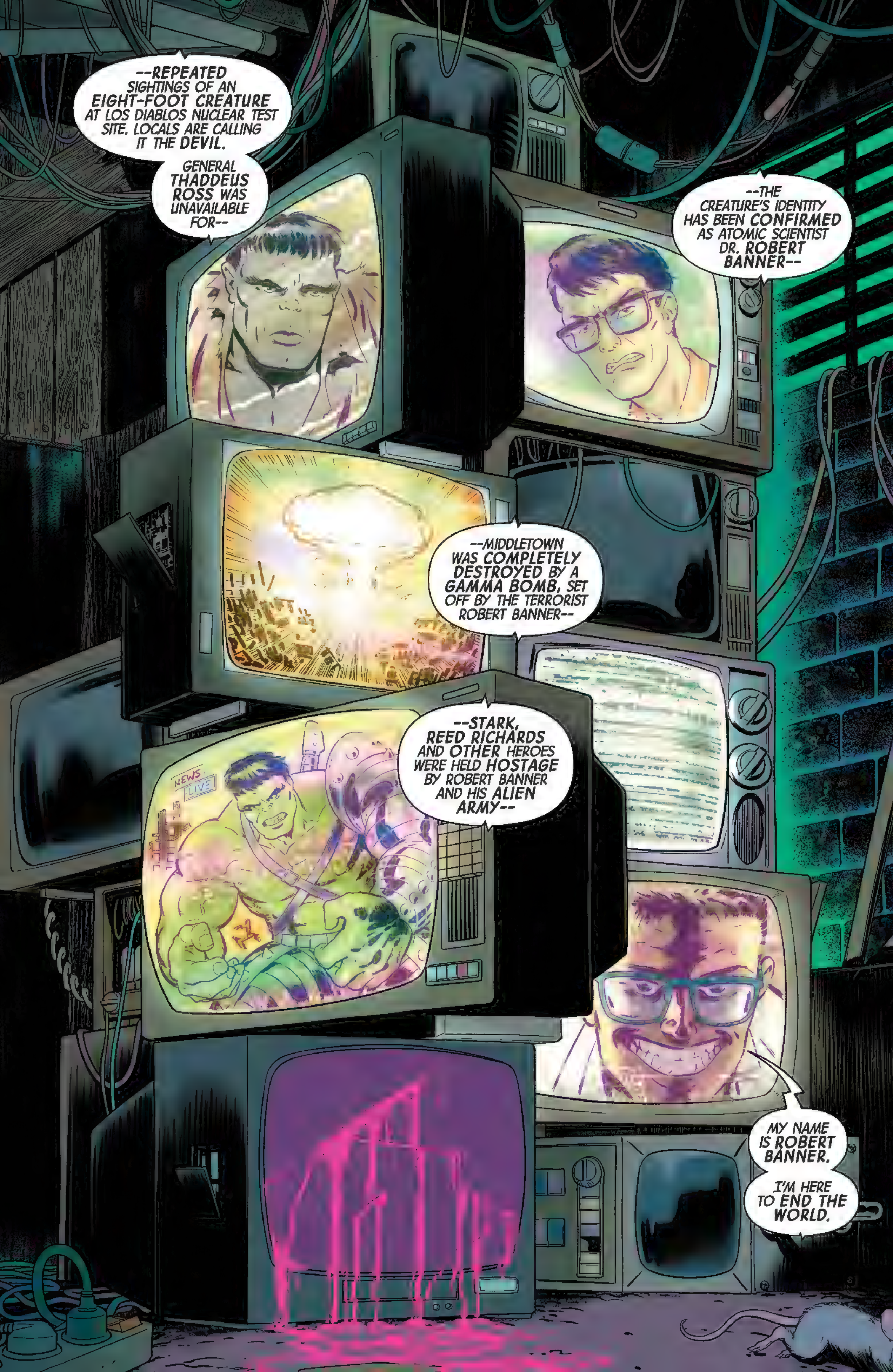

SURE. THE HULK, I KNOW THAT GUY.
XEMNU FROM THE MAGIC PLANET SHOW, RIGHT?
LOOK, I'M FROM JERSEY, AND XEMNU'S OUR HERO. ONE TIME I ACTUALLY SAW HIM, UH--AW MAN, WHAT'S HE CALL IT--
--EMBIGGEN. I SAW HIM EMBIGGEN.
XEMNU'S THE BEST.
IT IS SO IMPORTANT WHAT XEMNU'S SAYING ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT. IT'S ALL OUR RESPONSIBILITY.
WHAT'S THAT SLOGAN? "I BELIEVE IN THE INCREDIBLE HULK"?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO THE HERALD. WE'VE...WE LOST SO MANY.
IT'S HARD TO GET MY HEAD AROUND.
XEMNU WAS MY FAVORITE WHEN I WAS A KID. AND NOW MY KID'S A FAN TOO.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, SWEETPEA?
YOU'RE ON XEM-NU'S...MAGIC PLA-NET...
BUT THE THING IS...XEMNU'S ALSO RIGHT THAT WE CAN'T LISTEN TO THE ALARMISTS ON THIS. WE HAVE TO MOVE SLOWLY.
I MEAN, HOW DO WE PAY FOR IT ALL?

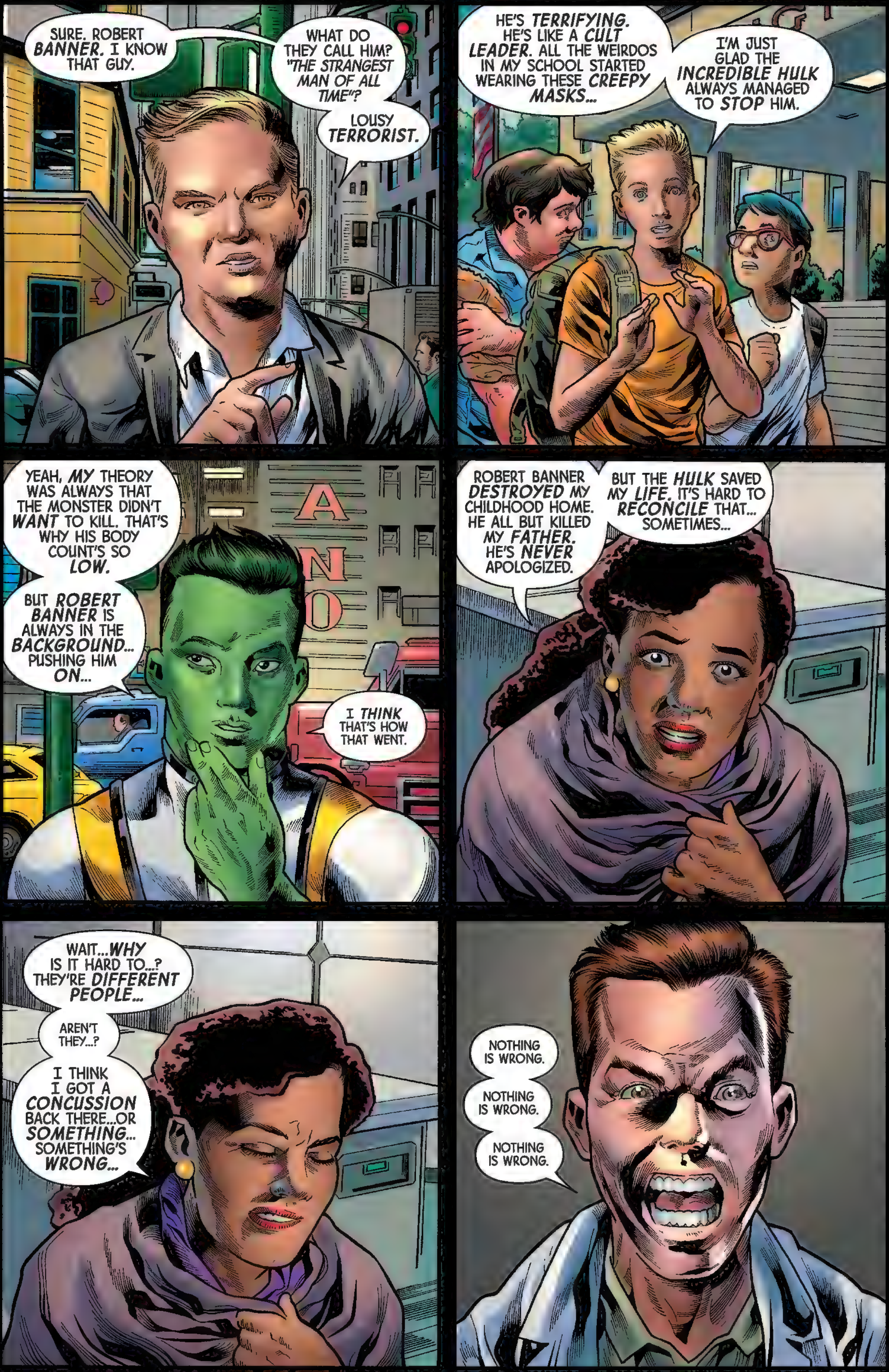

SO I COME DOWN VERY HARD ON PUPILS GOING ON STRIKE.
LIVING HULK SAVES PHOENIX
INTERESTING. I WASN'T EXPECTING YOU TO BE QUITE THIS POWERFUL...
MY POWERS ONLY GROW STRONGER. YES.
BUT STRONGEST IN A CONTEXT. THROUGH A SCREEN. THROUGH A CULTURE.
"TELE-VISION."
AND THERE ARE SO MANY LITTLE TELEVISIONS NOW. MILLIONS AND BILLIONS.
TELEVISION IN YOUR HOME, TELEVISION ON YOUR PHONE, TELEVISION BY YOUR BED...
TELEVISION IN YOUR HEAD.
DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

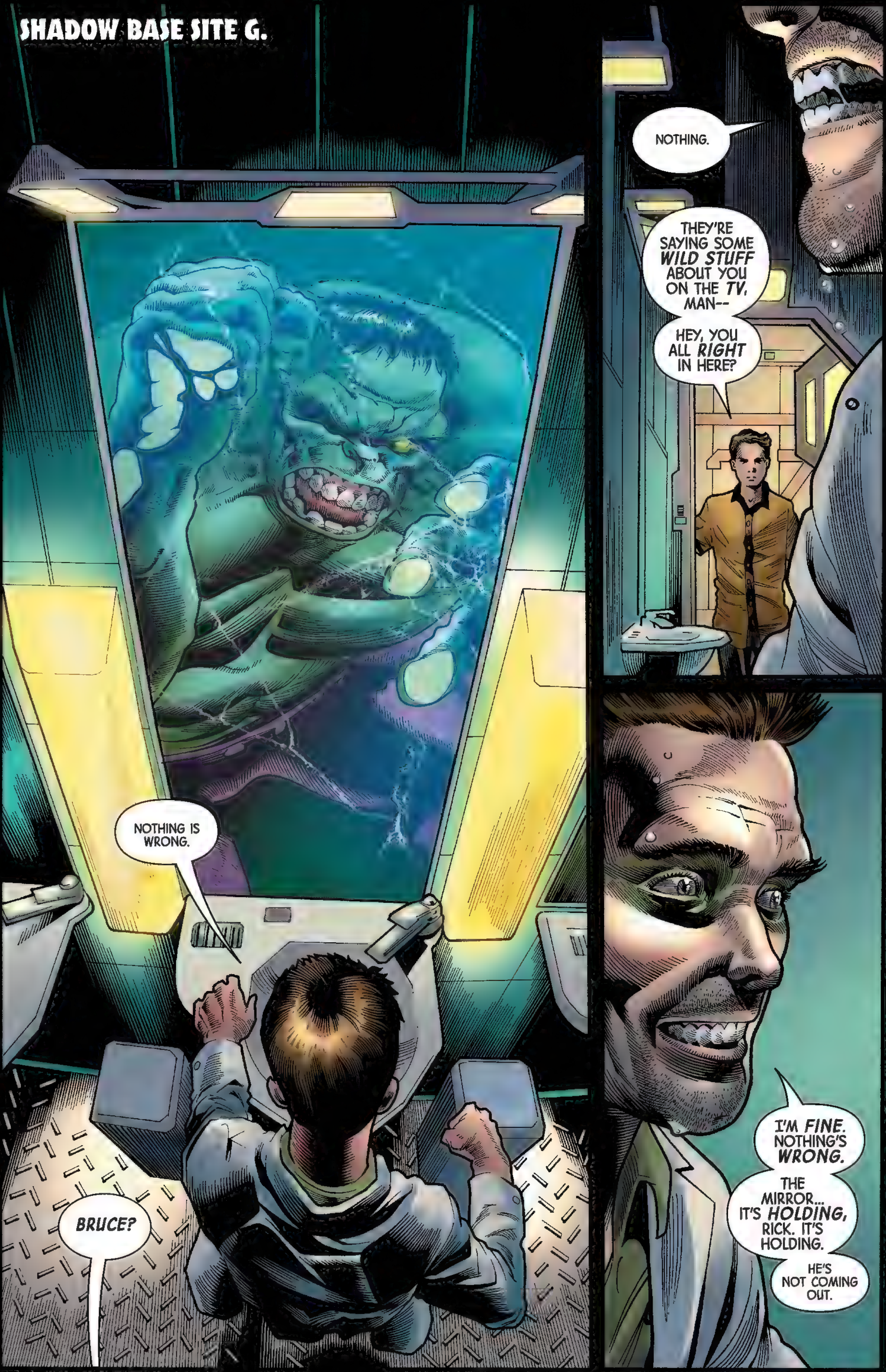

WHILE I HID, AND LICKED MY WOUNDS, AND LEARNED TO SEEM HARMLESS...THIS BECAME MY PLANET.
XEMNU'S MAGIC PLANET.
"PLANET HULK."
IT WON'T WORK ON ME, OF COURSE. MY MIND IS SHIELDED.
AND I'M DARIO AGGER. I OF ALL PEOPLE KNOW HOW THE SAUSAGE IS MADE.
I MENTION THAT IN CASE YOUR EYES ARE GETTING BIGGER THAN YOUR STOMACH...
OUR DEAL IS ACCEPTABLE TO ME.
ONCE YOU ARE DONE WITH THIS WORLD--WHEN IT IS A DYING SHELL--IT WILL BE LIKE MY HOME.
I WILL CONVERT THOSE HUMANS WHO SURVIVE TO BE AS I AM...
WHOEVER'S LEFT. AND YOU SHOULD CHARGE, FRANKLY.
YOU'RE NOT A CHARITY...
YES. REPAIRING MY PHYSICAL FORM WAS NOT WITHOUT COST. SUSTENANCE IS REQUIRED.
I AM VEWY HUNGWY.

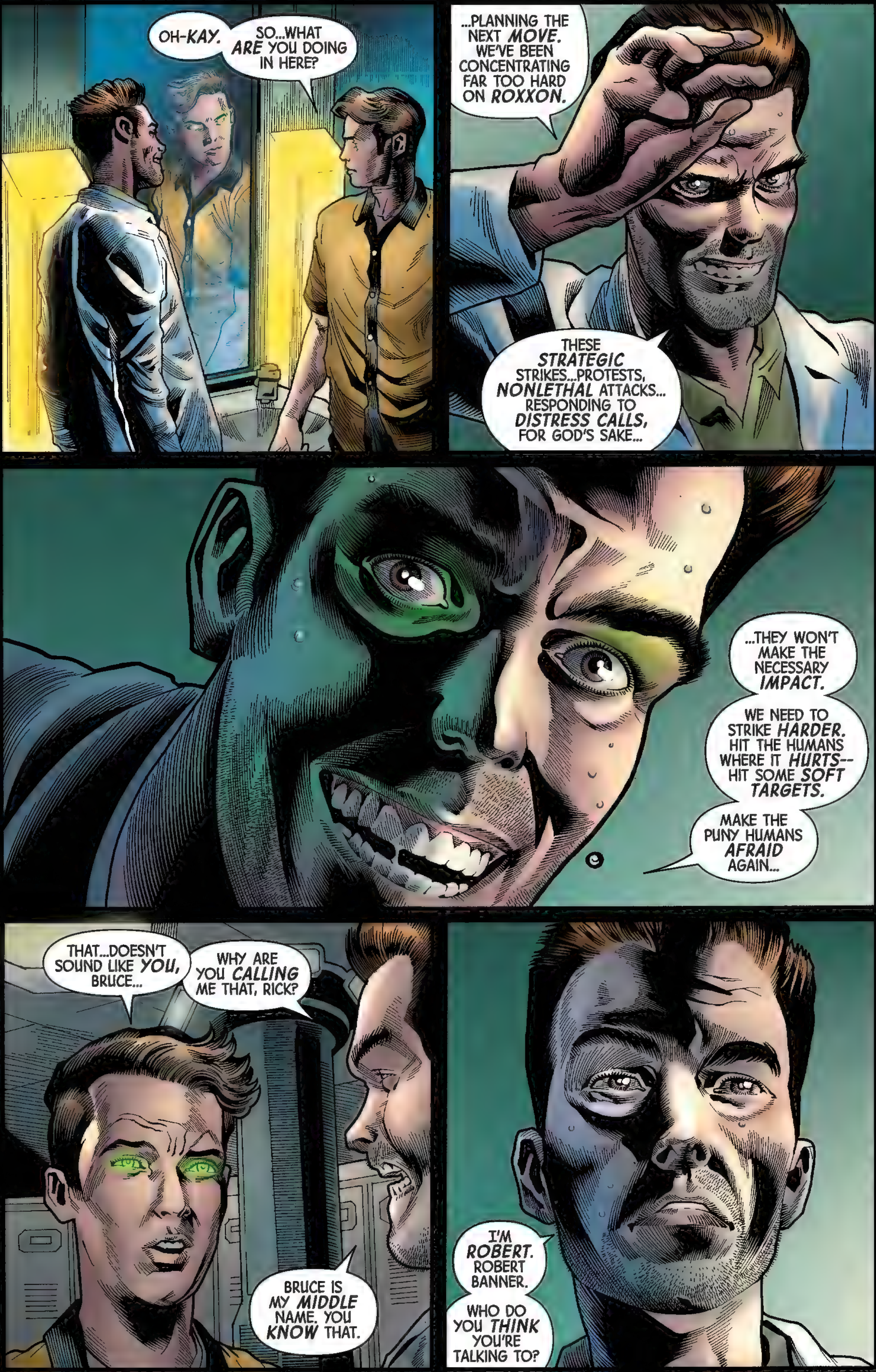

OF COURSE. TRAVERS? GET XEMNU A MEAL.
IT'LL TAKE A LITTLE TIME TO SOURCE, SIR, WHAT WITH ALL THE, AH... DISAPPEARANCES LATELY...
GIVE ME AN HOUR, THOUGH-- I'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO WON'T BE MISSED.
THAT'S A VERY REASONABLE TIME FRAME, TRAVERS.
XEMNU?
I'M HUNGWY NOW.
SORRY, TRAVERS.
WHAT?
SIR, YOU CAN'T--I'VE SERVED YOU FOR YEARS--
I'VE NEVER QUESTIONED-- I'VE--I'VE KILLED FOR YOU--
MR. AGGER, PLEASE--
IT'S UNFORTUNATE, I KNOW.
BUT THE THING IS, TRAVERS...I CAN ALWAYS HIRE ANOTHER KILLER.

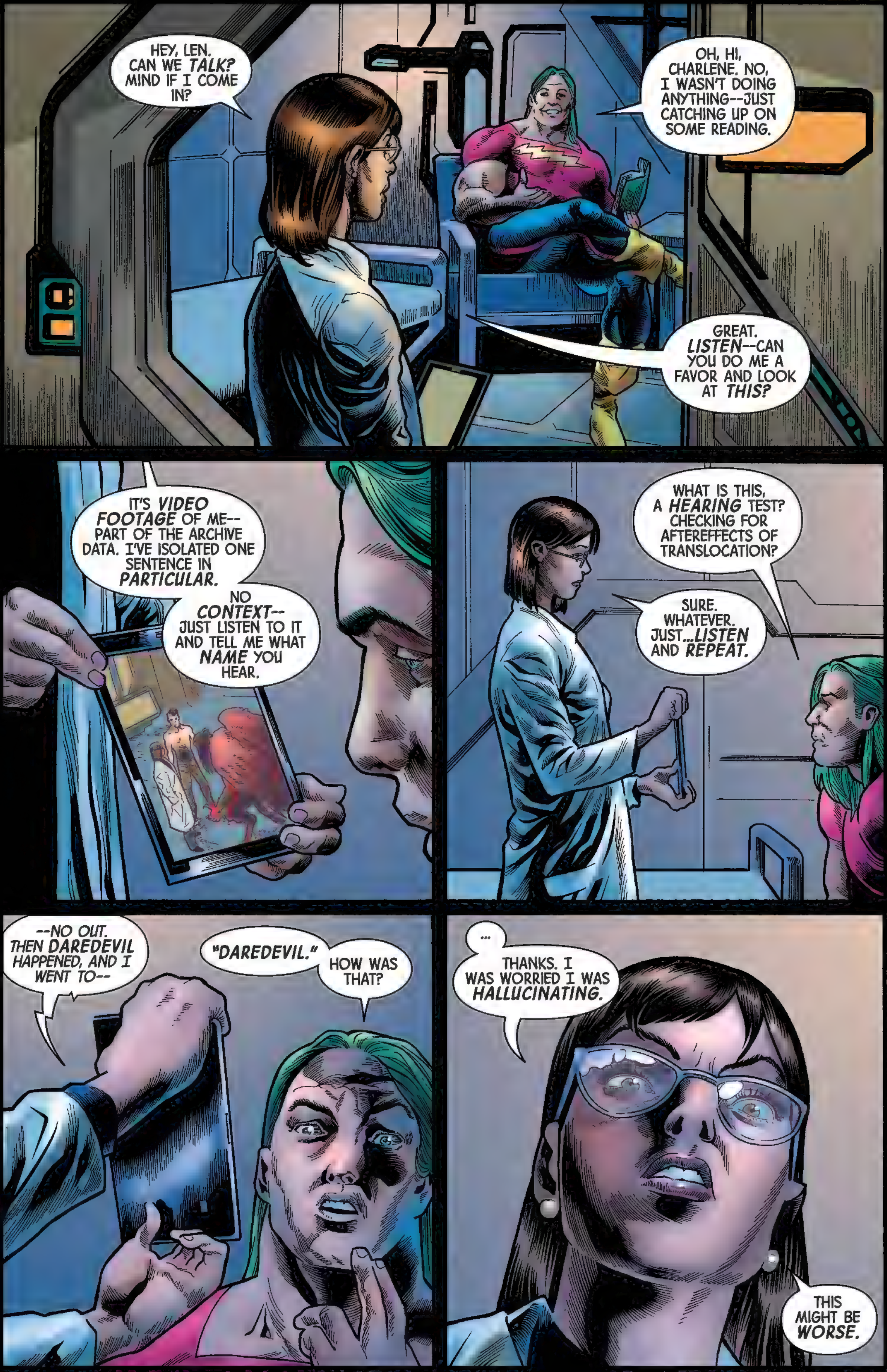

I'VE ONLY GOT ACCESS TO THE ONE HULK.
SUPPLY AND DEMAND, OLD FRIEND.
SUPPLY AND DEMAND.

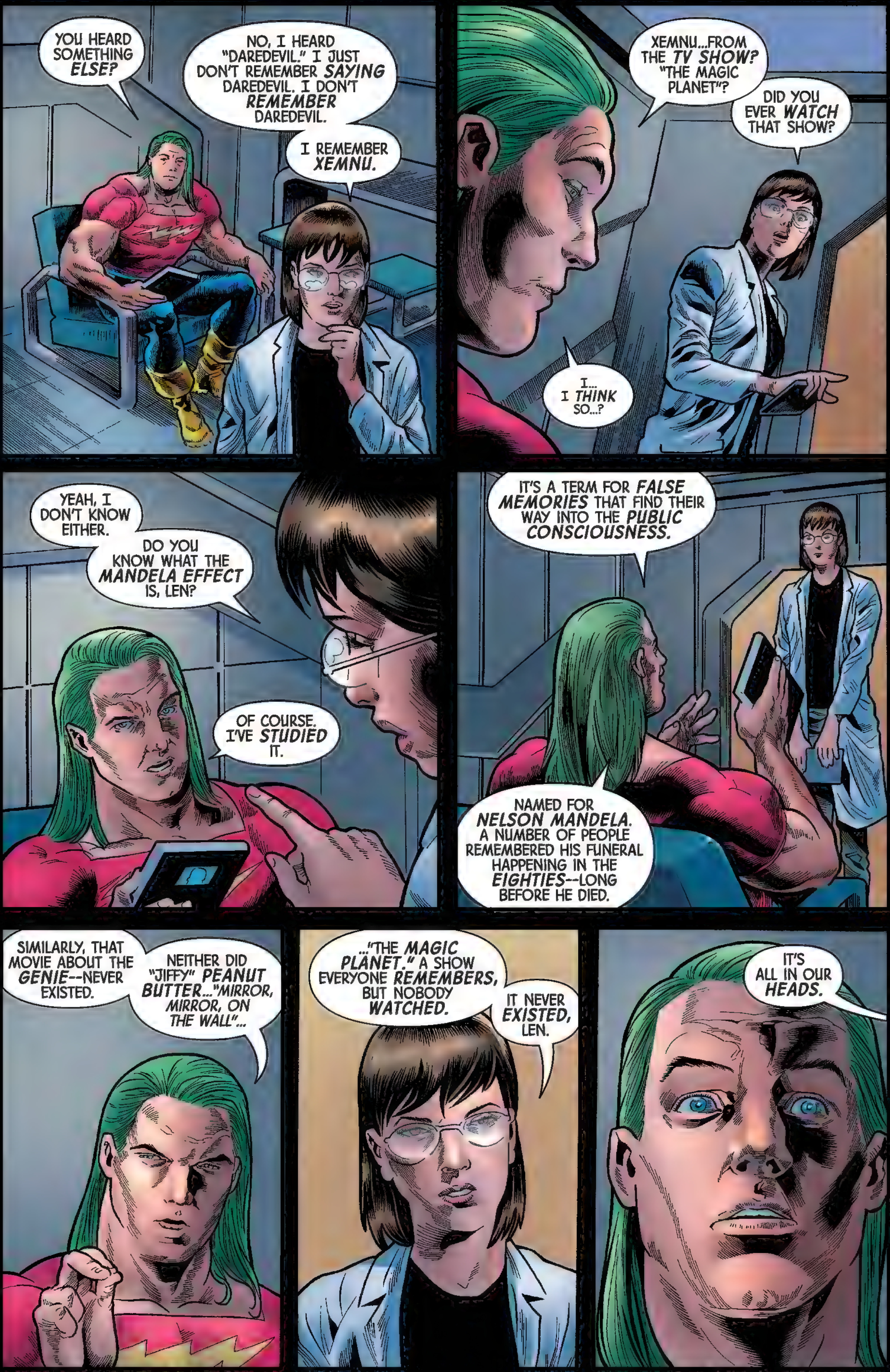

--REPEATED SIGHTINGS OF AN EIGHT-FOOT CREATURE AT LOS DIABLOS NUCLEAR TEST SITE. LOCALS ARE CALLING IT THE DEVIL.
GENERAL THADDEUS ROSS WAS UNAVAILABLE FOR--
--THE CREATURE'S IDENTITY HAS BEEN CONFIRMED AS ATOMIC SCIENTIST DR. ROBERT BANNER--
--MIDDLETOWN WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED BY A GAMMA BOMB, SET OFF BY THE TERRORIST ROBERT BANNER--
--STARK, REED RICHARDS AND OTHER HEROES WERE HELD HOSTAGE BY ROBERT BANNER AND HIS ALIEN ARMY--
NEWS
LIVE
MY NAME IS ROBERT BANNER.
I'M HERE TO END THE WORLD.

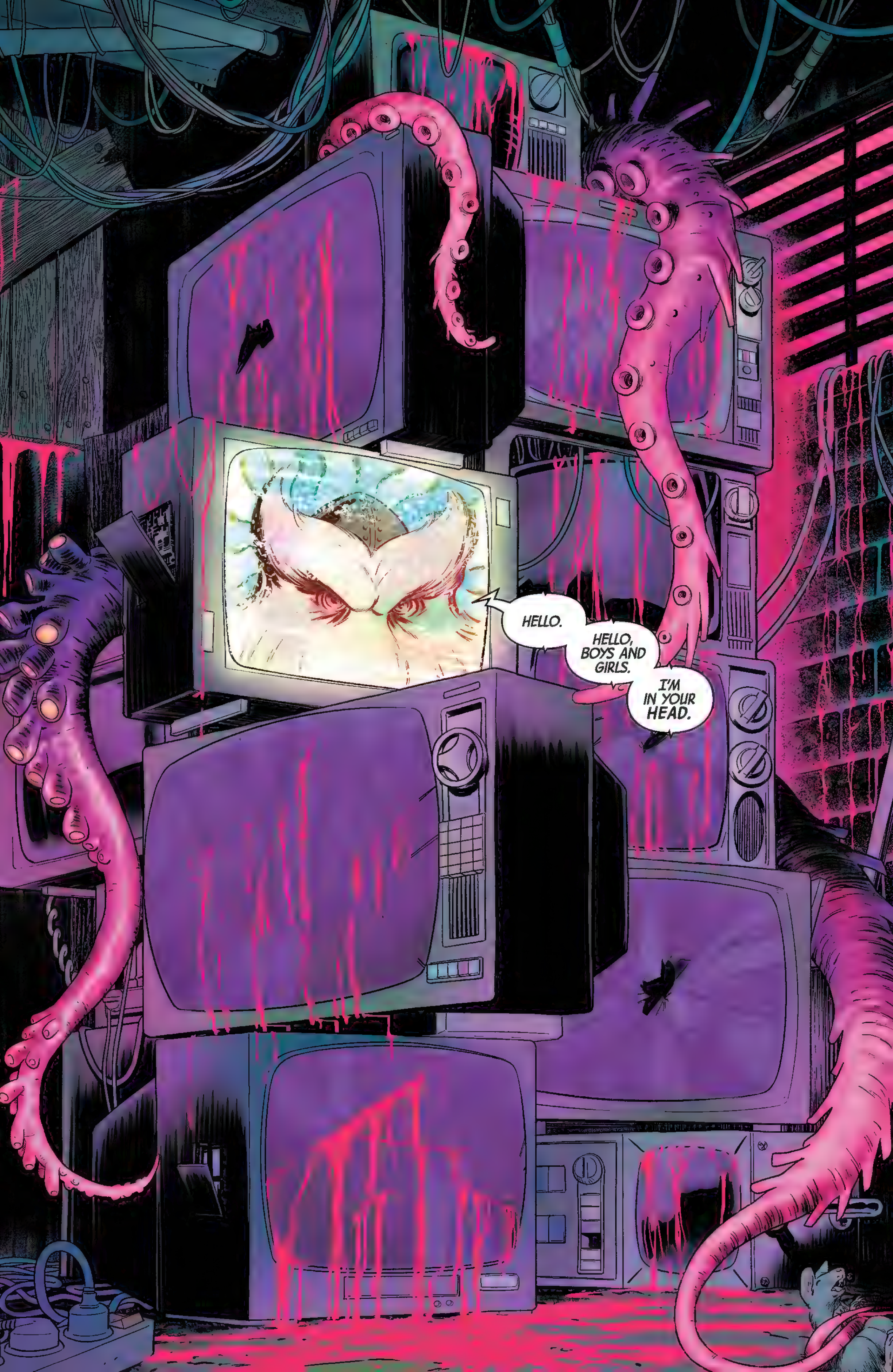

SURE. ROBERT BANNER. I KNOW THAT GUY.
WHAT DO THEY CALL HIM? "THE STRANGEST MAN OF ALL TIME"?
LOUSY TERRORIST.
HE'S TERRIFYING. HE'S LIKE A CULT LEADER. ALL THE WEIRDOS IN MY SCHOOL STARTED WEARING THESE CREEPY MASKS...
I'M JUST GLAD THE INCREDIBLE HULK ALWAYS MANAGED TO STOP HIM.
YEAH, MY THEORY WAS ALWAYS THAT THE MONSTER DIDN'T WANT TO KILL. THAT'S WHY HIS BODY COUNT'S SO LOW.
BUT ROBERT BANNER IS ALWAYS IN THE BACKGROUND... PUSHING HIM ON...
I THINK THAT'S HOW THAT WENT.
ROBERT BANNER DESTROYED MY CHILDHOOD HOME. HE ALL BUT KILLED MY FATHER. HE'S NEVER APOLOGIZED.
BUT THE HULK SAVED MY LIFE. IT'S HARD TO RECONCILE THAT... SOMETIMES...
WAIT...WHY IS IT HARD TO...? THEY'RE DIFFERENT PEOPLE...
AREN'T THEY...?
I THINK I GOT A CONCUSSION BACK THERE...OR SOMETHING... SOMETHING'S WRONG...
NOTHING IS WRONG.
NOTHING IS WRONG.
NOTHING IS WRONG.

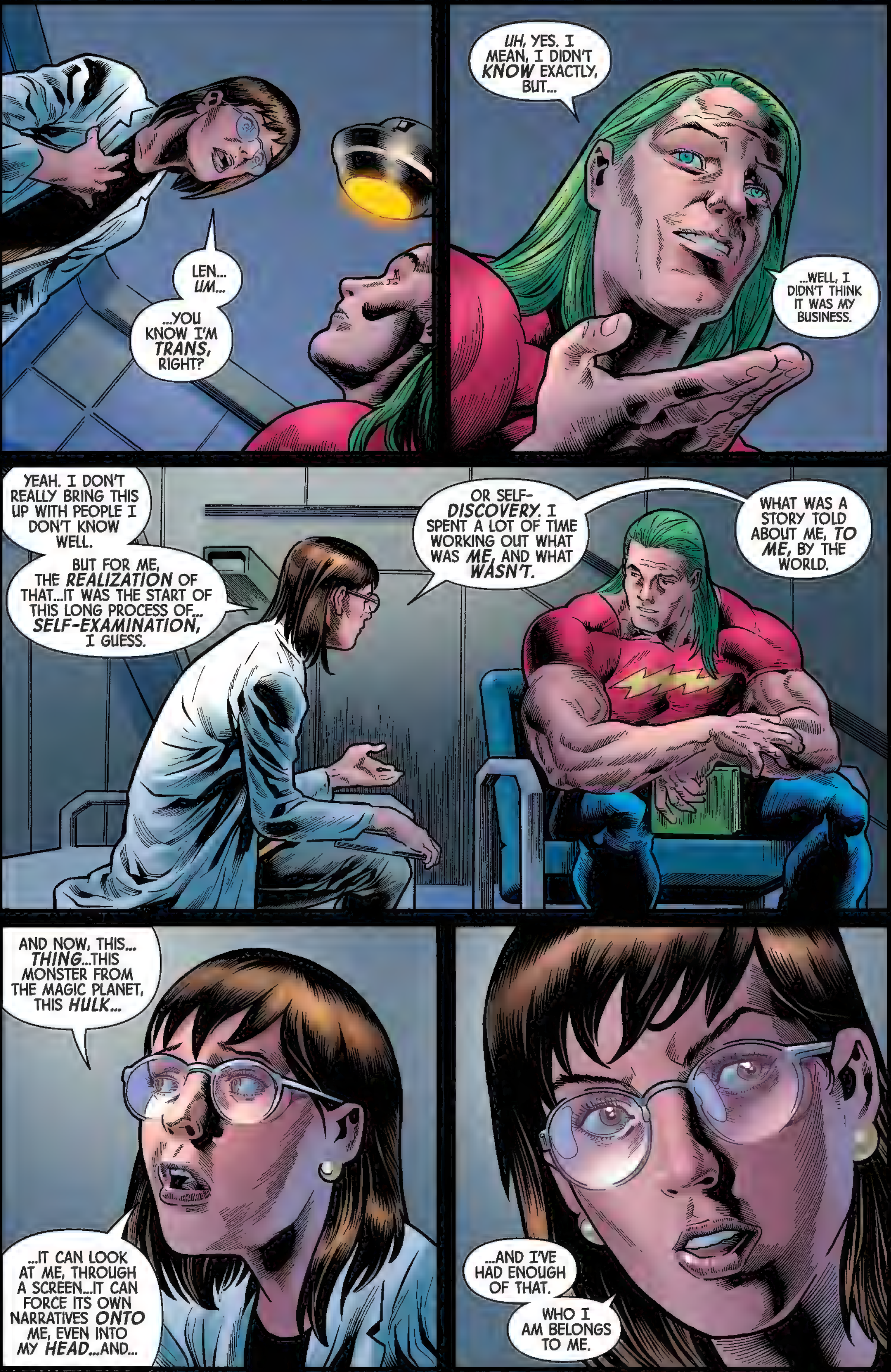

SHADOW BASE SITE G.
NOTHING IS WRONG.
BRUCE?
NOTHING.
THEY'RE SAYING SOME *WILD STUFF* ABOUT YOU ON THE *TV*, MAN--
HEY, YOU ALL *RIGHT* IN HERE?
I'M *FINE*. NOTHING'S *WRONG*.
THE MIRROR... IT'S *HOLDING*, RICK. IT'S HOLDING.
HE'S NOT COMING OUT.

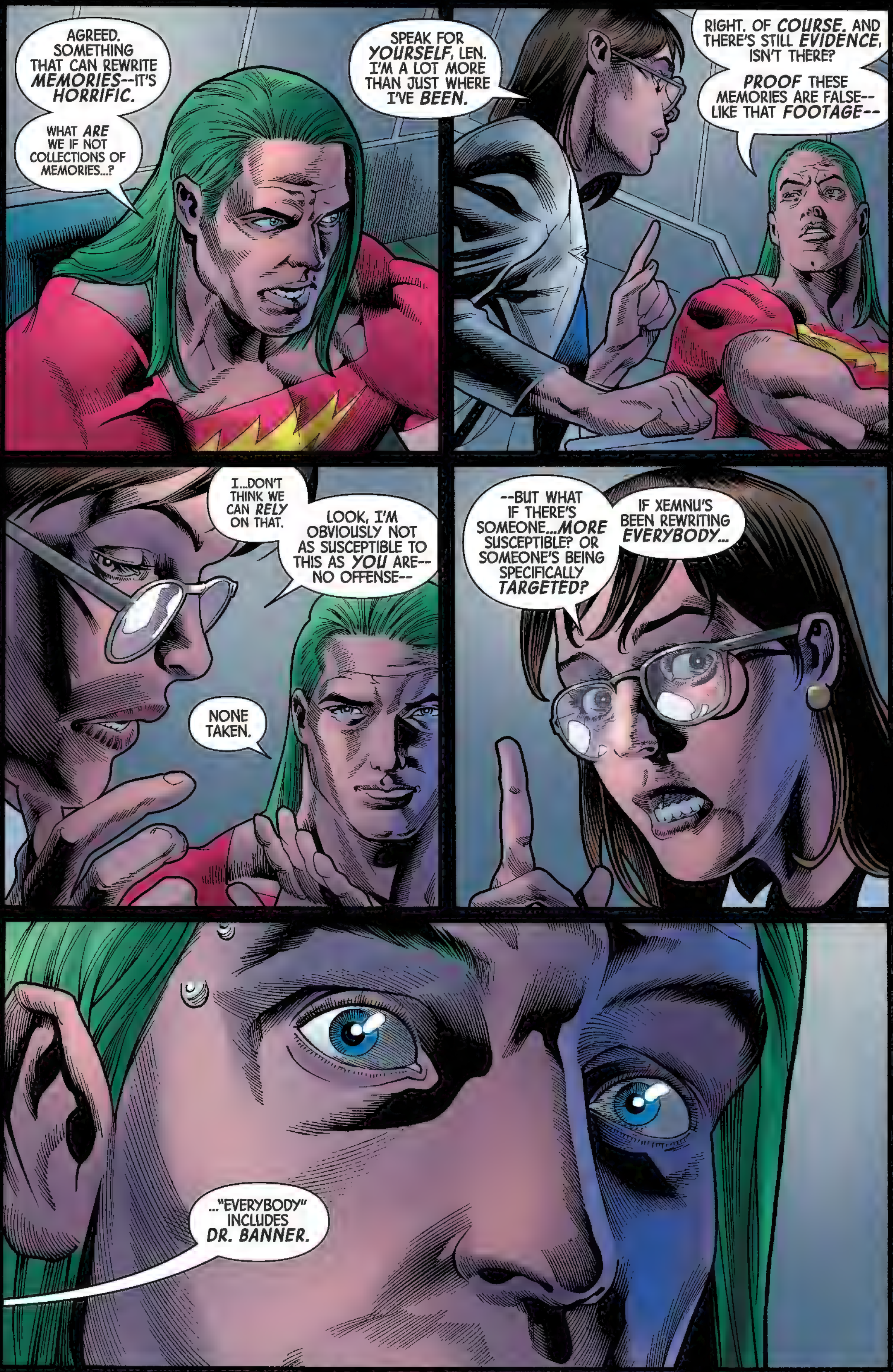

OH-KAY.
SO...WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?
...PLANNING THE NEXT MOVE. WE'VE BEEN CONCENTRATING FAR TOO HARD ON ROXXON.
THESE STRATEGIC STRIKES...PROTESTS, NONLETHAL ATTACKS... RESPONDING TO DISTRESS CALLS, FOR GOD'S SAKE...
...THEY WON'T MAKE THE NECESSARY IMPACT.
WE NEED TO STRIKE HARDER. HIT THE HUMANS WHERE IT HURTS-- HIT SOME SOFT TARGETS.
MAKE THE PUNY HUMANS AFRAID AGAIN...
THAT...DOESN'T SOUND LIKE YOU, BRUCE...
WHY ARE YOU CALLING ME THAT, RICK?
BRUCE IS MY MIDDLE NAME. YOU KNOW THAT.
I'M ROBERT. ROBERT BANNER.
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE TALKING TO?

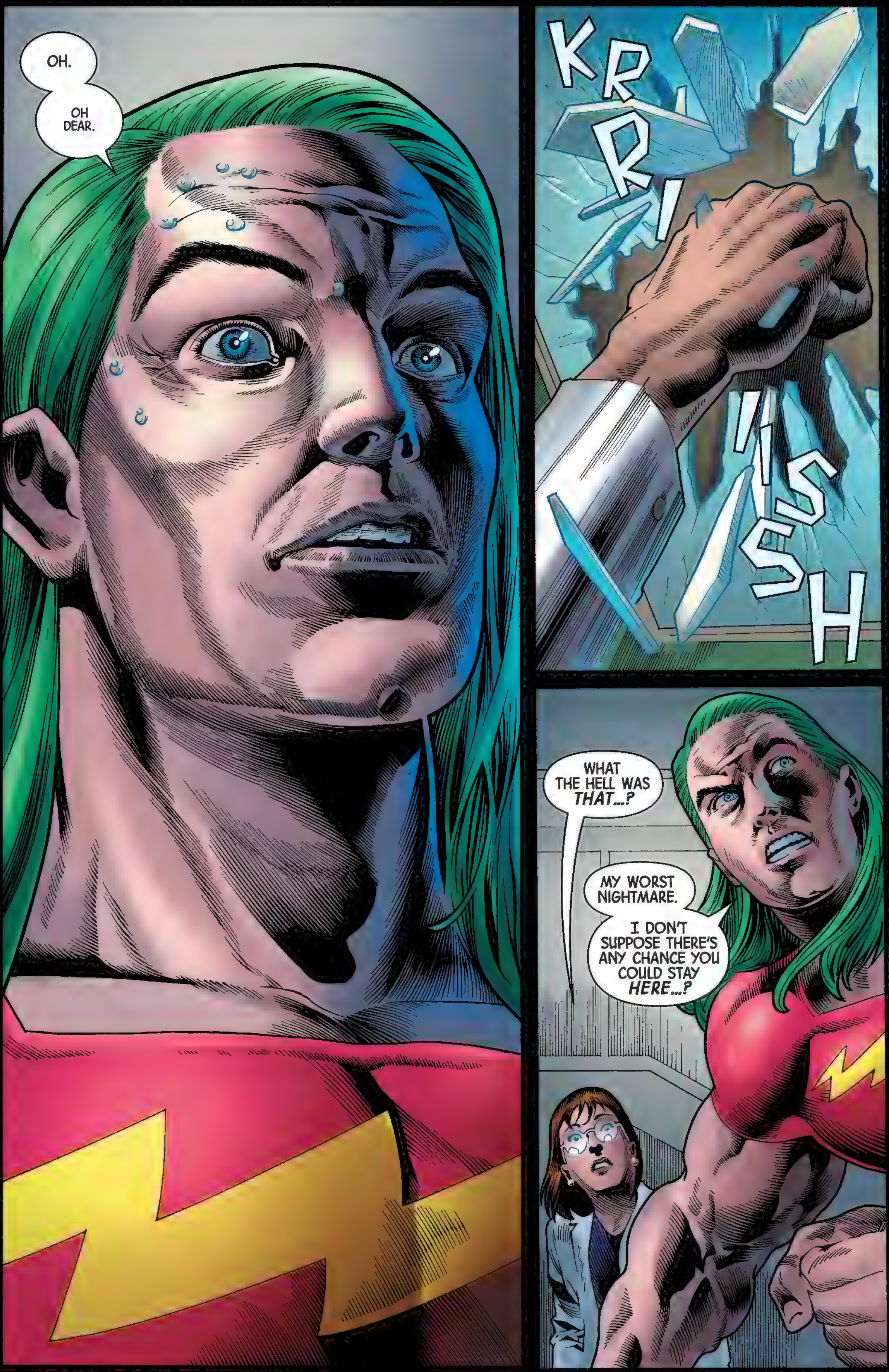

HEY, LEN. CAN WE *TALK?* MIND IF I COME IN?
OH, HI, CHARLENE. NO, I WASN'T DOING ANYTHING--JUST CATCHING UP ON SOME READING.
GREAT. *LISTEN*--CAN YOU DO ME A FAVOR AND LOOK AT *THIS?*
IT'S *VIDEO FOOTAGE* OF ME--PART OF THE ARCHIVE DATA. I'VE ISOLATED ONE SENTENCE IN *PARTICULAR.*
NO *CONTEXT*--JUST LISTEN TO IT AND TELL ME WHAT *NAME* YOU HEAR.
WHAT IS THIS, A *HEARING* TEST? CHECKING FOR AFTEREFFECTS OF TRANSLOCATION?
SURE. WHATEVER. JUST...*LISTEN* AND *REPEAT.*
--NO OUT. THEN *DAREDEVIL* HAPPENED, AND I WENT TO--
"DAREDEVIL."
HOW WAS THAT?
...
THANKS. I WAS WORRIED I WAS *HALLUCINATING.*
THIS MIGHT BE *WORSE.*

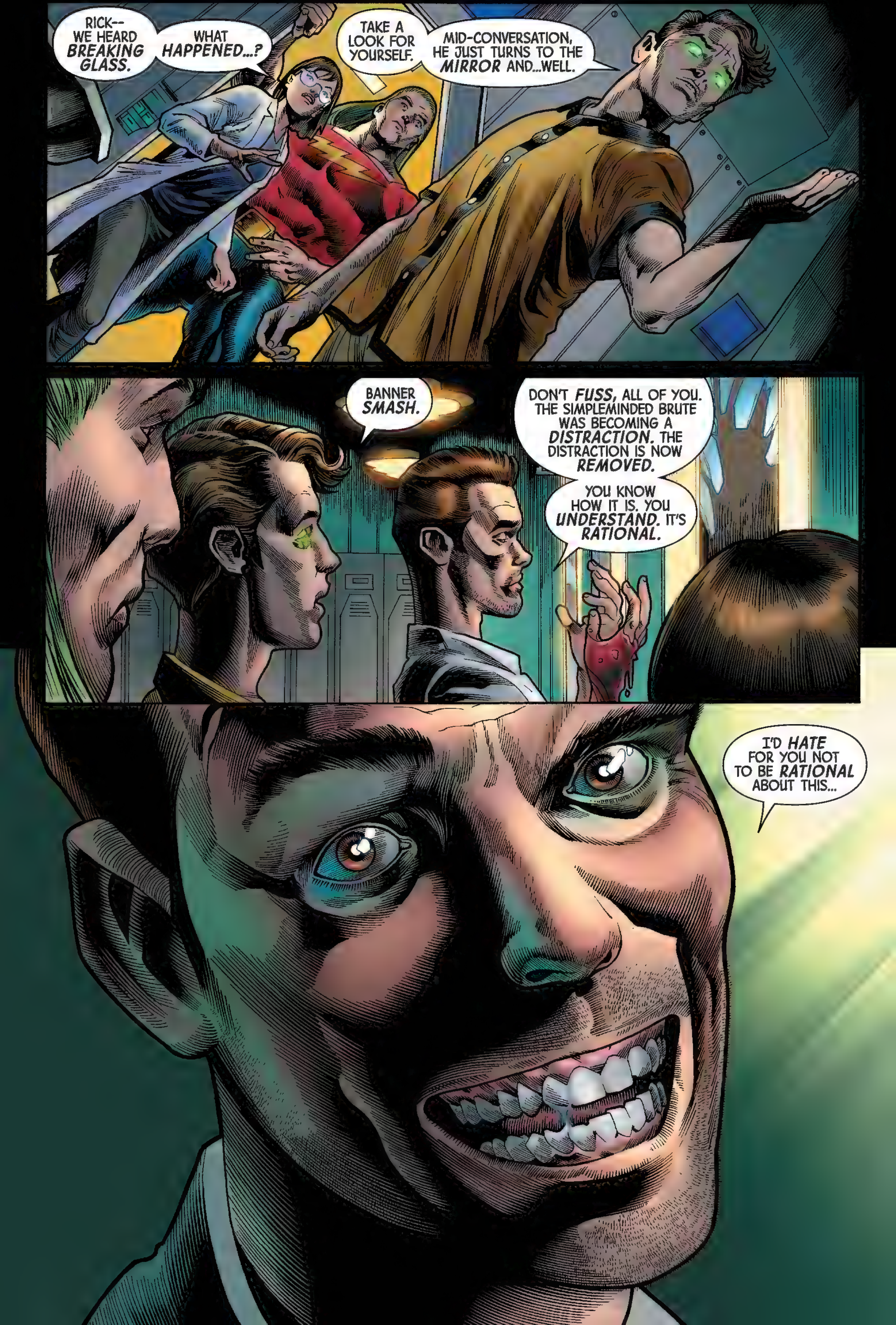

YOU HEARD SOMETHING *ELSE?*
NO, I HEARD "DAREDEVIL." I JUST DON'T REMEMBER *SAYING* DAREDEVIL. I DON'T *REMEMBER* DAREDEVIL.
I REMEMBER *XEMNU.*
XEMNU...FROM THE *TV SHOW?* "THE MAGIC PLANET"?
DID YOU EVER *WATCH* THAT SHOW?
I... I *THINK* SO...?
YEAH, I DON'T KNOW EITHER.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE *MANDELA EFFECT* IS, LEN?
OF COURSE. I'VE *STUDIED* IT.
IT'S A TERM FOR *FALSE MEMORIES* THAT FIND THEIR WAY INTO THE *PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS.*
NAMED FOR *NELSON MANDELA.* A NUMBER OF PEOPLE REMEMBERED HIS FUNERAL HAPPENING IN THE *EIGHTIES*--LONG BEFORE HE DIED.
SIMILARLY, THAT MOVIE ABOUT THE *GENIE*--NEVER EXISTED.
NEITHER DID "JIFFY" *PEANUT BUTTER*..."*MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL*"...
..."THE *MAGIC PLANET.*" A SHOW EVERYONE *REMEMBERS,* BUT NOBODY *WATCHED.*
IT NEVER *EXISTED,* LEN.
IT'S ALL IN OUR *HEADS.*

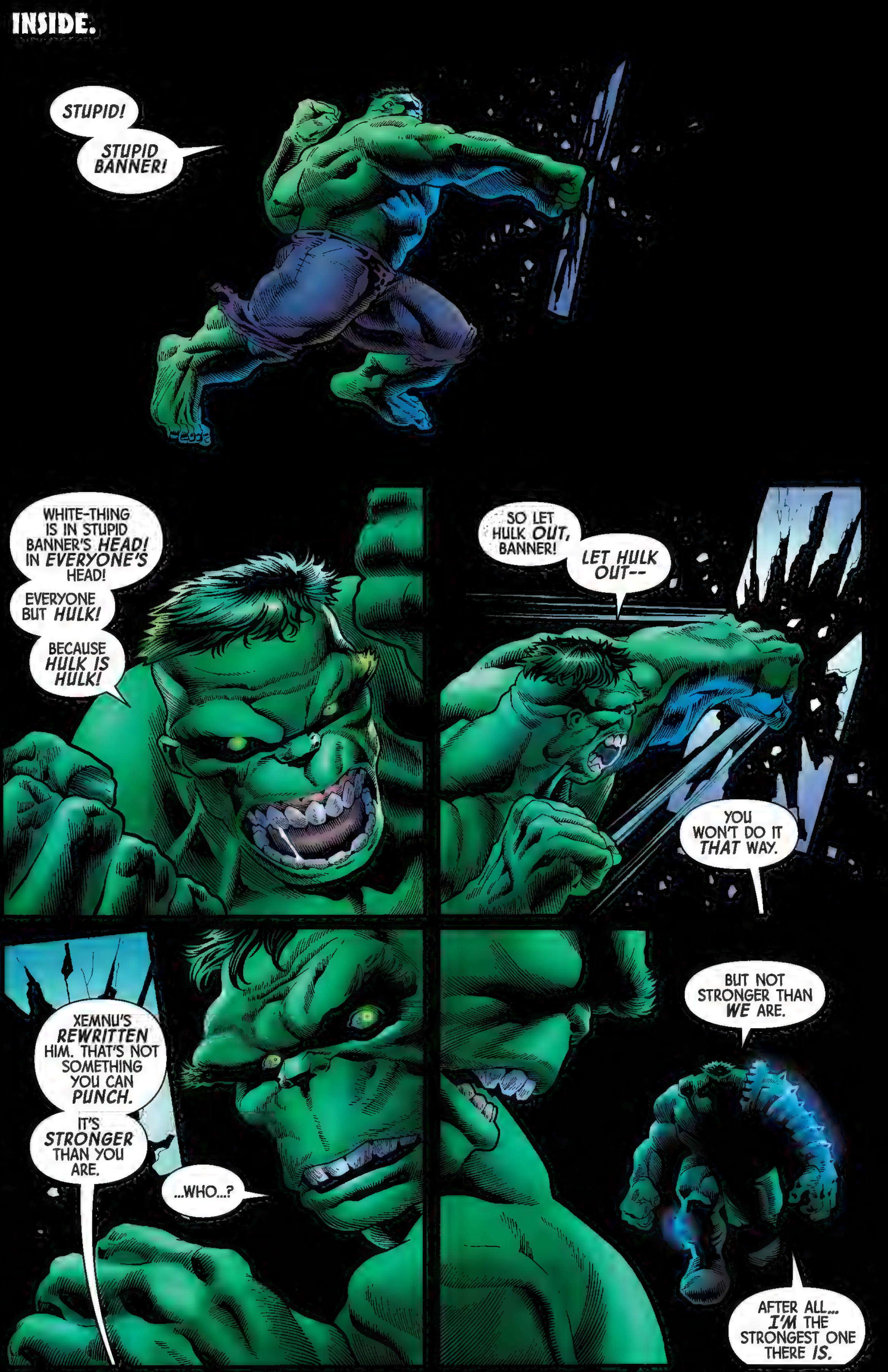

HELLO.
HELLO, BOYS AND GIRLS.
I'M IN YOUR HEAD.

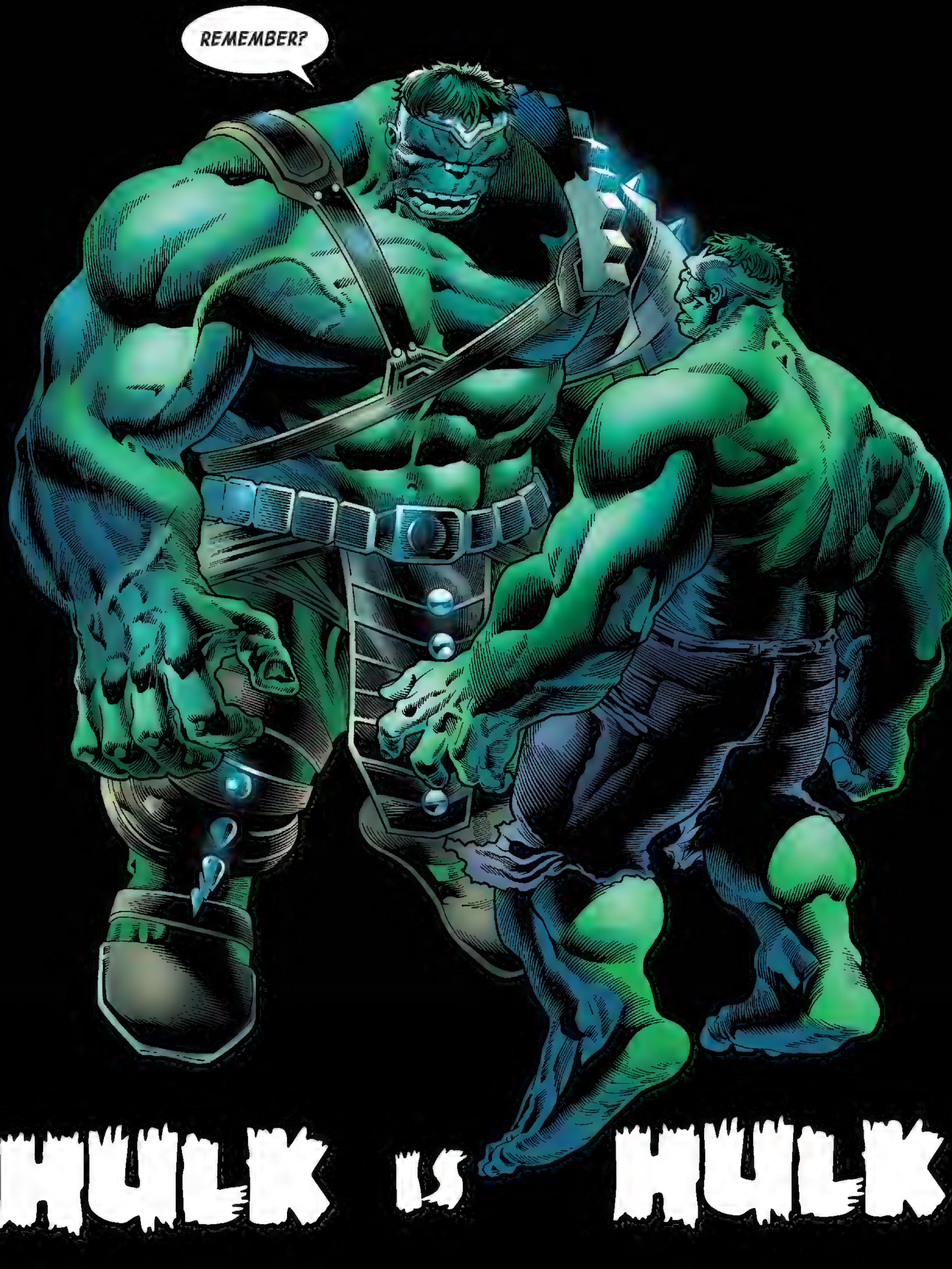

LEN... UM...
...YOU KNOW I'M *TRANS,* RIGHT?
UH, YES. I MEAN, I DIDN'T *KNOW* EXACTLY, BUT...
...WELL, I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS MY BUSINESS.
YEAH. I DON'T REALLY BRING THIS UP WITH PEOPLE I DON'T KNOW WELL.
BUT FOR ME, THE *REALIZATION* OF THAT...IT WAS THE START OF THIS LONG PROCESS OF... *SELF-EXAMINATION,* I GUESS.
OR SELF-*DISCOVERY.* I SPENT A LOT OF TIME WORKING OUT WHAT WAS *ME,* AND WHAT *WASN'T.*
WHAT WAS A STORY TOLD ABOUT ME, *TO ME,* BY THE WORLD.
AND NOW, THIS... *THING*...THIS MONSTER FROM THE MAGIC PLANET, THIS *HULK*...
...IT CAN LOOK AT ME, THROUGH A SCREEN...IT CAN FORCE ITS OWN NARRATIVES *ONTO* ME, EVEN INTO *MY HEAD*...AND...
...AND I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THAT.
WHO I AM BELONGS TO ME.


AGREED. SOMETHING THAT CAN REWRITE *MEMORIES*--IT'S *HORRIFIC.*
WHAT *ARE* WE IF NOT COLLECTIONS OF MEMORIES...?
SPEAK FOR *YOURSELF*, LEN. I'M A LOT MORE THAN JUST WHERE I'VE *BEEN.*
RIGHT. OF *COURSE.* AND THERE'S STILL *EVIDENCE*, ISN'T THERE?
PROOF THESE MEMORIES ARE FALSE--LIKE THAT *FOOTAGE*--
I...DON'T THINK WE CAN *RELY* ON THAT.
LOOK, I'M OBVIOUSLY NOT AS SUSCEPTIBLE TO THIS AS *YOU* ARE--NO OFFENSE--
NONE TAKEN.
IF XEMNU'S BEEN REWRITING *EVERYBODY*...
--BUT WHAT IF THERE'S SOMEONE...*MORE* SUSCEPTIBLE? OR SOMEONE'S BEING SPECIFICALLY *TARGETED?*
..."EVERYBODY" INCLUDES *DR. BANNER.*


OH.
OH DEAR.
KRRIISSH
WHAT THE HELL WAS *THAT...?*
MY WORST NIGHTMARE.
I DON'T SUPPOSE THERE'S ANY CHANCE YOU COULD STAY *HERE...?*

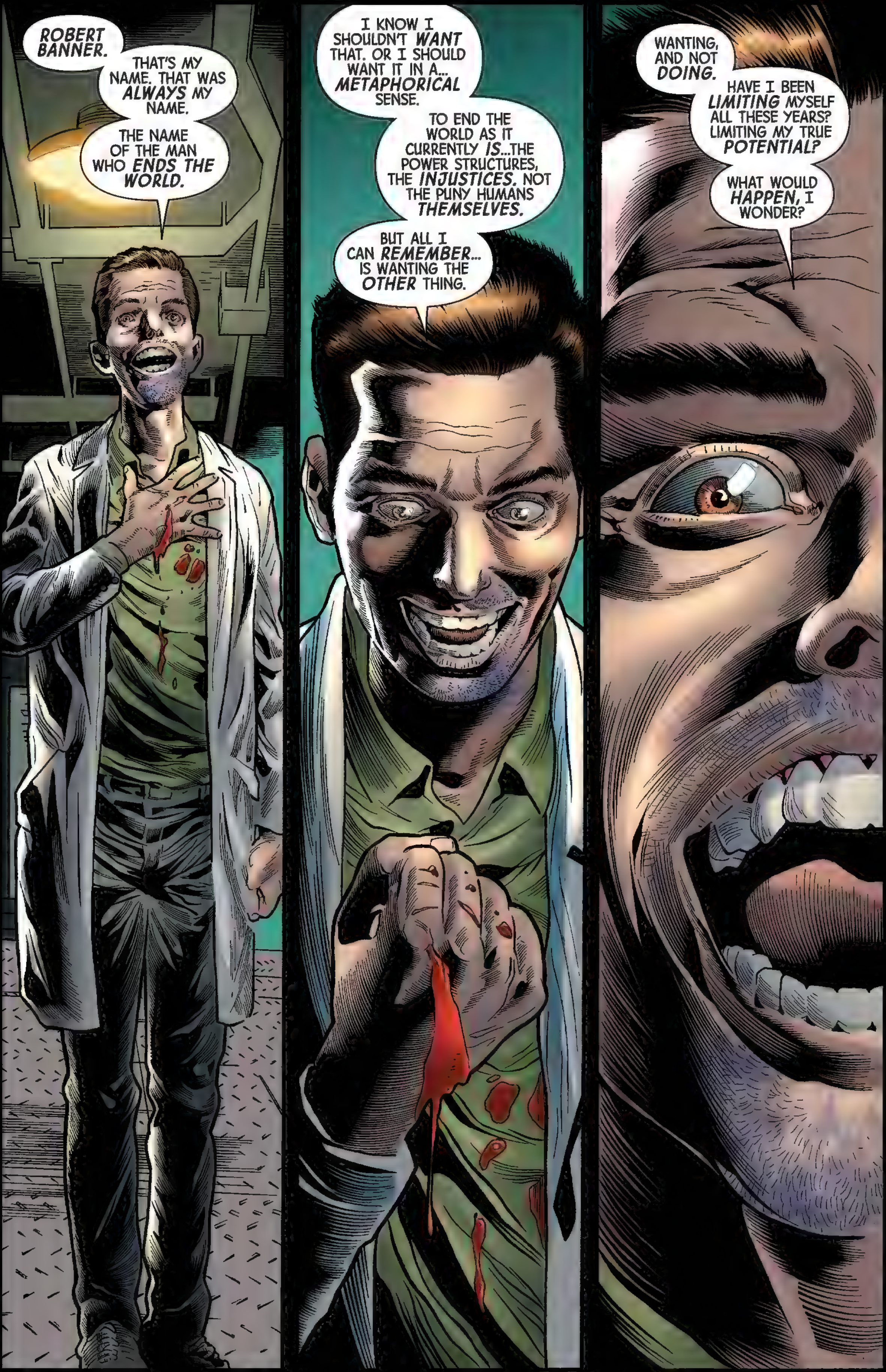

RICK-- WE HEARD *BREAKING GLASS.*
WHAT *HAPPENED...?*
TAKE A LOOK FOR YOURSELF.
MID-CONVERSATION, HE JUST TURNS TO THE *MIRROR* AND...WELL.
BANNER *SMASH.*
DON'T *FUSS,* ALL OF YOU. THE SIMPLEMINDED BRUTE WAS BECOMING A *DISTRACTION.* THE DISTRACTION IS NOW *REMOVED.*
YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. YOU *UNDERSTAND.* IT'S *RATIONAL.*
I'D *HATE* FOR YOU NOT TO BE *RATIONAL* ABOUT THIS...

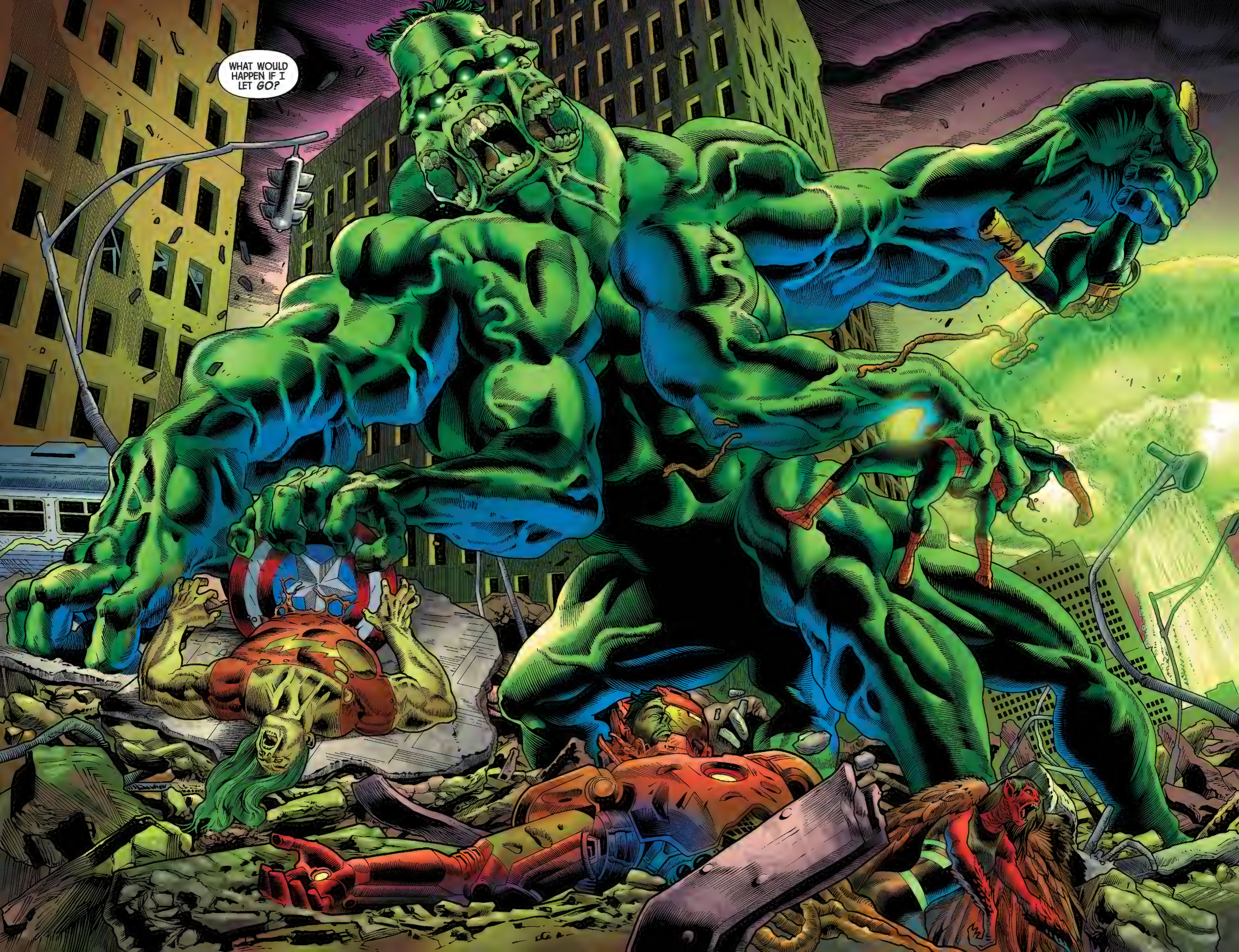

INSIDE.
STUPID!
STUPID BANNER!
WHITE-THING IS IN STUPID BANNER'S *HEAD!* IN *EVERYONE'S* HEAD!
EVERYONE BUT *HULK!*
BECAUSE *HULK IS HULK!*
SO LET HULK *OUT,* BANNER!
LET HULK OUT--
YOU WON'T DO IT *THAT* WAY.
XEMNU'S *REWRITTEN* HIM. THAT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN *PUNCH.*
IT'S *STRONGER* THAN YOU ARE.
...WHO...?
BUT NOT STRONGER THAN *WE* ARE.
AFTER ALL... *I'M* THE STRONGEST ONE THERE *IS.*

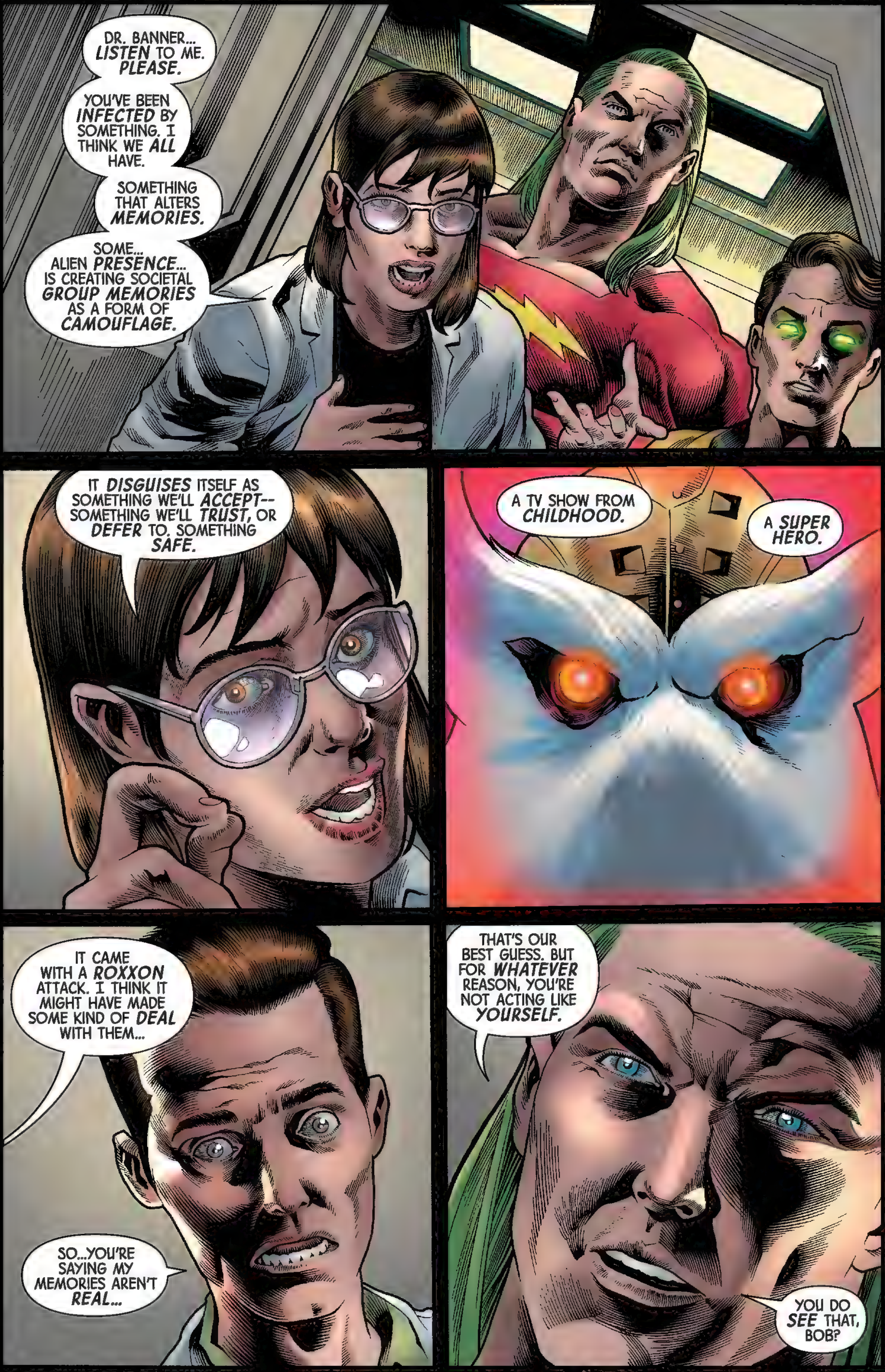

REMEMBER?
HULK IS HULK

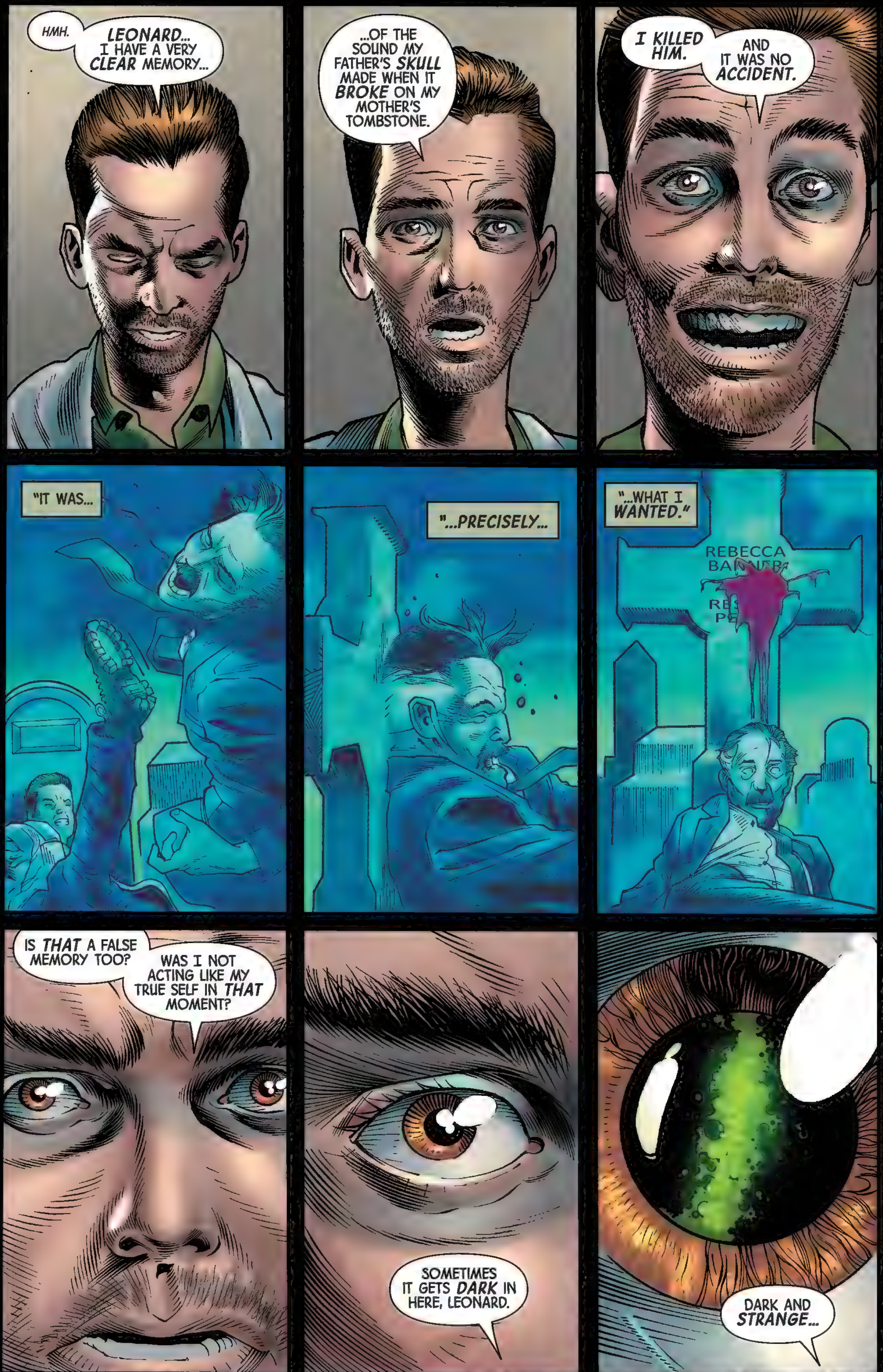
33

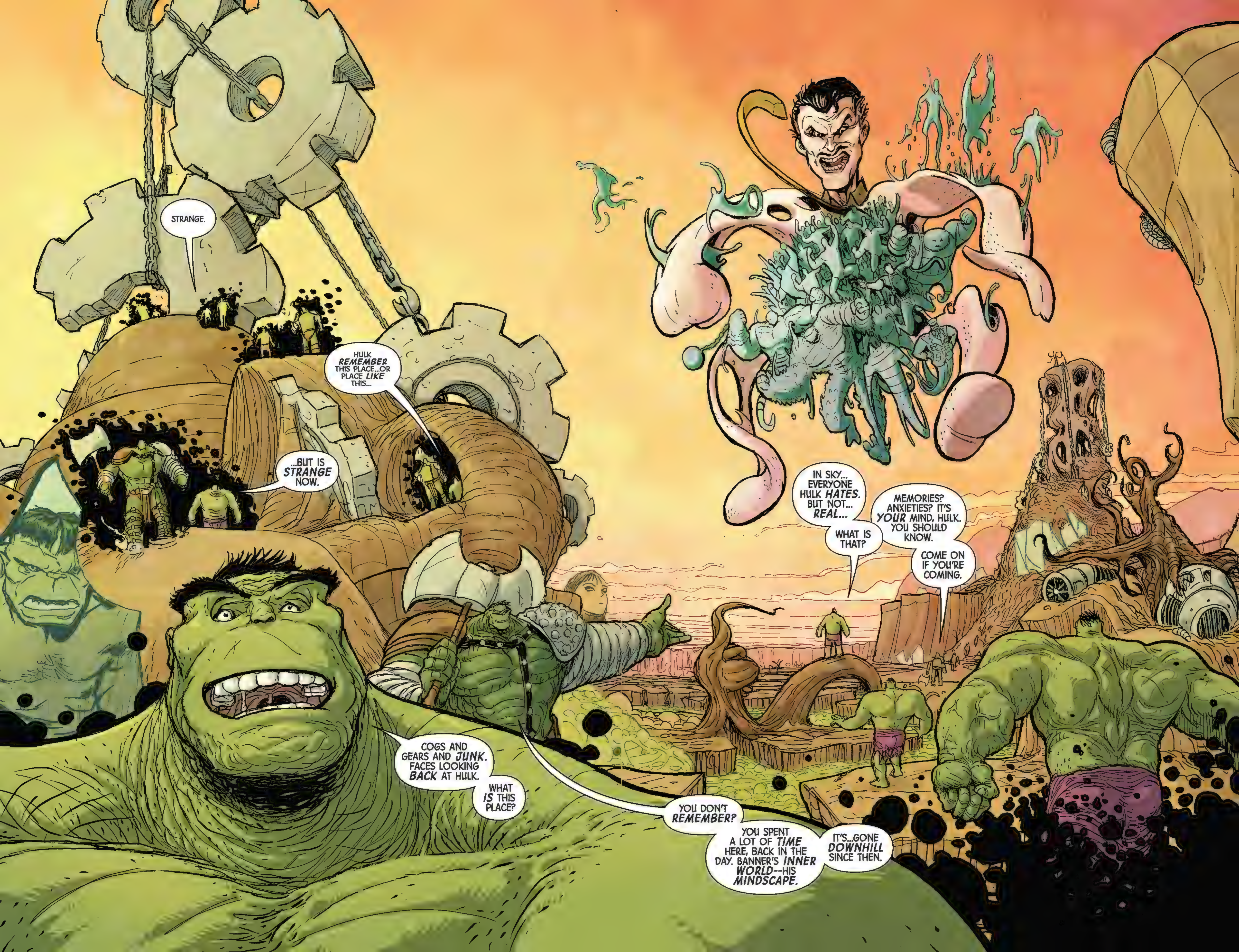
> "I WOULD RATHER BE A DEVIL
> IN ALLIANCE WITH TRUTH,
> THAN AN ANGEL IN ALLIANCE
> WITH FALSEHOOD."
>
> – LUDWIG FEUERBACH
> *THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY*

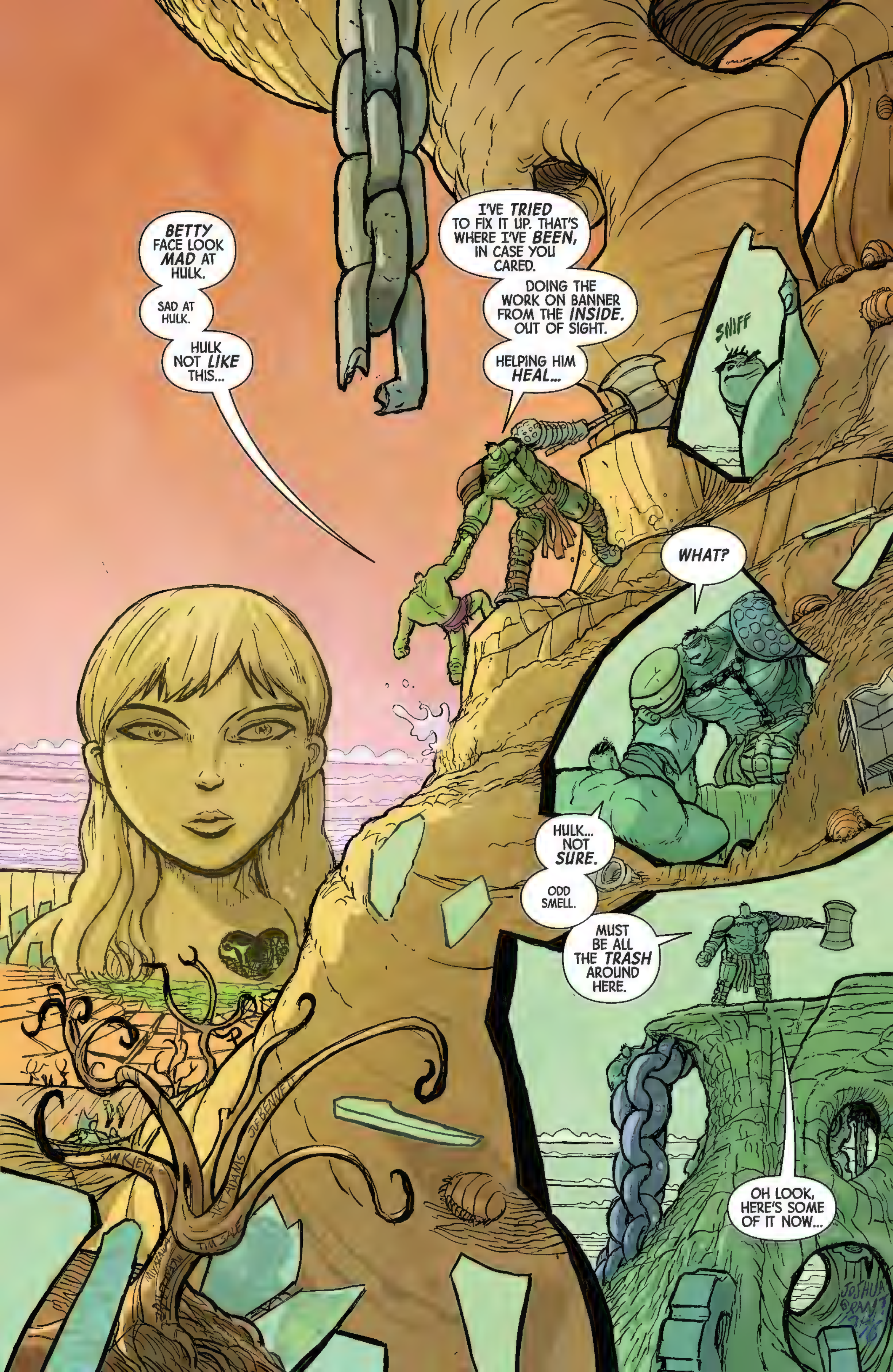

ROBERT BANNER.
THAT'S MY NAME. THAT WAS ALWAYS MY NAME.
THE NAME OF THE MAN WHO ENDS THE WORLD.
I KNOW I SHOULDN'T WANT THAT. OR I SHOULD WANT IT IN A... METAPHORICAL SENSE.
TO END THE WORLD AS IT CURRENTLY IS...THE POWER STRUCTURES, THE INJUSTICES. NOT THE PUNY HUMANS THEMSELVES.
BUT ALL I CAN REMEMBER... IS WANTING THE OTHER THING.
WANTING, AND NOT DOING.
HAVE I BEEN LIMITING MYSELF ALL THESE YEARS? LIMITING MY TRUE POTENTIAL?
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, I WONDER?

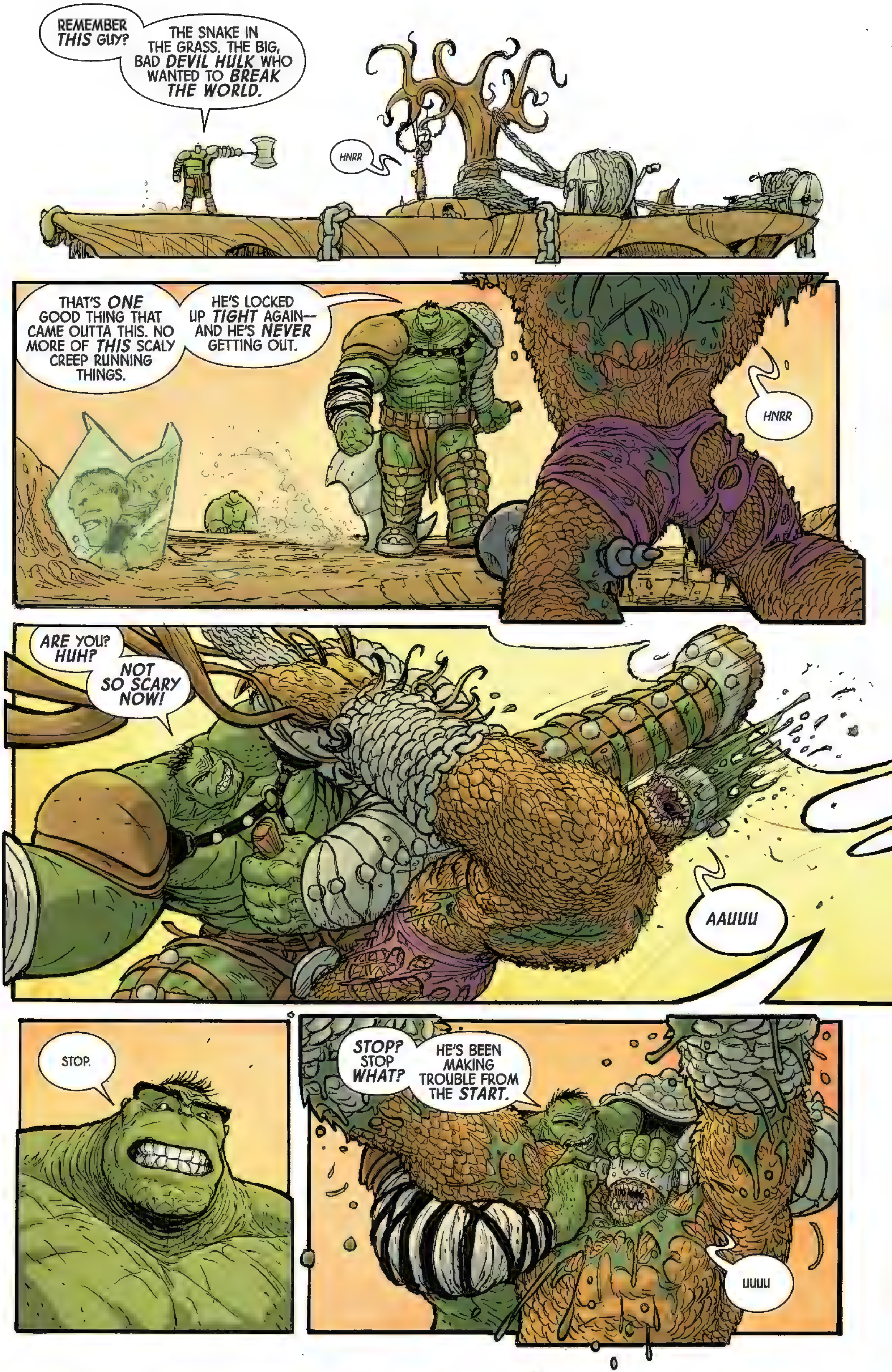

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I LET GO?

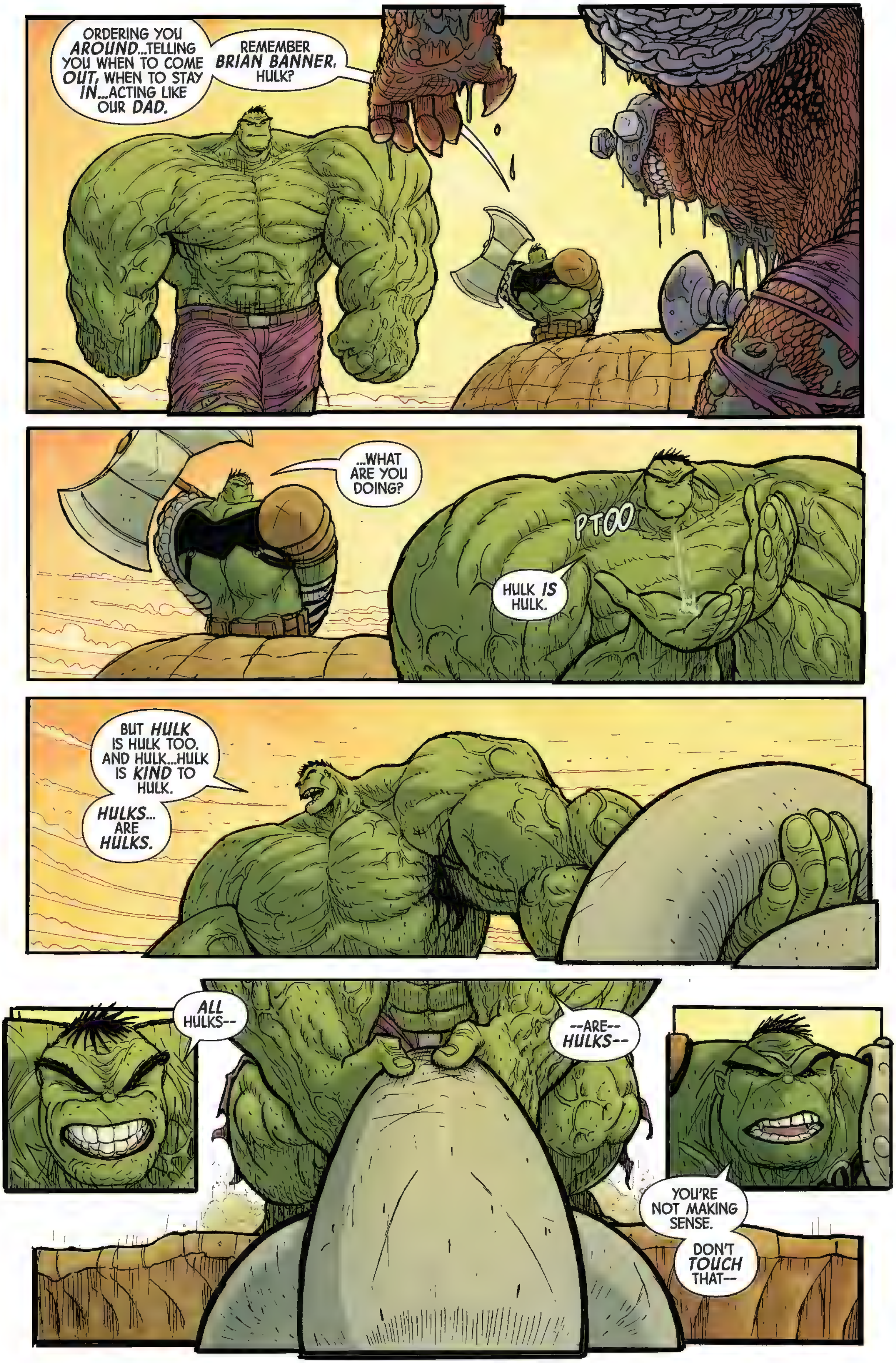

DR. BANNER... LISTEN TO ME. PLEASE.
YOU'VE BEEN INFECTED BY SOMETHING. I THINK WE ALL HAVE.
SOMETHING THAT ALTERS MEMORIES.
SOME... ALIEN PRESENCE... IS CREATING SOCIETAL GROUP MEMORIES AS A FORM OF CAMOUFLAGE.
IT DISGUISES ITSELF AS SOMETHING WE'LL ACCEPT-- SOMETHING WE'LL TRUST, OR DEFER TO. SOMETHING SAFE.
A TV SHOW FROM CHILDHOOD.
A SUPER HERO.
IT CAME WITH A ROXXON ATTACK. I THINK IT MIGHT HAVE MADE SOME KIND OF DEAL WITH THEM...
SO...YOU'RE SAYING MY MEMORIES AREN'T REAL...
THAT'S OUR BEST GUESS. BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON, YOU'RE NOT ACTING LIKE YOURSELF.
YOU DO SEE THAT, BOB?

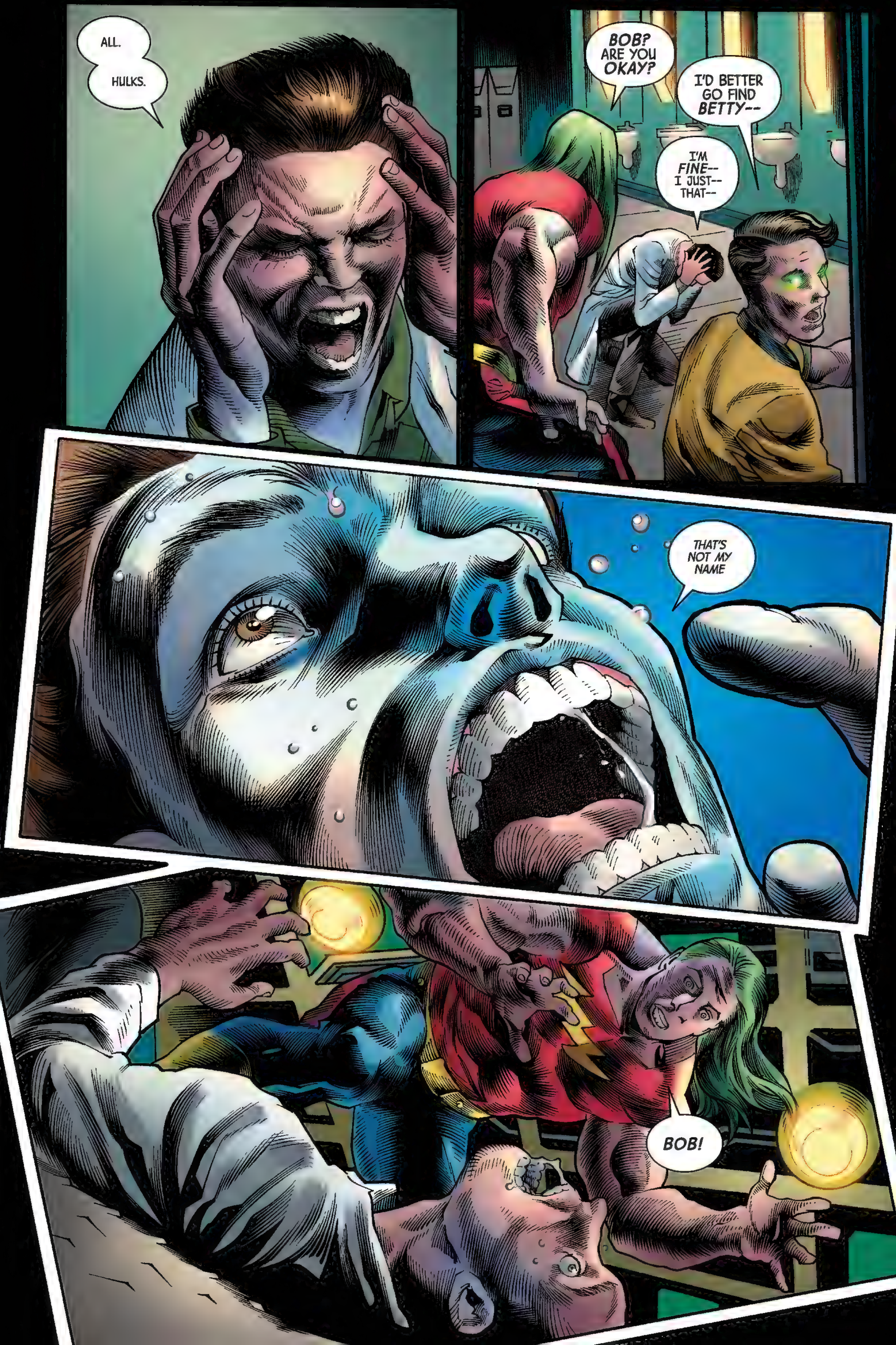

HMH.
LEONARD... I HAVE A VERY CLEAR MEMORY...
...OF THE SOUND MY FATHER'S SKULL MADE WHEN IT BROKE ON MY MOTHER'S TOMBSTONE.
I KILLED HIM.
AND IT WAS NO ACCIDENT.
"IT WAS...
"...PRECISELY...
"...WHAT I WANTED."
REBECCA
IS THAT A FALSE MEMORY TOO?
WAS I NOT ACTING LIKE MY TRUE SELF IN THAT MOMENT?
SOMETIMES IT GETS DARK IN HERE, LEONARD.
DARK AND STRANGE...

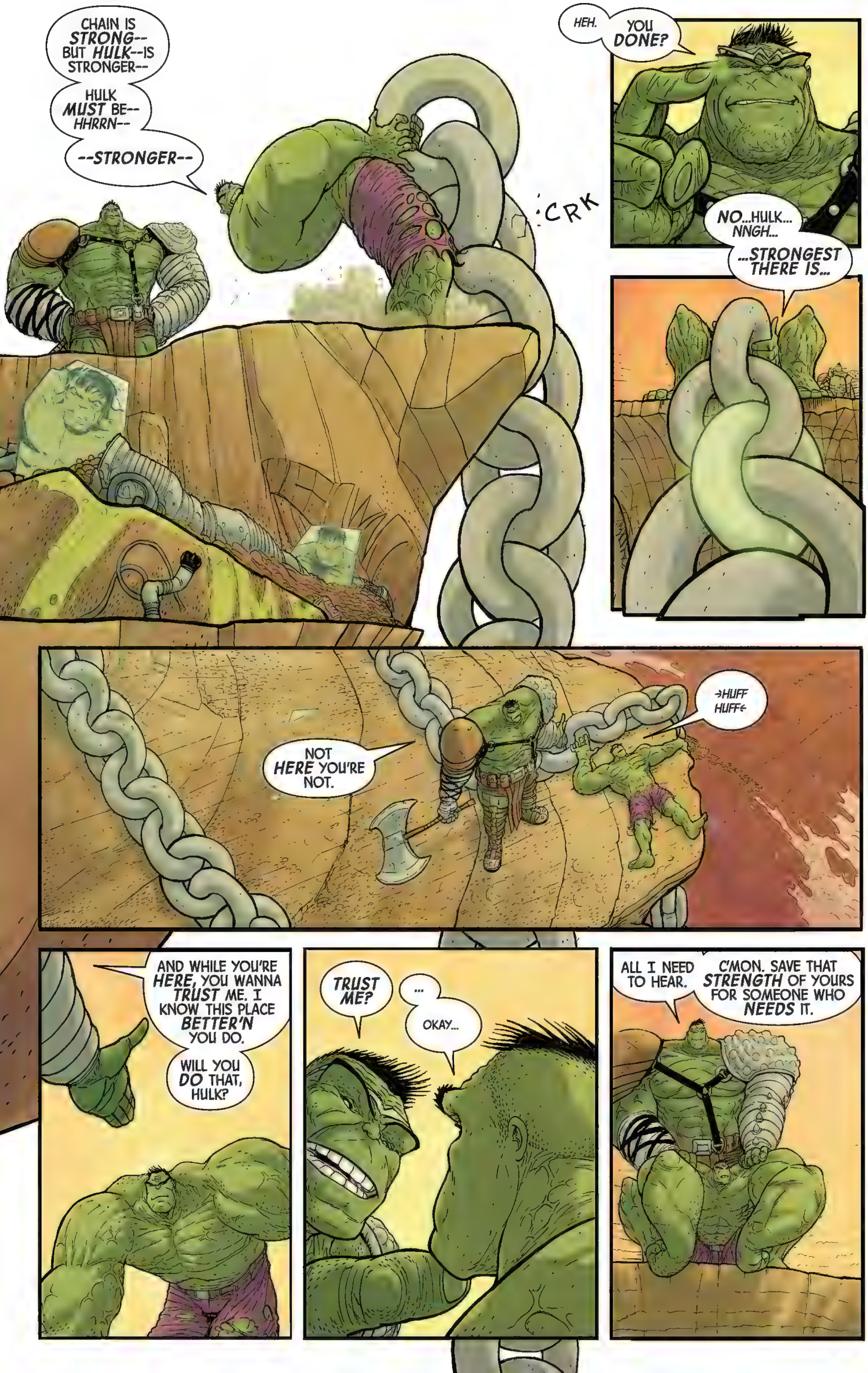

STRANGE.
HULK *REMEMBER* THIS PLACE...OR PLACE *LIKE* THIS...
...BUT IS *STRANGE* NOW.
COGS AND GEARS AND *JUNK*. FACES LOOKING *BACK* AT HULK.
WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE?
YOU DON'T *REMEMBER?*
YOU SPENT A LOT OF *TIME* HERE, BACK IN THE DAY. BANNER'S *INNER WORLD*--HIS *MINDSCAPE*.
IT'S...GONE *DOWNHILL* SINCE THEN.
IN SKY... EVERYONE HULK *HATES*. BUT NOT... *REAL*...
WHAT IS THAT?
MEMORIES? ANXIETIES? IT'S *YOUR* MIND, HULK. YOU SHOULD KNOW.
COME ON IF YOU'RE COMING.

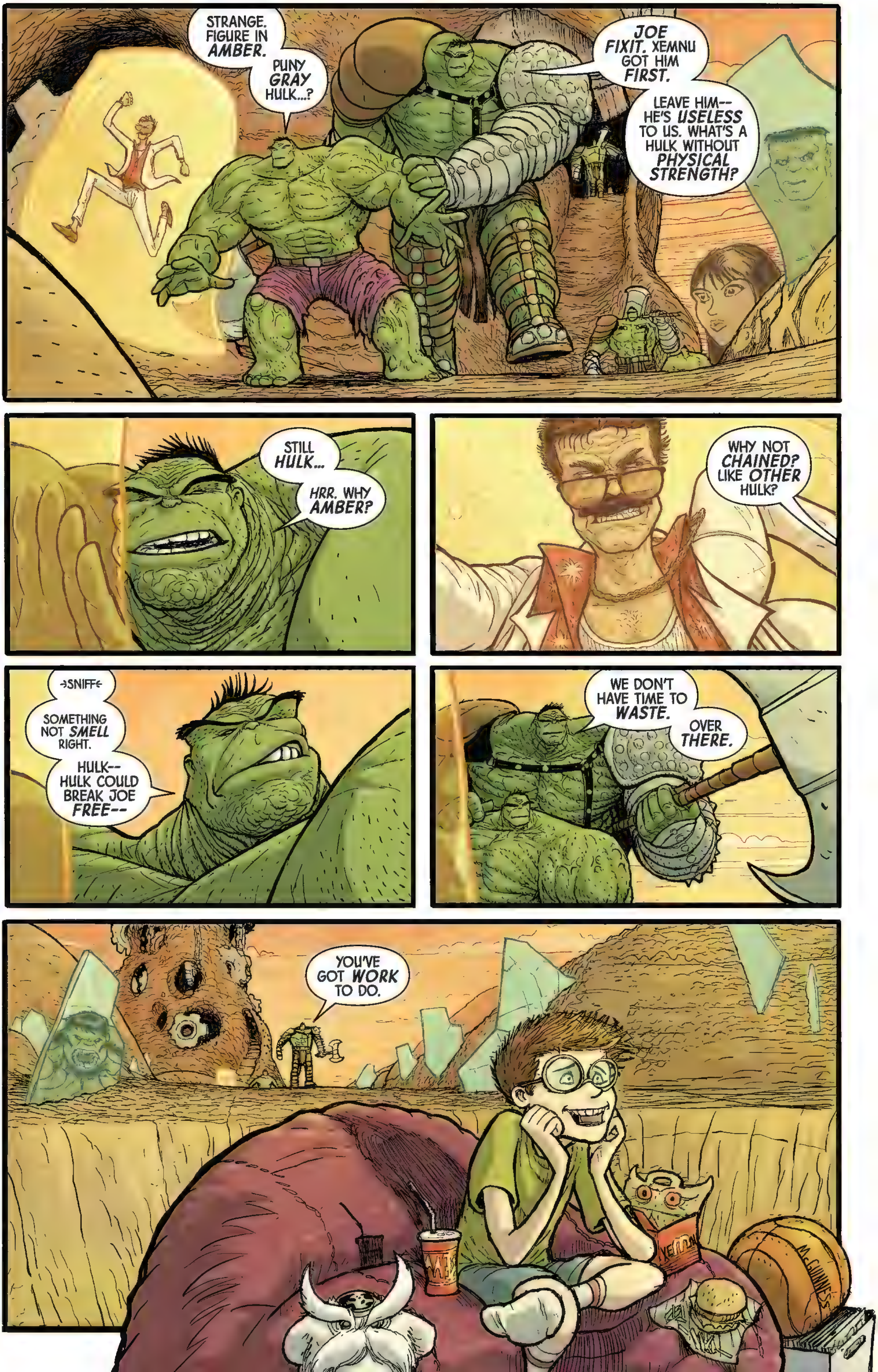

BETTY FACE LOOK *MAD* AT HULK.
SAD AT HULK.
HULK NOT *LIKE* THIS...
I'VE *TRIED* TO FIX IT UP. THAT'S WHERE I'VE *BEEN*, IN CASE YOU CARED.
DOING THE WORK ON BANNER FROM THE *INSIDE*. OUT OF SIGHT.
HELPING HIM *HEAL*...
SNIFF
WHAT?
HULK... NOT *SURE*.
ODD SMELL.
MUST BE ALL THE *TRASH* AROUND HERE.
OH LOOK, HERE'S SOME OF IT NOW...
SAM KIETH
JOE BENNETT
ART ADAMS
TIM SALE
MIYAZAWA
JOSHUA

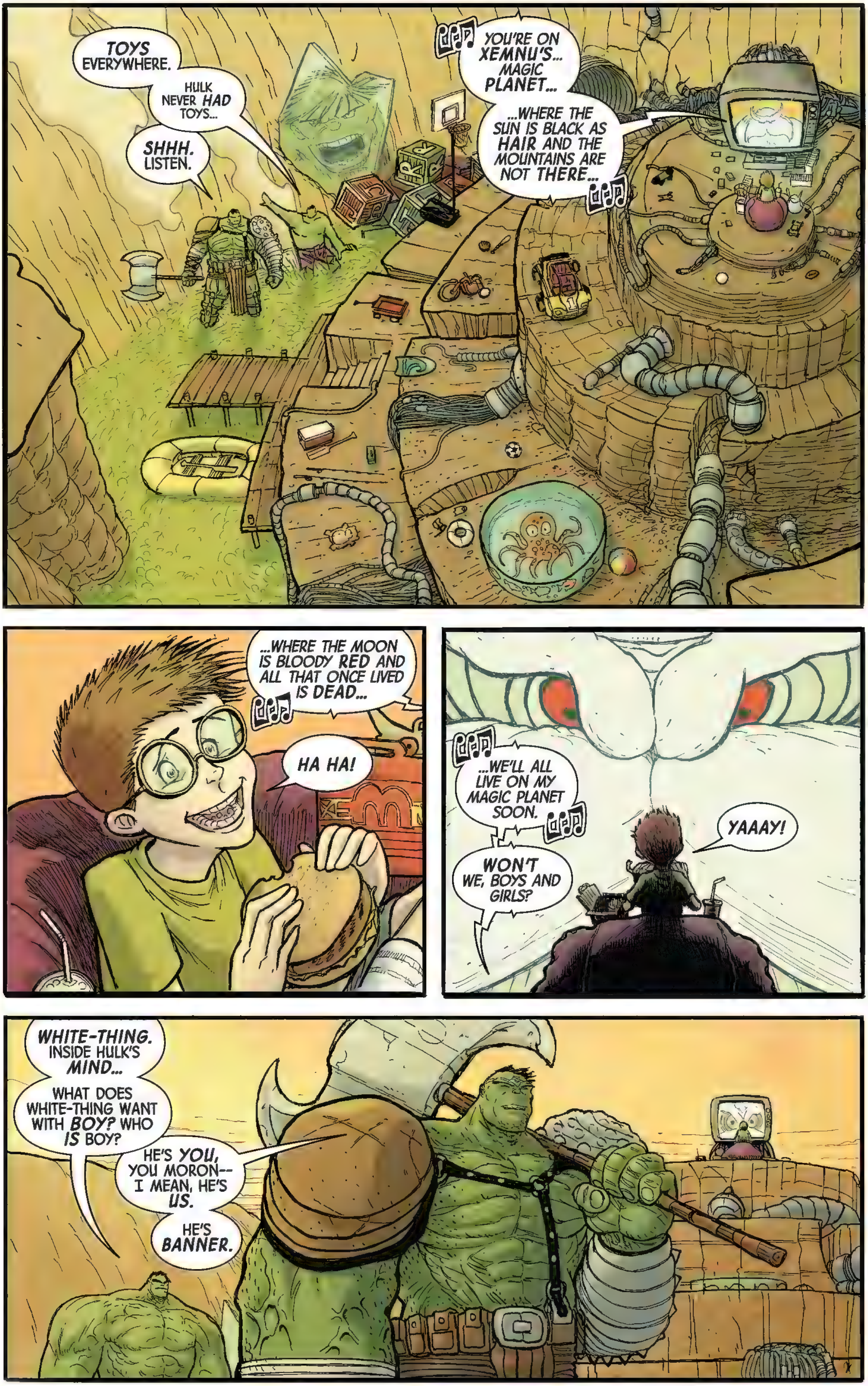

REMEMBER THIS GUY?
THE SNAKE IN THE GRASS. THE BIG, BAD DEVIL HULK WHO WANTED TO BREAK THE WORLD.
HNRR
THAT'S ONE GOOD THING THAT CAME OUTTA THIS. NO MORE OF THIS SCALY CREEP RUNNING THINGS.
HE'S LOCKED UP TIGHT AGAIN-- AND HE'S NEVER GETTING OUT.
HNRR
ARE YOU? HUH?
NOT SO SCARY NOW!
AAUUU
STOP.
STOP? STOP WHAT?
HE'S BEEN MAKING TROUBLE FROM THE START.
UUUU

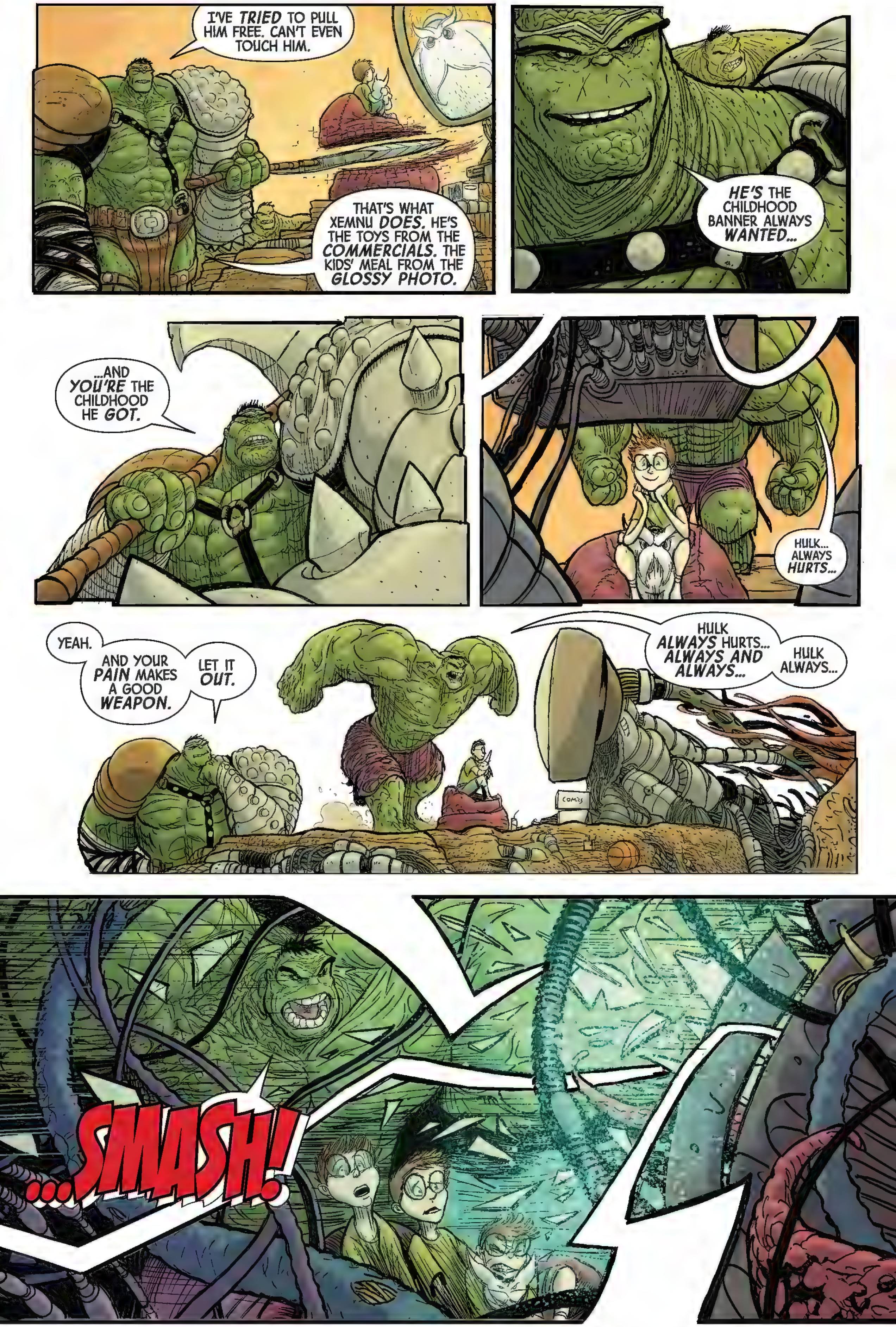

ORDERING YOU *AROUND*...TELLING YOU WHEN TO COME *OUT*, WHEN TO STAY *IN*...ACTING LIKE OUR *DAD*.
REMEMBER *BRIAN BANNER*, HULK?
...WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
PTOO
HULK *IS* HULK.
BUT *HULK* IS HULK TOO. AND HULK...HULK IS *KIND* TO HULK.
HULKS... ARE *HULKS*.
ALL HULKS--
--ARE-- *HULKS*--
YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE.
DON'T *TOUCH* THAT--

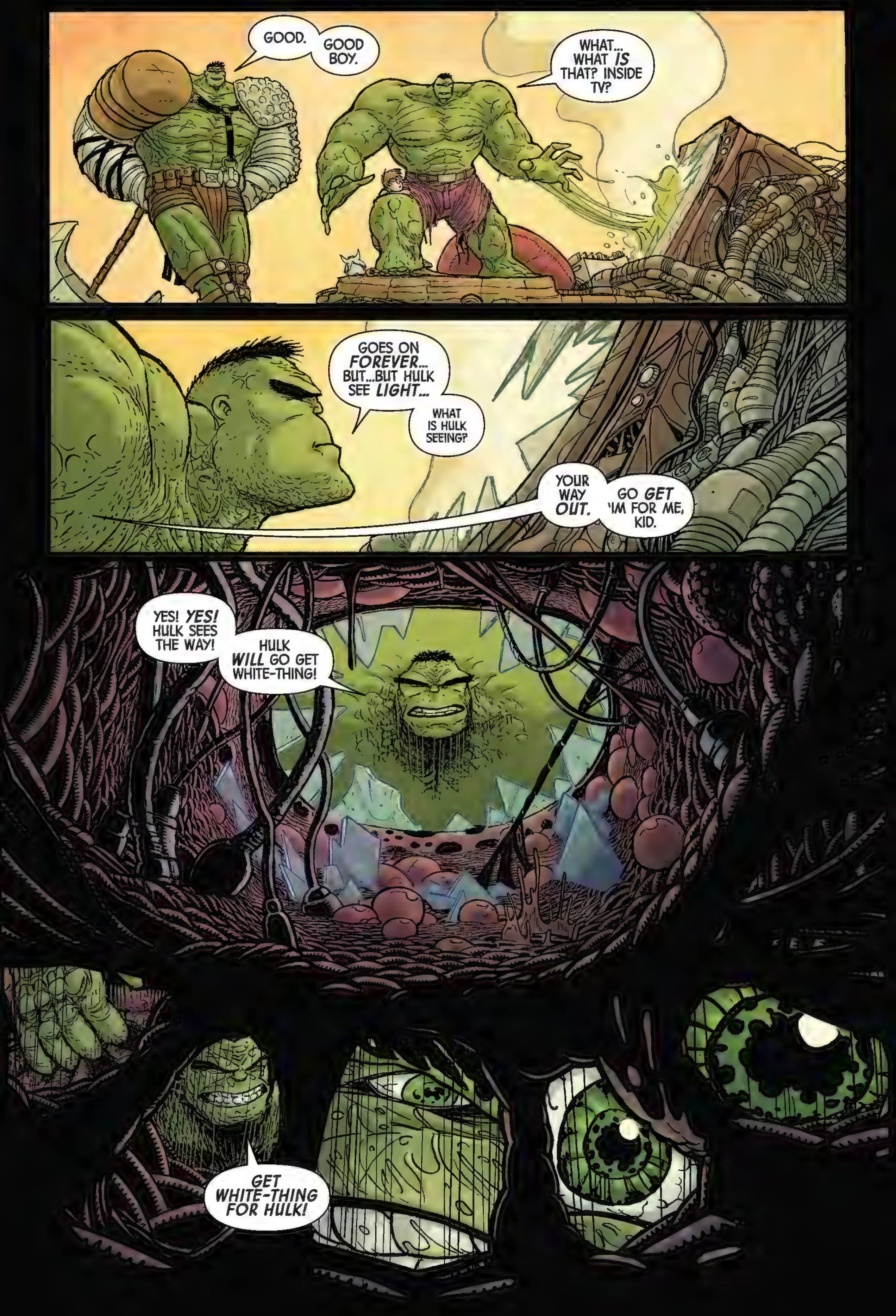

ALL.
HULKS.
BOB? ARE YOU OKAY?
I'D BETTER GO FIND BETTY--
I'M FINE-- I JUST-- THAT--
THAT'S NOT MY NAME
BOB!

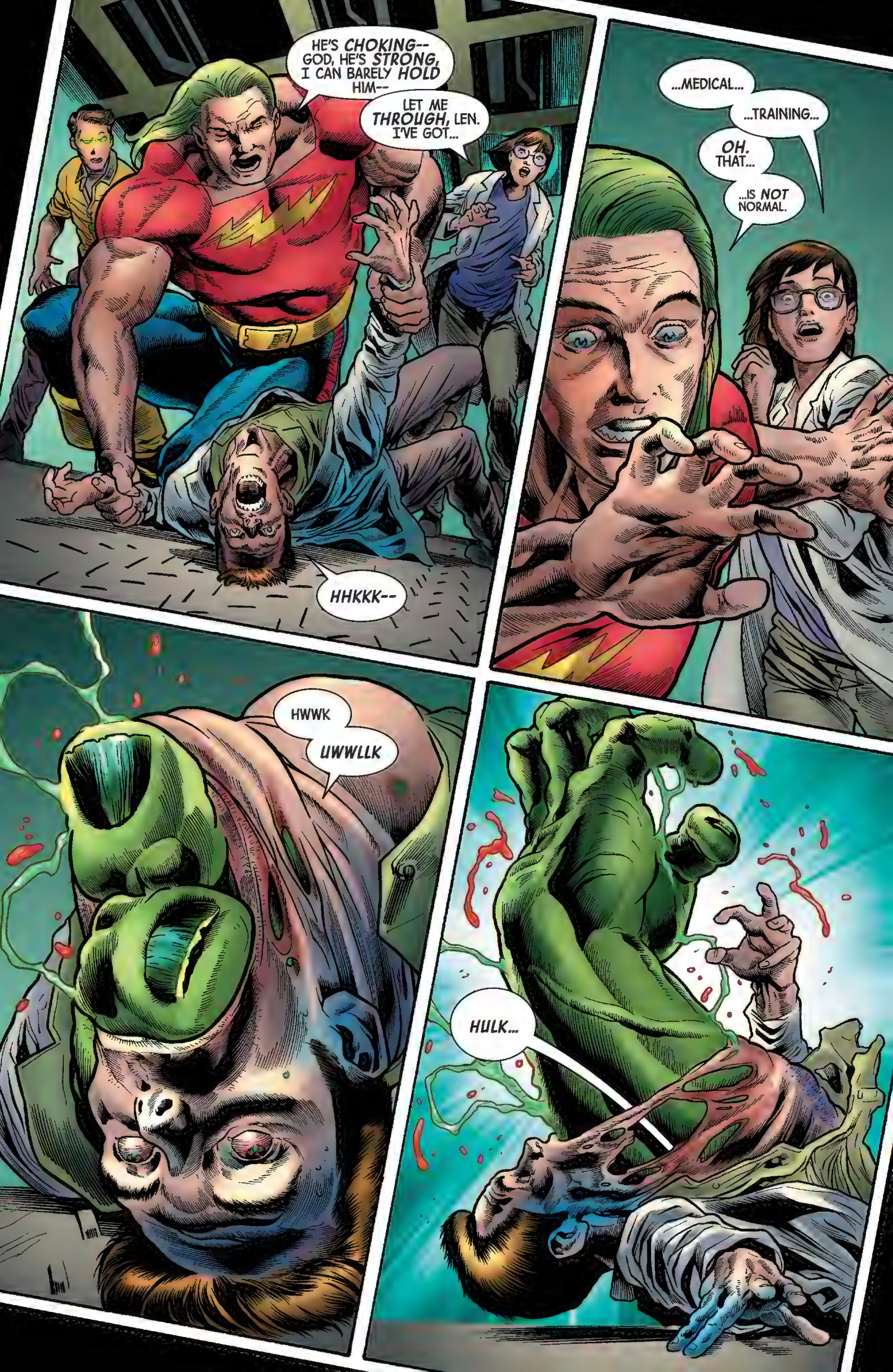

CHAIN IS STRONG-- BUT HULK--IS STRONGER--
HULK MUST BE-- HHRRN--
--STRONGER--
CRK
HEH.
YOU DONE?
NO...HULK... NNGH...
...STRONGEST THERE IS...
NOT HERE YOU'RE NOT.
HUFF HUFF
AND WHILE YOU'RE HERE, YOU WANNA TRUST ME. I KNOW THIS PLACE BETTER'N YOU DO.
WILL YOU DO THAT, HULK?
TRUST ME?
...
OKAY...
ALL I NEED TO HEAR.
C'MON. SAVE THAT STRENGTH OF YOURS FOR SOMEONE WHO NEEDS IT.

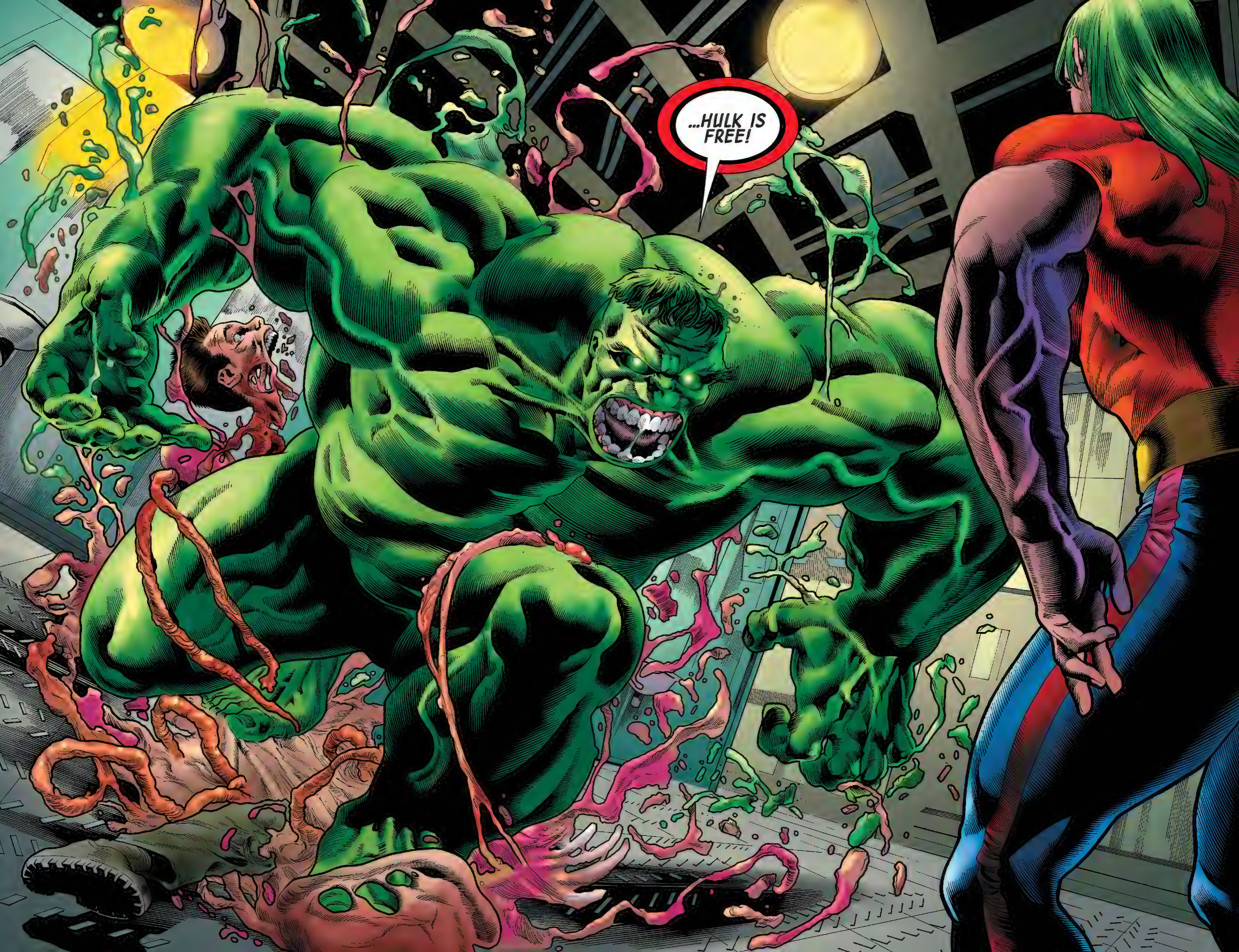

STRANGE. FIGURE IN *AMBER*.
PUNY *GRAY* HULK...?
JOE FIXIT. XEMNU GOT HIM *FIRST*.
LEAVE HIM-- HE'S *USELESS* TO US. WHAT'S A HULK WITHOUT *PHYSICAL STRENGTH?*
STILL *HULK*...
HRR. WHY *AMBER?*
WHY NOT *CHAINED?* LIKE *OTHER* HULK?
→SNIFF←
SOMETHING NOT *SMELL* RIGHT.
HULK-- HULK COULD BREAK JOE *FREE*--
WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO *WASTE*.
OVER *THERE*.
YOU'VE GOT *WORK* TO DO.

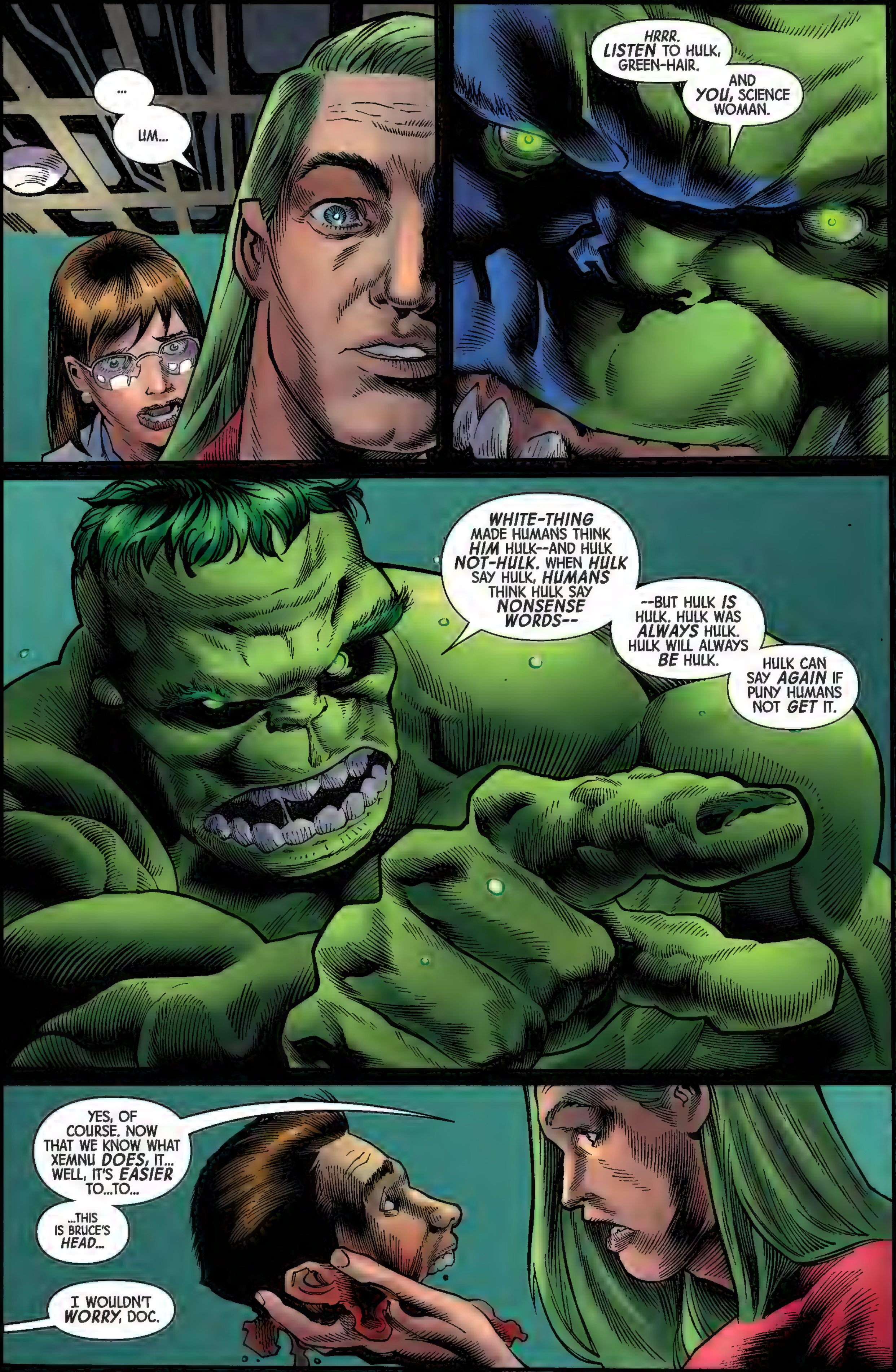

TOYS EVERYWHERE.
HULK NEVER HAD TOYS...
SHHH. LISTEN.
YOU'RE ON XEMNU'S... MAGIC PLANET...
...WHERE THE SUN IS BLACK AS HAIR AND THE MOUNTAINS ARE NOT THERE...
...WHERE THE MOON IS BLOODY RED AND ALL THAT ONCE LIVED IS DEAD...
HA HA!
...WE'LL ALL LIVE ON MY MAGIC PLANET SOON.
WON'T WE, BOYS AND GIRLS?
YAAAY!
WHITE-THING. INSIDE HULK'S MIND...
WHAT DOES WHITE-THING WANT WITH BOY? WHO IS BOY?
HE'S YOU, YOU MORON-- I MEAN, HE'S US.
HE'S BANNER.

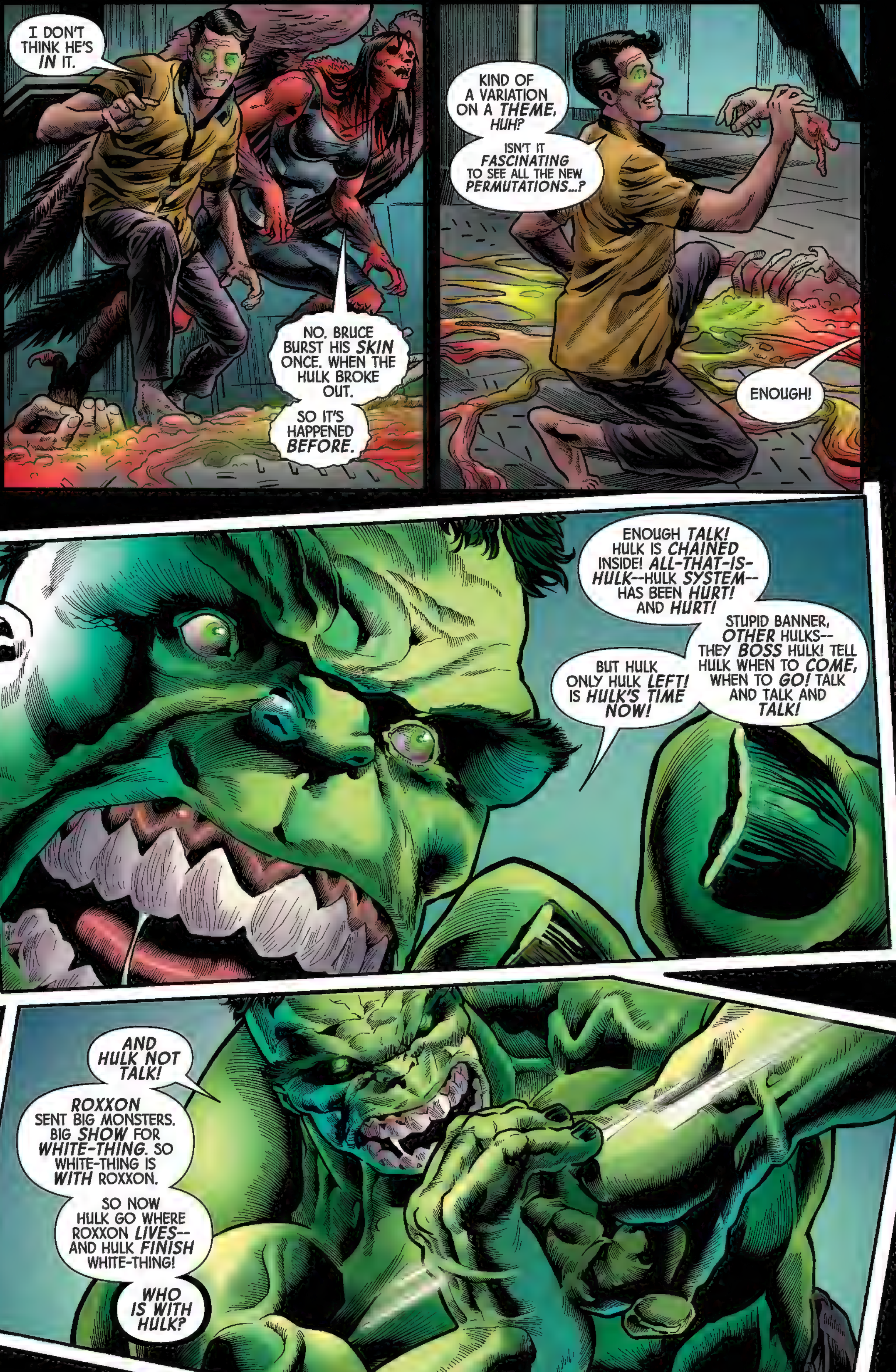

I'VE TRIED TO PULL HIM FREE. CAN'T EVEN TOUCH HIM.
THAT'S WHAT XEMNU DOES. HE'S THE TOYS FROM THE COMMERCIALS. THE KIDS' MEAL FROM THE GLOSSY PHOTO.
HE'S THE CHILDHOOD BANNER ALWAYS WANTED...
...AND YOU'RE THE CHILDHOOD HE GOT.
HULK... ALWAYS HURTS...
YEAH.
AND YOUR PAIN MAKES A GOOD WEAPON.
LET IT OUT.
HULK ALWAYS HURTS... ALWAYS AND ALWAYS...
HULK ALWAYS...
COMICS
...SMASH!

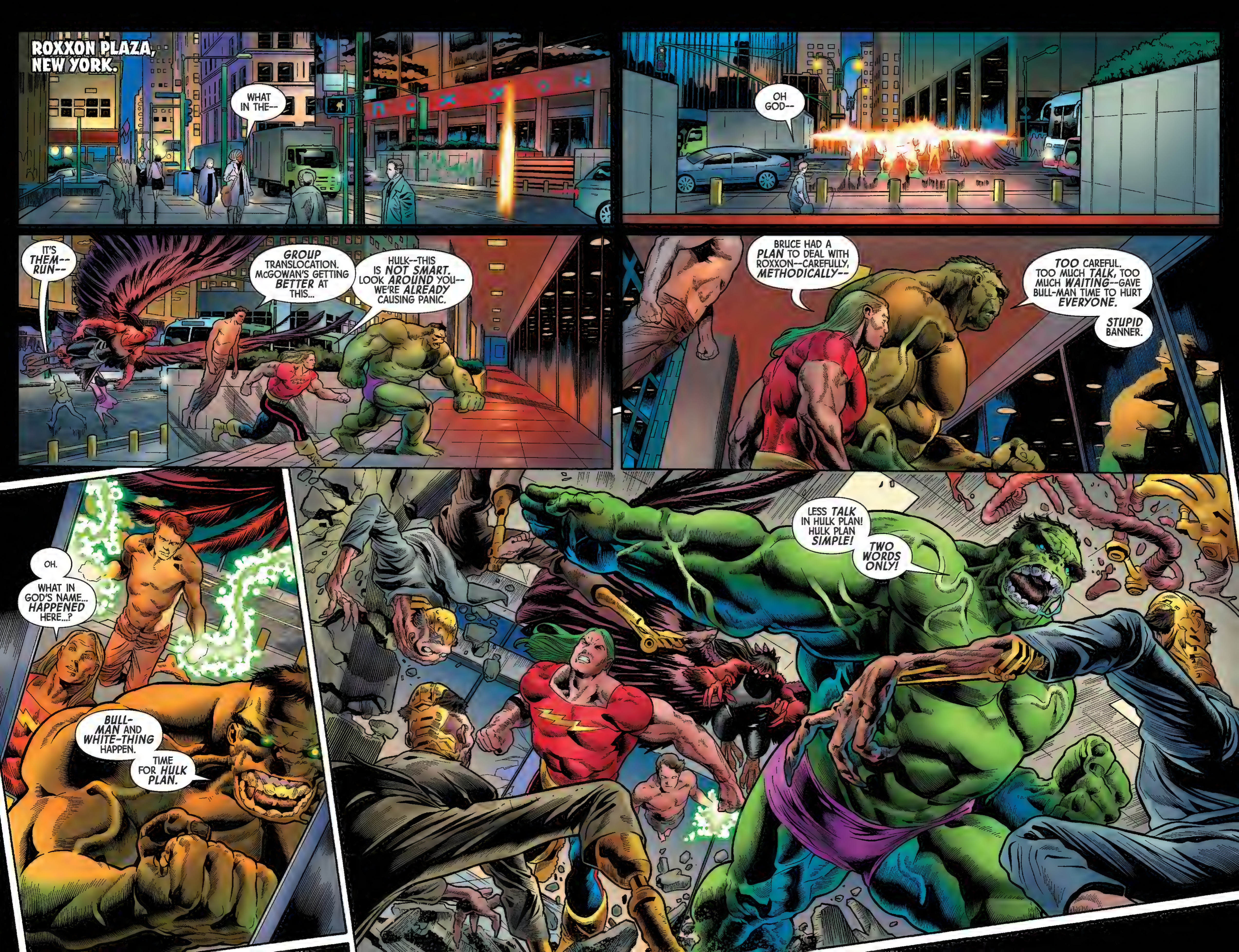

GOOD.
GOOD BOY.
WHAT... WHAT *IS* THAT? INSIDE TV?
GOES ON *FOREVER*... BUT...BUT HULK SEE *LIGHT*...
WHAT IS HULK SEEING?
YOUR WAY *OUT.*
GO *GET* 'IM FOR ME, KID.
YES! *YES!* HULK SEES THE WAY!
HULK *WILL* GO GET WHITE-THING!
GET WHITE-THING FOR HULK!

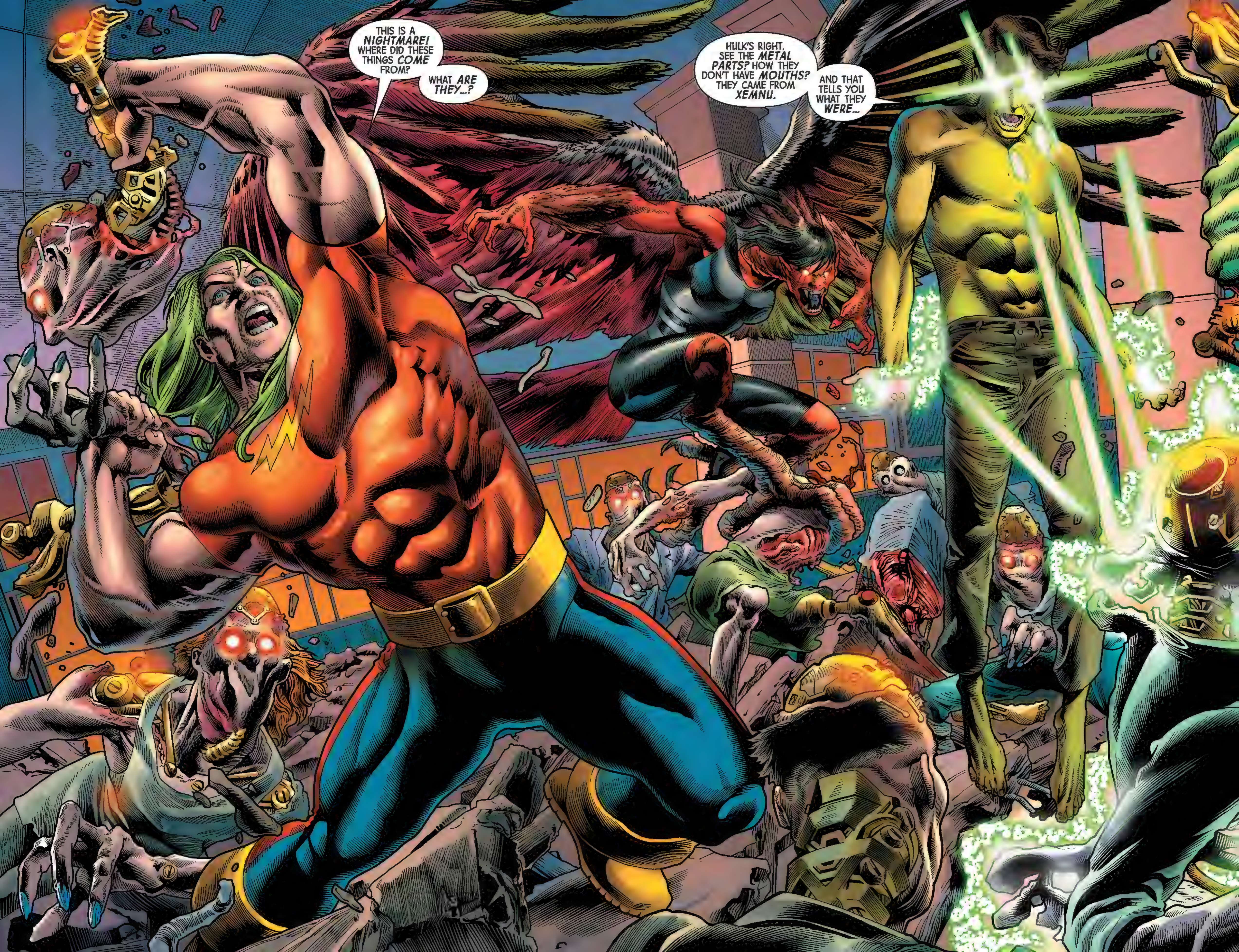

HE'S CHOKING-- GOD, HE'S STRONG, I CAN BARELY HOLD HIM--
LET ME THROUGH, LEN. I'VE GOT...
HHKKK--
...MEDICAL...
...TRAINING...
OH. THAT...
...IS NOT NORMAL.
HWWK
UWWLLK
HULK...

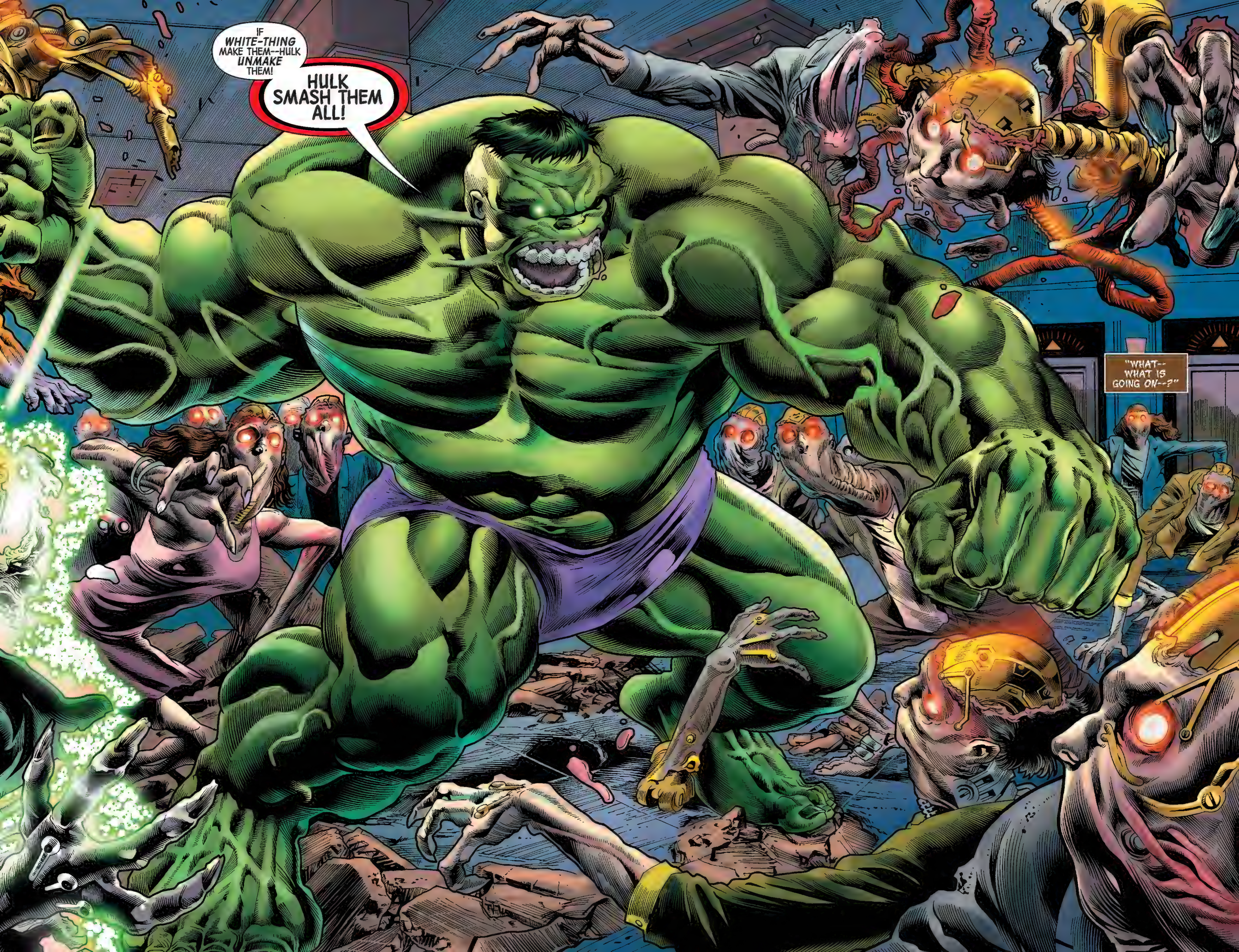

...HULK IS FREE!

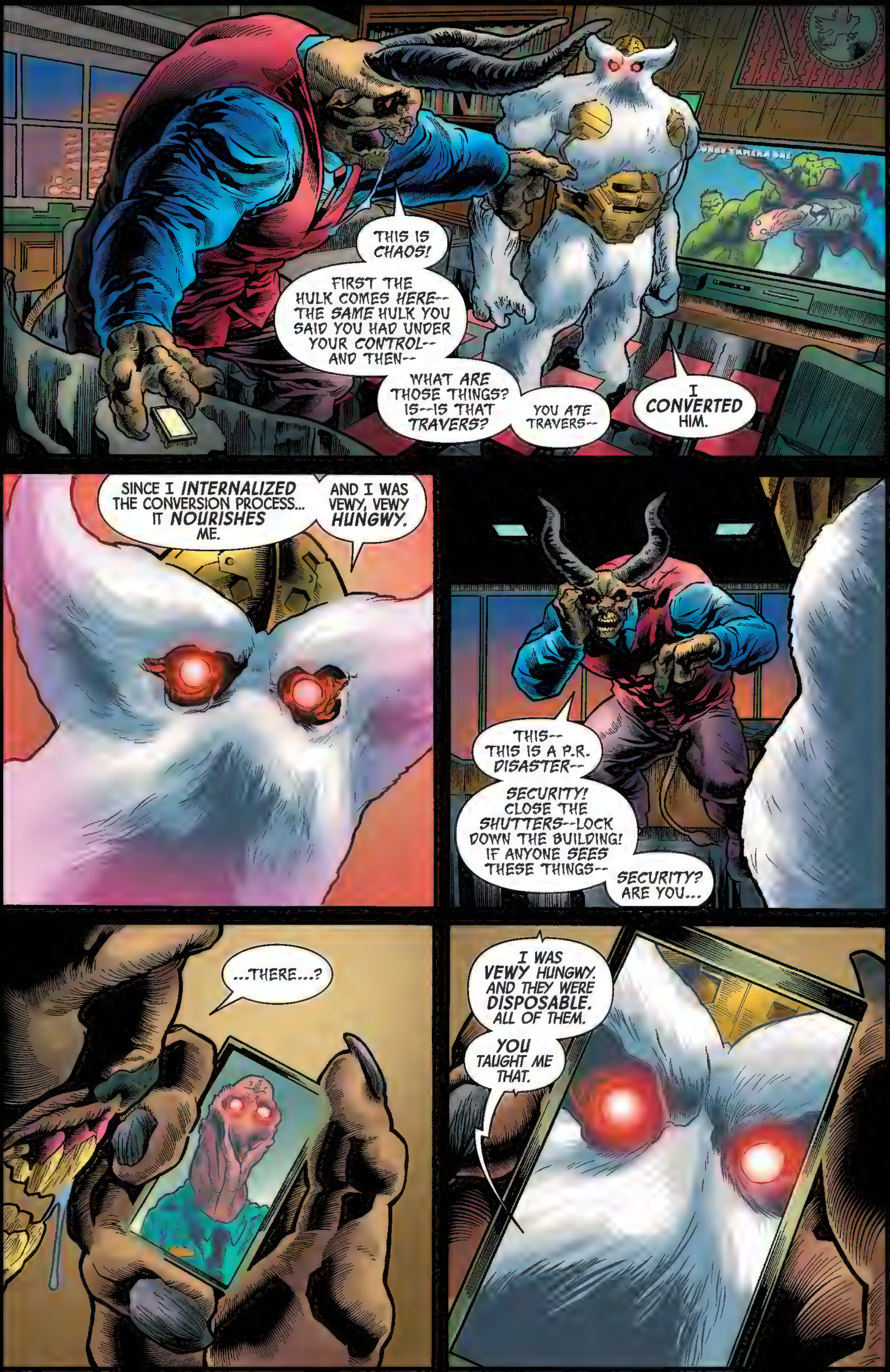

...
UM...
HRRR. LISTEN TO HULK, GREEN-HAIR.
AND YOU, SCIENCE WOMAN.
WHITE-THING MADE HUMANS THINK HIM HULK--AND HULK NOT-HULK. WHEN HULK SAY HULK, HUMANS THINK HULK SAY NONSENSE WORDS--
--BUT HULK IS HULK. HULK WAS ALWAYS HULK. HULK WILL ALWAYS BE HULK.
HULK CAN SAY AGAIN IF PUNY HUMANS NOT GET IT.
YES, OF COURSE. NOW THAT WE KNOW WHAT XEMNU DOES, IT... WELL, IT'S EASIER TO...TO...
...THIS IS BRUCE'S HEAD...
I WOULDN'T WORRY, DOC.

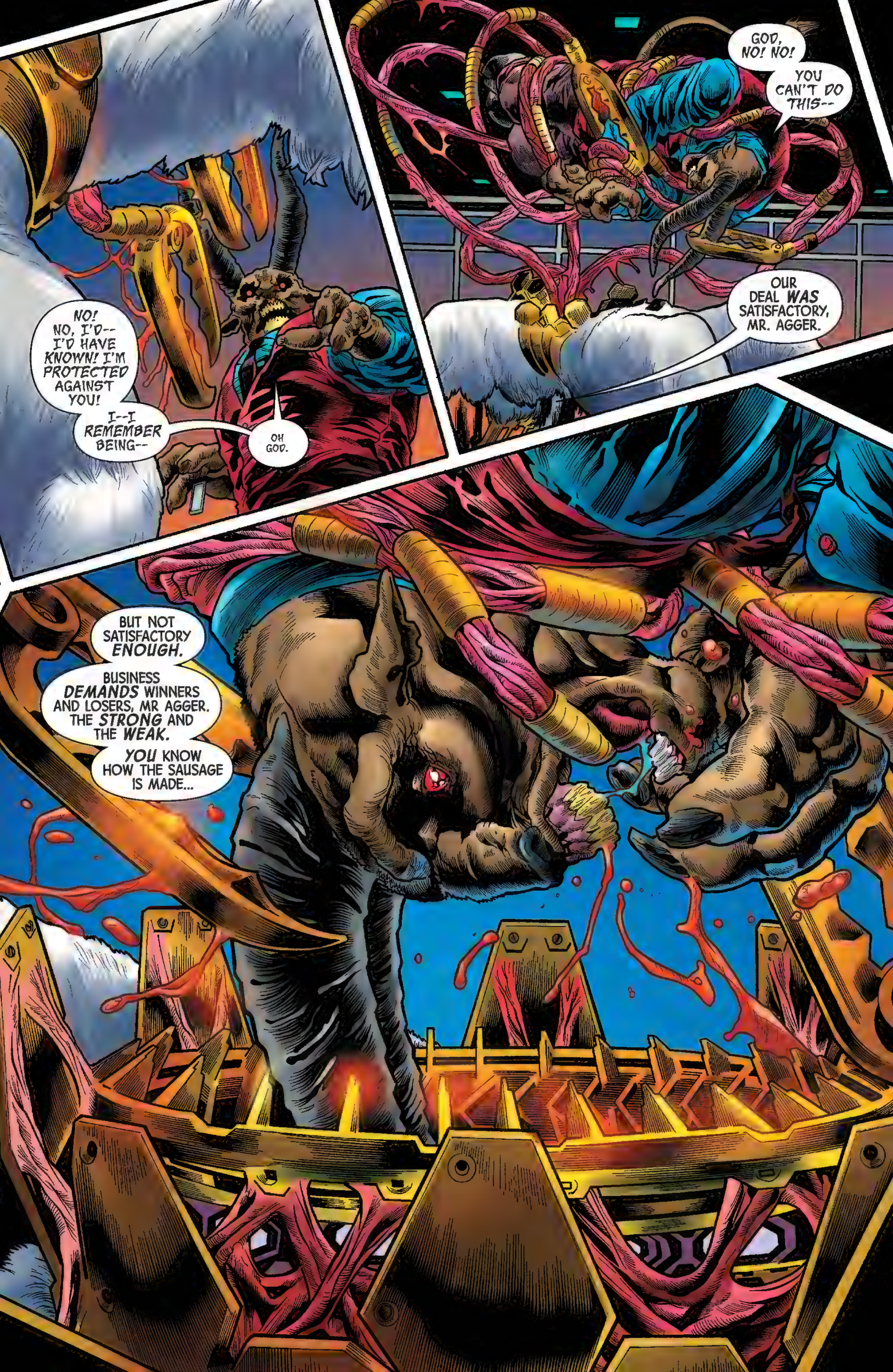

I DON'T THINK HE'S *IN* IT.
NO. BRUCE BURST HIS *SKIN* ONCE. WHEN THE HULK BROKE OUT.
SO IT'S HAPPENED *BEFORE.*
KIND OF A VARIATION ON A *THEME,* HUH?
ISN'T IT *FASCINATING* TO SEE ALL THE NEW *PERMUTATIONS...?*
ENOUGH!
ENOUGH *TALK!* HULK IS *CHAINED* INSIDE! *ALL-THAT-IS-HULK*--HULK *SYSTEM*--HAS BEEN *HURT!* AND *HURT!*
STUPID BANNER, *OTHER* HULKS--THEY *BOSS* HULK! TELL HULK WHEN TO *COME,* WHEN TO *GO!* TALK AND TALK AND *TALK!*
BUT HULK ONLY HULK *LEFT!* IS *HULK'S TIME NOW!*
AND HULK NOT TALK!
ROXXON SENT BIG MONSTERS. BIG *SHOW* FOR *WHITE-THING.* SO WHITE-THING IS *WITH* ROXXON.
SO NOW HULK GO WHERE ROXXON *LIVES*--AND HULK *FINISH* WHITE-THING!
WHO IS WITH HULK?

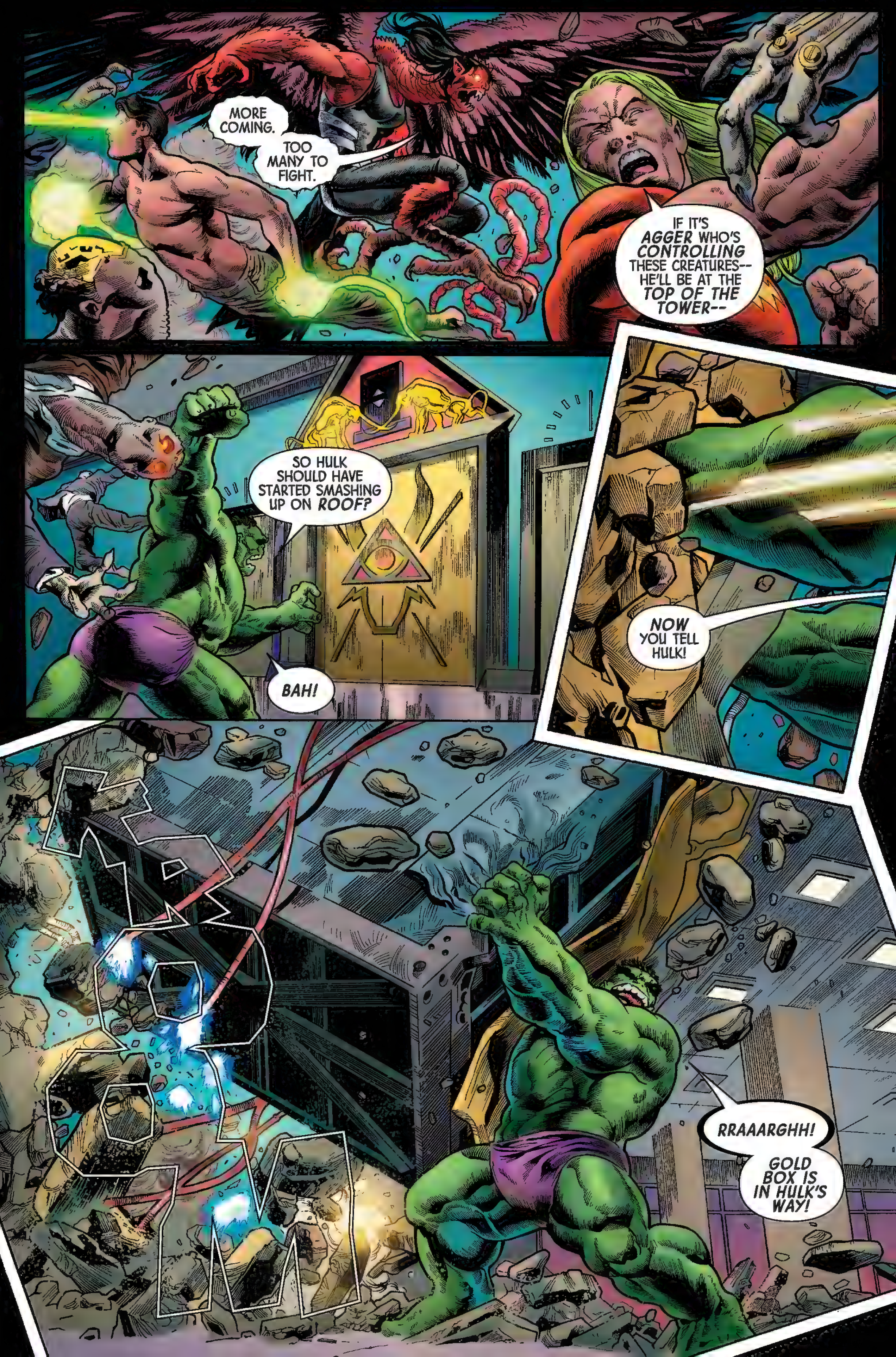

ROXXON PLAZA, NEW YORK.
WHAT IN THE--
OH GOD--
IT'S *THEM*--*RUN*--
GROUP TRANSLOCATION. McGOWAN'S GETTING *BETTER* AT THIS...
HULK--THIS IS *NOT SMART*. LOOK *AROUND* YOU--WE'RE *ALREADY* CAUSING PANIC.
BRUCE HAD A *PLAN* TO DEAL WITH ROXXON--CAREFULLY, *METHODICALLY*--
TOO CAREFUL. TOO MUCH *TALK*, TOO MUCH *WAITING*--GAVE BULL-MAN TIME TO HURT *EVERYONE*.
STUPID BANNER.
OH.
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME... *HAPPENED* HERE...?
BULL-MAN AND *WHITE-THING* HAPPEN.
TIME FOR *HULK PLAN*.
LESS *TALK* IN HULK PLAN! HULK PLAN *SIMPLE!*
TWO WORDS ONLY!

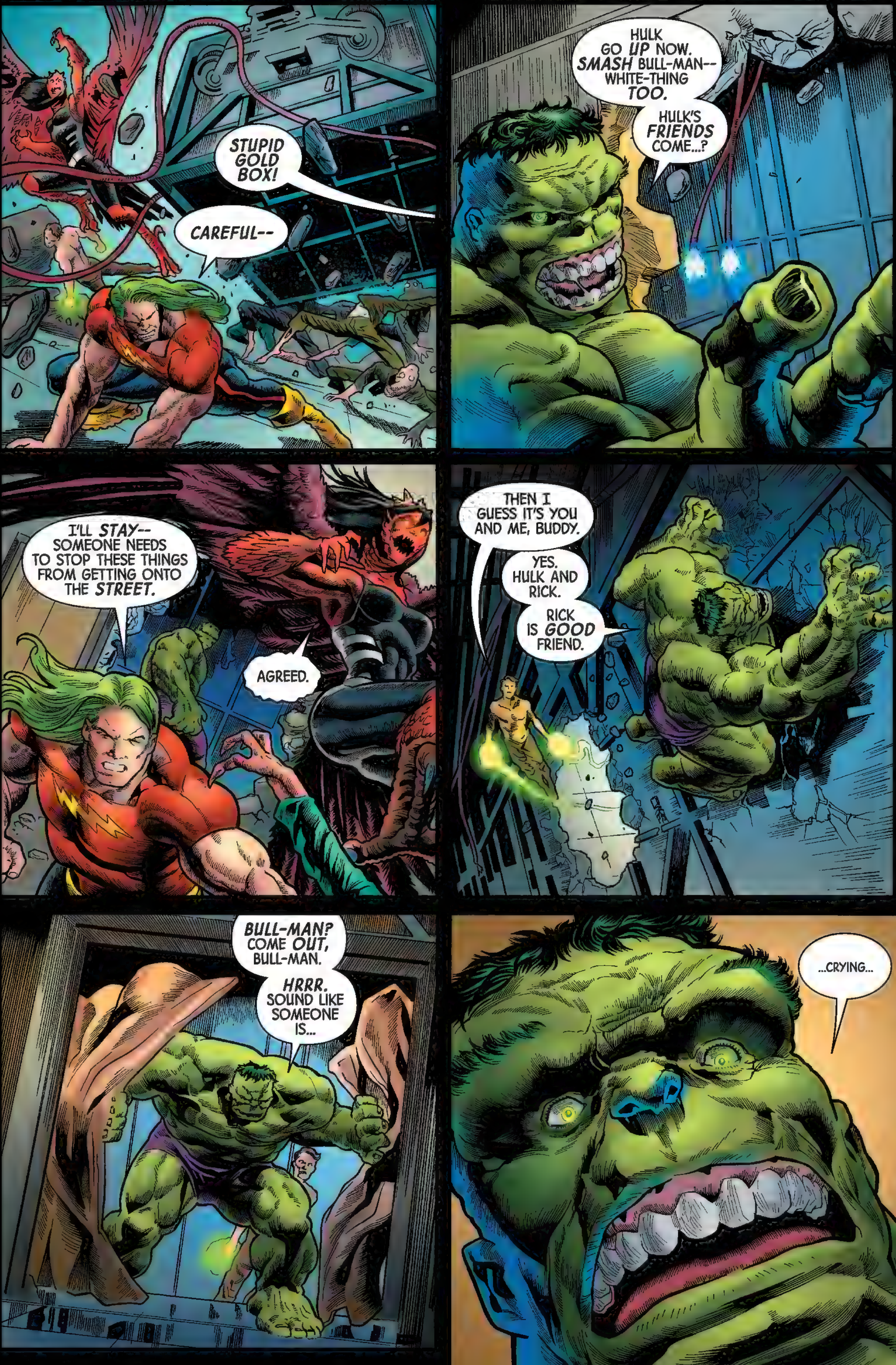

THIS IS A *NIGHTMARE!* WHERE DID THESE THINGS *COME* FROM?
WHAT *ARE THEY*...?
HULK'S RIGHT. SEE THE *METAL PARTS?* HOW THEY DON'T HAVE *MOUTHS?* THEY CAME FROM *XEMNU.*
AND THAT TELLS YOU WHAT THEY *WERE*...

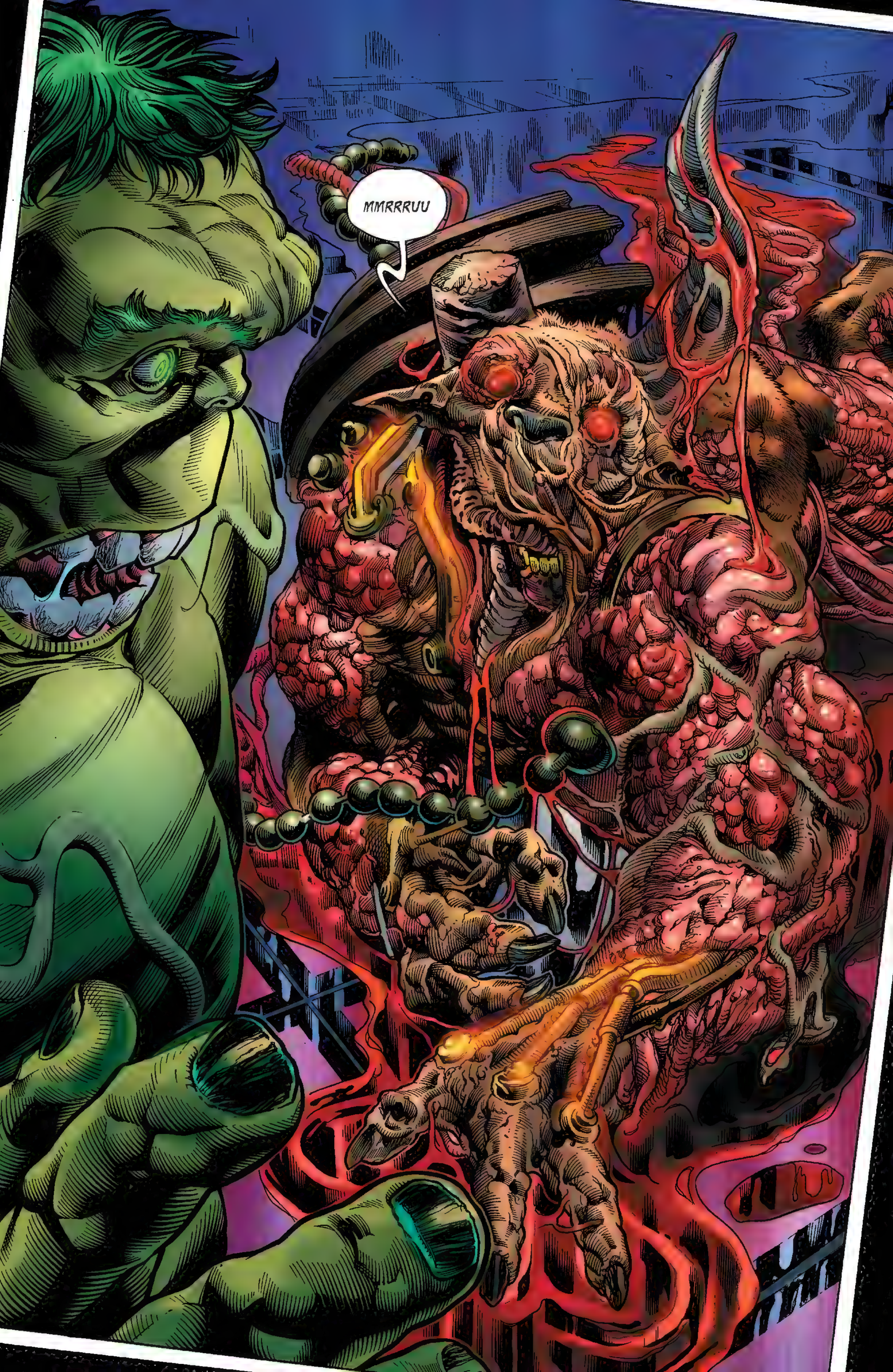

IF *WHITE-THING* MAKE THEM--HULK *UNMAKE* THEM!
HULK SMASH THEM ALL!
"WHAT-- WHAT IS GOING ON--?"

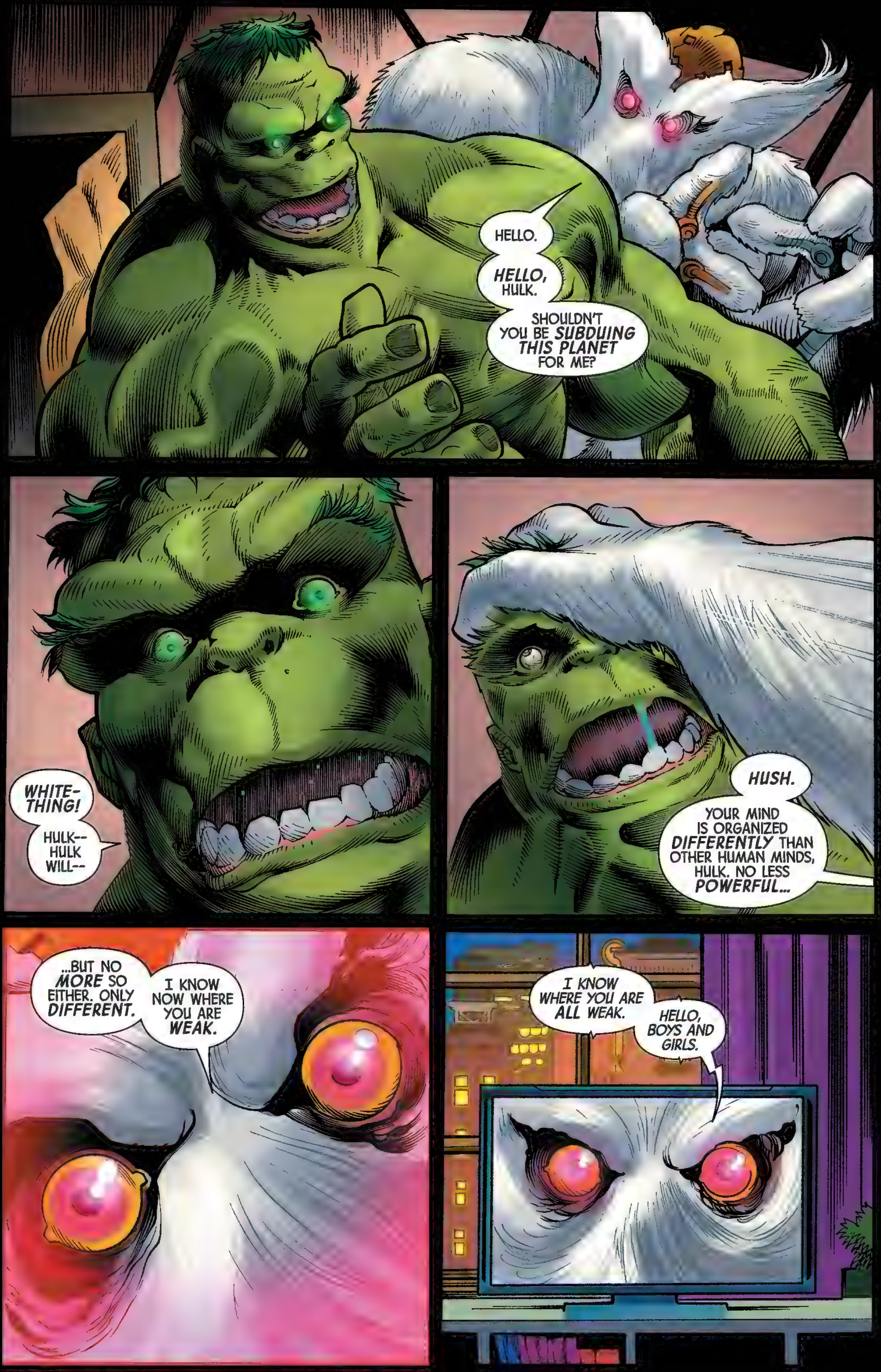

THIS IS CHAOS!
FIRST THE HULK COMES HERE-- THE SAME HULK YOU SAID YOU HAD UNDER YOUR CONTROL-- AND THEN--
WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS? IS--IS THAT TRAVERS?
YOU ATE TRAVERS--
I CONVERTED HIM.
SINCE I INTERNALIZED THE CONVERSION PROCESS... IT NOURISHES ME.
AND I WAS VEWY, VEWY HUNGWY.
THIS-- THIS IS A P.R. DISASTER--
SECURITY! CLOSE THE SHUTTERS--LOCK DOWN THE BUILDING! IF ANYONE SEES THESE THINGS--
SECURITY? ARE YOU...
...THERE...?
I WAS VEWY HUNGWY. AND THEY WERE DISPOSABLE. ALL OF THEM.
YOU TAUGHT ME THAT.

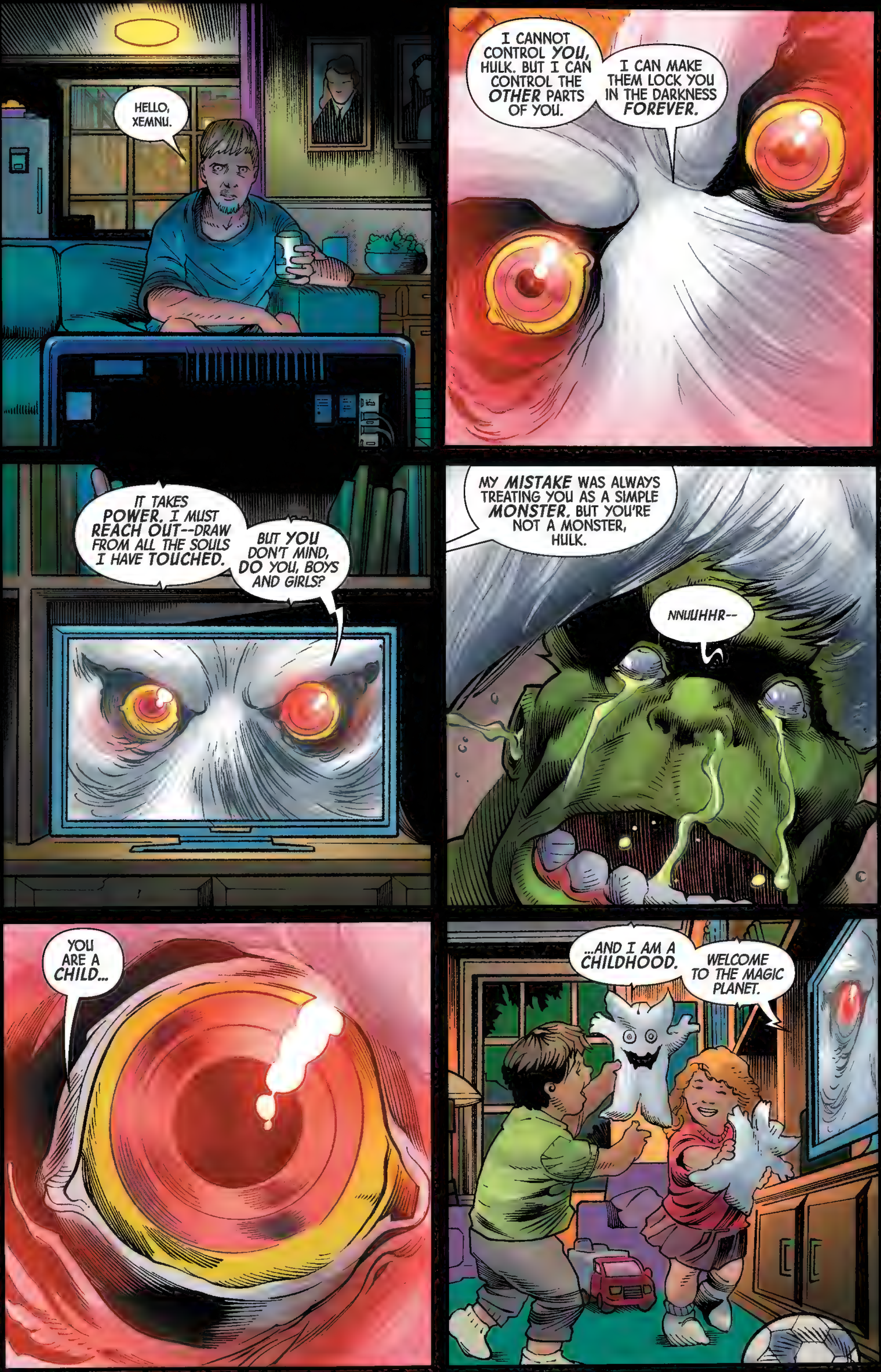

NO! NO, I'D-- I'D HAVE KNOWN! I'M PROTECTED AGAINST YOU!
I--I REMEMBER BEING--
OH GOD.
GOD, NO! NO!
YOU CAN'T DO THIS--
OUR DEAL WAS SATISFACTORY, MR. AGGER.
BUT NOT SATISFACTORY ENOUGH.
BUSINESS DEMANDS WINNERS AND LOSERS, MR AGGER. THE STRONG AND THE WEAK.
YOU KNOW HOW THE SAUSAGE IS MADE...

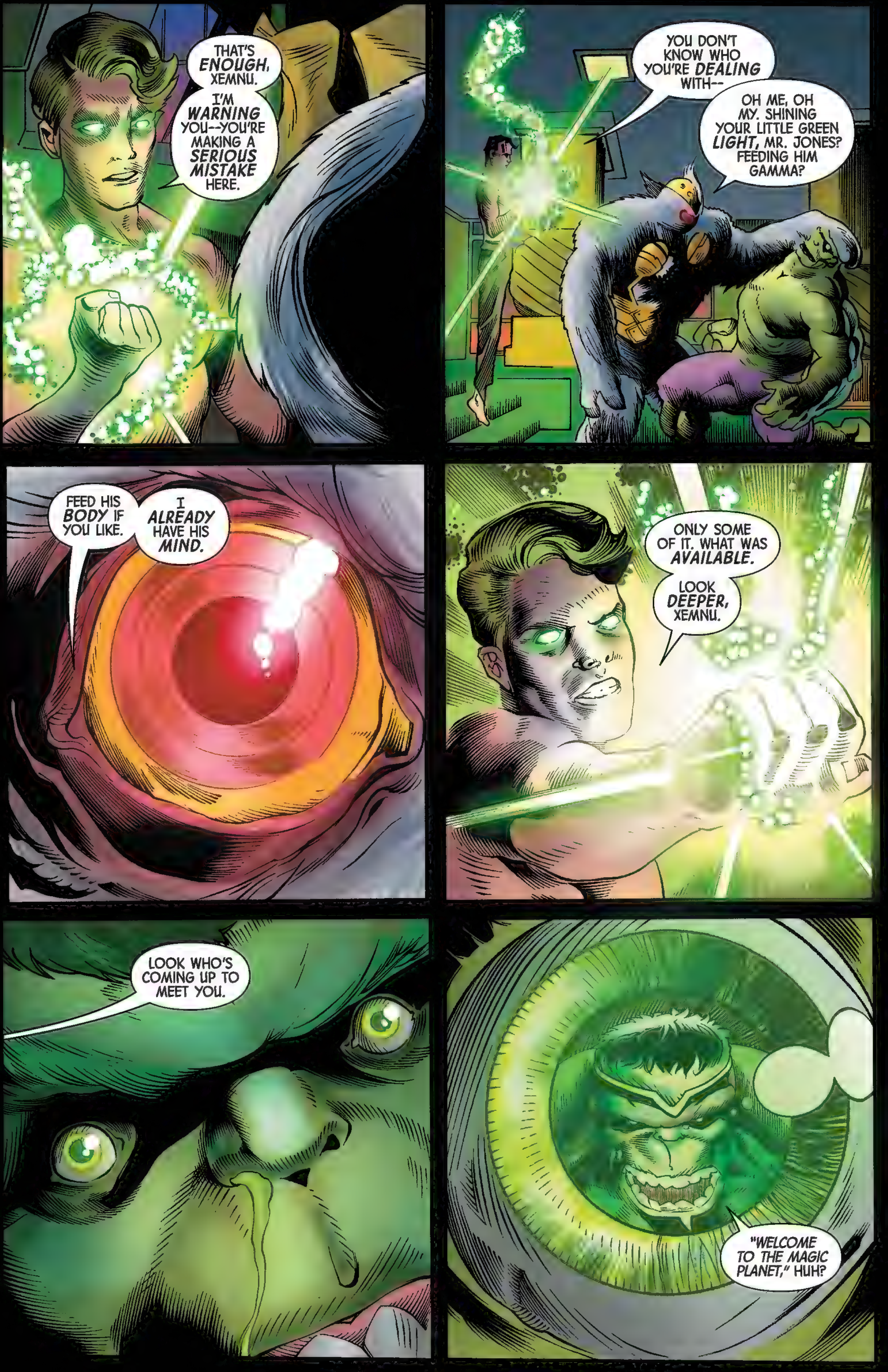

MORE COMING.
TOO MANY TO FIGHT.
IF IT'S *AGGER* WHO'S *CONTROLLING* THESE CREATURES-- HE'LL BE AT THE *TOP OF THE TOWER--*
SO HULK SHOULD HAVE STARTED SMASHING UP ON *ROOF?*
BAH!
NOW YOU TELL HULK!
KROOM
RRAAARGHH!
GOLD BOX IS IN HULK'S WAY!

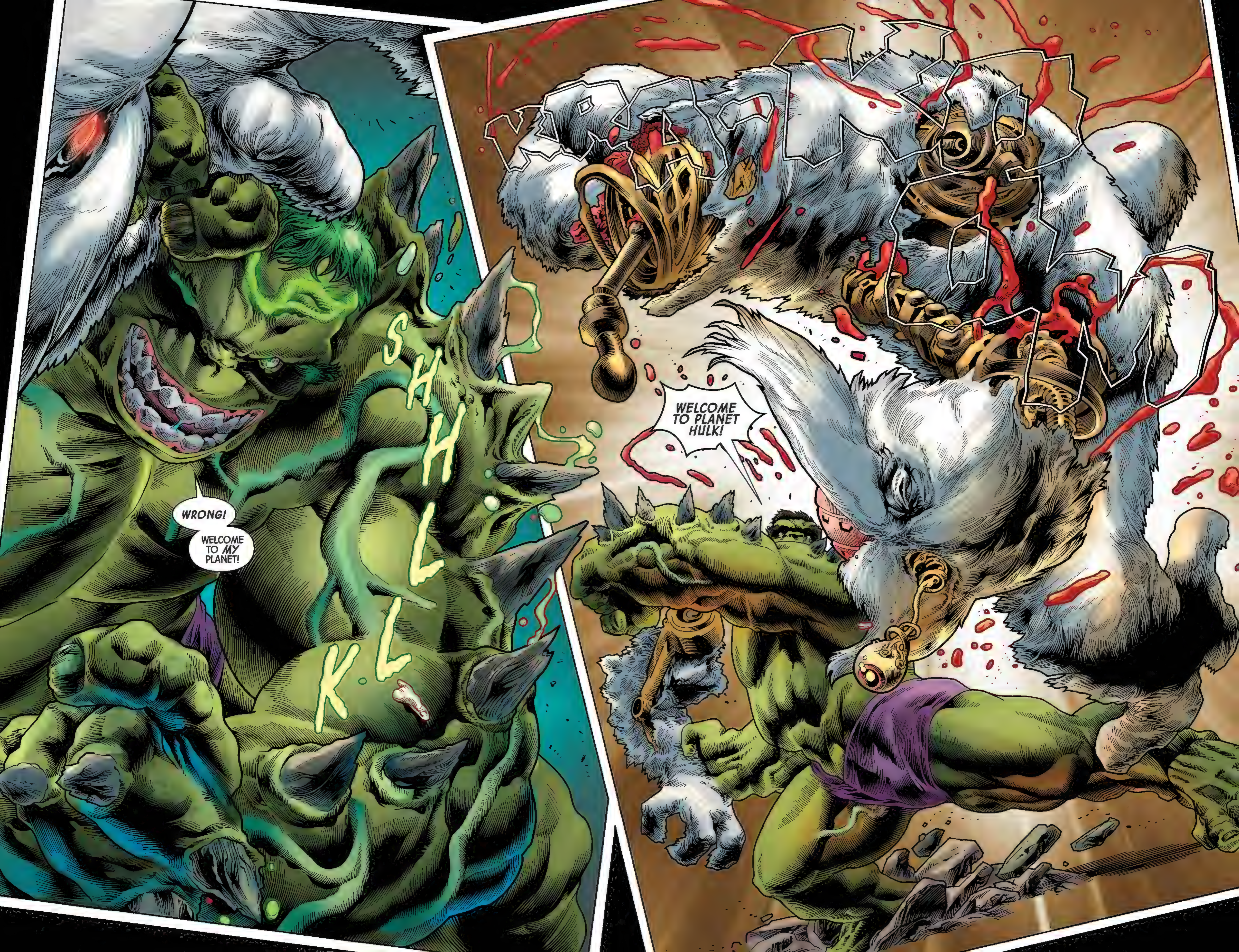

STUPID GOLD BOX!
CAREFUL--
HULK GO *UP* NOW. *SMASH* BULL-MAN-- WHITE-THING *TOO.*
HULK'S *FRIENDS* COME...?
I'LL *STAY*-- SOMEONE NEEDS TO STOP THESE THINGS FROM GETTING ONTO THE *STREET.*
AGREED.
THEN I GUESS IT'S YOU AND ME, BUDDY.
YES. HULK AND RICK.
RICK IS *GOOD* FRIEND.
BULL-MAN? COME *OUT,* BULL-MAN.
HRRR. SOUND LIKE SOMEONE IS...
...CRYING...

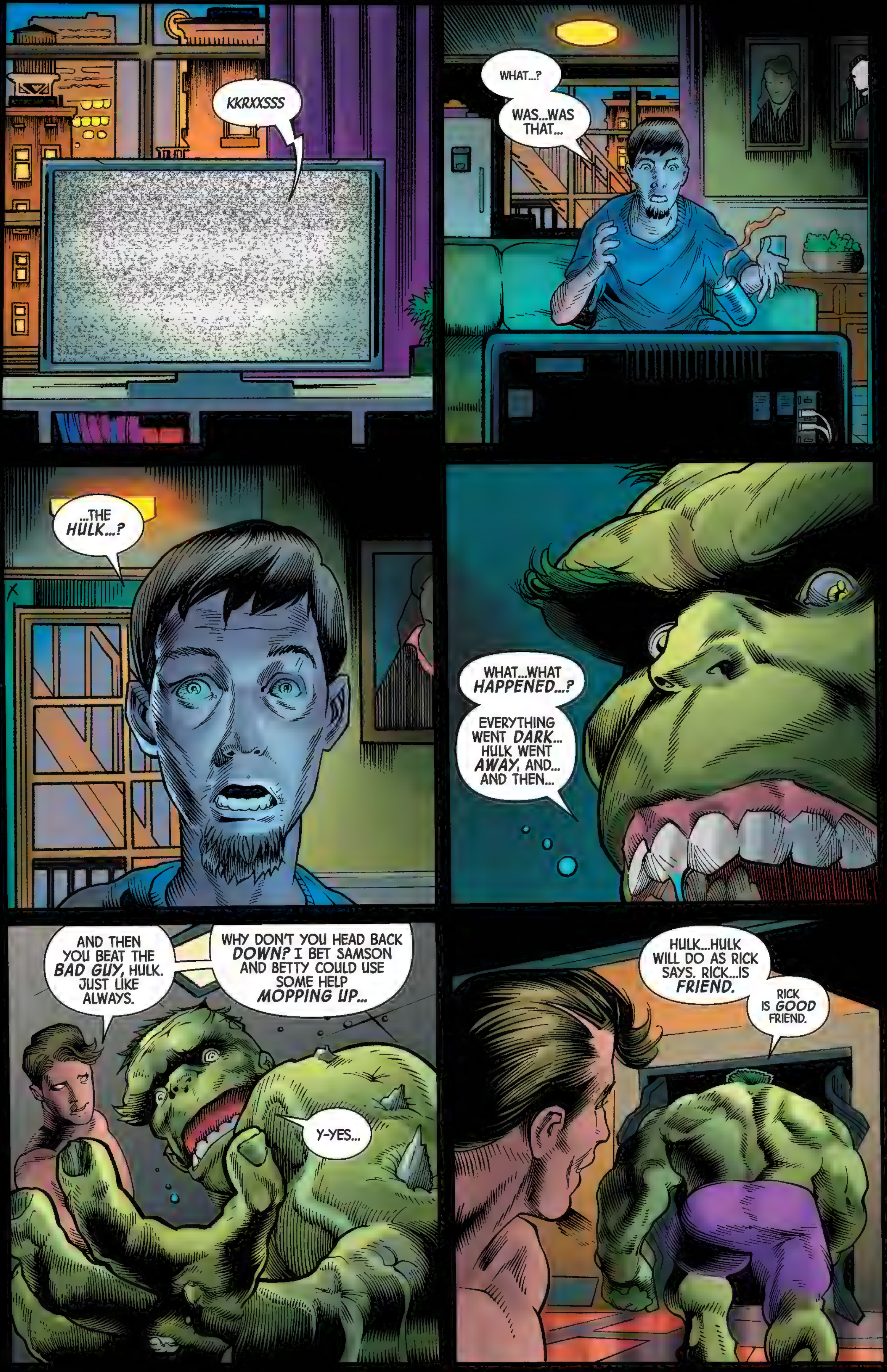

MMRRRUU

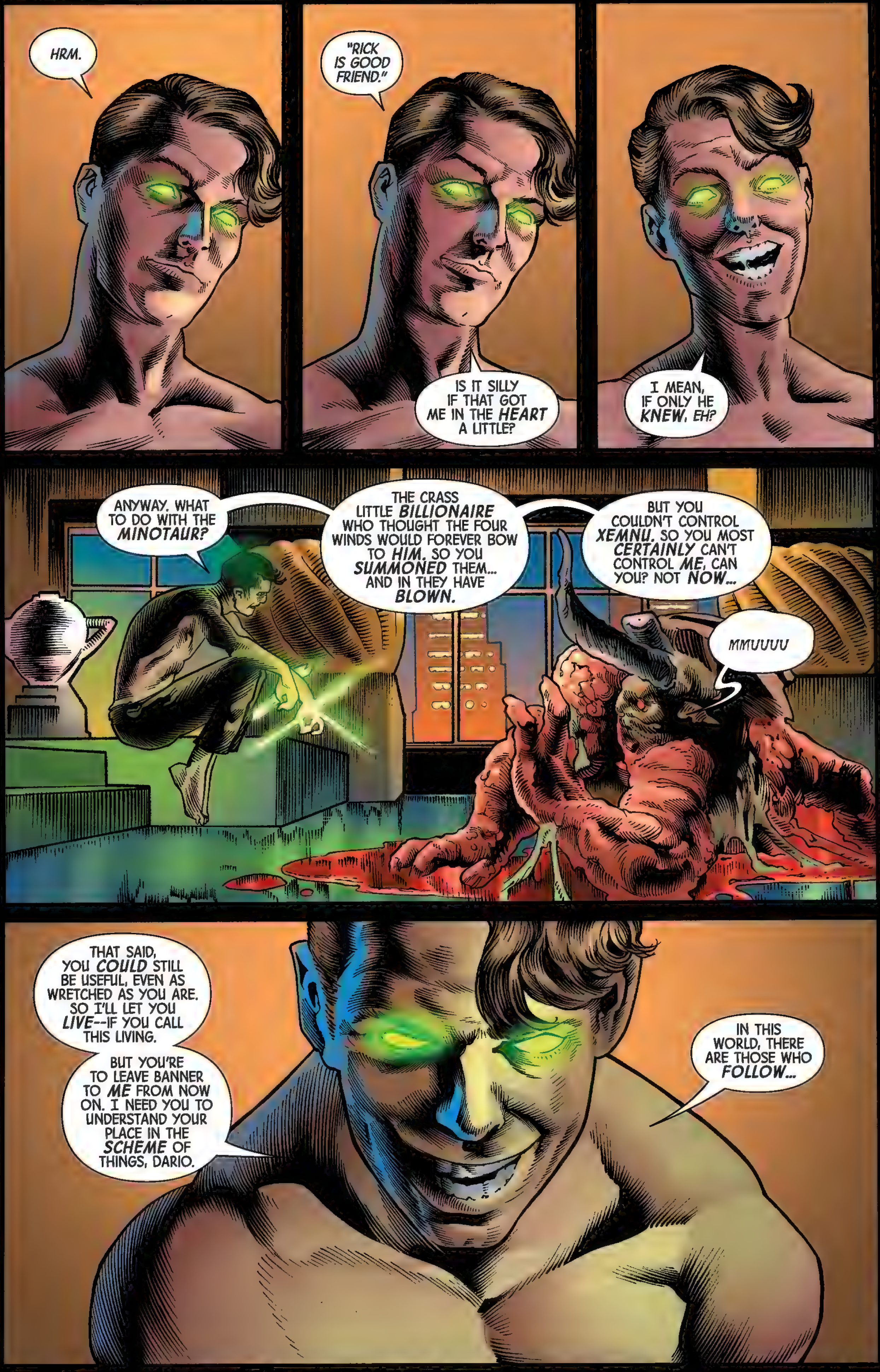

HELLO.
HELLO, HULK.
SHOULDN'T YOU BE SUBDUING THIS PLANET FOR ME?
WHITE-THING!
HULK--HULK WILL--
HUSH.
YOUR MIND IS ORGANIZED DIFFERENTLY THAN OTHER HUMAN MINDS, HULK. NO LESS POWERFUL...
...BUT NO MORE SO EITHER. ONLY DIFFERENT.
I KNOW NOW WHERE YOU ARE WEAK.
I KNOW WHERE YOU ARE ALL WEAK.
HELLO, BOYS AND GIRLS.

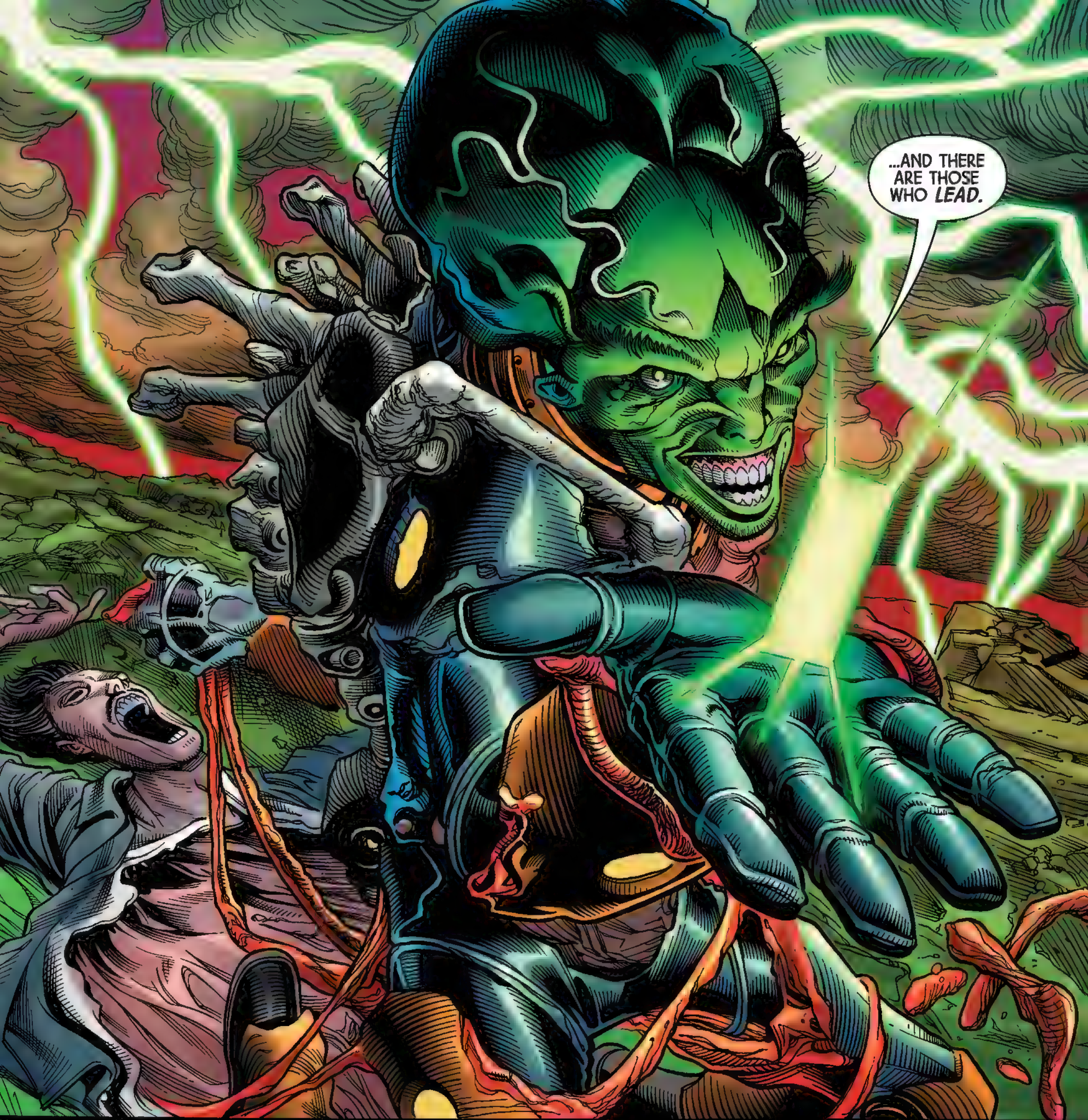

HELLO, XEMNU.
I CANNOT CONTROL YOU, HULK. BUT I CAN CONTROL THE OTHER PARTS OF YOU.
I CAN MAKE THEM LOCK YOU IN THE DARKNESS FOREVER.
IT TAKES POWER. I MUST REACH OUT--DRAW FROM ALL THE SOULS I HAVE TOUCHED.
BUT YOU DON'T MIND, DO YOU, BOYS AND GIRLS?
MY MISTAKE WAS ALWAYS TREATING YOU AS A SIMPLE MONSTER. BUT YOU'RE NOT A MONSTER, HULK.
NNUUHHR--
YOU ARE A CHILD...
...AND I AM A CHILDHOOD.
WELCOME TO THE MAGIC PLANET.


THAT'S ENOUGH, XEMNU.
I'M WARNING YOU--YOU'RE MAKING A SERIOUS MISTAKE HERE.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH--
OH ME, OH MY. SHINING YOUR LITTLE GREEN LIGHT, MR. JONES? FEEDING HIM GAMMA?
FEED HIS BODY IF YOU LIKE.
I ALREADY HAVE HIS MIND.
ONLY SOME OF IT. WHAT WAS AVAILABLE.
LOOK DEEPER, XEMNU.
LOOK WHO'S COMING UP TO MEET YOU.
"WELCOME TO THE MAGIC PLANET," HUH?


SHHLLK
WRONG!
WELCOME TO *MY* PLANET!
KRAKOOM
WELCOME TO PLANET HULK!


KKRXXSSS
WHAT...?
WAS...WAS THAT...
...THE *HULK...?*
WHAT...WHAT *HAPPENED...?*
EVERYTHING WENT *DARK...* HULK WENT *AWAY,* AND... AND THEN...
AND THEN YOU BEAT THE *BAD GUY,* HULK. JUST LIKE ALWAYS.
WHY DON'T YOU HEAD BACK *DOWN?* I BET SAMSON AND BETTY COULD USE SOME HELP *MOPPING UP...*
Y-YES...
HULK...HULK WILL DO AS RICK SAYS. RICK...IS *FRIEND.*
RICK IS *GOOD* FRIEND.

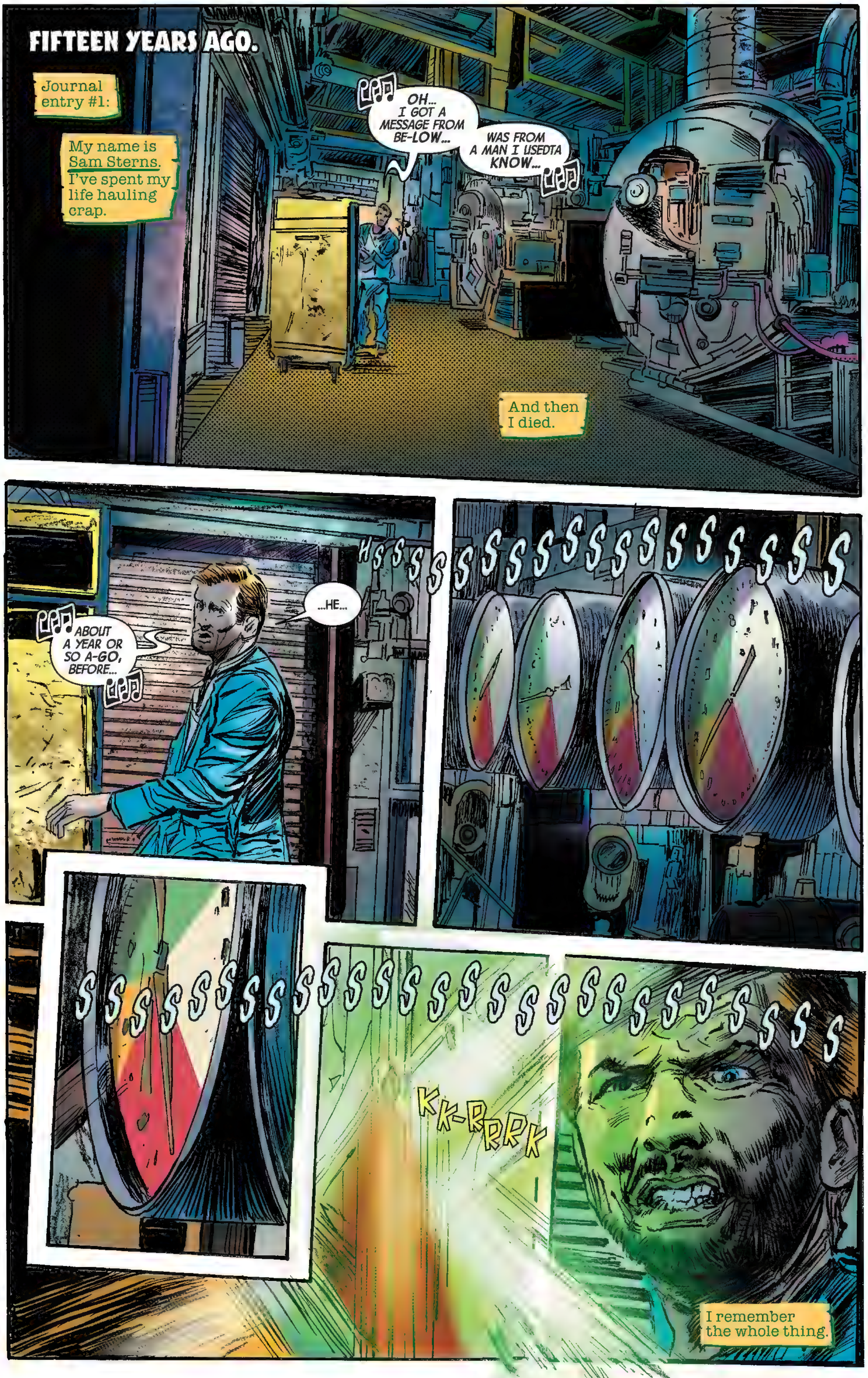

HRM.
"RICK IS GOOD FRIEND."
IS IT SILLY IF THAT GOT ME IN THE HEART A LITTLE?
I MEAN, IF ONLY HE KNEW, EH?
ANYWAY. WHAT TO DO WITH THE MINOTAUR?
THE CRASS LITTLE BILLIONAIRE WHO THOUGHT THE FOUR WINDS WOULD FOREVER BOW TO HIM. SO YOU SUMMONED THEM... AND IN THEY HAVE BLOWN.
BUT YOU COULDN'T CONTROL XEMNU, SO YOU MOST CERTAINLY CAN'T CONTROL ME, CAN YOU? NOT NOW...
MMUUUU
THAT SAID, YOU COULD STILL BE USEFUL, EVEN AS WRETCHED AS YOU ARE. SO I'LL LET YOU LIVE--IF YOU CALL THIS LIVING.
BUT YOU'RE TO LEAVE BANNER TO ME FROM NOW ON. I NEED YOU TO UNDERSTAND YOUR PLACE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS, DARIO.
IN THIS WORLD, THERE ARE THOSE WHO FOLLOW...

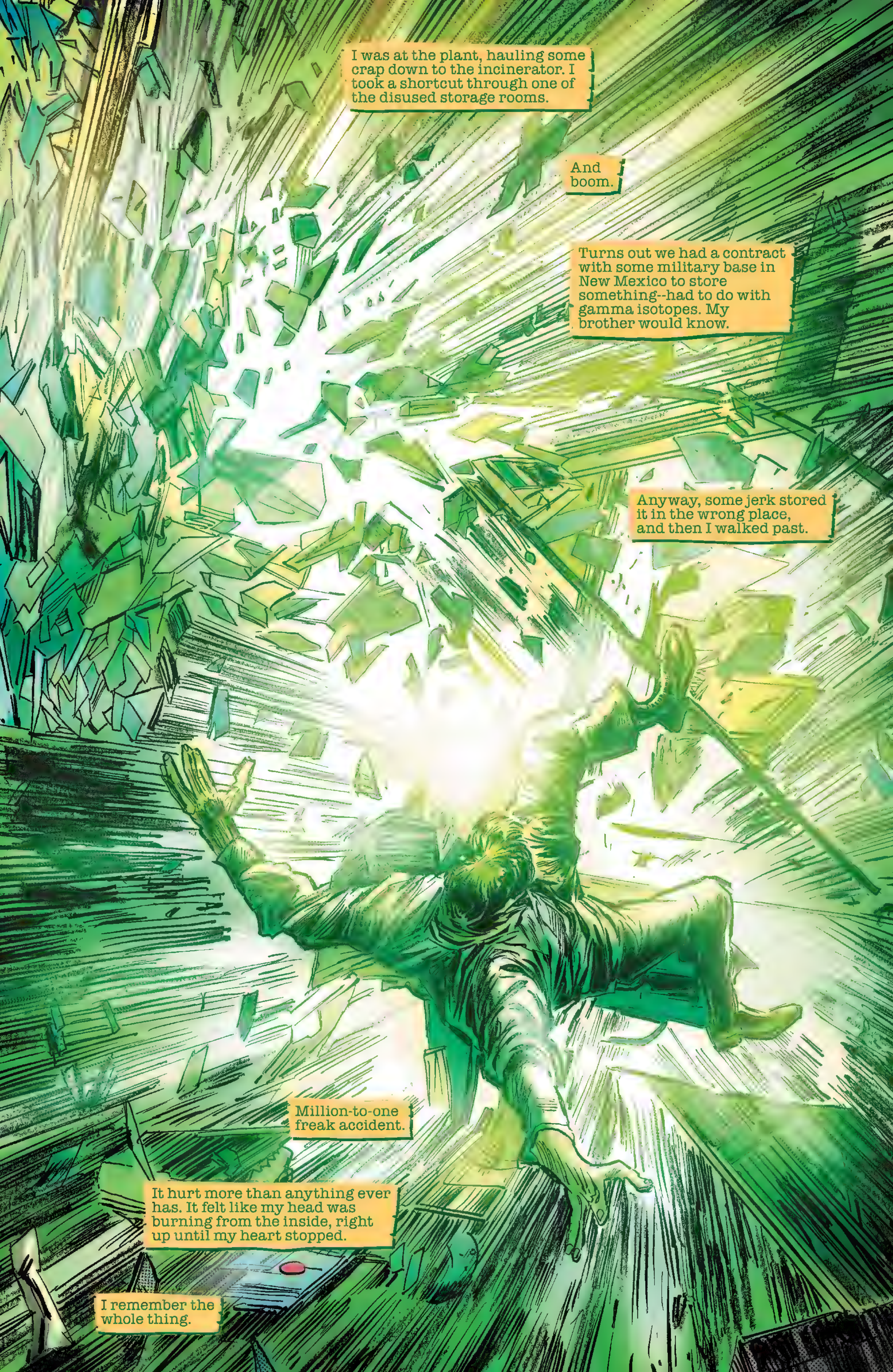

...AND THERE ARE THOSE WHO *LEAD.*

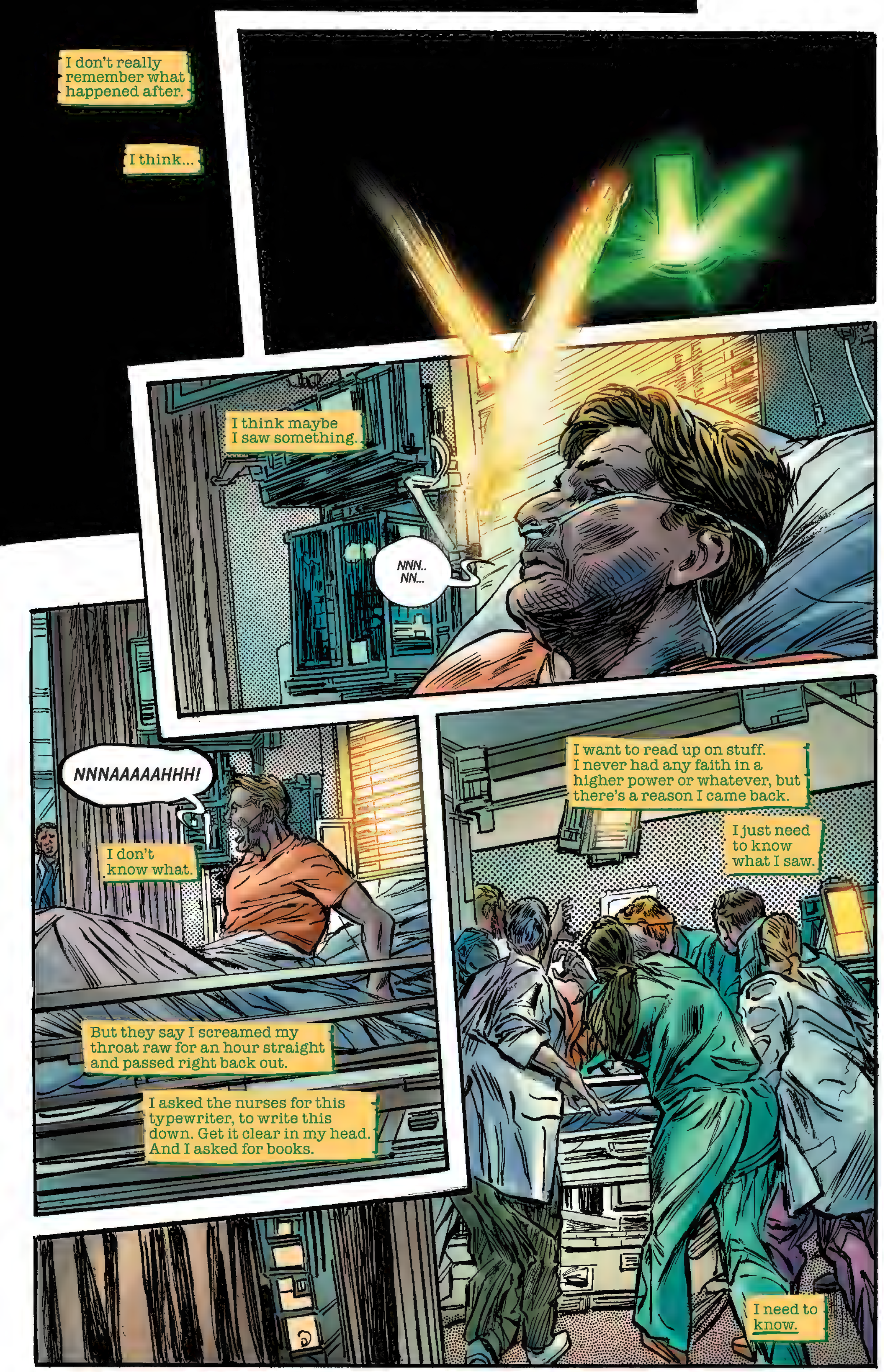
THE THOUGHTFUL MAN

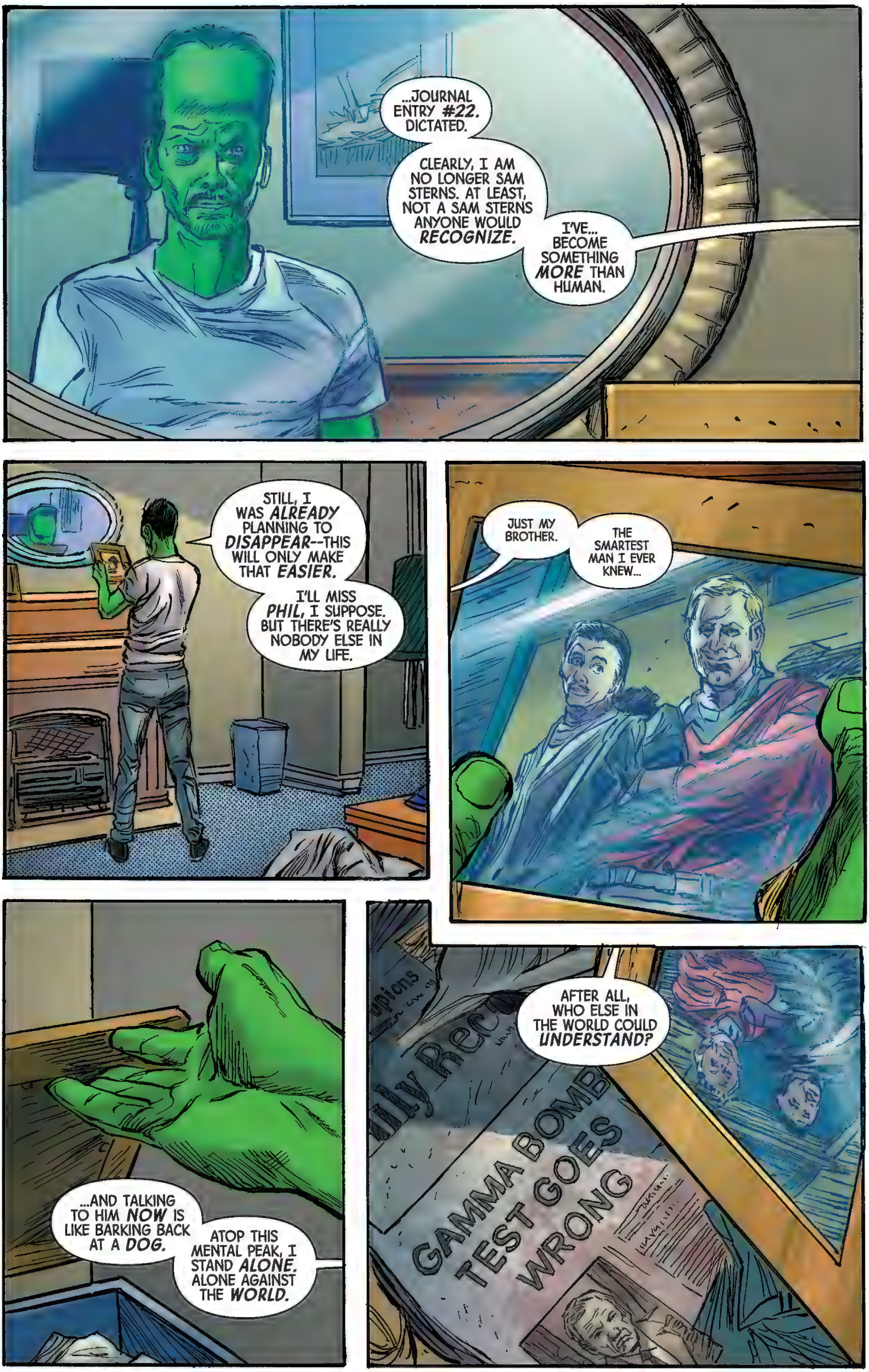
34

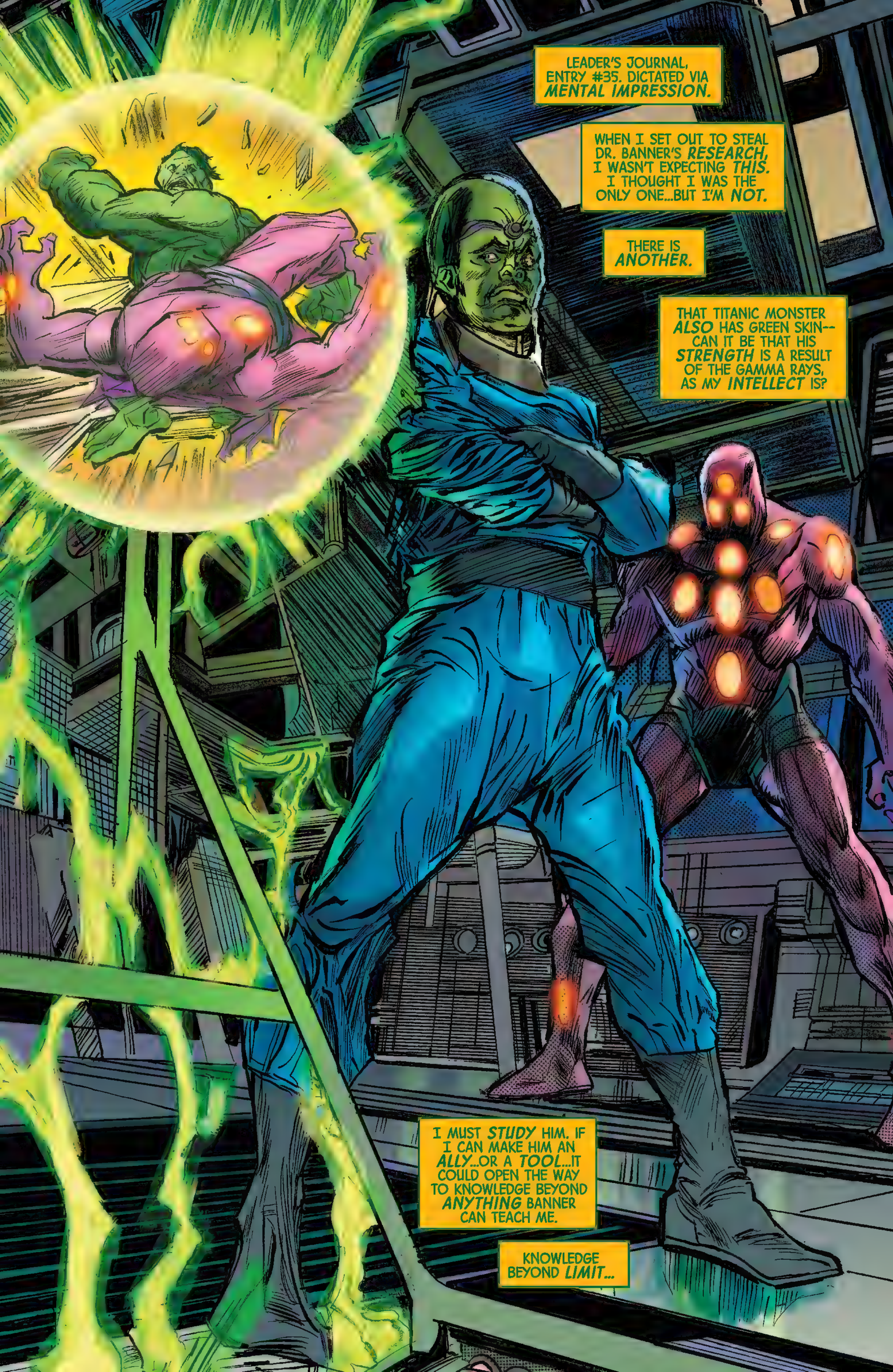
> “OH, I GOT A MESSAGE FROM BELOW
> ’TWAS FROM A MAN I USED TO KNOW
> ABOUT A YEAR OR SO AGO
> BEFORE HE DEPARTED
> HE IS JUST AS HAPPY AS CAN BE.”
>
> – IRVING BERLIN
> “PACK UP YOUR SINS (AND GO TO THE DEVIL)”

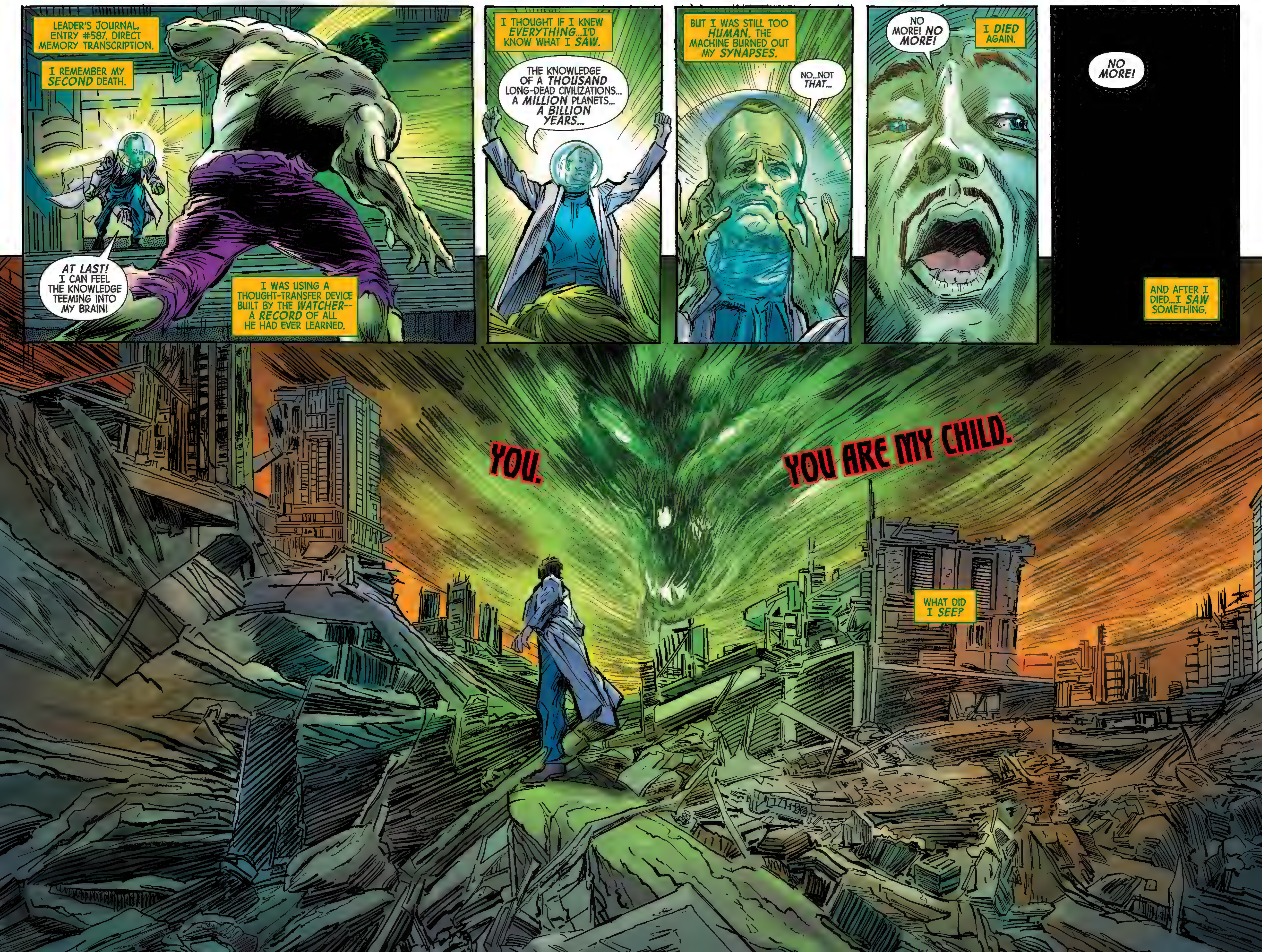

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.
Journal entry #1:
My name is Sam Sterns. I've spent my life hauling crap.
OH... I GOT A MESSAGE FROM BE-LOW...
WAS FROM A MAN I USEDTA KNOW...
And then I died.
ABOUT A YEAR OR SO A-GO, BEFORE...
...HE...
HSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS
SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS
KK-RRRRK
I remember the whole thing.

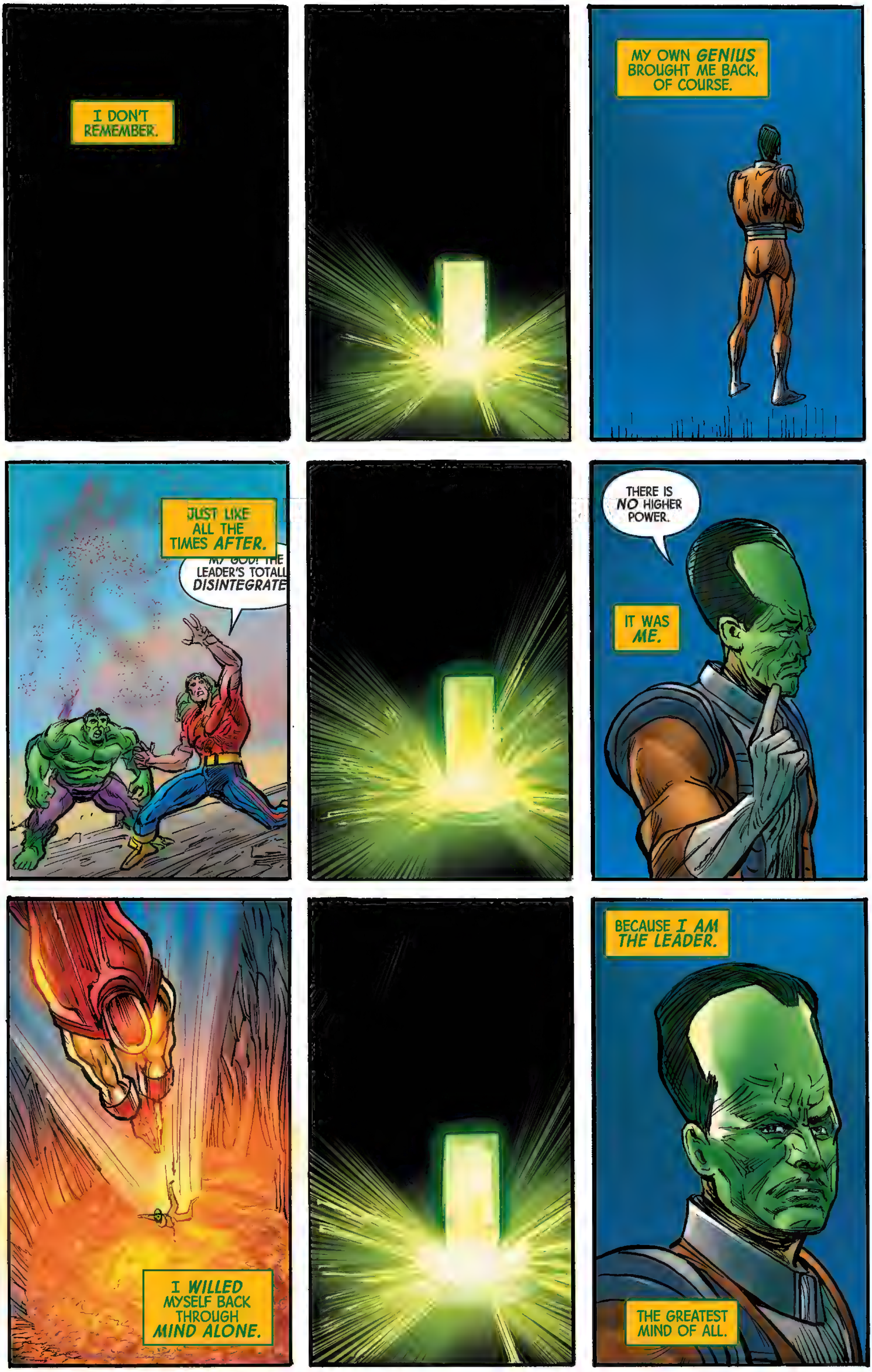

I was at the plant, hauling some crap down to the incinerator. I took a shortcut through one of the disused storage rooms.
And boom.
Turns out we had a contract with some military base in New Mexico to store something--had to do with gamma isotopes. My brother would know.
Anyway, some jerk stored it in the wrong place, and then I walked past.
Million-to-one freak accident.
It hurt more than anything ever has. It felt like my head was burning from the inside, right up until my heart stopped.
I remember the whole thing.

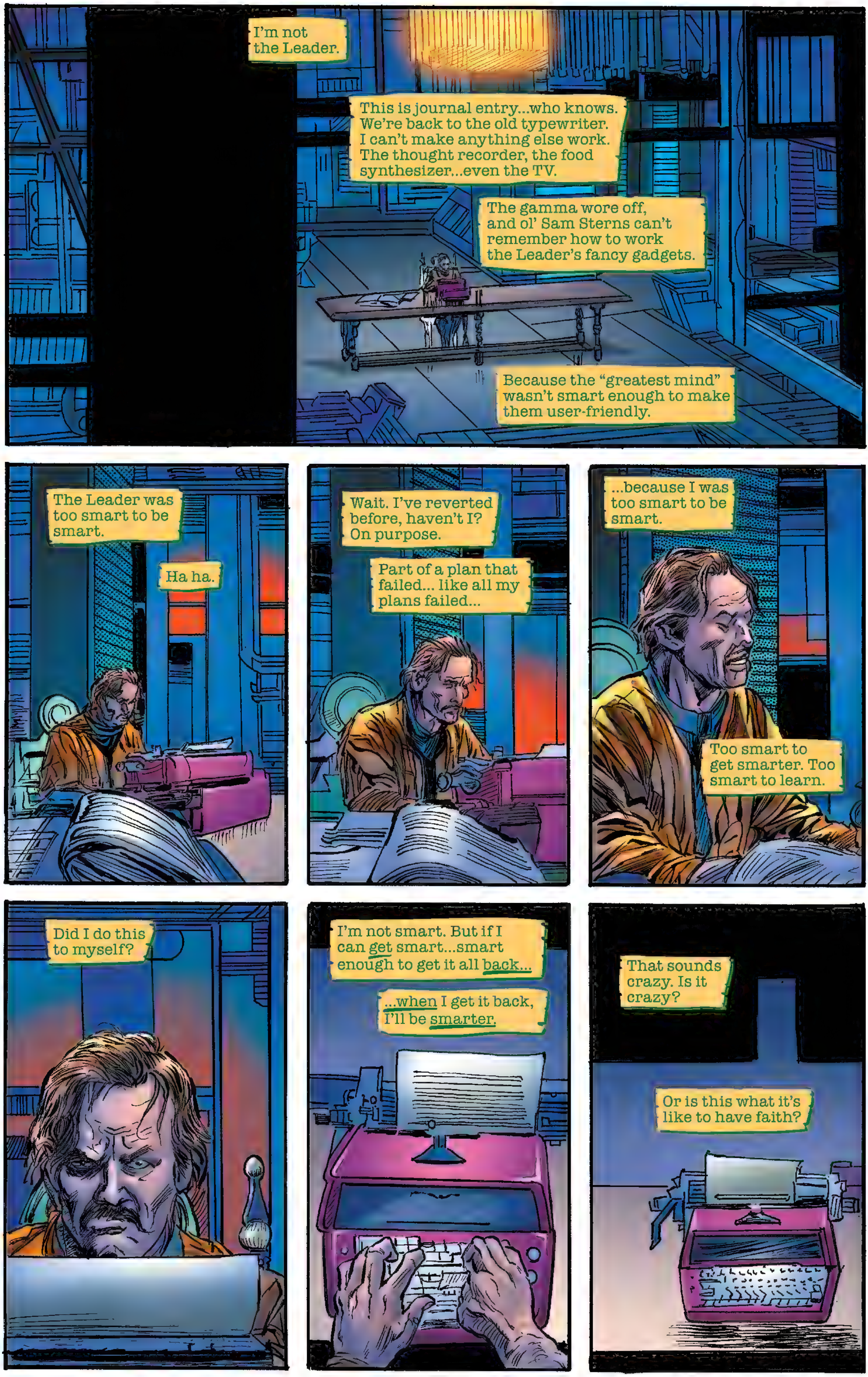

I don't really remember what happened after.
I think...
I think maybe I saw something.
NNN.. NN...
NNNAAAAAHHH!
I don't know what.
But they say I screamed my throat raw for an hour straight and passed right back out.
I asked the nurses for this typewriter, to write this down. Get it clear in my head. And I asked for books.
I want to read up on stuff. I never had any faith in a higher power or whatever, but there's a reason I came back.
I just need to know what I saw.
I need to know.

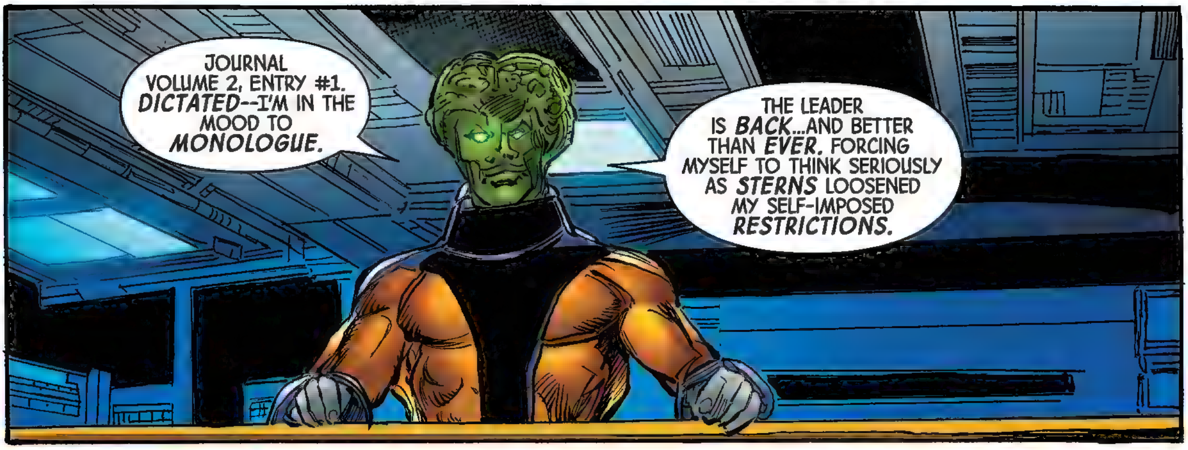

...JOURNAL ENTRY *#22.* DICTATED.
CLEARLY, I AM NO LONGER SAM STERNS. AT LEAST, NOT A SAM STERNS ANYONE WOULD *RECOGNIZE.*
I'VE... BECOME SOMETHING *MORE* THAN HUMAN.
STILL, I WAS *ALREADY* PLANNING TO *DISAPPEAR*--THIS WILL ONLY MAKE THAT *EASIER.*
I'LL MISS *PHIL,* I SUPPOSE. BUT THERE'S REALLY NOBODY ELSE IN *MY* LIFE.
JUST MY BROTHER.
THE SMARTEST MAN I EVER KNEW...
...AND TALKING TO HIM *NOW* IS LIKE BARKING BACK AT A *DOG.*
ATOP THIS MENTAL PEAK, I STAND *ALONE.* ALONE AGAINST THE *WORLD.*
AFTER ALL, WHO ELSE IN THE WORLD COULD *UNDERSTAND?*
GAMMA BOMB TEST GOES WRONG

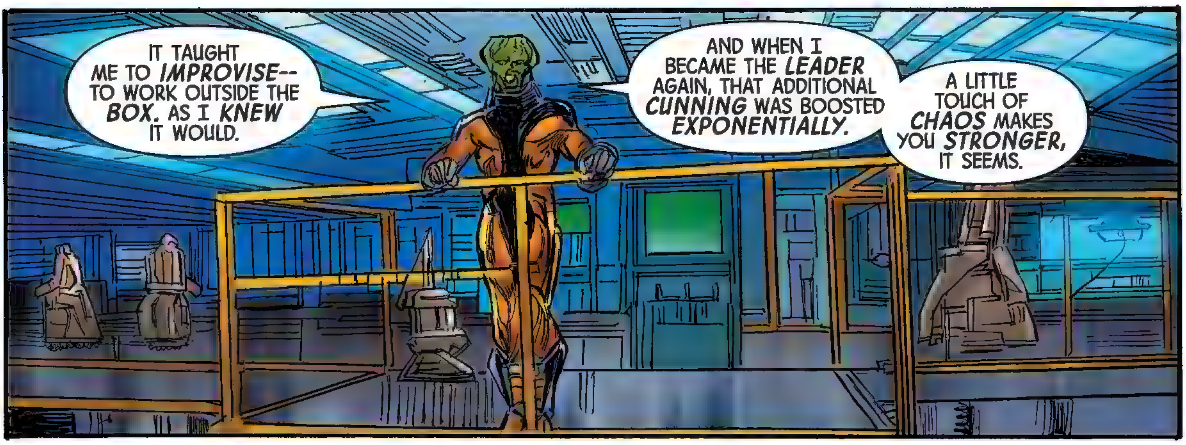

LEADER'S JOURNAL, ENTRY #35. DICTATED VIA *MENTAL IMPRESSION.*
WHEN I SET OUT TO STEAL DR. BANNER'S *RESEARCH,* I WASN'T EXPECTING *THIS.* I THOUGHT I WAS THE ONLY ONE...BUT I'M *NOT.*
THERE IS *ANOTHER.*
THAT TITANIC MONSTER *ALSO* HAS GREEN SKIN--CAN IT BE THAT HIS *STRENGTH* IS A RESULT OF THE GAMMA RAYS, AS MY *INTELLECT* IS?
I MUST *STUDY* HIM. IF I CAN MAKE HIM AN *ALLY*...OR A *TOOL*...IT COULD OPEN THE WAY TO KNOWLEDGE BEYOND *ANYTHING* BANNER CAN TEACH ME.
KNOWLEDGE BEYOND *LIMIT*...

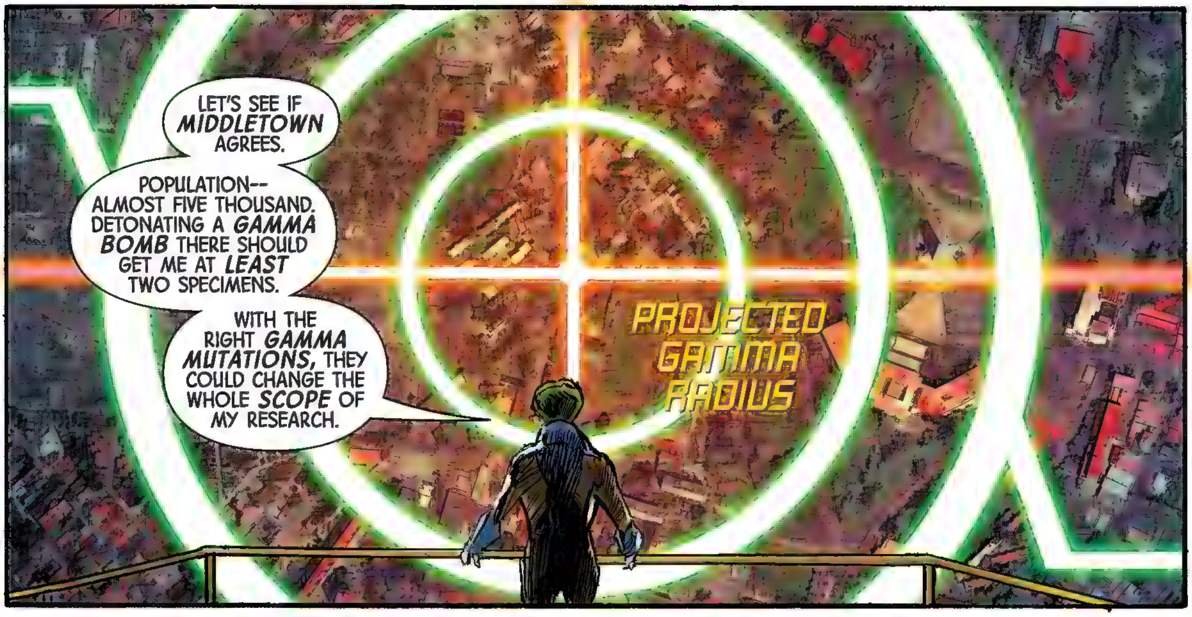

LEADER'S JOURNAL, ENTRY #587. DIRECT MEMORY TRANSCRIPTION.
I REMEMBER MY *SECOND* DEATH.
AT LAST! I CAN FEEL THE KNOWLEDGE TEEMING INTO MY BRAIN!
I WAS USING A THOUGHT-TRANSFER DEVICE BUILT BY THE *WATCHER*-- A *RECORD* OF ALL HE HAD EVER LEARNED.
I THOUGHT IF I KNEW *EVERYTHING*...I'D KNOW WHAT I *SAW*.
THE KNOWLEDGE OF A *THOUSAND* LONG-DEAD CIVILIZATIONS... A *MILLION* PLANETS... A *BILLION* YEARS...
BUT I WAS STILL TOO *HUMAN*. THE MACHINE BURNED OUT MY *SYNAPSES*.
NO...NOT *THAT*...
NO MORE! *NO MORE!*
I *DIED* AGAIN.
NO MORE!
AND AFTER I DIED...I *SAW* SOMETHING.
YOU.
YOU ARE MY CHILD.
WHAT DID I *SEE?*

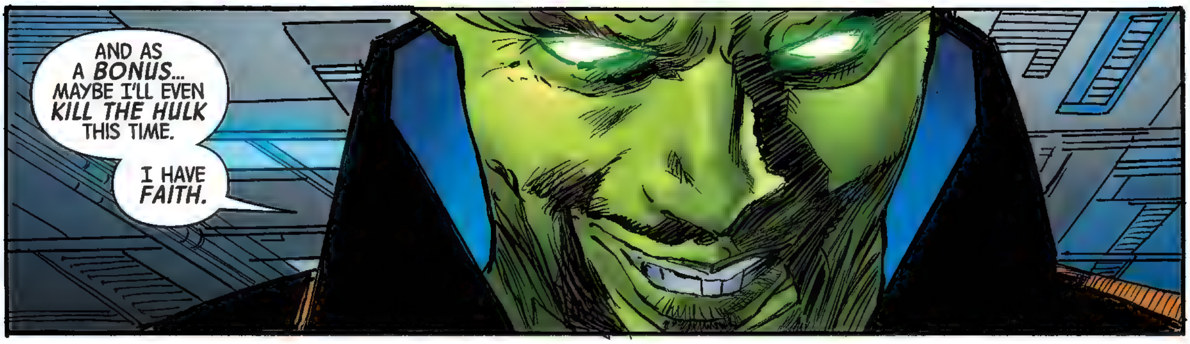

I DON'T REMEMBER.
MY OWN GENIUS BROUGHT ME BACK, OF COURSE.
JUST LIKE ALL THE TIMES AFTER.
MY GOD! THE LEADER'S TOTALL DISINTEGRATE
THERE IS NO HIGHER POWER.
IT WAS ME.
I WILLED MYSELF BACK THROUGH MIND ALONE.
BECAUSE I AM THE LEADER.
THE GREATEST MIND OF ALL.

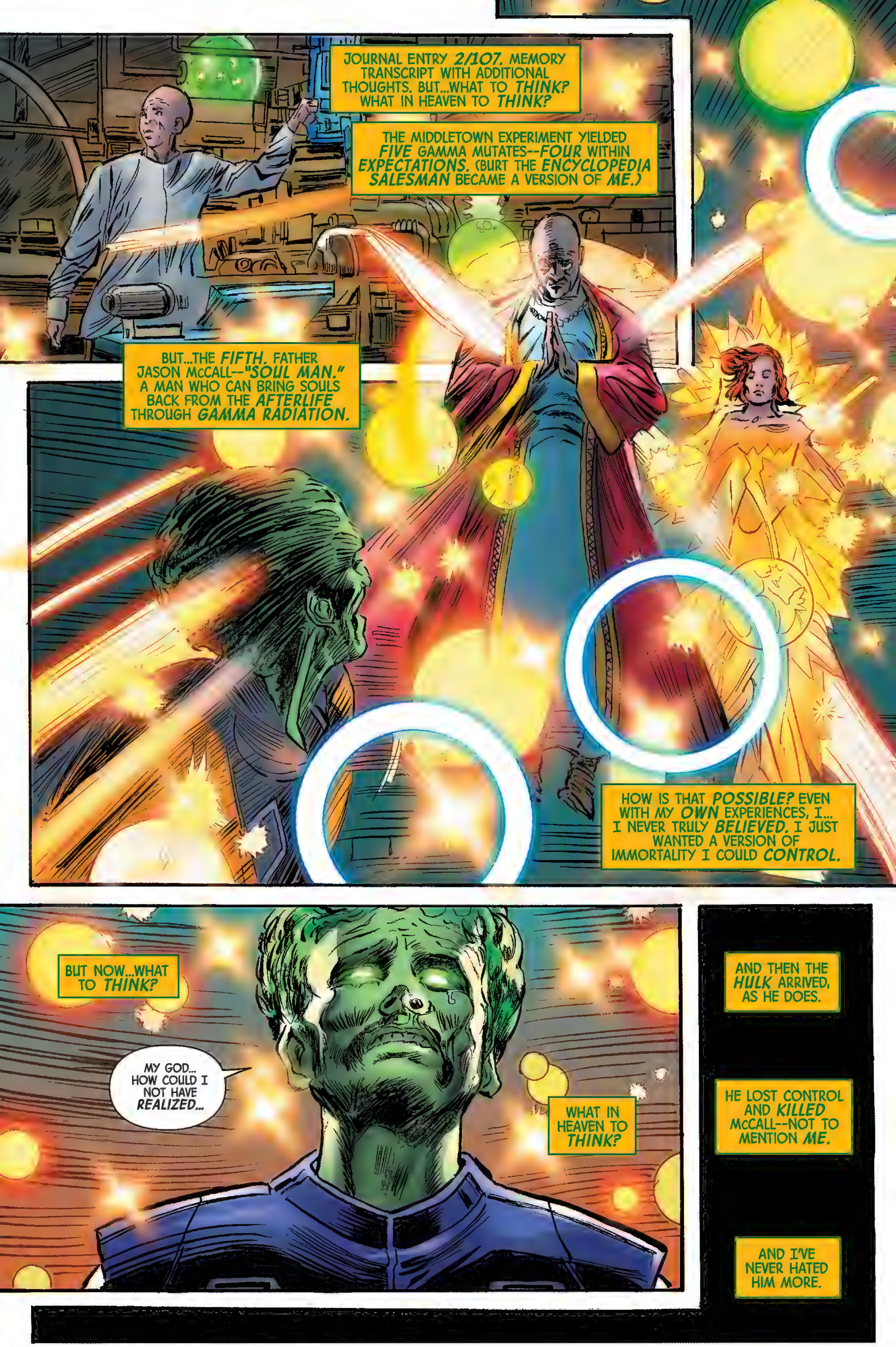

I'm not the Leader.
This is journal entry...who knows. We're back to the old typewriter. I can't make anything else work. The thought recorder, the food synthesizer...even the TV.
The gamma wore off, and ol' Sam Sterns can't remember how to work the Leader's fancy gadgets.
Because the "greatest mind" wasn't smart enough to make them user-friendly.
The Leader was too smart to be smart.
Ha ha.
Wait. I've reverted before, haven't I? On purpose.
Part of a plan that failed... like all my plans failed...
...because I was too smart to be smart.
Too smart to get smarter. Too smart to learn.
Did I do this to myself?
I'm not smart. But if I can get smart...smart enough to get it all back...
...when I get it back, I'll be smarter.
That sounds crazy. Is it crazy?
Or is this what it's like to have faith?

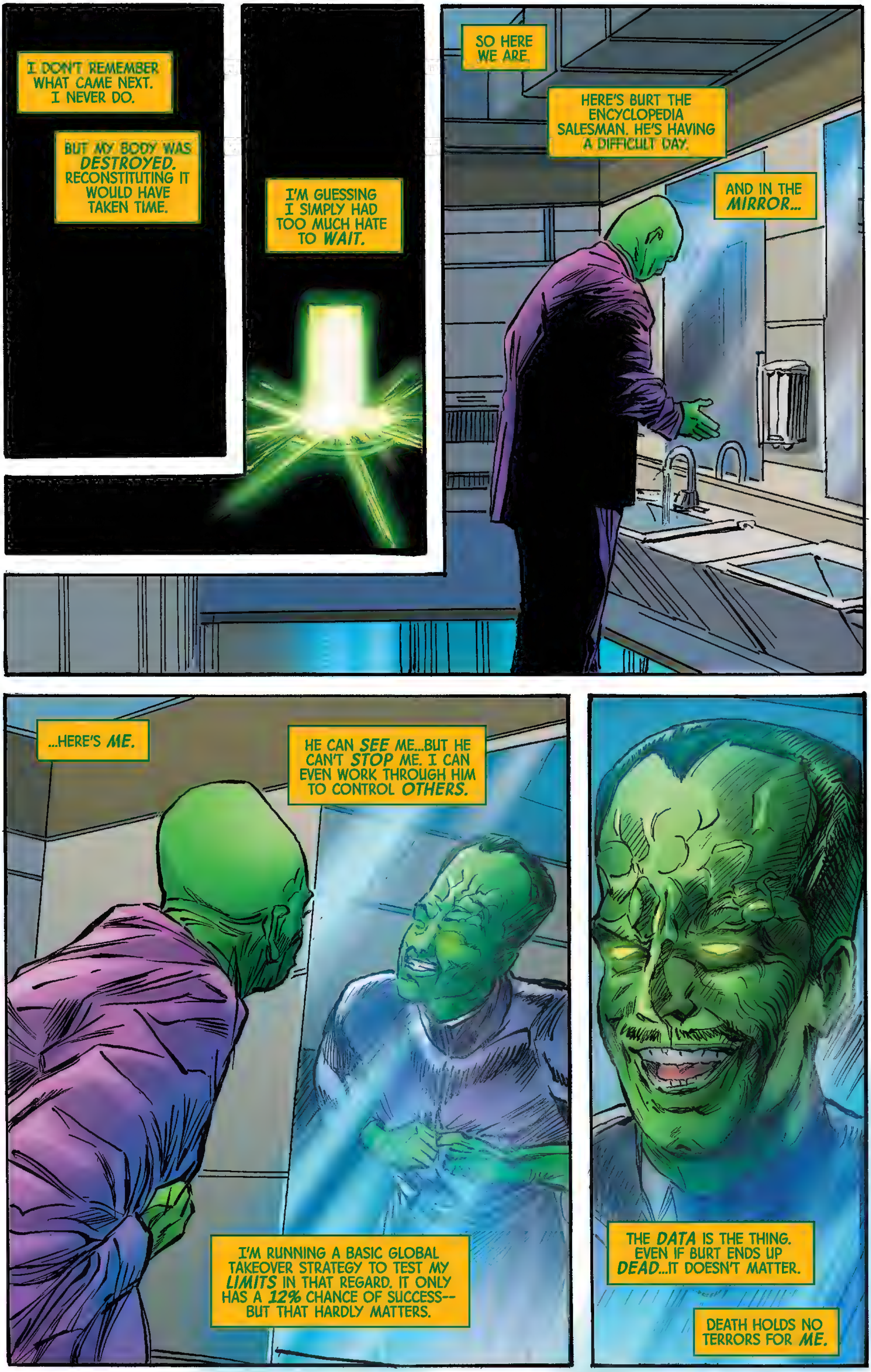

JOURNAL VOLUME 2, ENTRY #1. DICTATED--I'M IN THE MOOD TO MONOLOGUE.
THE LEADER IS BACK...AND BETTER THAN EVER. FORCING MYSELF TO THINK SERIOUSLY AS STERNS LOOSENED MY SELF-IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS.

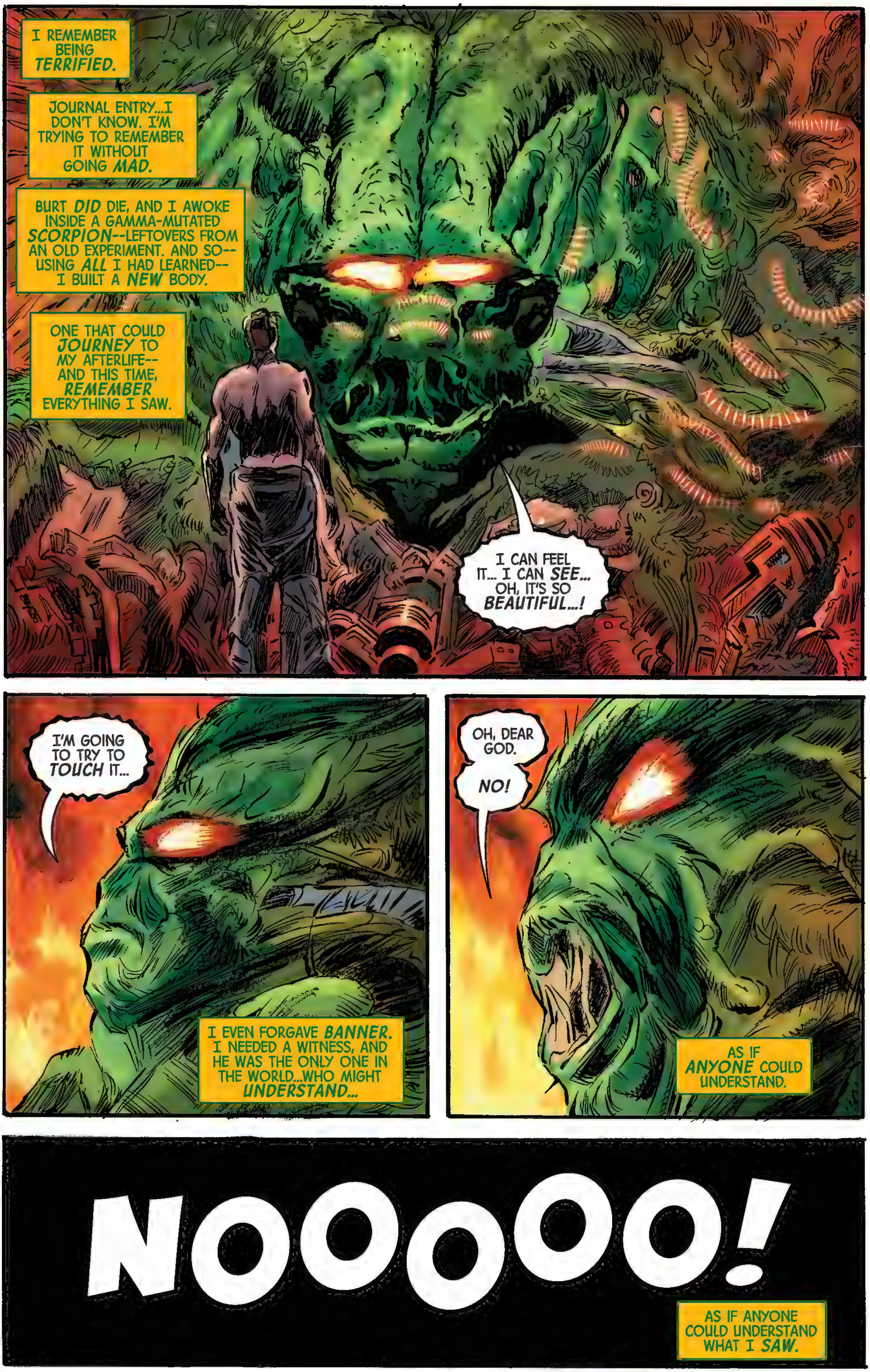

IT TAUGHT ME TO IMPROVISE--TO WORK OUTSIDE THE BOX. AS I KNEW IT WOULD.
AND WHEN I BECAME THE LEADER AGAIN, THAT ADDITIONAL CUNNING WAS BOOSTED EXPONENTIALLY.
A LITTLE TOUCH OF CHAOS MAKES YOU STRONGER, IT SEEMS.

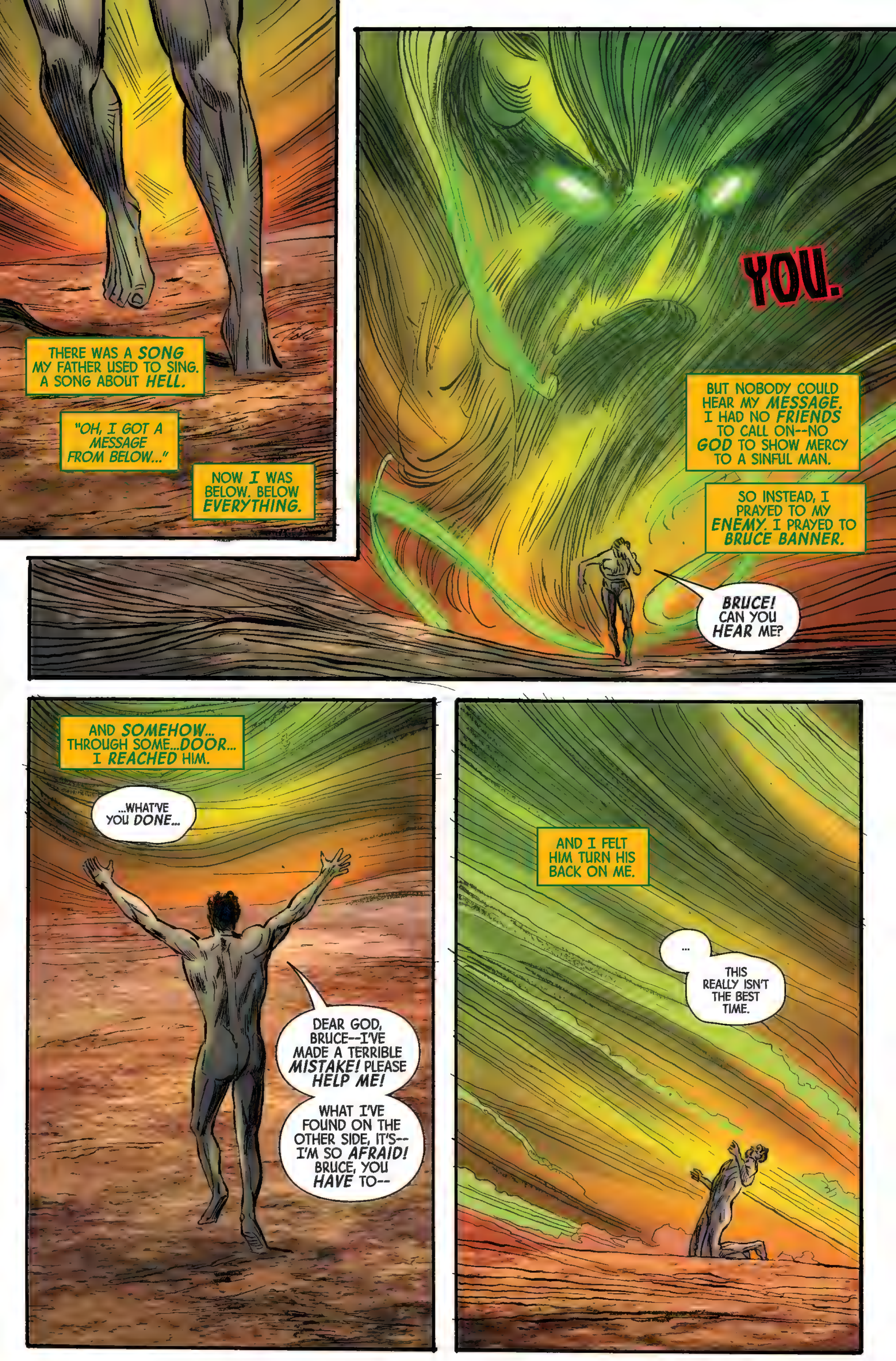

LET'S SEE IF MIDDLETOWN AGREES.
POPULATION--ALMOST FIVE THOUSAND. DETONATING A GAMMA BOMB THERE SHOULD GET ME AT LEAST TWO SPECIMENS.
WITH THE RIGHT GAMMA MUTATIONS, THEY COULD CHANGE THE WHOLE SCOPE OF MY RESEARCH.
PROJECTED GAMMA RADIUS

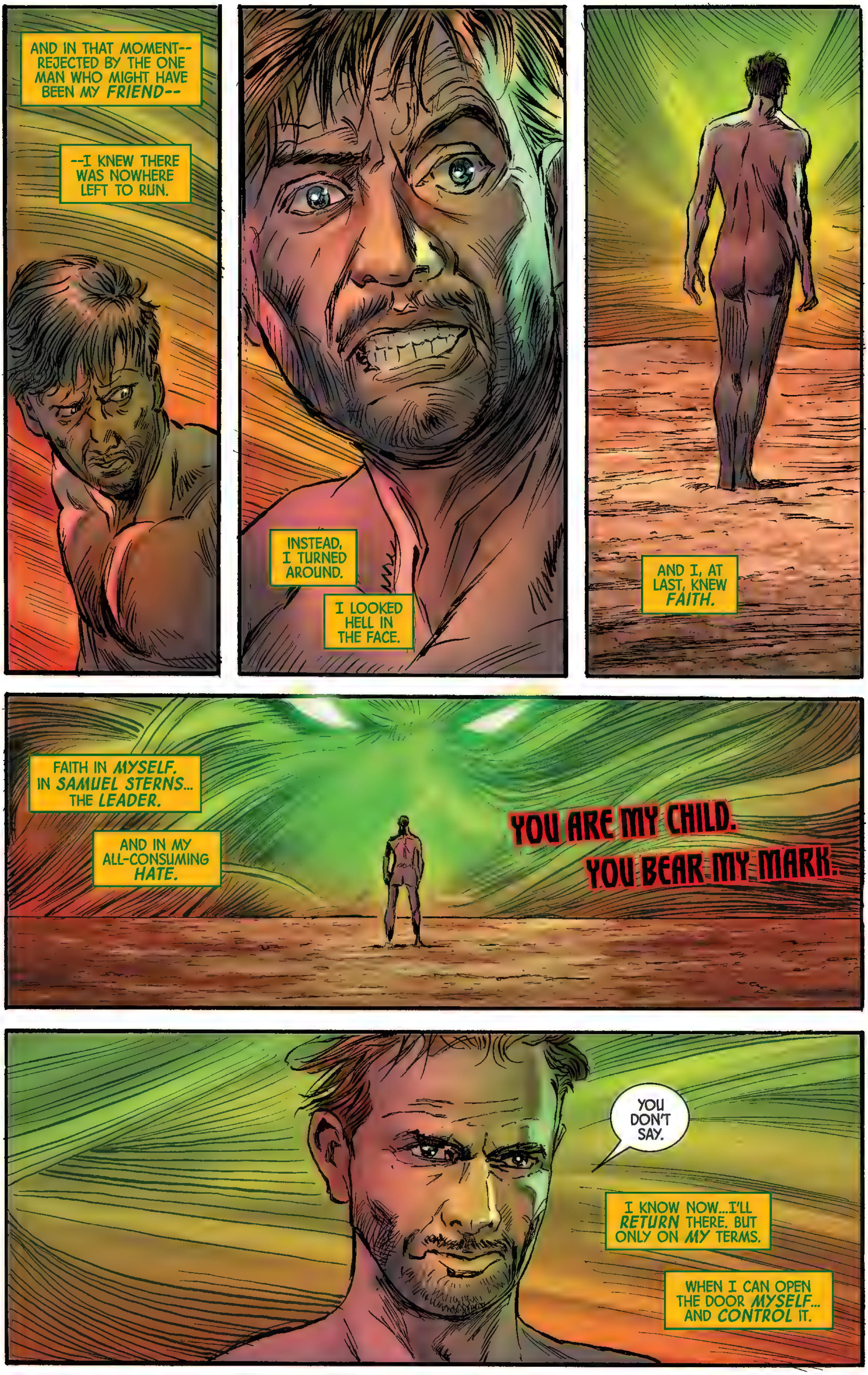

AND AS A BONUS... MAYBE I'LL EVEN KILL THE HULK THIS TIME.
I HAVE FAITH.

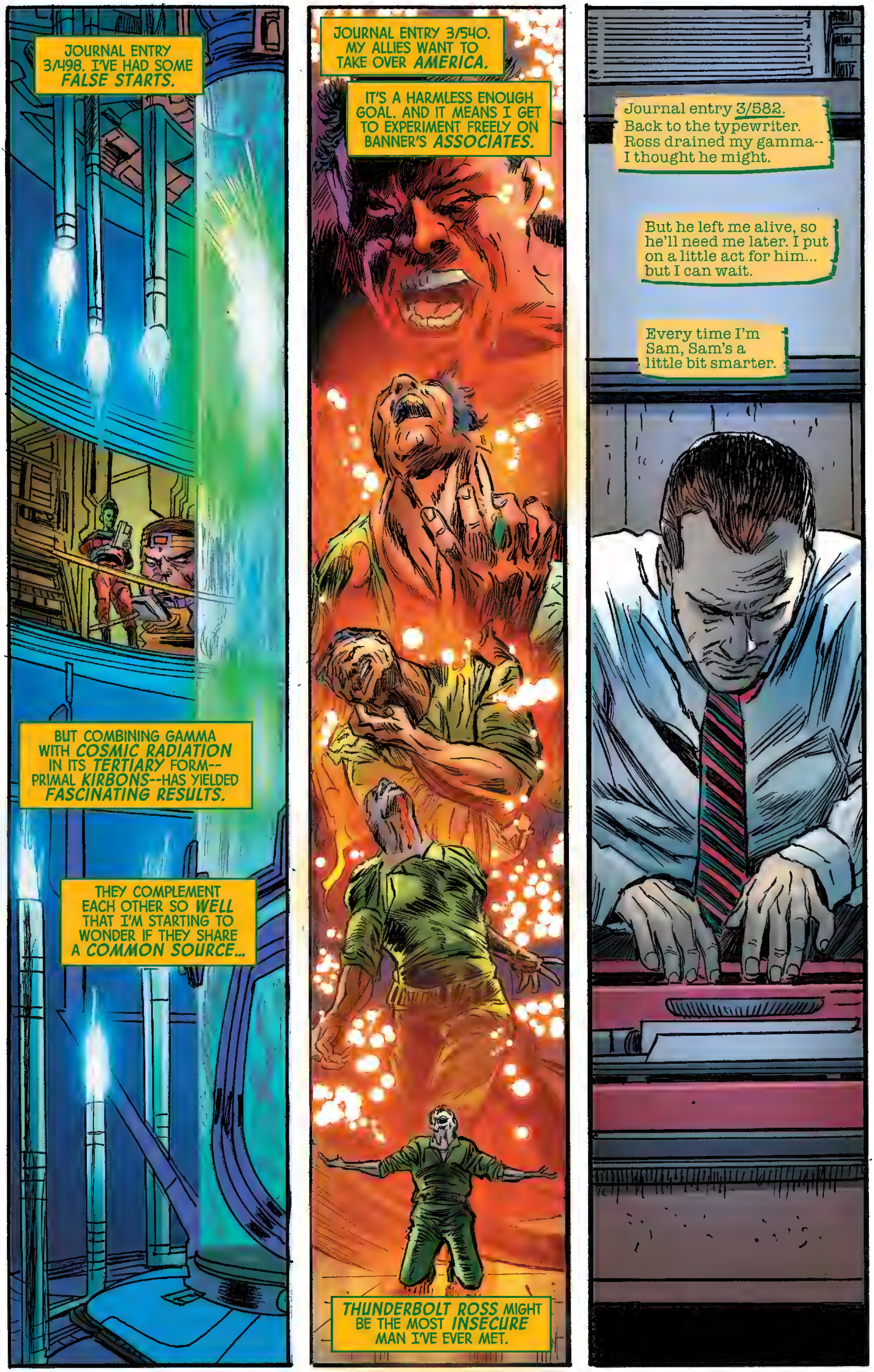

JOURNAL ENTRY 2/107. MEMORY TRANSCRIPT WITH ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS. BUT...WHAT TO THINK? WHAT IN HEAVEN TO THINK?
THE MIDDLETOWN EXPERIMENT YIELDED FIVE GAMMA MUTATES--FOUR WITHIN EXPECTATIONS. (BURT THE ENCYCLOPEDIA SALESMAN BECAME A VERSION OF ME.)
BUT...THE FIFTH. FATHER JASON McCALL--"SOUL MAN." A MAN WHO CAN BRING SOULS BACK FROM THE AFTERLIFE THROUGH GAMMA RADIATION.
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? EVEN WITH MY OWN EXPERIENCES, I... I NEVER TRULY BELIEVED. I JUST WANTED A VERSION OF IMMORTALITY I COULD CONTROL.
BUT NOW...WHAT TO THINK?
MY GOD... HOW COULD I NOT HAVE REALIZED...
WHAT IN HEAVEN TO THINK?
AND THEN THE HULK ARRIVED, AS HE DOES.
HE LOST CONTROL AND KILLED McCALL--NOT TO MENTION ME.
AND I'VE NEVER HATED HIM MORE.

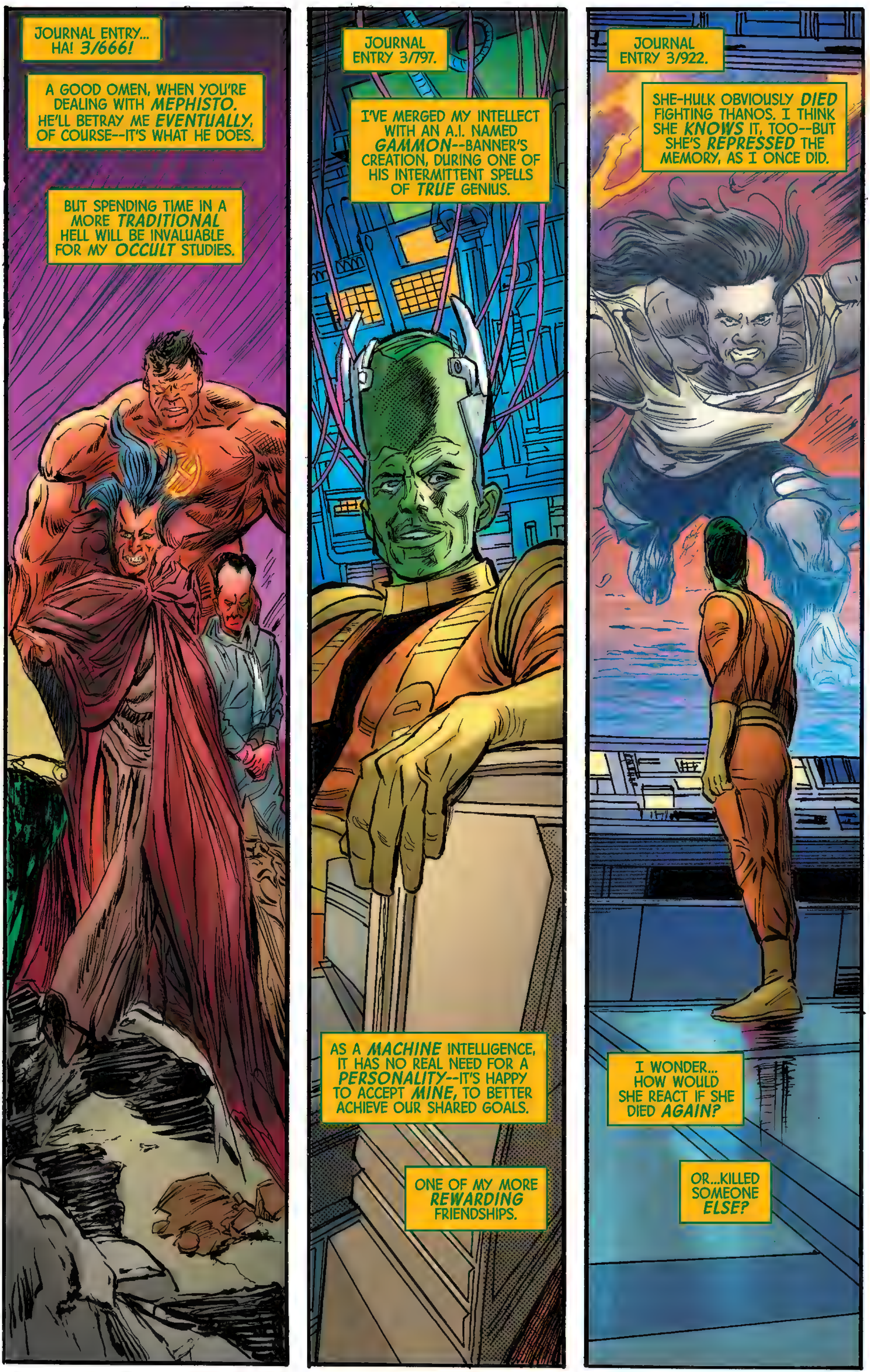

I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT CAME NEXT. I NEVER DO.
BUT MY BODY WAS *DESTROYED.* RECONSTITUTING IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN TIME.
I'M GUESSING I SIMPLY HAD TOO MUCH HATE TO *WAIT.*
SO HERE WE ARE.
HERE'S BURT THE ENCYCLOPEDIA SALESMAN. HE'S HAVING A DIFFICULT DAY.
AND IN THE *MIRROR...*
...HERE'S *ME.*
HE CAN *SEE* ME...BUT HE CAN'T *STOP* ME. I CAN EVEN WORK THROUGH HIM TO CONTROL *OTHERS.*
I'M RUNNING A BASIC GLOBAL TAKEOVER STRATEGY TO TEST MY *LIMITS* IN THAT REGARD. IT ONLY HAS A *12%* CHANCE OF SUCCESS-- BUT THAT HARDLY MATTERS.
THE *DATA* IS THE THING. EVEN IF BURT ENDS UP *DEAD*...IT DOESN'T MATTER.
DEATH HOLDS NO TERRORS FOR *ME.*

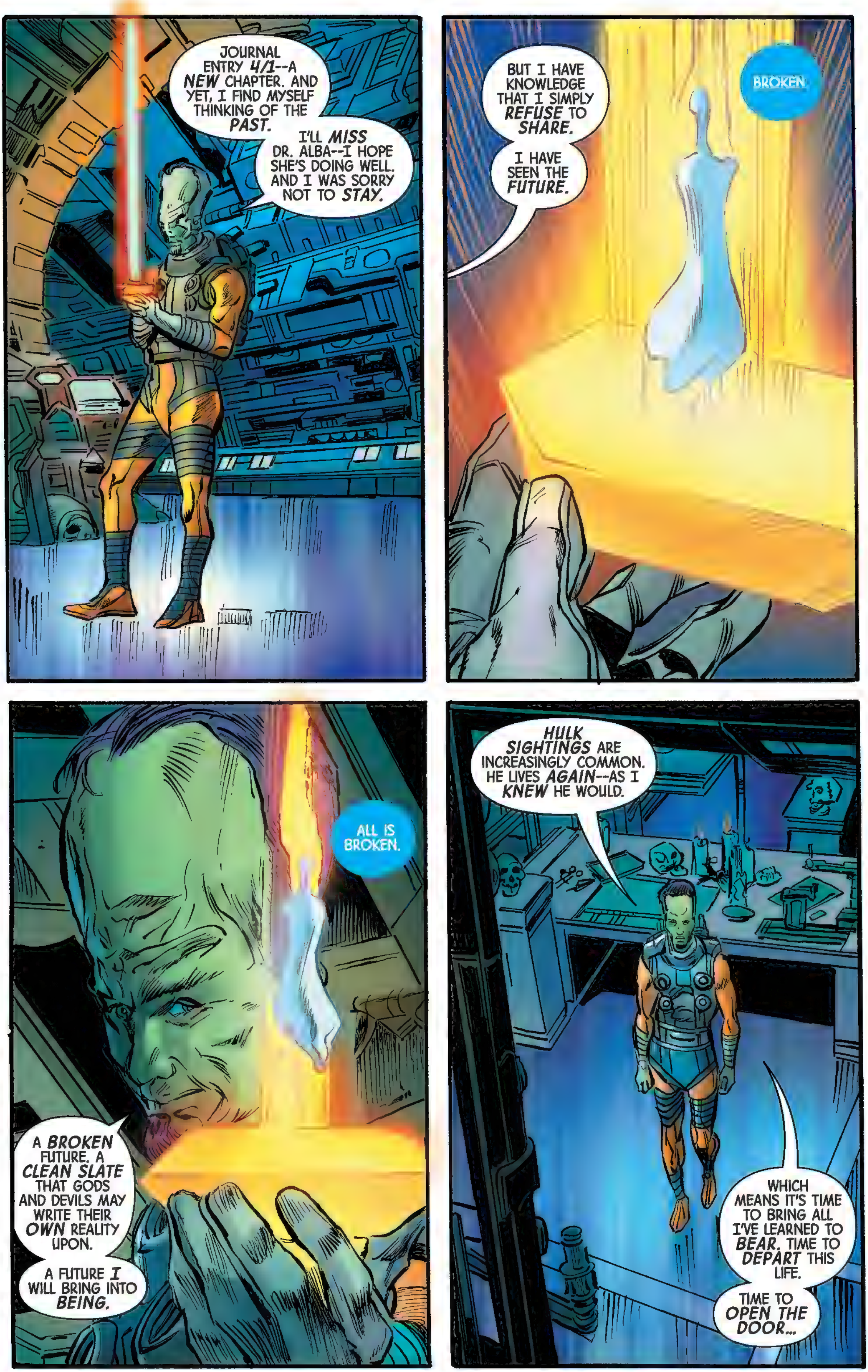

I REMEMBER BEING *TERRIFIED.*
JOURNAL ENTRY...I DON'T KNOW. I'M TRYING TO REMEMBER IT WITHOUT GOING *MAD.*
BURT *DID* DIE, AND I AWOKE INSIDE A GAMMA-MUTATED *SCORPION*--LEFTOVERS FROM AN OLD EXPERIMENT. AND SO--USING *ALL* I HAD LEARNED--I BUILT A *NEW* BODY.
ONE THAT COULD *JOURNEY* TO MY AFTERLIFE--AND THIS TIME, *REMEMBER* EVERYTHING I SAW.
I CAN FEEL IT... I CAN *SEE*... OH, IT'S SO *BEAUTIFUL...!*
I'M GOING TO TRY TO *TOUCH* IT...
I EVEN FORGAVE *BANNER.* I NEEDED A WITNESS, AND HE WAS THE ONLY ONE IN THE WORLD...WHO MIGHT *UNDERSTAND...*
OH, DEAR GOD.
NO!
AS IF *ANYONE* COULD UNDERSTAND.
NOOOOO!
AS IF ANYONE COULD UNDERSTAND WHAT I *SAW.*

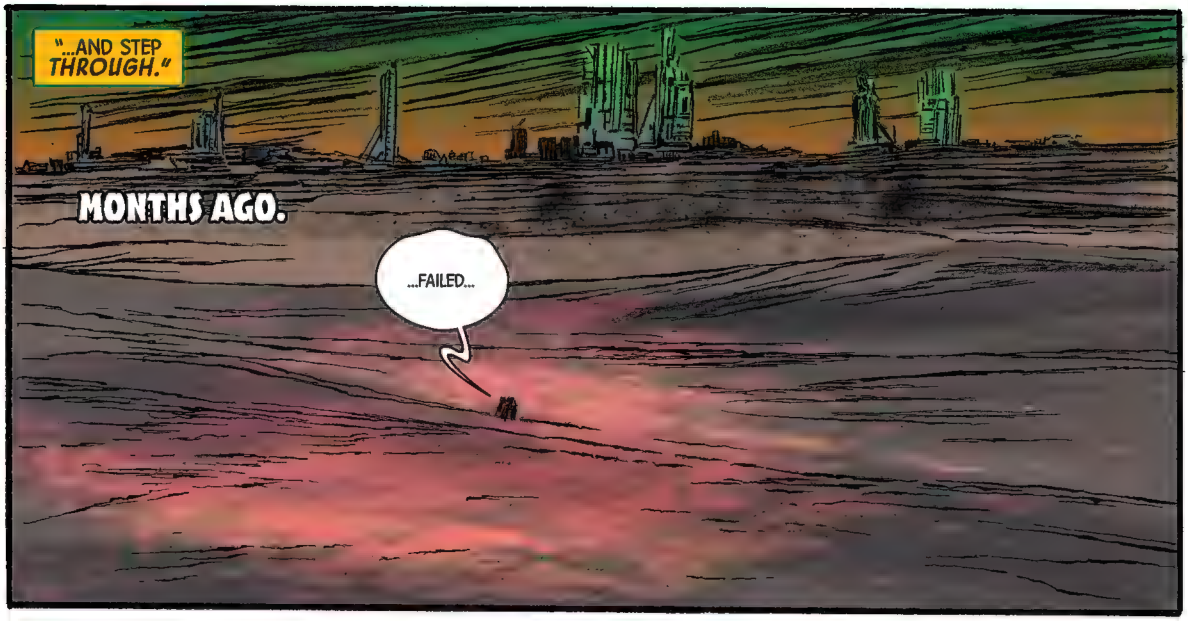

THERE WAS A SONG MY FATHER USED TO SING. A SONG ABOUT HELL.
"OH, I GOT A MESSAGE FROM BELOW..."
NOW I WAS BELOW. BELOW EVERYTHING.
YOU.
BUT NOBODY COULD HEAR MY MESSAGE. I HAD NO FRIENDS TO CALL ON--NO GOD TO SHOW MERCY TO A SINFUL MAN.
SO INSTEAD, I PRAYED TO MY ENEMY. I PRAYED TO BRUCE BANNER.
BRUCE! CAN YOU HEAR ME?
AND SOMEHOW... THROUGH SOME...DOOR... I REACHED HIM.
...WHAT'VE YOU DONE...
DEAR GOD, BRUCE--I'VE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE! PLEASE HELP ME!
WHAT I'VE FOUND ON THE OTHER SIDE, IT'S-- I'M SO AFRAID! BRUCE, YOU HAVE TO--
AND I FELT HIM TURN HIS BACK ON ME.
...
THIS REALLY ISN'T THE BEST TIME.

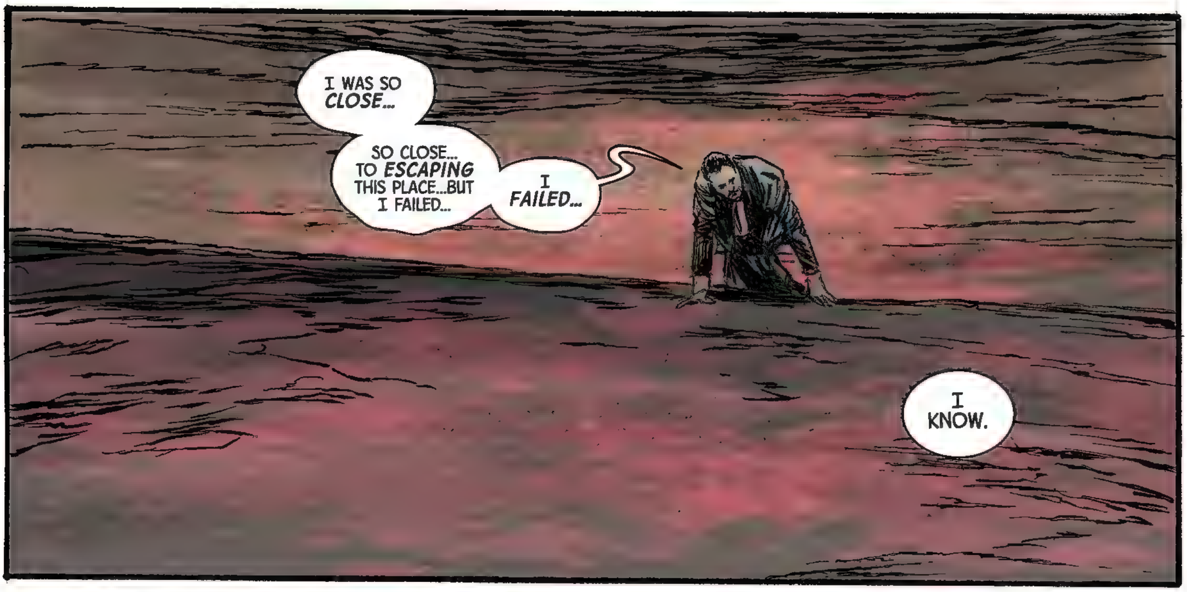

AND IN THAT MOMENT-- REJECTED BY THE ONE MAN WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN MY *FRIEND*--
--I KNEW THERE WAS NOWHERE LEFT TO RUN.
INSTEAD, I TURNED AROUND.
I LOOKED HELL IN THE FACE.
AND I, AT LAST, KNEW *FAITH*.
FAITH IN *MYSELF*. IN *SAMUEL STERNS*... THE *LEADER*.
AND IN MY ALL-CONSUMING *HATE*.
YOU ARE MY CHILD.
YOU BEAR MY MARK.
YOU DON'T SAY.
I KNOW NOW...I'LL *RETURN* THERE. BUT ONLY ON *MY* TERMS.
WHEN I CAN OPEN THE DOOR *MYSELF*... AND *CONTROL* IT.

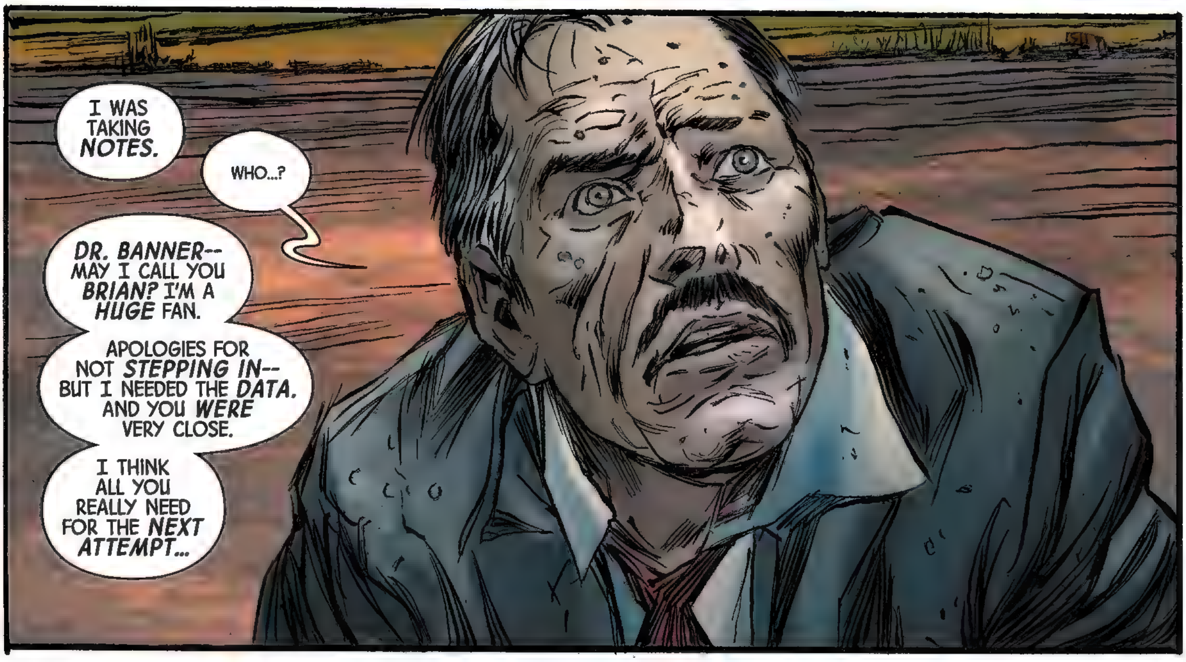

JOURNAL ENTRY 3/498. I'VE HAD SOME FALSE STARTS.
BUT COMBINING GAMMA WITH COSMIC RADIATION IN ITS TERTIARY FORM--PRIMAL KIRBONS--HAS YIELDED FASCINATING RESULTS.
THEY COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER SO WELL THAT I'M STARTING TO WONDER IF THEY SHARE A COMMON SOURCE...
JOURNAL ENTRY 3/540. MY ALLIES WANT TO TAKE OVER AMERICA.
IT'S A HARMLESS ENOUGH GOAL. AND IT MEANS I GET TO EXPERIMENT FREELY ON BANNER'S ASSOCIATES.
THUNDERBOLT ROSS MIGHT BE THE MOST INSECURE MAN I'VE EVER MET.
Journal entry 3/582. Back to the typewriter. Ross drained my gamma--I thought he might.
But he left me alive, so he'll need me later. I put on a little act for him... but I can wait.
Every time I'm Sam, Sam's a little bit smarter.

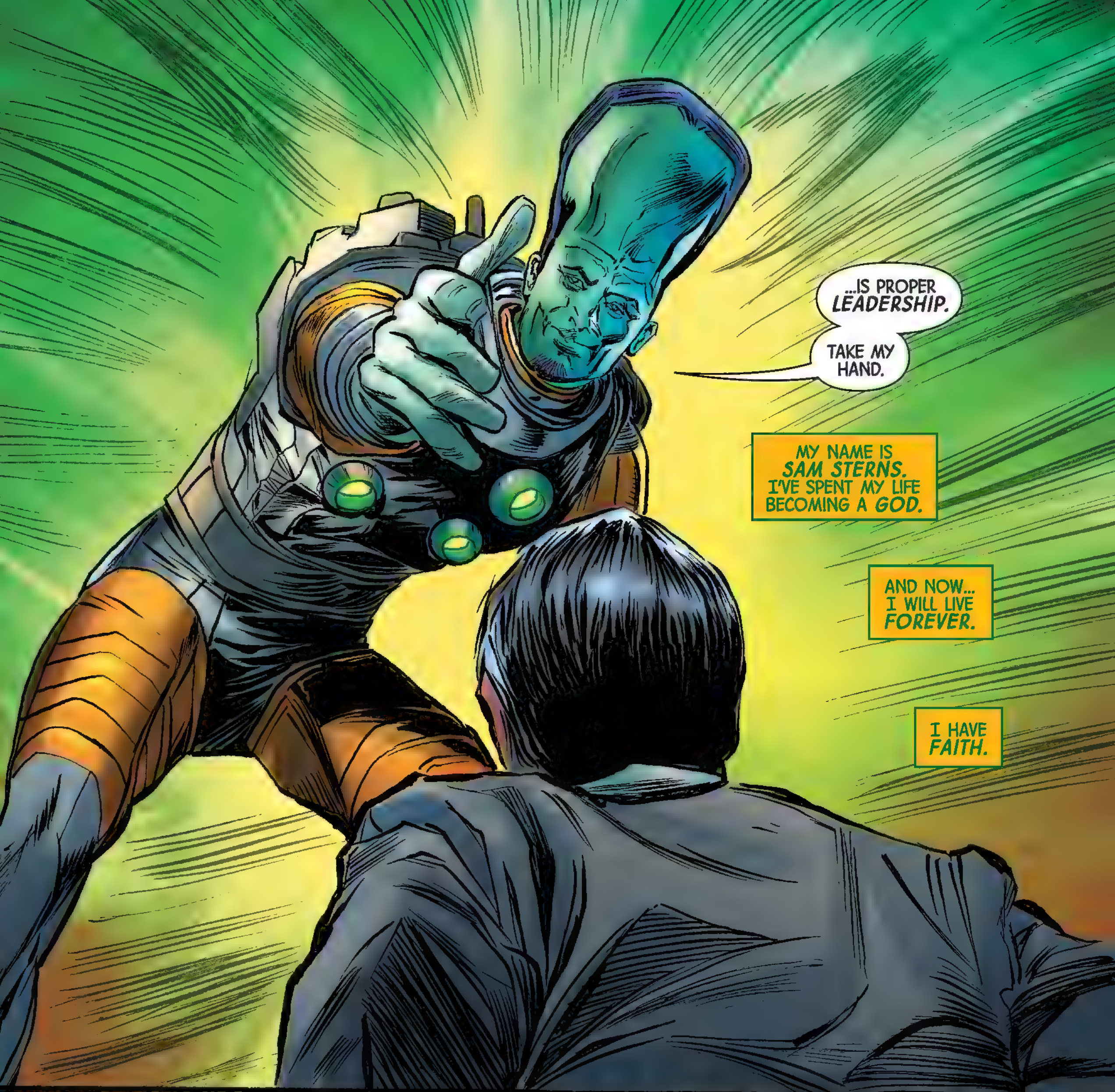

JOURNAL ENTRY... HA! *3/666!*
A GOOD OMEN, WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH *MEPHISTO.* HE'LL BETRAY ME *EVENTUALLY,* OF COURSE--IT'S WHAT HE DOES.
BUT SPENDING TIME IN A MORE *TRADITIONAL* HELL WILL BE INVALUABLE FOR MY *OCCULT* STUDIES.
JOURNAL ENTRY 3/797.
I'VE MERGED MY INTELLECT WITH AN A.I. NAMED *GAMMON*--BANNER'S CREATION, DURING ONE OF HIS INTERMITTENT SPELLS OF *TRUE* GENIUS.
AS A *MACHINE* INTELLIGENCE, IT HAS NO REAL NEED FOR A *PERSONALITY*--IT'S HAPPY TO ACCEPT *MINE,* TO BETTER ACHIEVE OUR SHARED GOALS.
ONE OF MY MORE *REWARDING* FRIENDSHIPS.
JOURNAL ENTRY 3/922.
SHE-HULK OBVIOUSLY *DIED* FIGHTING THANOS. I THINK SHE *KNOWS* IT, TOO--BUT SHE'S *REPRESSED* THE MEMORY, AS I ONCE DID.
I WONDER... HOW WOULD SHE REACT IF SHE DIED *AGAIN?*
OR...KILLED SOMEONE *ELSE?*


JOURNAL ENTRY 4/1--A NEW CHAPTER. AND YET, I FIND MYSELF THINKING OF THE PAST.
I'LL MISS DR. ALBA--I HOPE SHE'S DOING WELL. AND I WAS SORRY NOT TO STAY.
BUT I HAVE KNOWLEDGE THAT I SIMPLY REFUSE TO SHARE.
I HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE.
BROKEN
ALL IS BROKEN.
A BROKEN FUTURE. A CLEAN SLATE THAT GODS AND DEVILS MAY WRITE THEIR OWN REALITY UPON.
A FUTURE I WILL BRING INTO BEING.
HULK SIGHTINGS ARE INCREASINGLY COMMON. HE LIVES AGAIN--AS I KNEW HE WOULD.
WHICH MEANS IT'S TIME TO BRING ALL I'VE LEARNED TO BEAR. TIME TO DEPART THIS LIFE.
TIME TO OPEN THE DOOR...

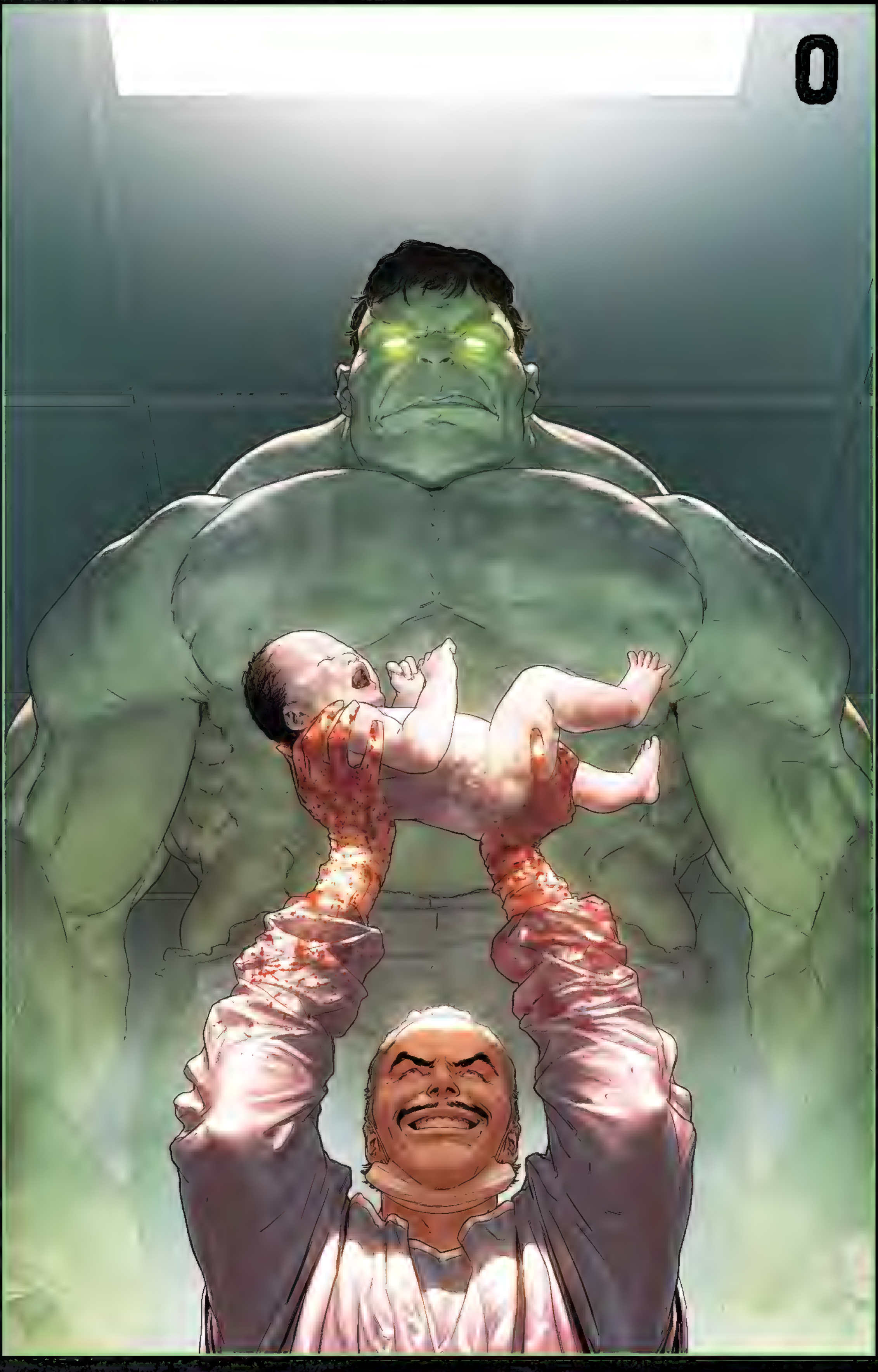

"...AND STEP THROUGH."
MONTHS AGO.
...FAILED...


I WAS SO CLOSE...
SO CLOSE... TO ESCAPING THIS PLACE...BUT I FAILED...
I FAILED...
I KNOW.


I WAS TAKING NOTES.
WHO...?
DR. BANNER-- MAY I CALL YOU BRIAN? I'M A HUGE FAN.
APOLOGIES FOR NOT STEPPING IN-- BUT I NEEDED THE DATA. AND YOU WERE VERY CLOSE.
I THINK ALL YOU REALLY NEED FOR THE NEXT ATTEMPT...


...IS PROPER *LEADERSHIP.*
TAKE MY HAND.
MY NAME IS *SAM STERNS.* I'VE SPENT MY LIFE BECOMING A *GOD.*
AND NOW... I WILL LIVE *FOREVER.*
I HAVE *FAITH.*

THE APOTHEOSIS OF SAMUEL STERNS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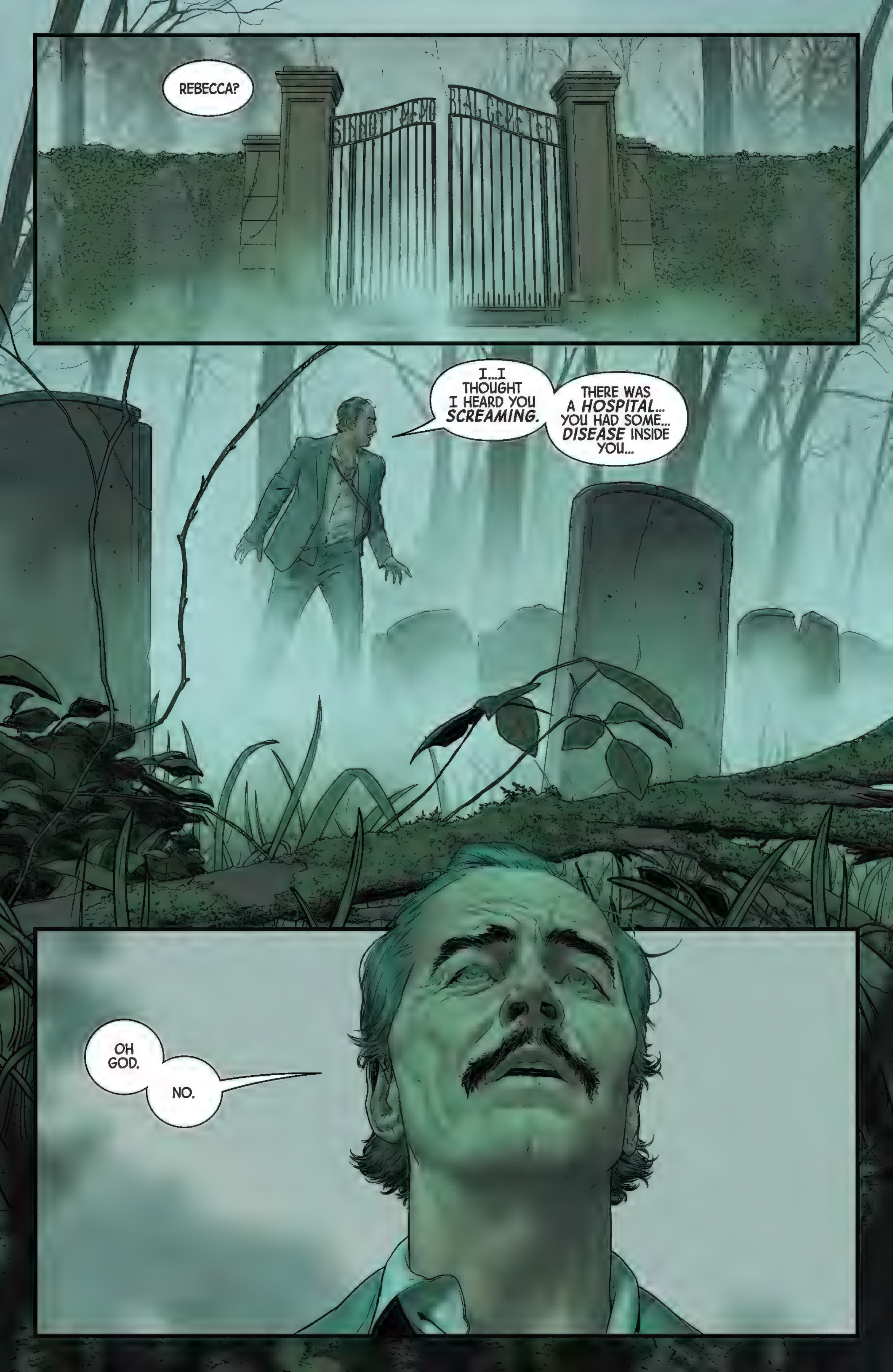
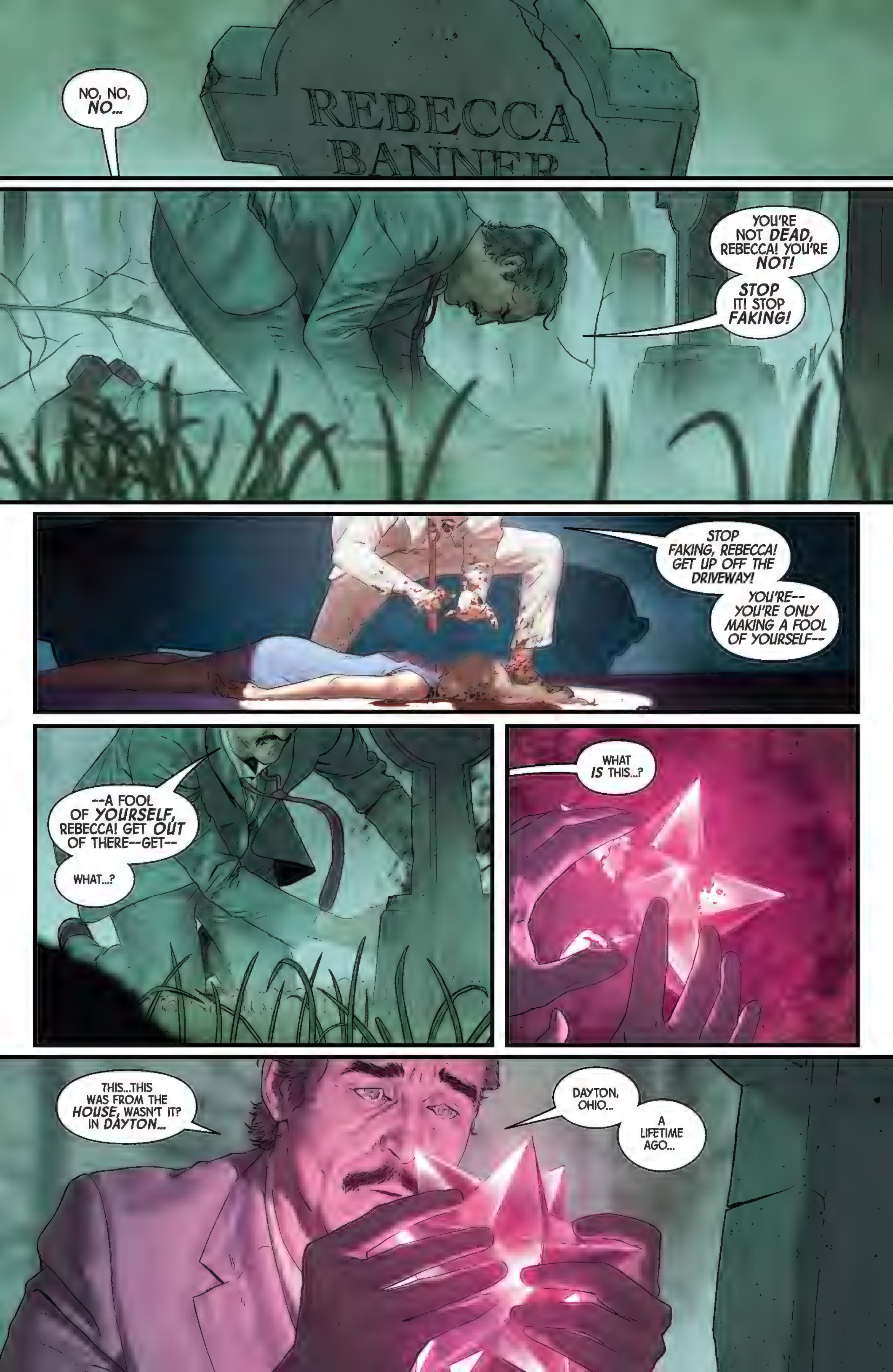
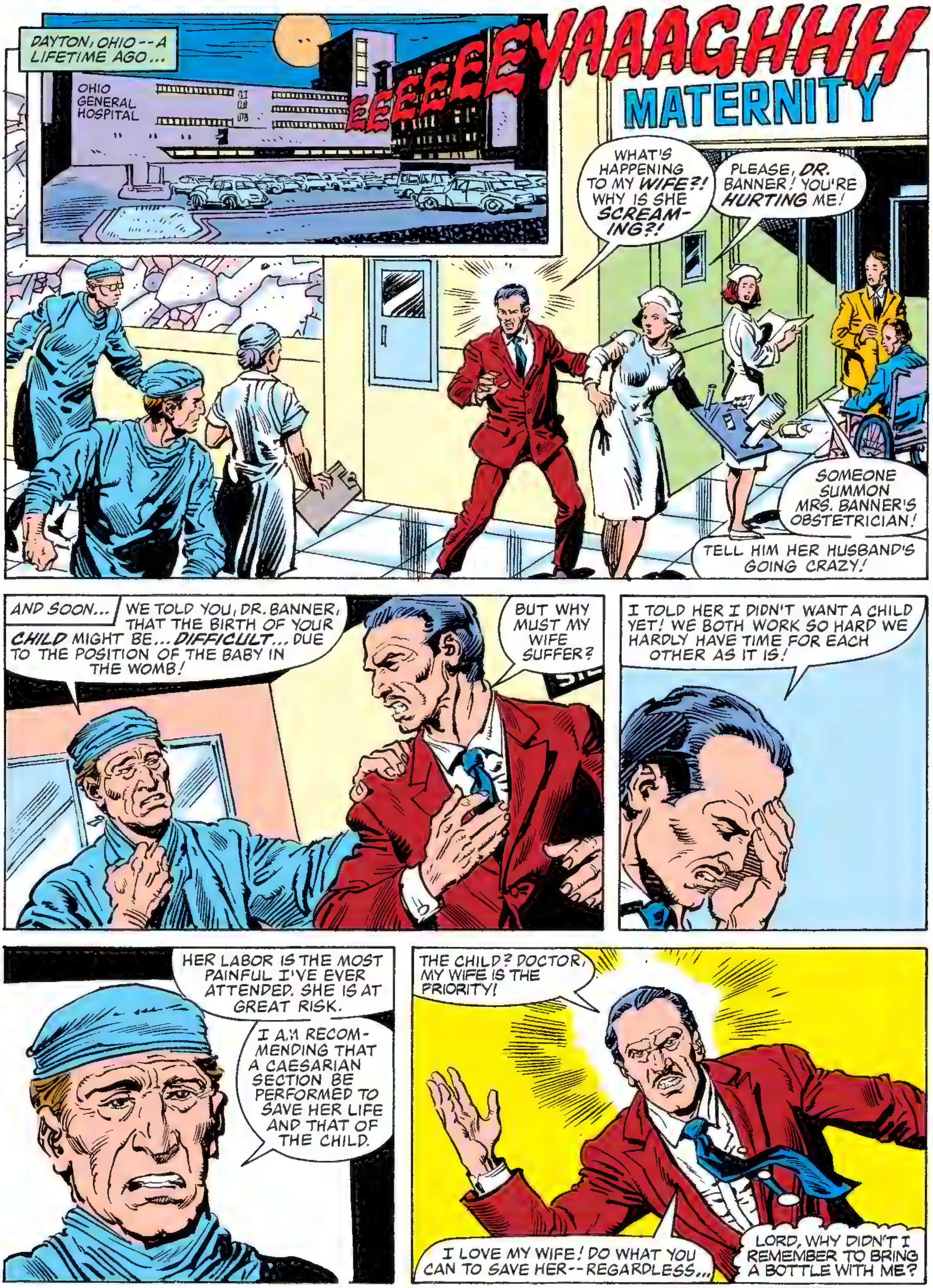
"AND WHO SHALL REPAY
HIM WHAT HE HATH DONE?
YET SHALL HE BE BROUGHT
TO THE GRAVE, AND SHALL
REMAIN IN THE TOMB."

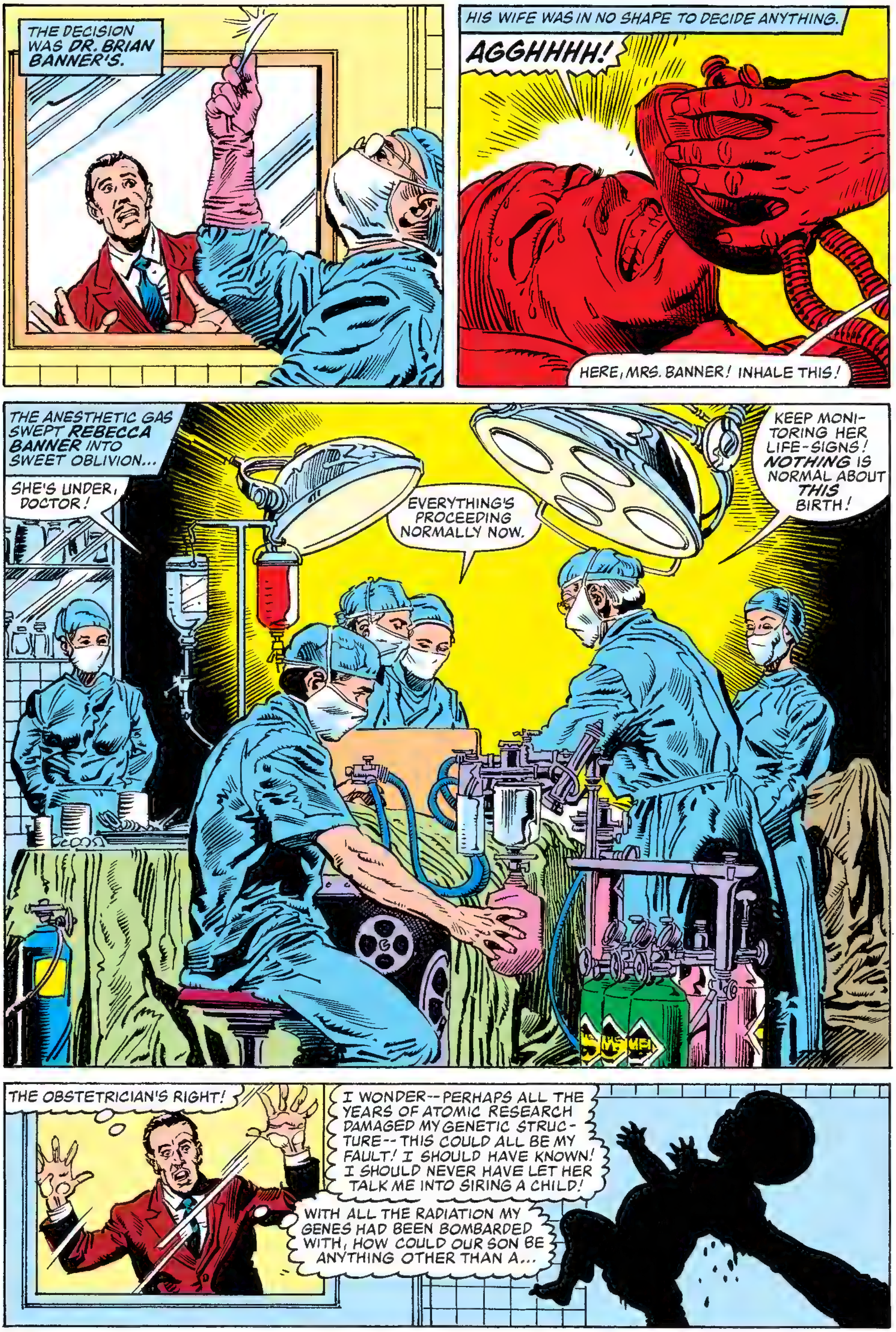
— JOB 21:31-32

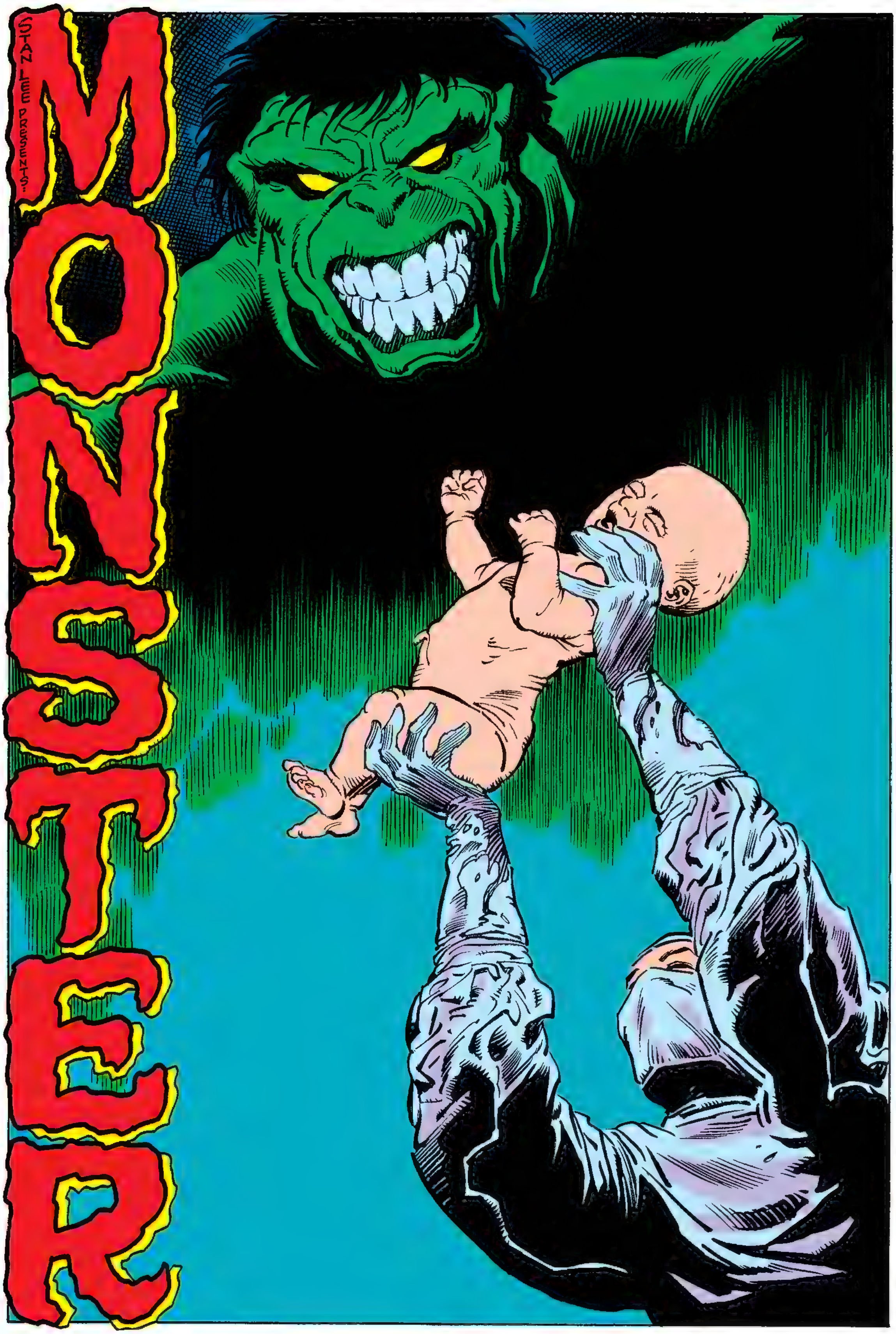

REBECCA?
SINNOTT MEMO RIAL CEMETER
I...I THOUGHT I HEARD YOU *SCREAMING.*
THERE WAS A *HOSPITAL*... YOU HAD SOME... *DISEASE* INSIDE YOU...
OH GOD.
NO.

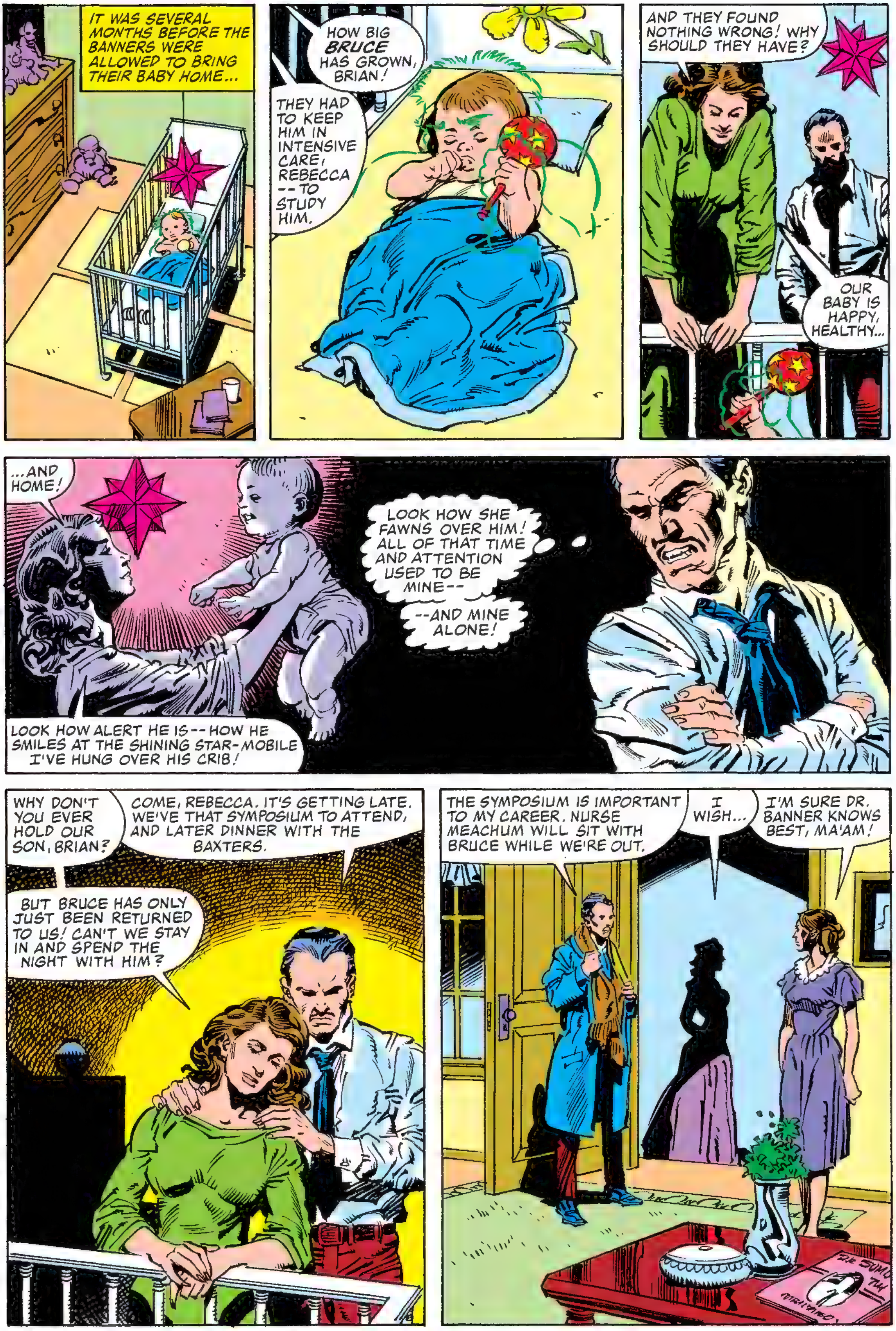

NO, NO, *NO*...
REBECCA BANNER
YOU'RE NOT *DEAD*, REBECCA! YOU'RE *NOT!*
STOP IT! STOP *FAKING!*
STOP FAKING, REBECCA! GET UP OFF THE DRIVEWAY!
YOU'RE-- YOU'RE ONLY MAKING A FOOL OF YOURSELF--
--A FOOL OF *YOURSELF*, REBECCA! GET *OUT* OF THERE--GET--
WHAT...?
WHAT *IS* THIS...?
THIS...THIS WAS FROM THE *HOUSE*, WASN'T IT? IN *DAYTON*...
DAYTON, OHIO...
A LIFETIME AGO...

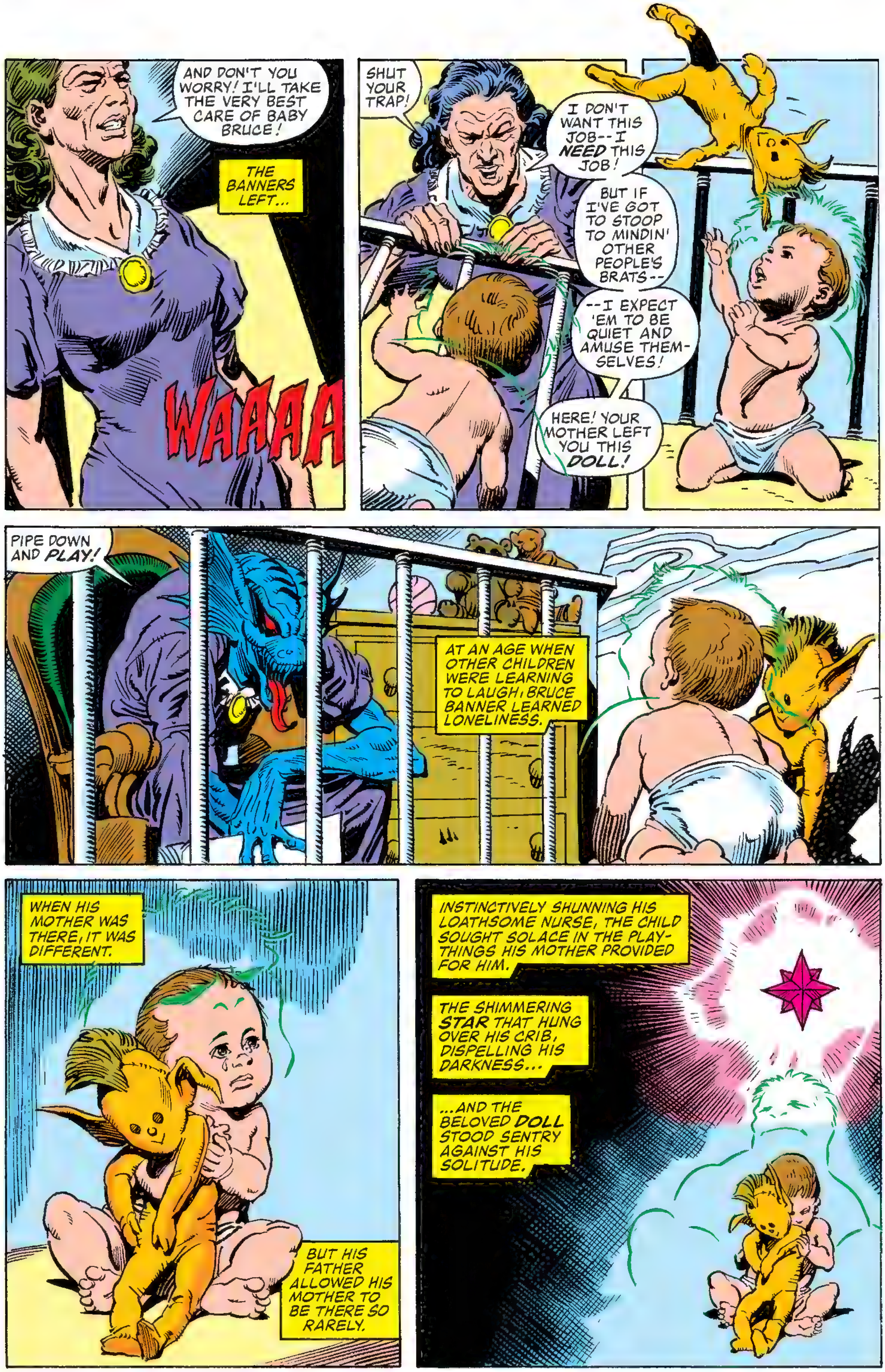

DAYTON, OHIO -- A LIFETIME AGO...
OHIO GENERAL HOSPITAL
EEEEEEYAAAGHHH
MATERNITY
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY WIFE?! WHY IS SHE SCREAMING?!
PLEASE, DR. BANNER! YOU'RE HURTING ME!
SOMEONE SUMMON MRS. BANNER'S OBSTETRICIAN!
TELL HIM HER HUSBAND'S GOING CRAZY!
AND SOON...
WE TOLD YOU, DR. BANNER, THAT THE BIRTH OF YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE... DIFFICULT... DUE TO THE POSITION OF THE BABY IN THE WOMB!
BUT WHY MUST MY WIFE SUFFER?
I TOLD HER I DIDN'T WANT A CHILD YET! WE BOTH WORK SO HARD WE HARDLY HAVE TIME FOR EACH OTHER AS IT IS!
HER LABOR IS THE MOST PAINFUL I'VE EVER ATTENDED. SHE IS AT GREAT RISK.
I AM RECOMMENDING THAT A CAESARIAN SECTION BE PERFORMED TO SAVE HER LIFE AND THAT OF THE CHILD.
THE CHILD? DOCTOR, MY WIFE IS THE PRIORITY!
I LOVE MY WIFE! DO WHAT YOU CAN TO SAVE HER--REGARDLESS...
LORD, WHY DIDN'T I REMEMBER TO BRING A BOTTLE WITH ME?

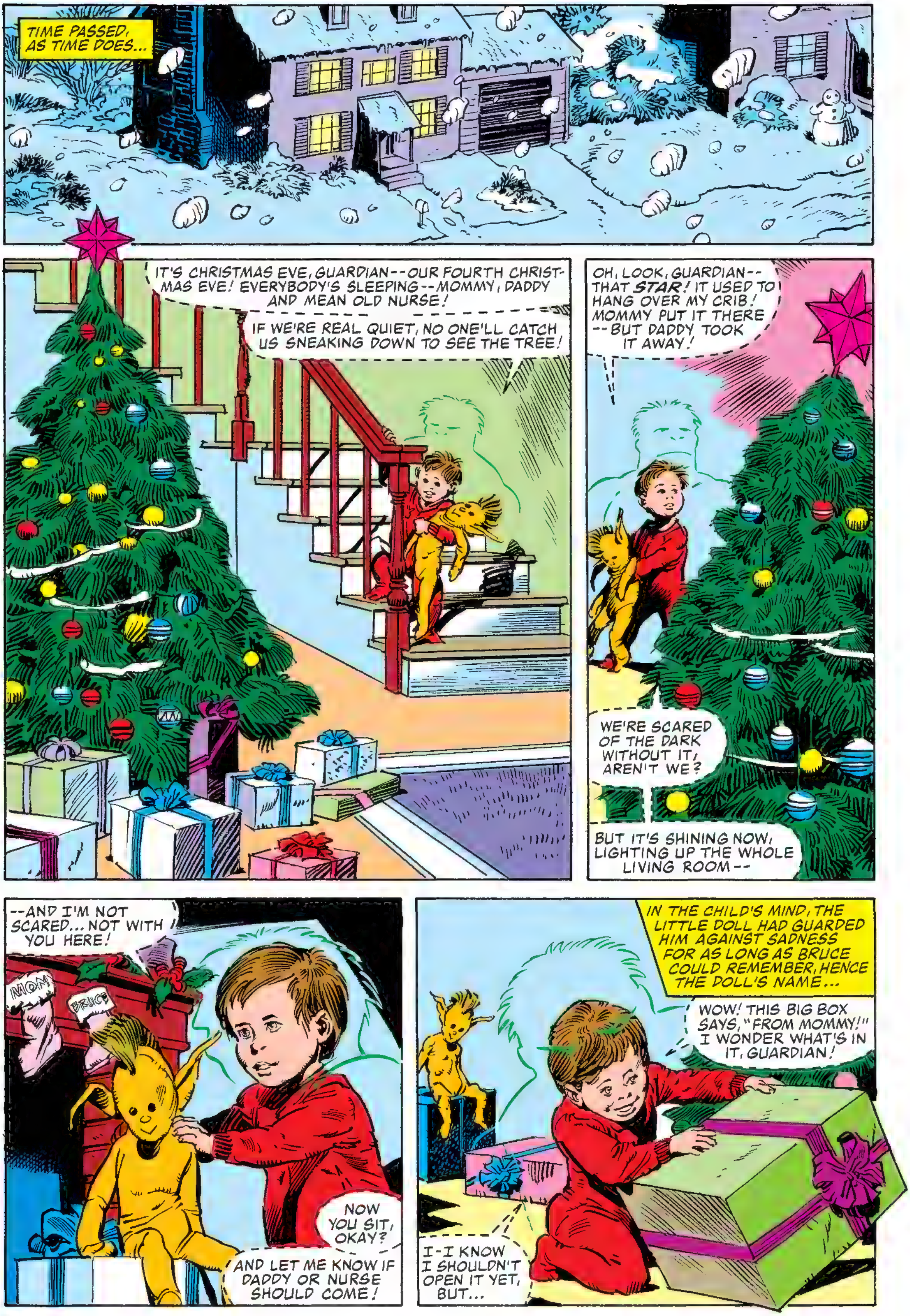
BILL MANTLO STORY · **MIKE MIGNOLA** ART · **JIM NOVAK** LETTERS · **BOB SHAREN** COLORS · **CARL POTTS** EDITOR · **JIM SHOOTER** EDITOR IN CHIEF

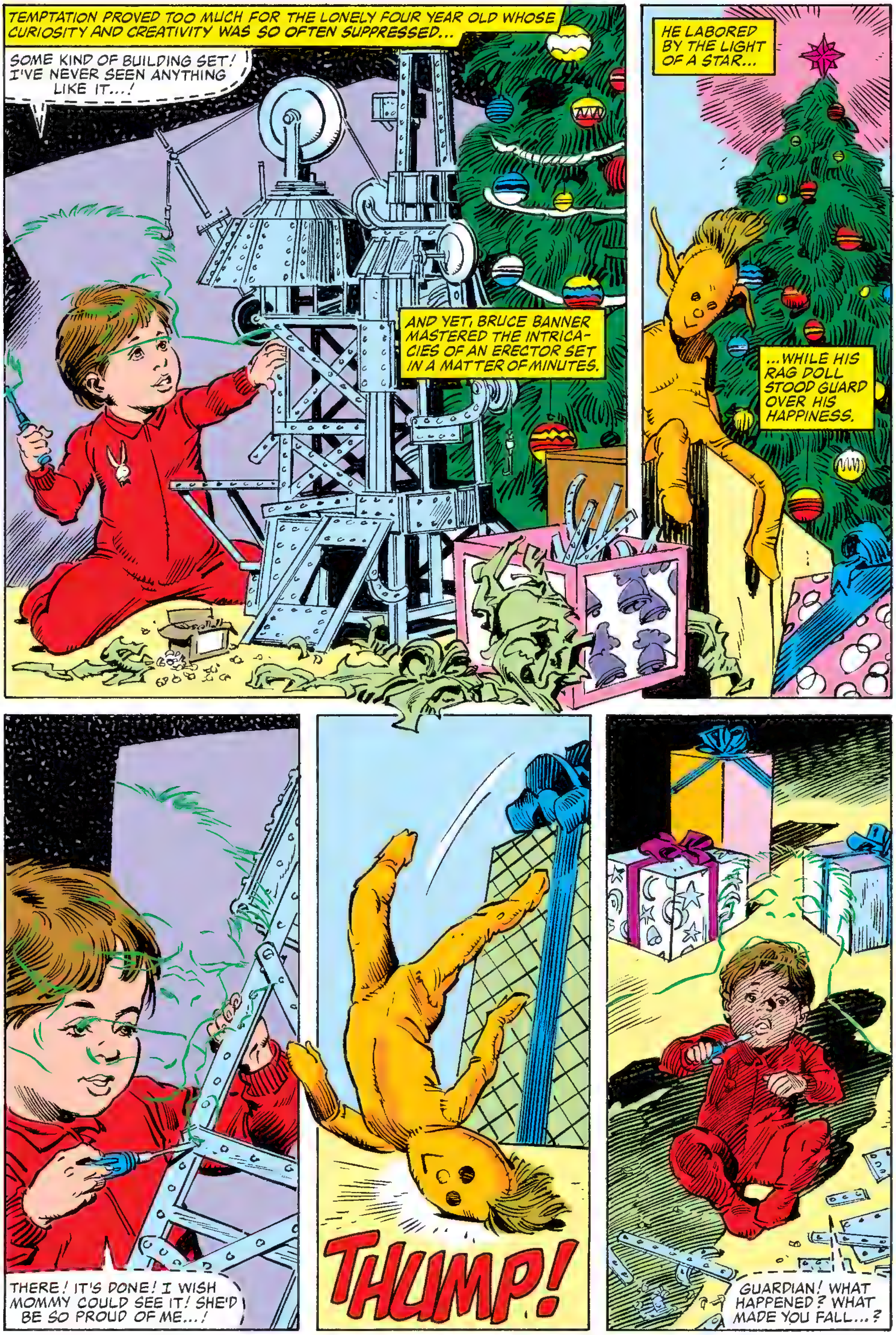

THE DECISION WAS DR. BRIAN BANNER'S.
HIS WIFE WAS IN NO SHAPE TO DECIDE ANYTHING.
AGGHHHH!
HERE, MRS. BANNER! INHALE THIS!
THE ANESTHETIC GAS SWEPT REBECCA BANNER INTO SWEET OBLIVION...
SHE'S UNDER, DOCTOR!
EVERYTHING'S PROCEEDING NORMALLY NOW.
KEEP MONITORING HER LIFE-SIGNS! NOTHING IS NORMAL ABOUT THIS BIRTH!
THE OBSTETRICIAN'S RIGHT!
I WONDER--PERHAPS ALL THE YEARS OF ATOMIC RESEARCH DAMAGED MY GENETIC STRUCTURE-- THIS COULD ALL BE MY FAULT! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN! I SHOULD NEVER HAVE LET HER TALK ME INTO SIRING A CHILD!
WITH ALL THE RADIATION MY GENES HAD BEEN BOMBARDED WITH, HOW COULD OUR SON BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN A...

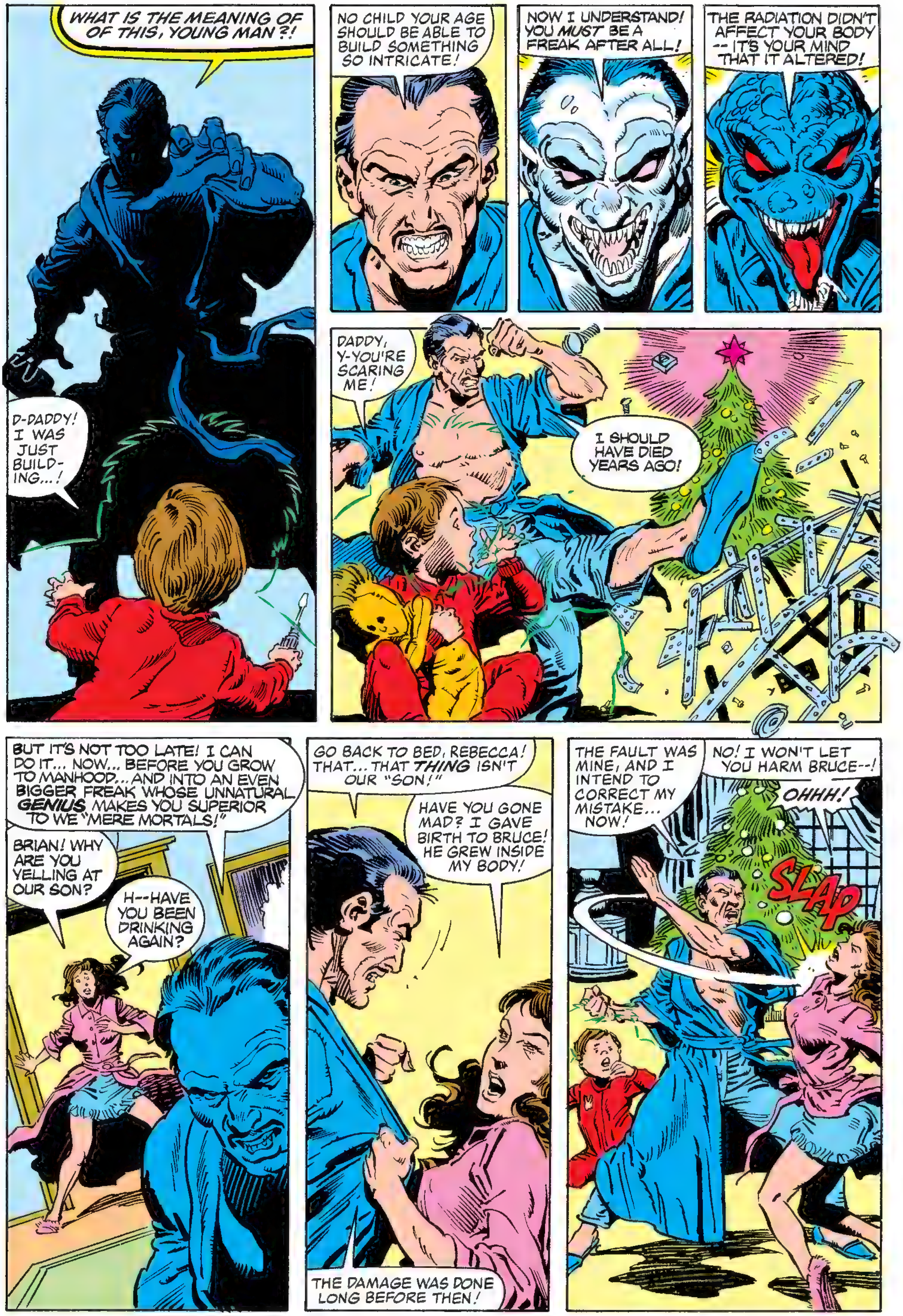

STAN LEE PRESENTS:
MONSTER

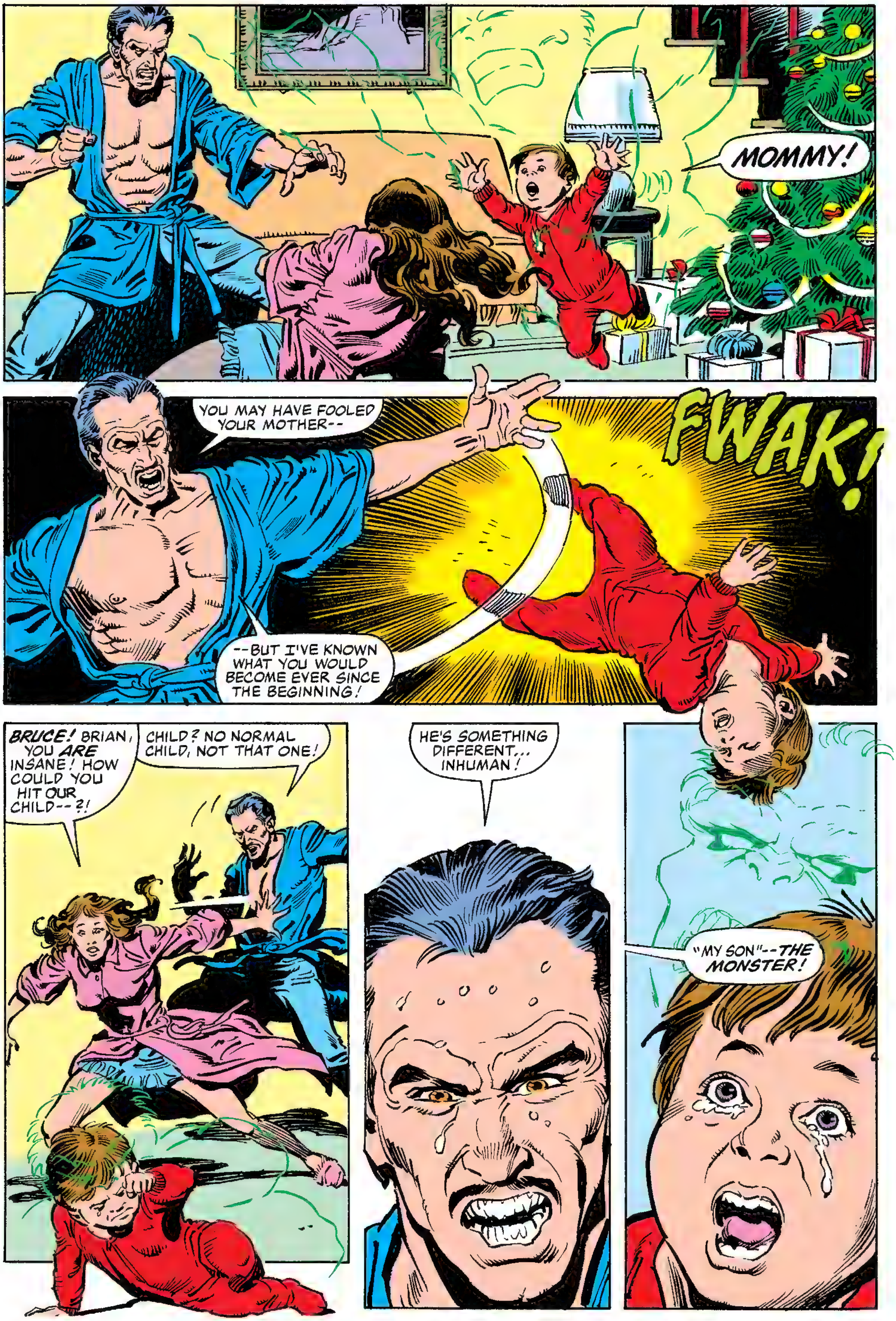

IT WAS SEVERAL MONTHS BEFORE THE BANNERS WERE ALLOWED TO BRING THEIR BABY HOME...
HOW BIG **BRUCE** HAS GROWN, BRIAN!
THEY HAD TO KEEP HIM IN INTENSIVE CARE, REBECCA -- TO STUDY HIM.
AND THEY FOUND NOTHING WRONG! WHY SHOULD THEY HAVE?
OUR BABY IS HAPPY, HEALTHY...
...AND HOME!
LOOK HOW ALERT HE IS -- HOW HE SMILES AT THE SHINING STAR-MOBILE I'VE HUNG OVER HIS CRIB!
LOOK HOW SHE FAWNS OVER HIM! ALL OF THAT TIME AND ATTENTION USED TO BE MINE--
--AND MINE ALONE!
WHY DON'T YOU EVER HOLD OUR SON, BRIAN?
COME, REBECCA. IT'S GETTING LATE. WE'VE THAT SYMPOSIUM TO ATTEND, AND LATER DINNER WITH THE BAXTERS.
BUT BRUCE HAS ONLY JUST BEEN RETURNED TO US! CAN'T WE STAY IN AND SPEND THE NIGHT WITH HIM?
THE SYMPOSIUM IS IMPORTANT TO MY CAREER. NURSE MEACHUM WILL SIT WITH BRUCE WHILE WE'RE OUT.
I WISH...
I'M SURE DR. BANNER KNOWS BEST, MA'AM!

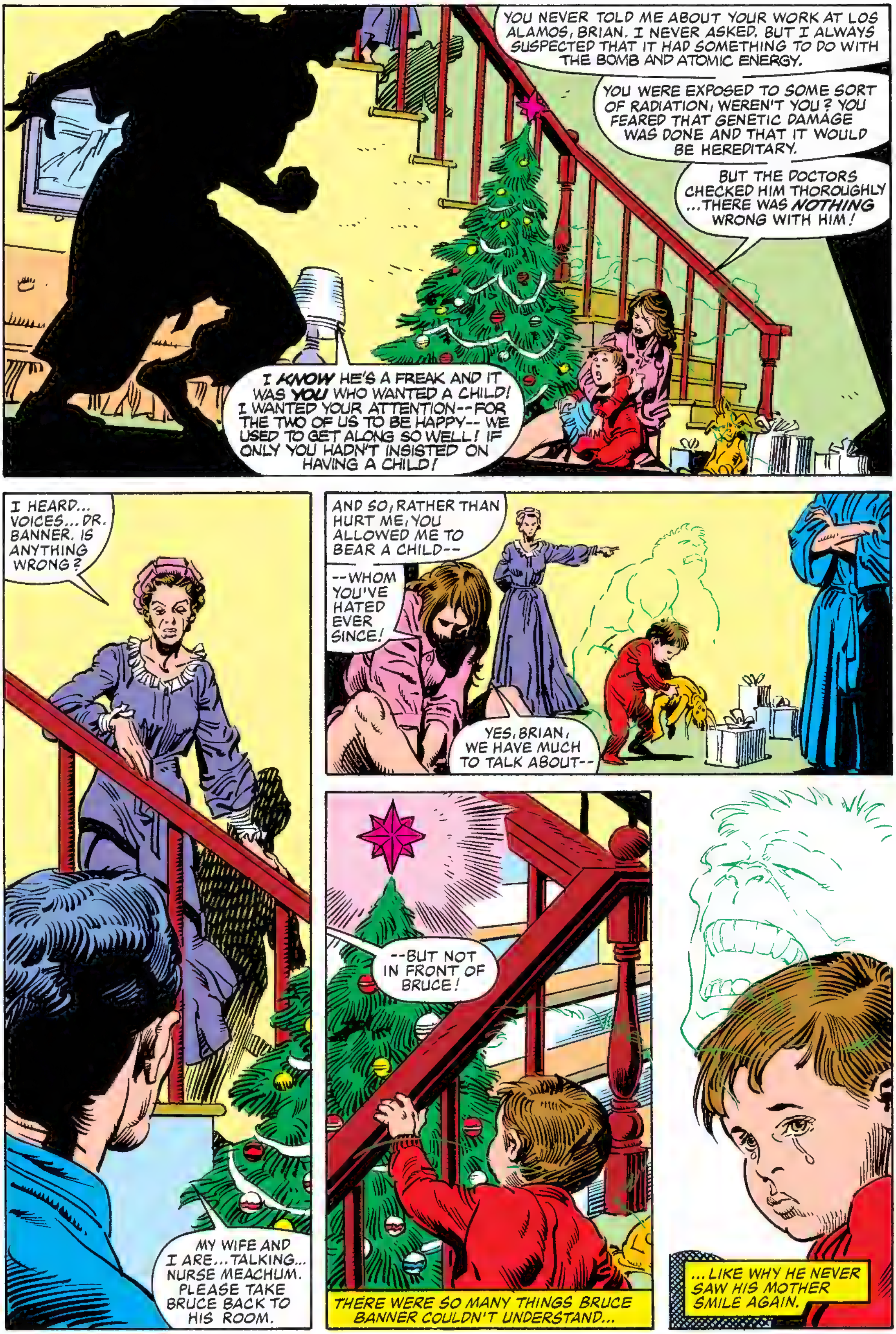

AND DON'T YOU WORRY! I'LL TAKE THE VERY BEST CARE OF BABY BRUCE!
THE BANNERS LEFT...
WAAAA
SHUT YOUR TRAP!
I DON'T WANT THIS JOB-- I NEED THIS JOB!
BUT IF I'VE GOT TO STOOP TO MINDIN' OTHER PEOPLE'S BRATS--
--I EXPECT 'EM TO BE QUIET AND AMUSE THEMSELVES!
HERE! YOUR MOTHER LEFT YOU THIS DOLL!
PIPE DOWN AND PLAY!
AT AN AGE WHEN OTHER CHILDREN WERE LEARNING TO LAUGH, BRUCE BANNER LEARNED LONELINESS.
WHEN HIS MOTHER WAS THERE, IT WAS DIFFERENT.
BUT HIS FATHER ALLOWED HIS MOTHER TO BE THERE SO RARELY.
INSTINCTIVELY SHUNNING HIS LOATHSOME NURSE, THE CHILD SOUGHT SOLACE IN THE PLAYTHINGS HIS MOTHER PROVIDED FOR HIM.
THE SHIMMERING STAR THAT HUNG OVER HIS CRIB, DISPELLING HIS DARKNESS...
...AND THE BELOVED DOLL STOOD SENTRY AGAINST HIS SOLITUDE.

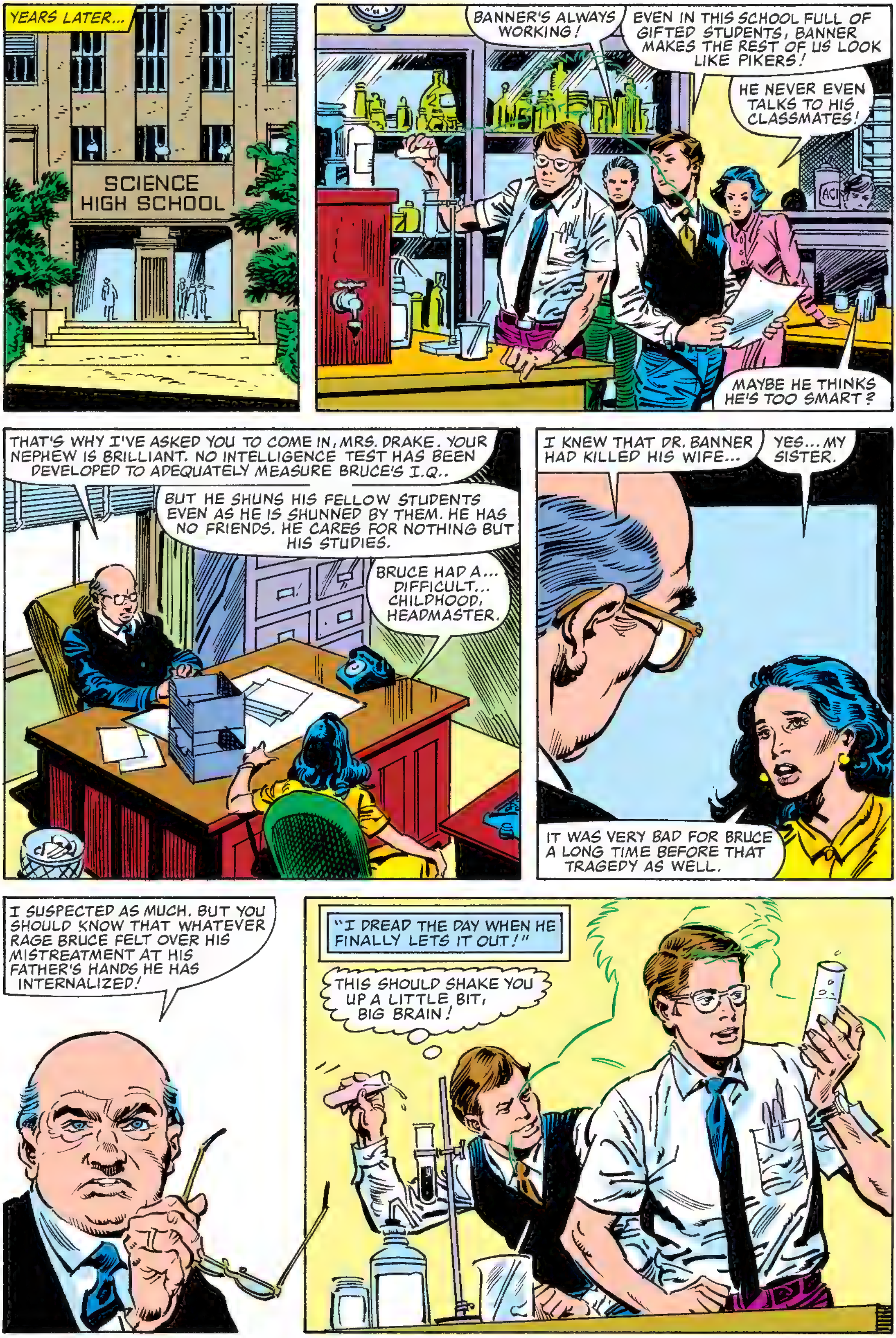

TIME PASSED, AS TIME DOES...
IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE, GUARDIAN--OUR FOURTH CHRISTMAS EVE! EVERYBODY'S SLEEPING--MOMMY, DADDY AND MEAN OLD NURSE!
IF WE'RE REAL QUIET, NO ONE'LL CATCH US SNEAKING DOWN TO SEE THE TREE!
OH, LOOK, GUARDIAN--THAT *STAR!* IT USED TO HANG OVER MY CRIB! MOMMY PUT IT THERE--BUT DADDY TOOK IT AWAY!
WE'RE SCARED OF THE DARK WITHOUT IT, AREN'T WE?
BUT IT'S SHINING NOW, LIGHTING UP THE WHOLE LIVING ROOM--
--AND I'M NOT SCARED... NOT WITH YOU HERE!
MOM
BRUCE
NOW YOU SIT, OKAY?
AND LET ME KNOW IF DADDY OR NURSE SHOULD COME!
IN THE CHILD'S MIND, THE LITTLE DOLL HAD GUARDED HIM AGAINST SADNESS FOR AS LONG AS BRUCE COULD REMEMBER, HENCE THE DOLL'S NAME...
WOW! THIS BIG BOX SAYS, "FROM MOMMY!" I WONDER WHAT'S IN IT, GUARDIAN!
I-I KNOW I SHOULDN'T OPEN IT YET, BUT...

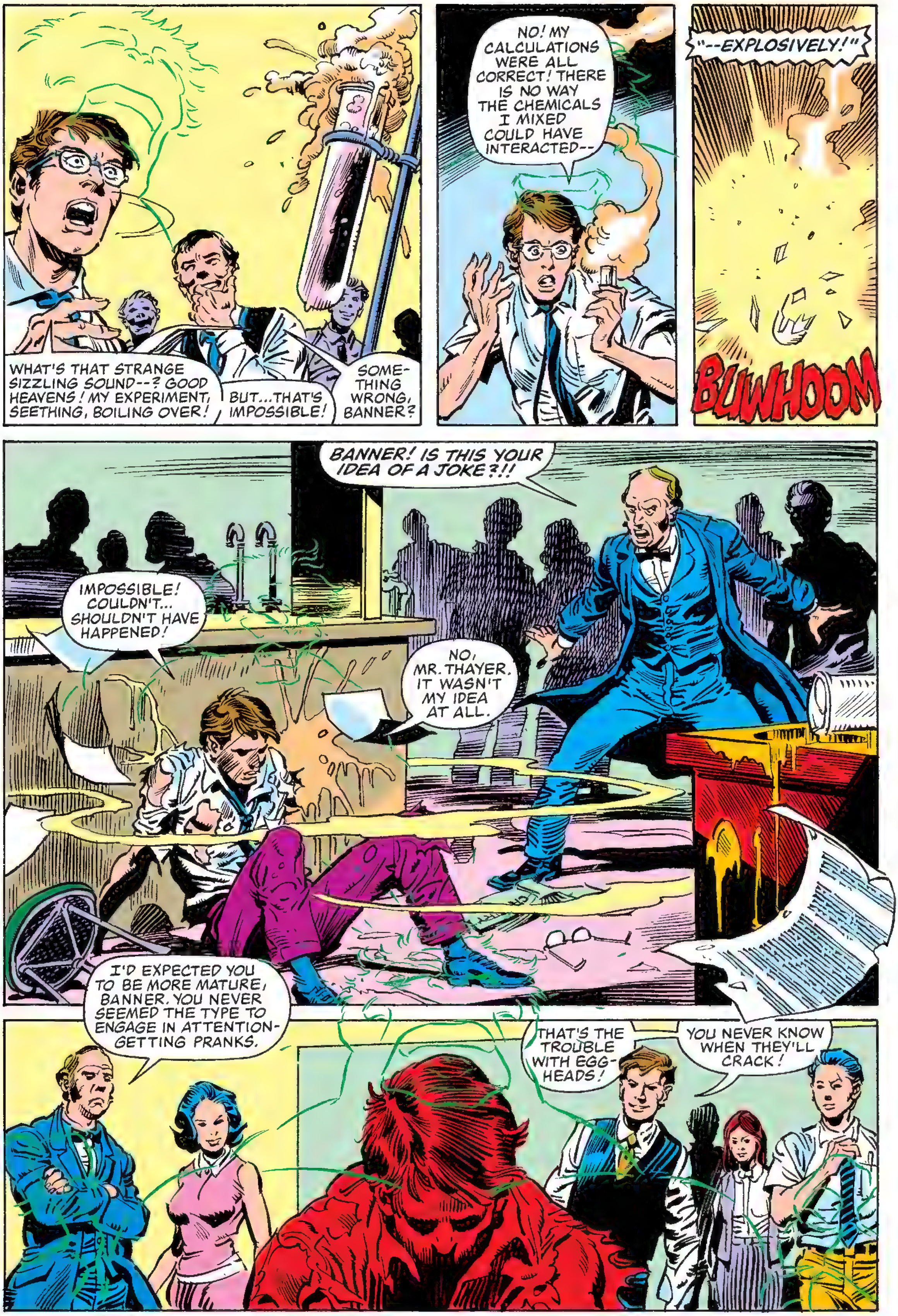

TEMPTATION PROVED TOO MUCH FOR THE LONELY FOUR YEAR OLD WHOSE CURIOSITY AND CREATIVITY WAS SO OFTEN SUPPRESSED...
SOME KIND OF BUILDING SET! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT...!
AND YET, BRUCE BANNER MASTERED THE INTRICACIES OF AN ERECTOR SET IN A MATTER OF MINUTES.
HE LABORED BY THE LIGHT OF A STAR...
...WHILE HIS RAG DOLL STOOD GUARD OVER HIS HAPPINESS.
THERE! IT'S DONE! I WISH MOMMY COULD SEE IT! SHE'D BE SO PROUD OF ME...!
THUMP!
GUARDIAN! WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT MADE YOU FALL...?

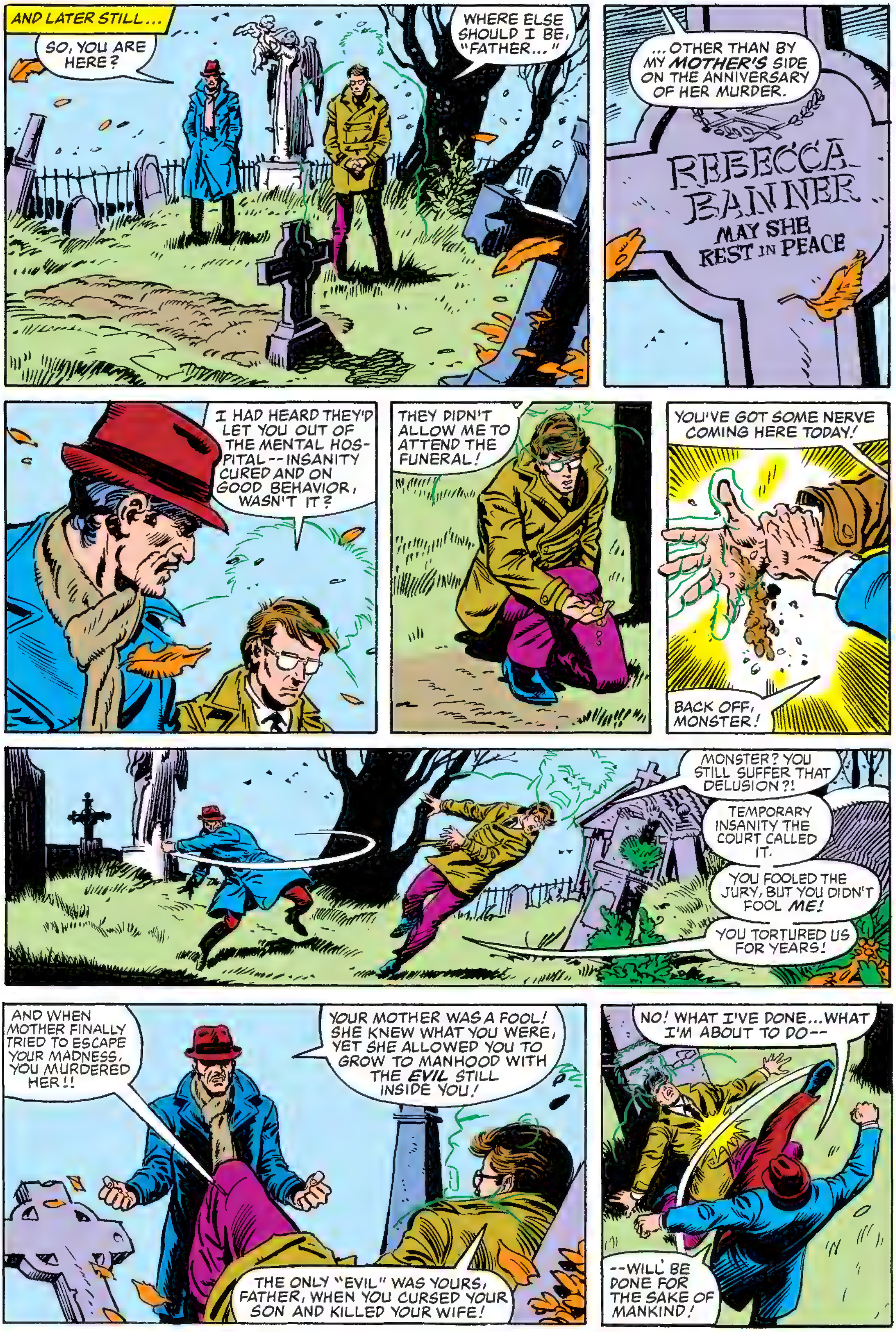

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF OF THIS, YOUNG MAN?!
D-DADDY! I WAS JUST BUILDING...!
NO CHILD YOUR AGE SHOULD BE ABLE TO BUILD SOMETHING SO INTRICATE!
NOW I UNDERSTAND! YOU MUST BE A FREAK AFTER ALL!
THE RADIATION DIDN'T AFFECT YOUR BODY -- IT'S YOUR MIND THAT IT ALTERED!
DADDY, Y-YOU'RE SCARING ME!
I SHOULD HAVE DIED YEARS AGO!
BUT IT'S NOT TOO LATE! I CAN DO IT... NOW... BEFORE YOU GROW TO MANHOOD... AND INTO AN EVEN BIGGER FREAK WHOSE UNNATURAL GENIUS MAKES YOU SUPERIOR TO WE "MERE MORTALS!"
BRIAN! WHY ARE YOU YELLING AT OUR SON?
H--HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING AGAIN?
GO BACK TO BED, REBECCA! THAT... THAT THING ISN'T OUR "SON!"
HAVE YOU GONE MAD? I GAVE BIRTH TO BRUCE! HE GREW INSIDE MY BODY!
THE DAMAGE WAS DONE LONG BEFORE THEN!
THE FAULT WAS MINE, AND I INTEND TO CORRECT MY MISTAKE... NOW!
NO! I WON'T LET YOU HARM BRUCE--!
OHHH!
SLAP

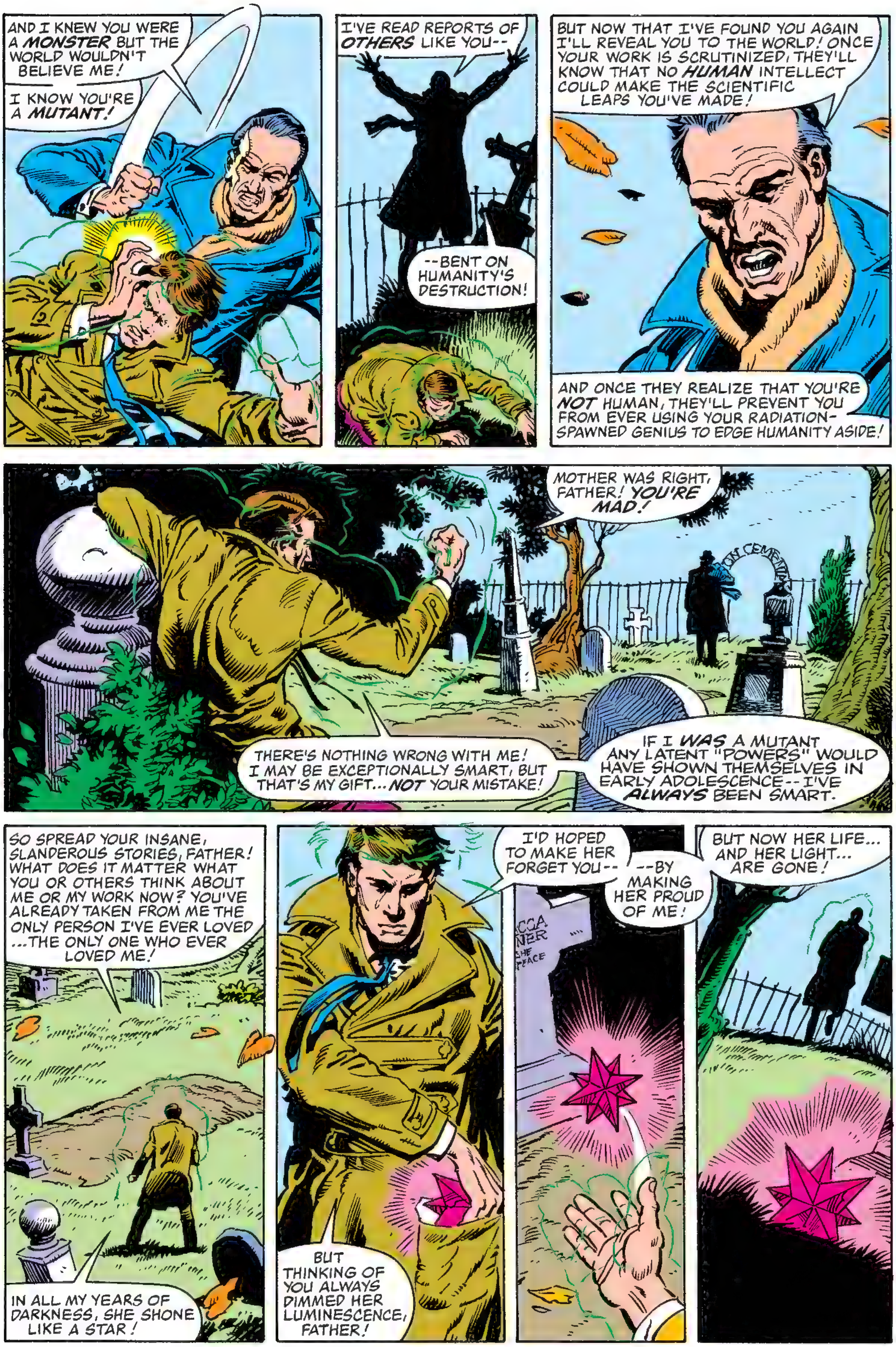

MOMMY!
YOU MAY HAVE FOOLED YOUR MOTHER--
FWAK!
--BUT I'VE KNOWN WHAT YOU WOULD BECOME EVER SINCE THE BEGINNING!
BRUCE! BRIAN, YOU ARE INSANE! HOW COULD YOU HIT OUR CHILD--?!
CHILD? NO NORMAL CHILD, NOT THAT ONE!
HE'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT... INHUMAN!
"MY SON"--THE MONSTER!

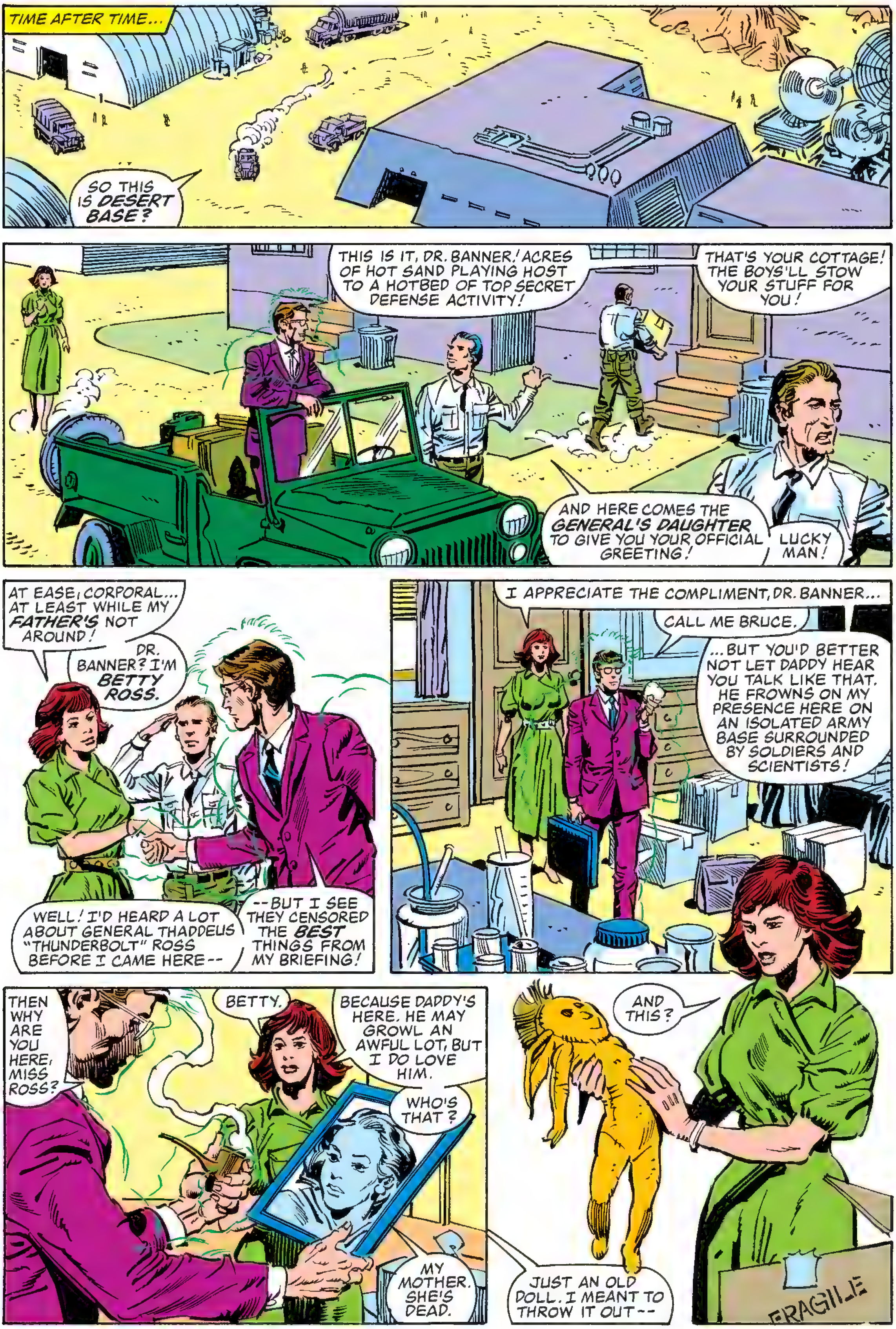

YOU NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR WORK AT LOS ALAMOS, BRIAN. I NEVER ASKED. BUT I ALWAYS SUSPECTED THAT IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE BOMB AND ATOMIC ENERGY.
YOU WERE EXPOSED TO SOME SORT OF RADIATION, WEREN'T YOU? YOU FEARED THAT GENETIC DAMAGE WAS DONE AND THAT IT WOULD BE HEREDITARY.
BUT THE DOCTORS CHECKED HIM THOROUGHLY ...THERE WAS *NOTHING* WRONG WITH HIM!
I *KNOW* HE'S A FREAK AND IT WAS *YOU* WHO WANTED A CHILD! I WANTED YOUR ATTENTION--FOR THE TWO OF US TO BE HAPPY-- WE USED TO GET ALONG SO WELL! IF ONLY YOU HADN'T INSISTED ON HAVING A CHILD!
I HEARD... VOICES... DR. BANNER. IS ANYTHING WRONG?
MY WIFE AND I ARE... TALKING... NURSE MEACHUM. PLEASE TAKE BRUCE BACK TO HIS ROOM.
AND SO, RATHER THAN HURT ME, YOU ALLOWED ME TO BEAR A CHILD--
--WHOM YOU'VE HATED EVER SINCE!
YES, BRIAN, WE HAVE MUCH TO TALK ABOUT--
--BUT NOT IN FRONT OF BRUCE!
THERE WERE SO MANY THINGS BRUCE BANNER COULDN'T UNDERSTAND...
...LIKE WHY HE NEVER SAW HIS MOTHER SMILE AGAIN.

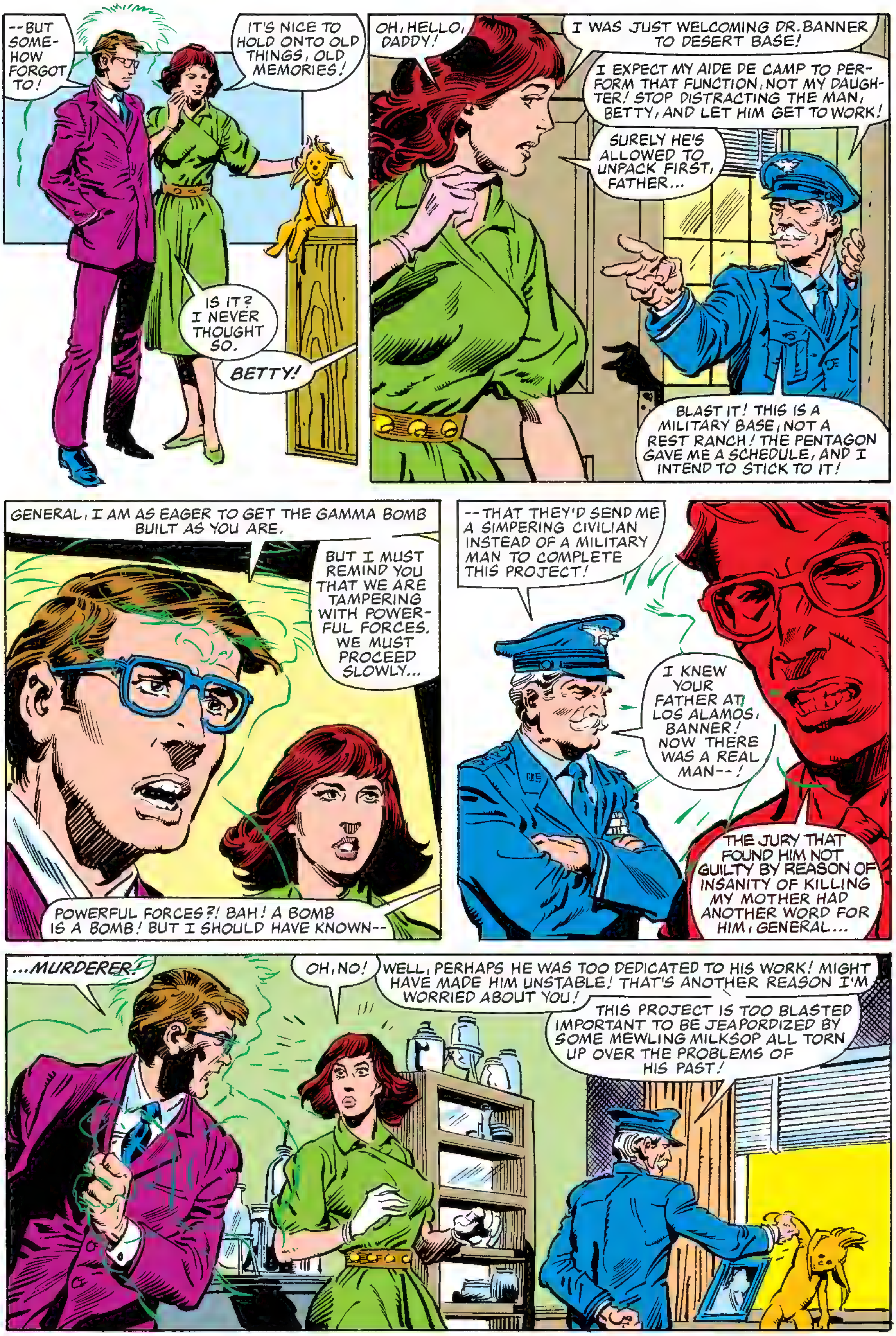

YEARS LATER...
SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL
BANNER'S ALWAYS WORKING!
EVEN IN THIS SCHOOL FULL OF GIFTED STUDENTS, BANNER MAKES THE REST OF US LOOK LIKE PIKERS!
HE NEVER EVEN TALKS TO HIS CLASSMATES!
MAYBE HE THINKS HE'S TOO SMART?
THAT'S WHY I'VE ASKED YOU TO COME IN, MRS. DRAKE. YOUR NEPHEW IS BRILLIANT. NO INTELLIGENCE TEST HAS BEEN DEVELOPED TO ADEQUATELY MEASURE BRUCE'S I.Q..
BUT HE SHUNS HIS FELLOW STUDENTS EVEN AS HE IS SHUNNED BY THEM. HE HAS NO FRIENDS. HE CARES FOR NOTHING BUT HIS STUDIES.
BRUCE HAD A... DIFFICULT... CHILDHOOD, HEADMASTER.
I KNEW THAT DR. BANNER HAD KILLED HIS WIFE...
YES... MY SISTER.
IT WAS VERY BAD FOR BRUCE A LONG TIME BEFORE THAT TRAGEDY AS WELL.
I SUSPECTED AS MUCH. BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT WHATEVER RAGE BRUCE FELT OVER HIS MISTREATMENT AT HIS FATHER'S HANDS HE HAS INTERNALIZED!
"I DREAD THE DAY WHEN HE FINALLY LETS IT OUT!"
THIS SHOULD SHAKE YOU UP A LITTLE BIT, BIG BRAIN!

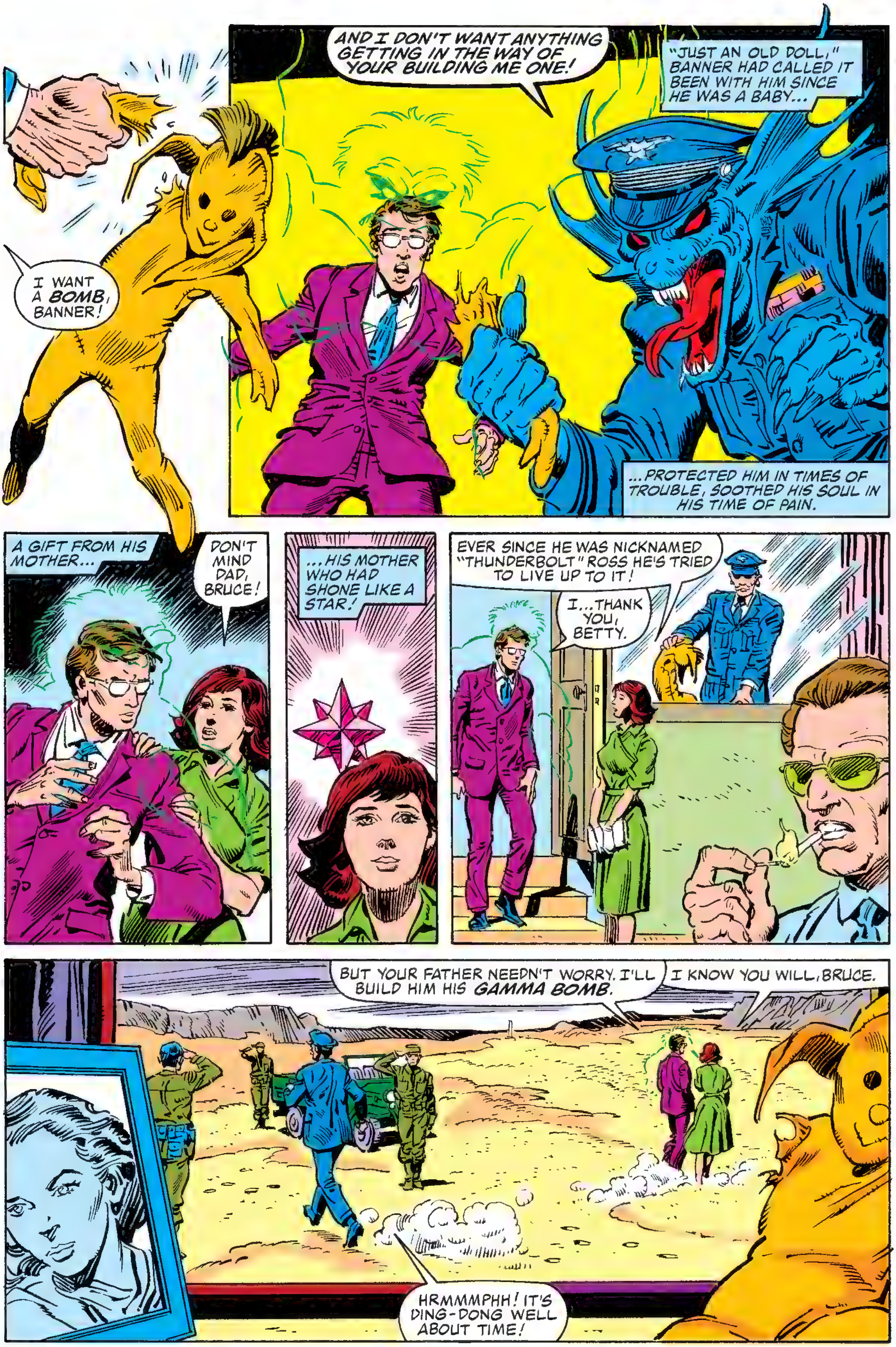

WHAT'S THAT STRANGE SIZZLING SOUND--? GOOD HEAVENS! MY EXPERIMENT, SEETHING, BOILING OVER!
BUT...THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
SOMETHING WRONG, BANNER?
NO! MY CALCULATIONS WERE ALL CORRECT! THERE IS NO WAY THE CHEMICALS I MIXED COULD HAVE INTERACTED--
"--EXPLOSIVELY!"
BUWHOOM
BANNER! IS THIS YOUR IDEA OF A JOKE?!!
IMPOSSIBLE! COULDN'T... SHOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED!
NO, MR. THAYER, IT WASN'T MY IDEA AT ALL.
I'D EXPECTED YOU TO BE MORE MATURE, BANNER. YOU NEVER SEEMED THE TYPE TO ENGAGE IN ATTENTION-GETTING PRANKS.
THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH EGG-HEADS!
YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN THEY'LL CRACK!

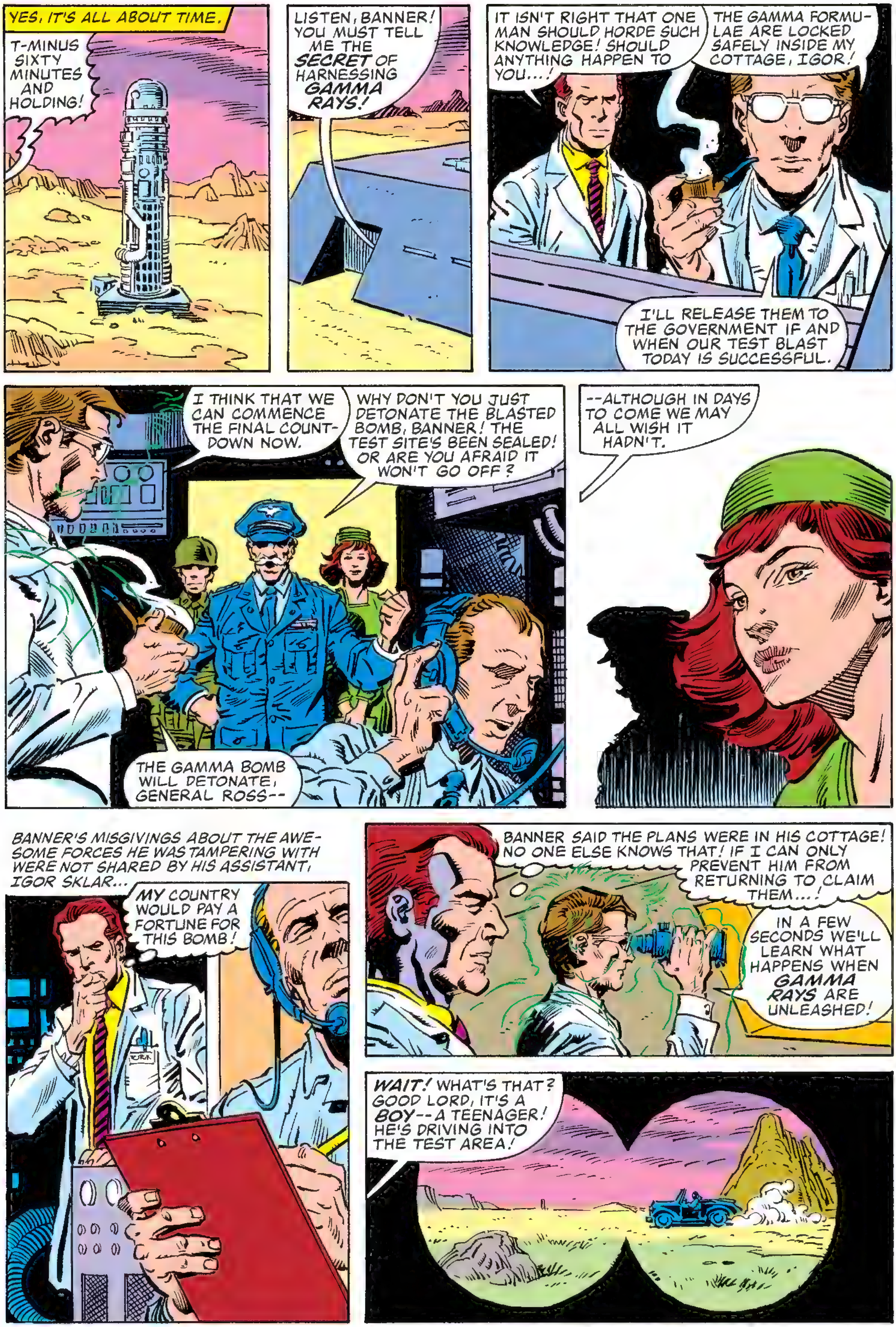

AND LATER STILL...
SO, YOU ARE HERE?
WHERE ELSE SHOULD I BE, "FATHER..."
...OTHER THAN BY MY **MOTHER'S** SIDE ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF HER MURDER.
REBECCA BANNER MAY SHE REST IN PEACE
I HAD HEARD THEY'D LET YOU OUT OF THE MENTAL HOSPITAL--INSANITY CURED AND ON GOOD BEHAVIOR, WASN'T IT?
THEY DIDN'T ALLOW ME TO ATTEND THE FUNERAL!
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE COMING HERE TODAY!
BACK OFF, MONSTER!
MONSTER? YOU STILL SUFFER THAT DELUSION?!
TEMPORARY INSANITY THE COURT CALLED IT.
YOU FOOLED THE JURY, BUT YOU DIDN'T FOOL **ME!**
YOU TORTURED US FOR YEARS!
AND WHEN MOTHER FINALLY TRIED TO ESCAPE YOUR MADNESS, YOU MURDERED HER!!
YOUR MOTHER WAS A FOOL! SHE KNEW WHAT YOU WERE, YET SHE ALLOWED YOU TO GROW TO MANHOOD WITH THE **EVIL** STILL INSIDE YOU!
THE ONLY "EVIL" WAS YOURS, FATHER, WHEN YOU CURSED YOUR SON AND KILLED YOUR WIFE!
NO! WHAT I'VE DONE...WHAT I'M ABOUT TO DO--
--WILL BE DONE FOR THE SAKE OF MANKIND!

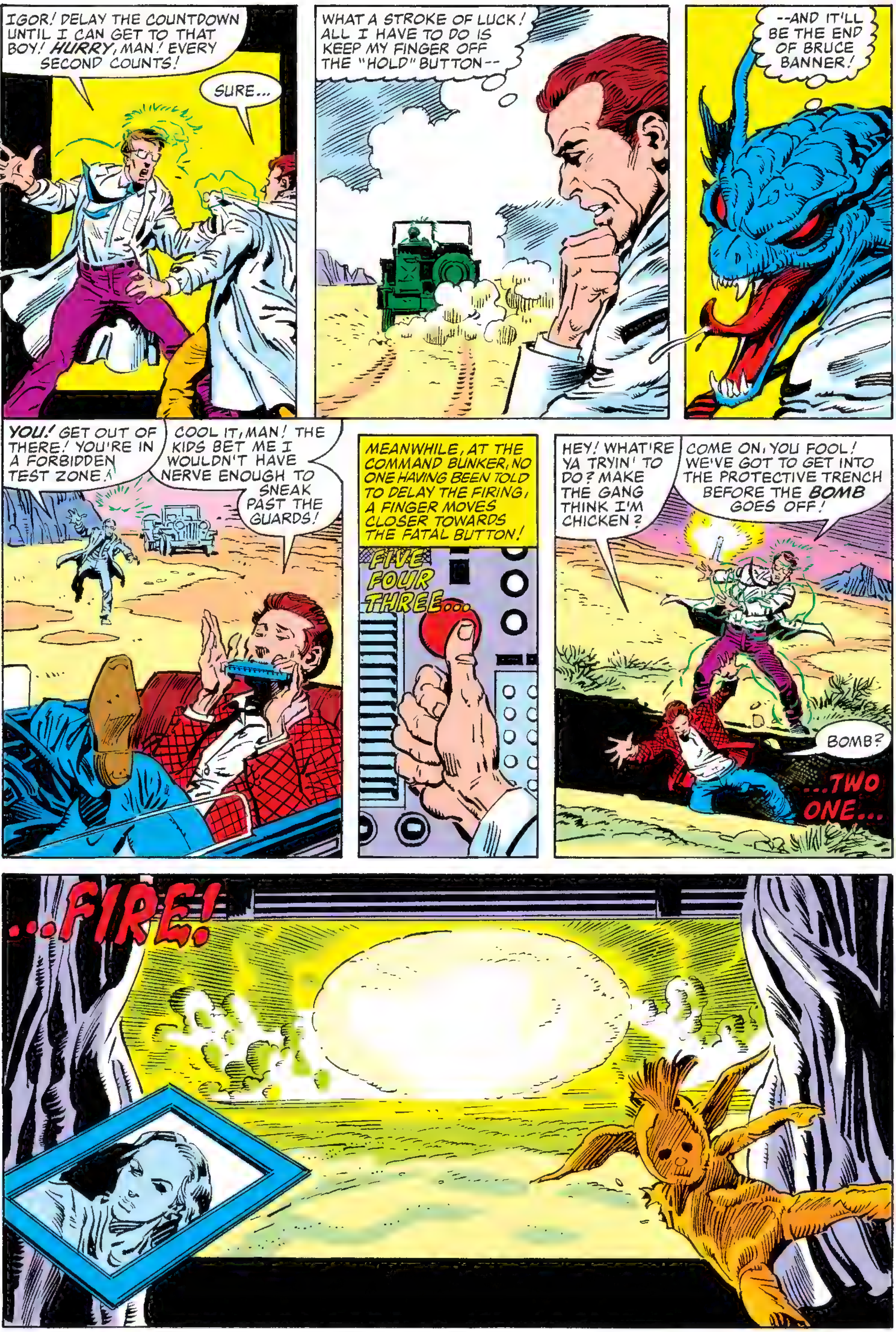

AND I KNEW YOU WERE A MONSTER BUT THE WORLD WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME!
I KNOW YOU'RE A MUTANT!
I'VE READ REPORTS OF OTHERS LIKE YOU--
--BENT ON HUMANITY'S DESTRUCTION!
BUT NOW THAT I'VE FOUND YOU AGAIN I'LL REVEAL YOU TO THE WORLD! ONCE YOUR WORK IS SCRUTINIZED, THEY'LL KNOW THAT NO HUMAN INTELLECT COULD MAKE THE SCIENTIFIC LEAPS YOU'VE MADE!
AND ONCE THEY REALIZE THAT YOU'RE NOT HUMAN, THEY'LL PREVENT YOU FROM EVER USING YOUR RADIATION-SPAWNED GENIUS TO EDGE HUMANITY ASIDE!
MOTHER WAS RIGHT, FATHER! YOU'RE MAD!
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH ME! I MAY BE EXCEPTIONALLY SMART, BUT THAT'S MY GIFT... NOT YOUR MISTAKE!
IF I WAS A MUTANT ANY LATENT "POWERS" WOULD HAVE SHOWN THEMSELVES IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE--I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SMART.
SO SPREAD YOUR INSANE, SLANDEROUS STORIES, FATHER! WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHAT YOU OR OTHERS THINK ABOUT ME OR MY WORK NOW? YOU'VE ALREADY TAKEN FROM ME THE ONLY PERSON I'VE EVER LOVED ...THE ONLY ONE WHO EVER LOVED ME!
IN ALL MY YEARS OF DARKNESS, SHE SHONE LIKE A STAR!
BUT THINKING OF YOU ALWAYS DIMMED HER LUMINESCENCE, FATHER!
I'D HOPED TO MAKE HER FORGET YOU--
--BY MAKING HER PROUD OF ME!
BUT NOW HER LIFE... AND HER LIGHT... ARE GONE!

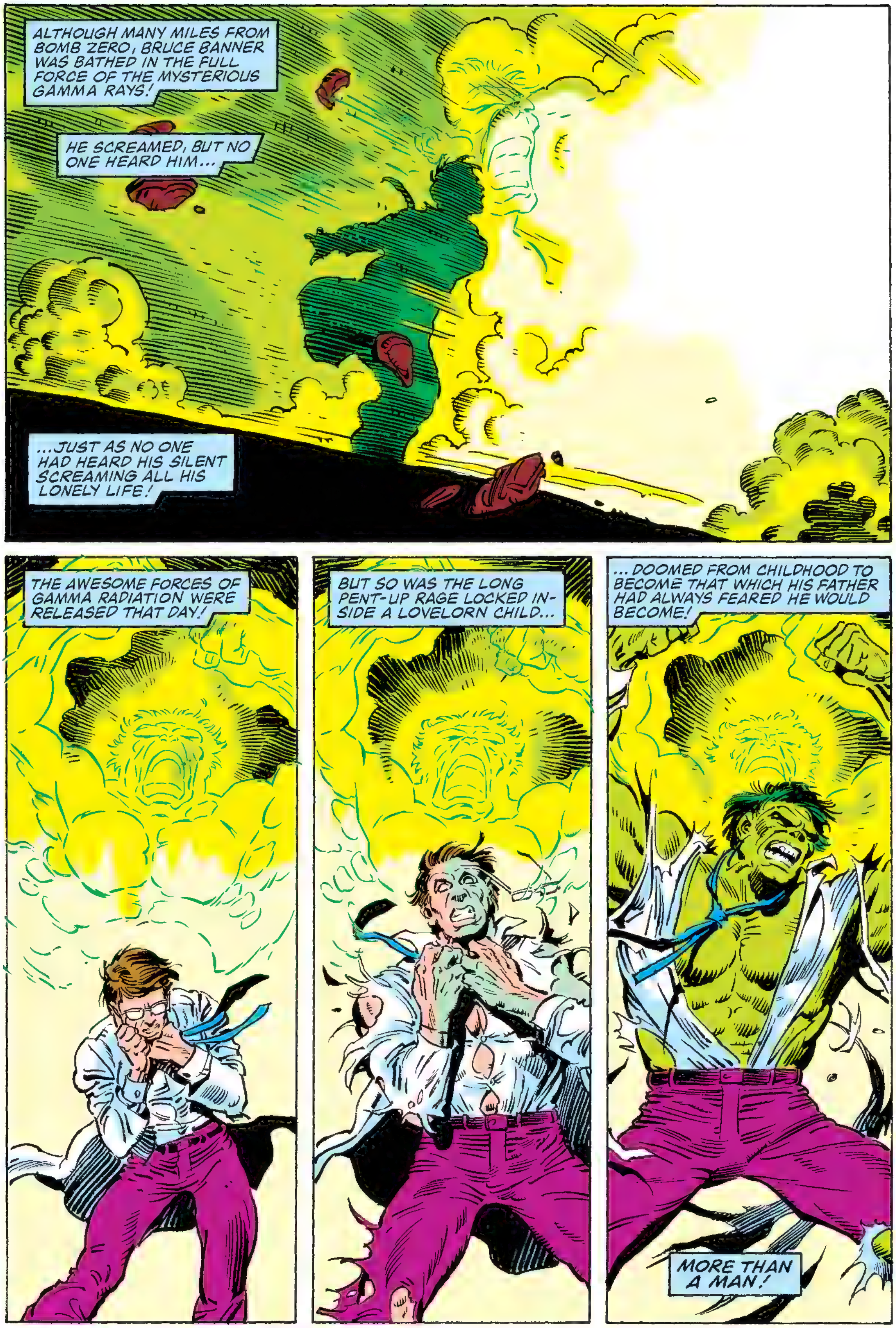

TIME AFTER TIME...
SO THIS IS DESERT BASE?
THIS IS IT, DR. BANNER! ACRES OF HOT SAND PLAYING HOST TO A HOTBED OF TOP SECRET DEFENSE ACTIVITY!
THAT'S YOUR COTTAGE! THE BOYS'LL STOW YOUR STUFF FOR YOU!
AND HERE COMES THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER TO GIVE YOU YOUR OFFICIAL GREETING!
LUCKY MAN!
AT EASE, CORPORAL... AT LEAST WHILE MY FATHER'S NOT AROUND!
DR. BANNER? I'M BETTY ROSS.
WELL! I'D HEARD A LOT ABOUT GENERAL THADDEUS "THUNDERBOLT" ROSS BEFORE I CAME HERE--
--BUT I SEE THEY CENSORED THE BEST THINGS FROM MY BRIEFING!
I APPRECIATE THE COMPLIMENT, DR. BANNER...
CALL ME BRUCE.
...BUT YOU'D BETTER NOT LET DADDY HEAR YOU TALK LIKE THAT. HE FROWNS ON MY PRESENCE HERE ON AN ISOLATED ARMY BASE SURROUNDED BY SOLDIERS AND SCIENTISTS!
THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE, MISS ROSS?
BETTY.
BECAUSE DADDY'S HERE. HE MAY GROWL AN AWFUL LOT, BUT I DO LOVE HIM.
WHO'S THAT?
MY MOTHER. SHE'S DEAD.
AND THIS?
JUST AN OLD DOLL. I MEANT TO THROW IT OUT--
FRAGILE

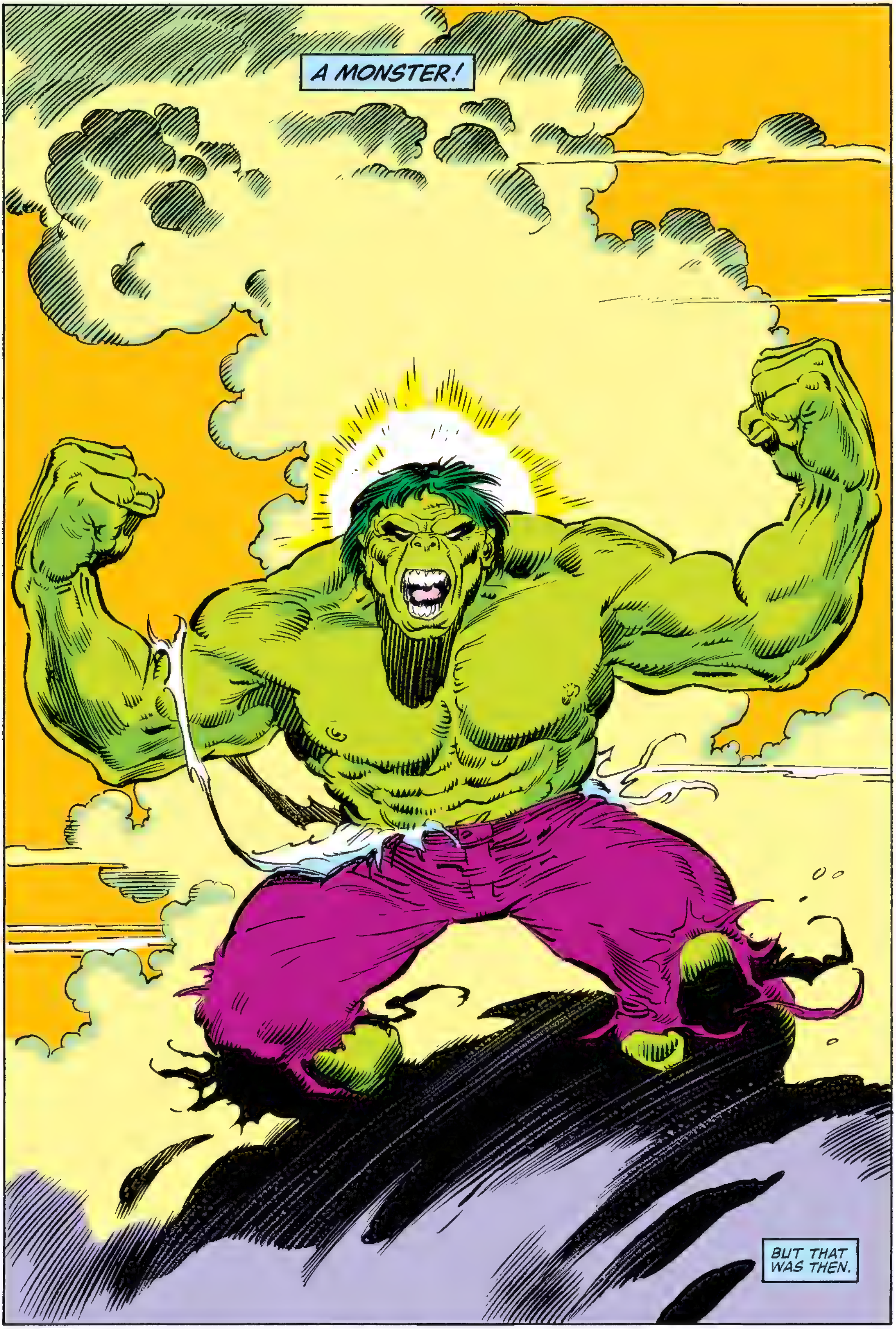

--BUT SOMEHOW FORGOT TO!
IT'S NICE TO HOLD ONTO OLD THINGS, OLD MEMORIES!
IS IT? I NEVER THOUGHT SO.
BETTY!
OH, HELLO, DADDY!
I WAS JUST WELCOMING DR. BANNER TO DESERT BASE!
I EXPECT MY AIDE DE CAMP TO PERFORM THAT FUNCTION, NOT MY DAUGHTER! STOP DISTRACTING THE MAN, BETTY, AND LET HIM GET TO WORK!
SURELY HE'S ALLOWED TO UNPACK FIRST, FATHER...
BLAST IT! THIS IS A MILITARY BASE, NOT A REST RANCH! THE PENTAGON GAVE ME A SCHEDULE, AND I INTEND TO STICK TO IT!
GENERAL, I AM AS EAGER TO GET THE GAMMA BOMB BUILT AS YOU ARE.
BUT I MUST REMIND YOU THAT WE ARE TAMPERING WITH POWERFUL FORCES. WE MUST PROCEED SLOWLY...
POWERFUL FORCES?! BAH! A BOMB IS A BOMB! BUT I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN--
--THAT THEY'D SEND ME A SIMPERING CIVILIAN INSTEAD OF A MILITARY MAN TO COMPLETE THIS PROJECT!
I KNEW YOUR FATHER AT LOS ALAMOS, BANNER! NOW THERE WAS A REAL MAN--!
THE JURY THAT FOUND HIM NOT GUILTY BY REASON OF INSANITY OF KILLING MY MOTHER HAD ANOTHER WORD FOR HIM, GENERAL...
...MURDERER.
OH, NO!
WELL, PERHAPS HE WAS TOO DEDICATED TO HIS WORK! MIGHT HAVE MADE HIM UNSTABLE! THAT'S ANOTHER REASON I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU!
THIS PROJECT IS TOO BLASTED IMPORTANT TO BE JEAPORDIZED BY SOME MEWLING MILKSOP ALL TORN UP OVER THE PROBLEMS OF HIS PAST!

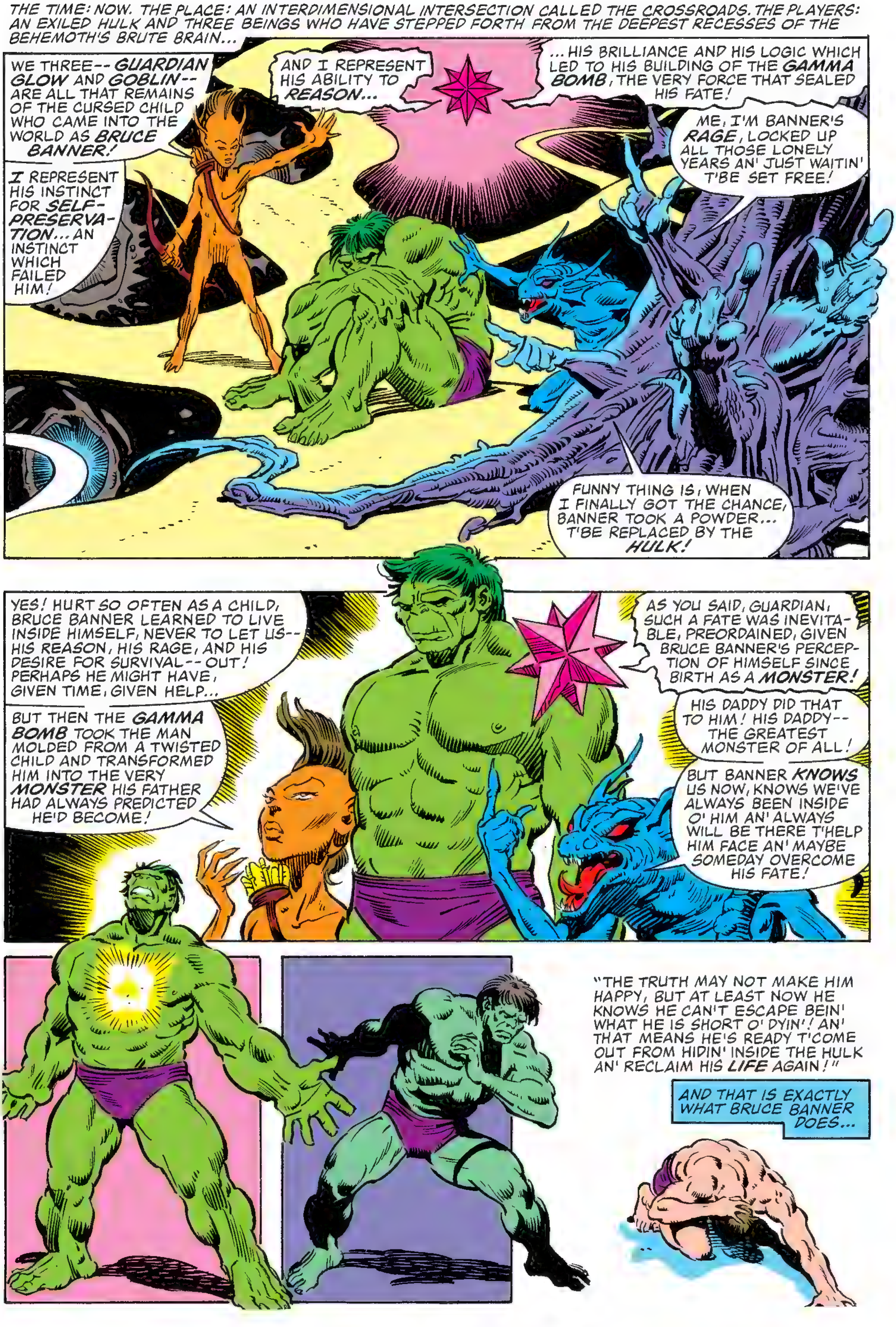

I WANT A *BOMB*, BANNER!
AND I DON'T WANT ANYTHING GETTING IN THE WAY OF YOUR BUILDING ME ONE!
"JUST AN OLD DOLL," BANNER HAD CALLED IT BEEN WITH HIM SINCE HE WAS A BABY...
...PROTECTED HIM IN TIMES OF TROUBLE, SOOTHED HIS SOUL IN HIS TIME OF PAIN.
A GIFT FROM HIS MOTHER...
DON'T MIND DAD, BRUCE!
...HIS MOTHER WHO HAD SHONE LIKE A STAR!
EVER SINCE HE WAS NICKNAMED "THUNDERBOLT" ROSS HE'S TRIED TO LIVE UP TO IT!
I...THANK YOU, BETTY.
BUT YOUR FATHER NEEDN'T WORRY. I'LL BUILD HIM HIS *GAMMA BOMB*.
I KNOW YOU WILL, BRUCE.
HRMMMPHH! IT'S DING-DONG WELL ABOUT TIME!

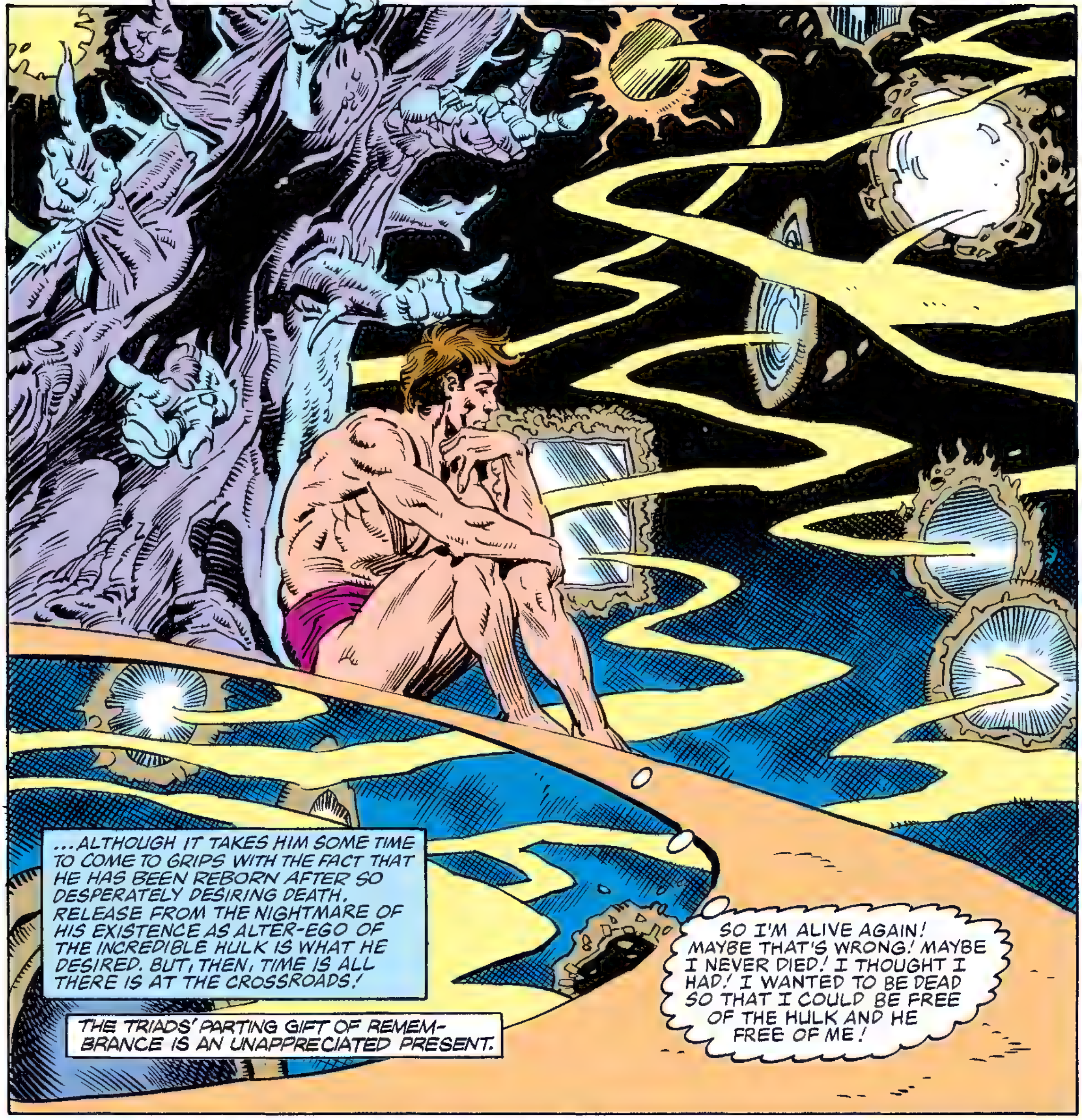

YES, IT'S ALL ABOUT TIME.
T-MINUS SIXTY MINUTES AND HOLDING!
LISTEN, BANNER! YOU MUST TELL ME THE SECRET OF HARNESSING GAMMA RAYS!
IT ISN'T RIGHT THAT ONE MAN SHOULD HORDE SUCH KNOWLEDGE! SHOULD ANYTHING HAPPEN TO YOU...!
THE GAMMA FORMULAE ARE LOCKED SAFELY INSIDE MY COTTAGE, IGOR!
I'LL RELEASE THEM TO THE GOVERNMENT IF AND WHEN OUR TEST BLAST TODAY IS SUCCESSFUL.
I THINK THAT WE CAN COMMENCE THE FINAL COUNTDOWN NOW.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST DETONATE THE BLASTED BOMB, BANNER! THE TEST SITE'S BEEN SEALED! OR ARE YOU AFRAID IT WON'T GO OFF?
THE GAMMA BOMB WILL DETONATE, GENERAL ROSS--
--ALTHOUGH IN DAYS TO COME WE MAY ALL WISH IT HADN'T.
BANNER'S MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE AWESOME FORCES HE WAS TAMPERING WITH WERE NOT SHARED BY HIS ASSISTANT, IGOR SKLAR...
MY COUNTRY WOULD PAY A FORTUNE FOR THIS BOMB!
BANNER SAID THE PLANS WERE IN HIS COTTAGE! NO ONE ELSE KNOWS THAT! IF I CAN ONLY PREVENT HIM FROM RETURNING TO CLAIM THEM...!
IN A FEW SECONDS WE'LL LEARN WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GAMMA RAYS ARE UNLEASHED!
WAIT! WHAT'S THAT? GOOD LORD, IT'S A BOY--A TEENAGER! HE'S DRIVING INTO THE TEST AREA!

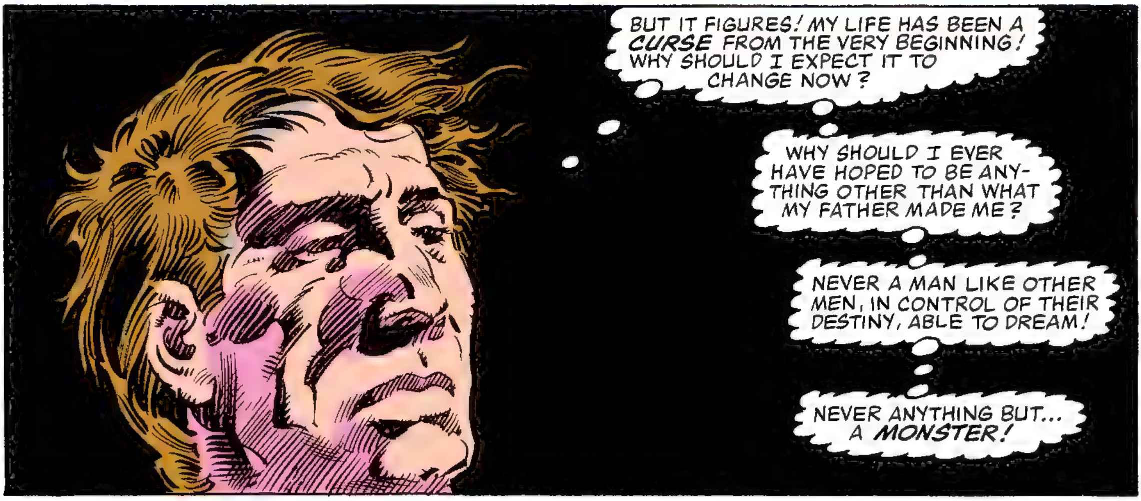

IGOR! DELAY THE COUNTDOWN UNTIL I CAN GET TO THAT BOY! HURRY, MAN! EVERY SECOND COUNTS!
SURE...
WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS KEEP MY FINGER OFF THE "HOLD" BUTTON--
--AND IT'LL BE THE END OF BRUCE BANNER!
YOU! GET OUT OF THERE! YOU'RE IN A FORBIDDEN TEST ZONE!
COOL IT, MAN! THE KIDS BET ME I WOULDN'T HAVE NERVE ENOUGH TO SNEAK PAST THE GUARDS!
MEANWHILE, AT THE COMMAND BUNKER, NO ONE HAVING BEEN TOLD TO DELAY THE FIRING, A FINGER MOVES CLOSER TOWARDS THE FATAL BUTTON!
FIVE FOUR THREE...
HEY! WHAT'RE YA TRYIN' TO DO? MAKE THE GANG THINK I'M CHICKEN?
COME ON, YOU FOOL! WE'VE GOT TO GET INTO THE PROTECTIVE TRENCH BEFORE THE BOMB GOES OFF!
BOMB?
...TWO ONE...
...FIRE!

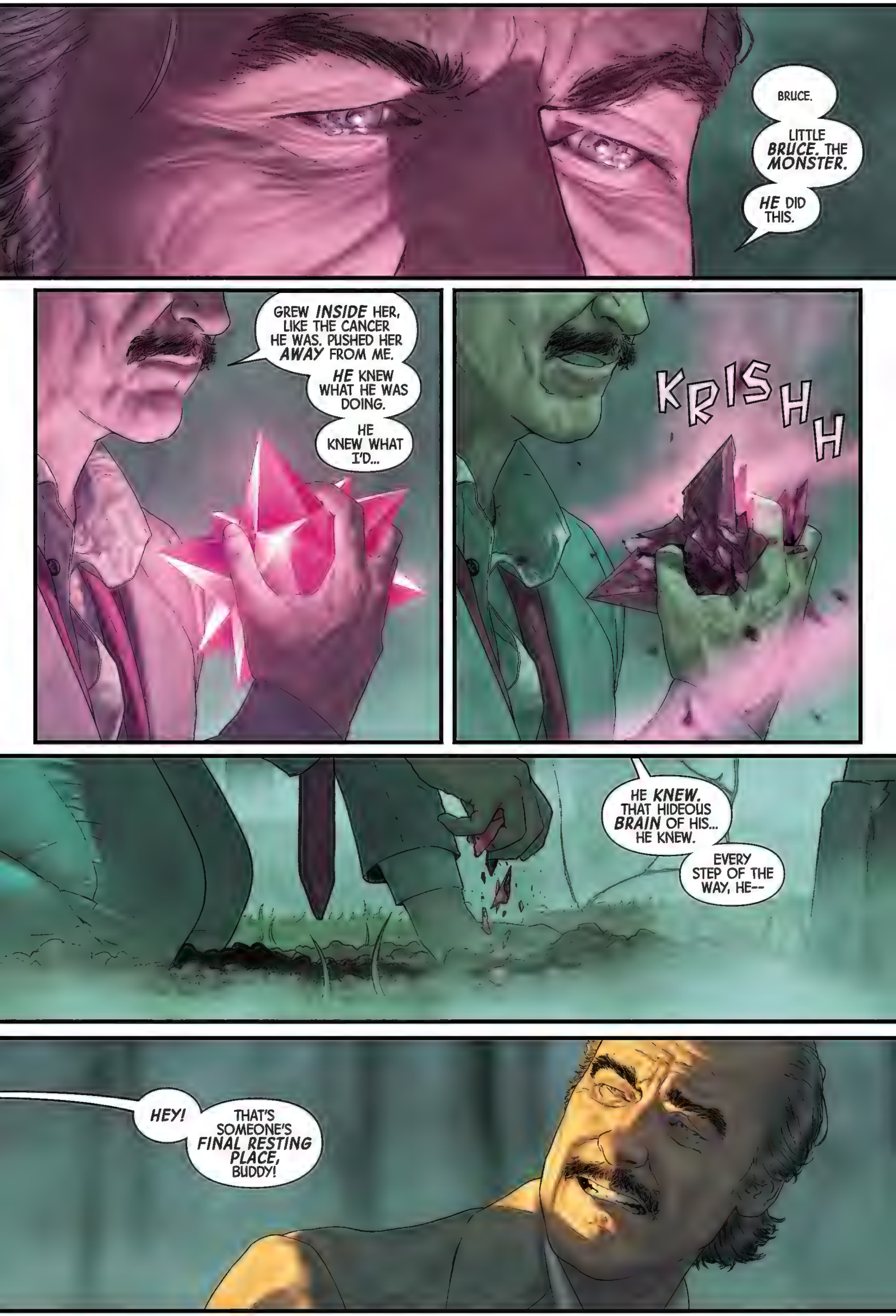

ALTHOUGH MANY MILES FROM BOMB ZERO, BRUCE BANNER WAS BATHED IN THE FULL FORCE OF THE MYSTERIOUS GAMMA RAYS!
HE SCREAMED, BUT NO ONE HEARD HIM...
...JUST AS NO ONE HAD HEARD HIS SILENT SCREAMING ALL HIS LONELY LIFE!
THE AWESOME FORCES OF GAMMA RADIATION WERE RELEASED THAT DAY!
BUT SO WAS THE LONG PENT-UP RAGE LOCKED INSIDE A LOVELORN CHILD...
...DOOMED FROM CHILDHOOD TO BECOME THAT WHICH HIS FATHER HAD ALWAYS FEARED HE WOULD BECOME!
MORE THAN A MAN!

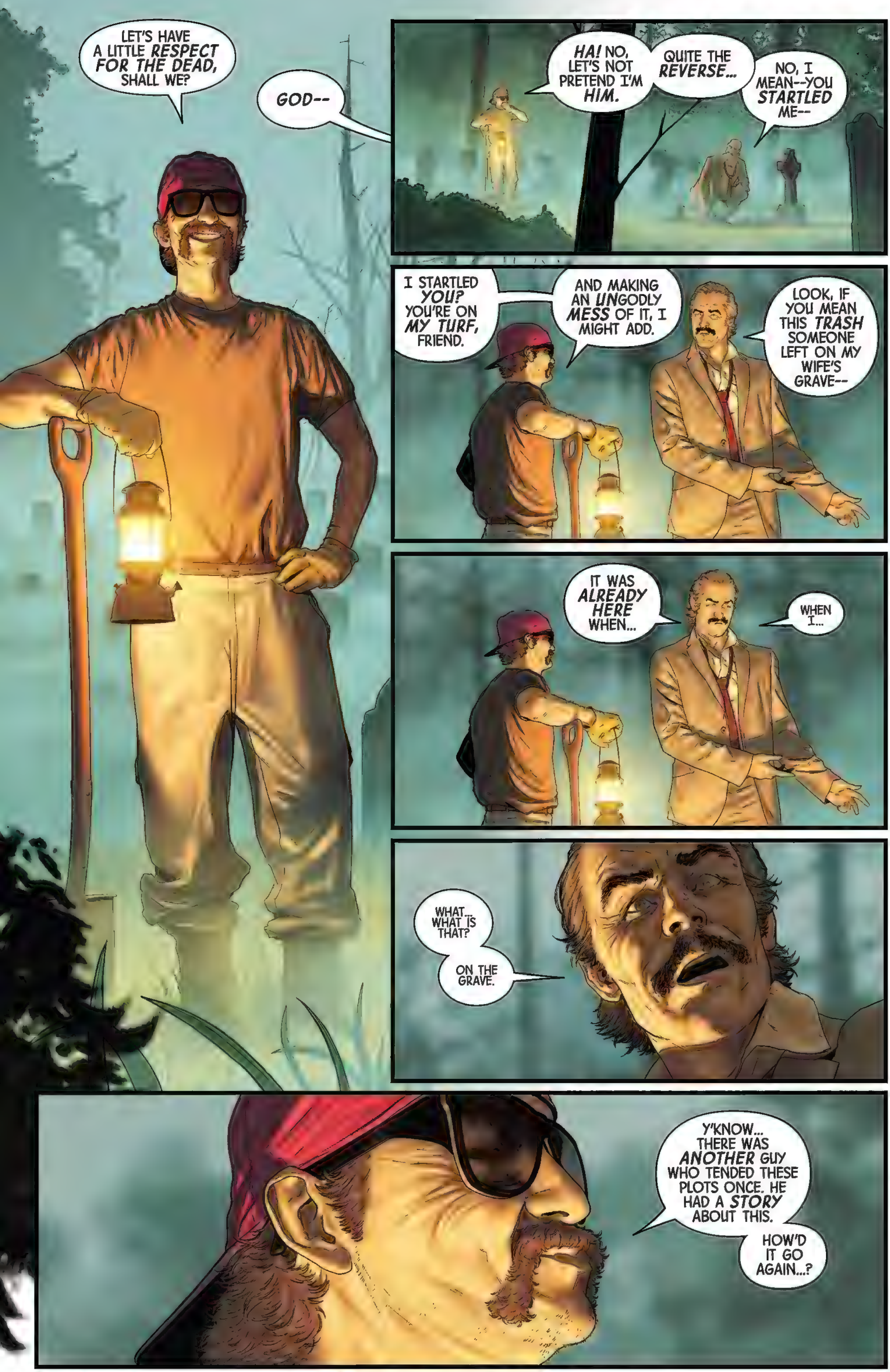

A MONSTER!
BUT THAT WAS THEN.

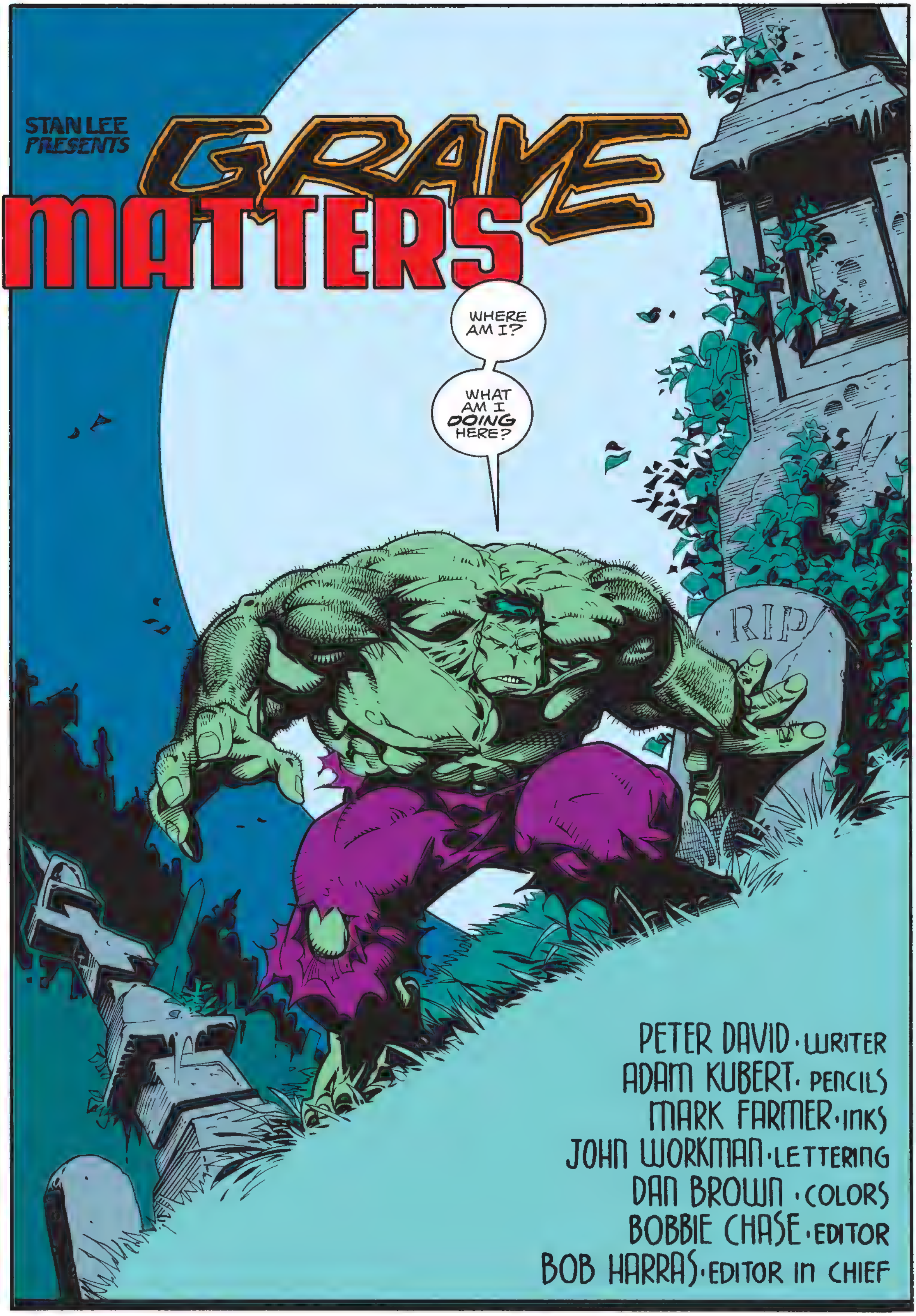

THE TIME: NOW. THE PLACE: AN INTERDIMENSIONAL INTERSECTION CALLED THE CROSSROADS. THE PLAYERS: AN EXILED HULK AND THREE BEINGS WHO HAVE STEPPED FORTH FROM THE DEEPEST RECESSES OF THE BEHEMOTH'S BRUTE BRAIN...
WE THREE-- GUARDIAN GLOW AND GOBLIN-- ARE ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE CURSED CHILD WHO CAME INTO THE WORLD AS BRUCE BANNER!
I REPRESENT HIS INSTINCT FOR SELF-PRESERVATION... AN INSTINCT WHICH FAILED HIM!
AND I REPRESENT HIS ABILITY TO REASON...
...HIS BRILLIANCE AND HIS LOGIC WHICH LED TO HIS BUILDING OF THE GAMMA BOMB, THE VERY FORCE THAT SEALED HIS FATE!
ME, I'M BANNER'S RAGE, LOCKED UP ALL THOSE LONELY YEARS AN' JUST WAITIN' T'BE SET FREE!
FUNNY THING IS, WHEN I FINALLY GOT THE CHANCE, BANNER TOOK A POWDER... T'BE REPLACED BY THE HULK!
YES! HURT SO OFTEN AS A CHILD, BRUCE BANNER LEARNED TO LIVE INSIDE HIMSELF, NEVER TO LET US-- HIS REASON, HIS RAGE, AND HIS DESIRE FOR SURVIVAL-- OUT! PERHAPS HE MIGHT HAVE, GIVEN TIME, GIVEN HELP...
BUT THEN THE GAMMA BOMB TOOK THE MAN MOLDED FROM A TWISTED CHILD AND TRANSFORMED HIM INTO THE VERY MONSTER HIS FATHER HAD ALWAYS PREDICTED HE'D BECOME!
AS YOU SAID, GUARDIAN, SUCH A FATE WAS INEVITABLE, PREORDAINED, GIVEN BRUCE BANNER'S PERCEPTION OF HIMSELF SINCE BIRTH AS A MONSTER!
HIS DADDY DID THAT TO HIM! HIS DADDY-- THE GREATEST MONSTER OF ALL!
BUT BANNER KNOWS US NOW, KNOWS WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN INSIDE O' HIM AN' ALWAYS WILL BE THERE T'HELP HIM FACE AN' MAYBE SOMEDAY OVERCOME HIS FATE!
"THE TRUTH MAY NOT MAKE HIM HAPPY, BUT AT LEAST NOW HE KNOWS HE CAN'T ESCAPE BEIN' WHAT HE IS SHORT O' DYIN'! AN' THAT MEANS HE'S READY T'COME OUT FROM HIDIN' INSIDE THE HULK AN' RECLAIM HIS LIFE AGAIN!"
AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT BRUCE BANNER DOES...

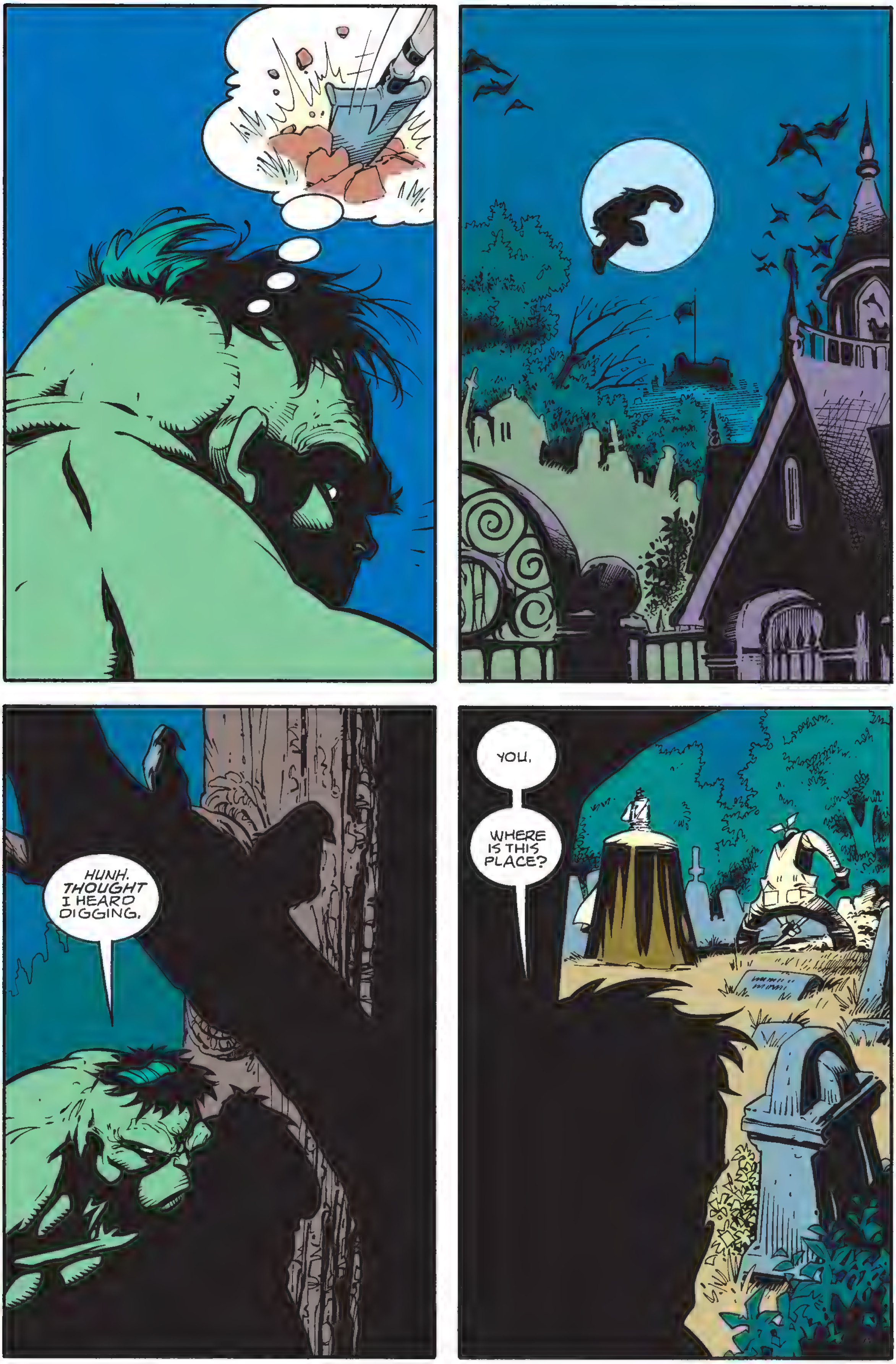

...ALTHOUGH IT TAKES HIM SOME TIME TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE FACT THAT HE HAS BEEN REBORN AFTER SO DESPERATELY DESIRING DEATH. RELEASE FROM THE NIGHTMARE OF HIS EXISTENCE AS ALTER-EGO OF THE INCREDIBLE HULK IS WHAT HE DESIRED. BUT, THEN, TIME IS ALL THERE IS AT THE CROSSROADS!
THE TRIADS' PARTING GIFT OF REMEMBRANCE IS AN UNAPPRECIATED PRESENT.
SO I'M ALIVE AGAIN! MAYBE THAT'S WRONG! MAYBE I NEVER DIED! I THOUGHT I HAD! I WANTED TO BE DEAD SO THAT I COULD BE FREE OF THE HULK AND HE FREE OF ME!

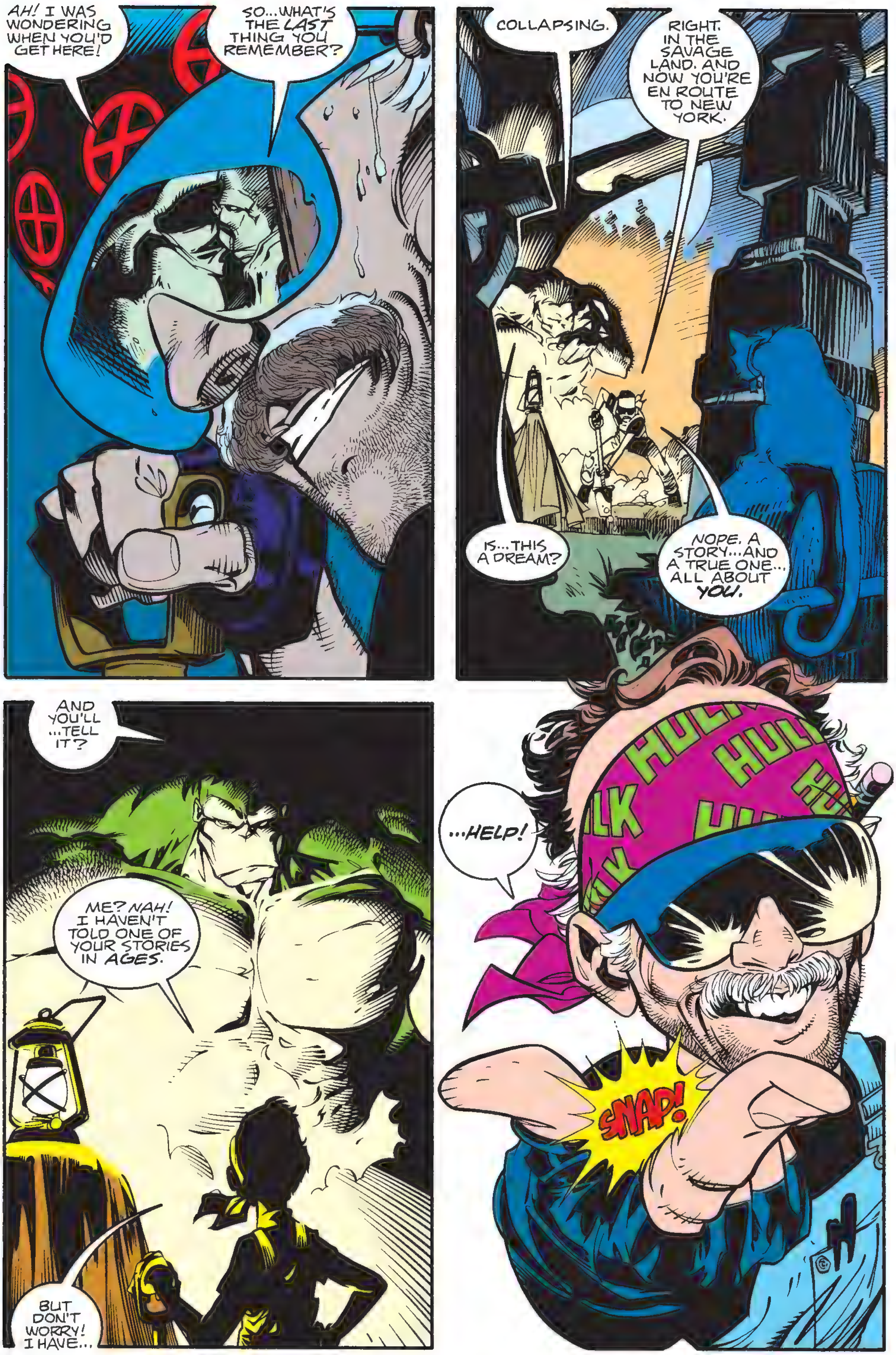

BUT IT FIGURES! MY LIFE HAS BEEN A *CURSE* FROM THE VERY BEGINNING! WHY SHOULD I EXPECT IT TO CHANGE NOW?
WHY SHOULD I EVER HAVE HOPED TO BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN WHAT MY FATHER MADE ME?
NEVER A MAN LIKE OTHER MEN, IN CONTROL OF THEIR DESTINY, ABLE TO DREAM!
NEVER ANYTHING BUT... A ***MONSTER!***

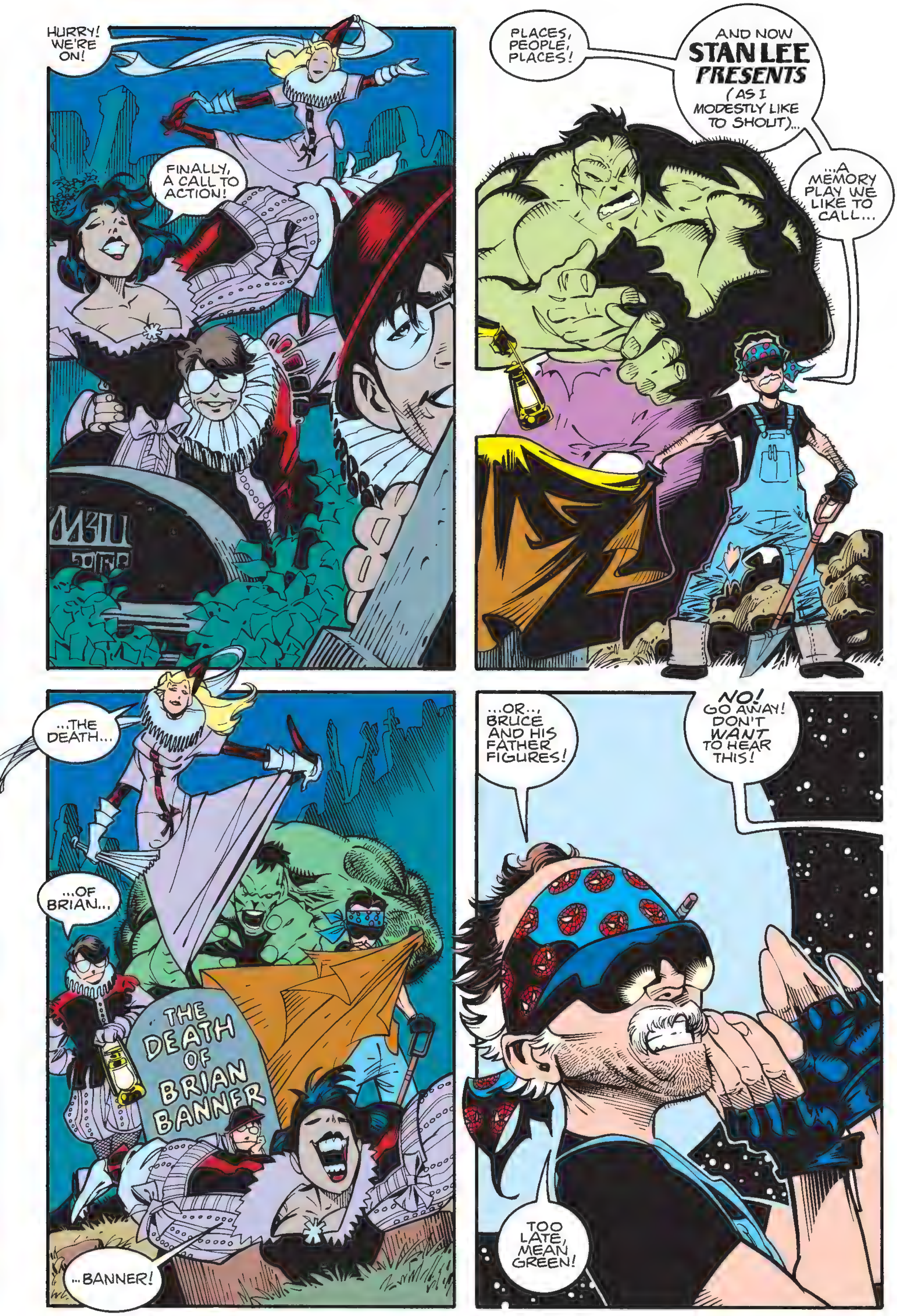

BRUCE.
LITTLE *BRUCE.* THE *MONSTER.*
HE DID THIS.
GREW *INSIDE* HER, LIKE THE CANCER HE WAS. PUSHED HER *AWAY* FROM ME.
HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING.
HE KNEW WHAT I'D...
KRISHH
HE *KNEW.* THAT HIDEOUS *BRAIN* OF HIS... HE KNEW.
EVERY STEP OF THE WAY, HE--
HEY!
THAT'S SOMEONE'S *FINAL RESTING PLACE,* BUDDY!

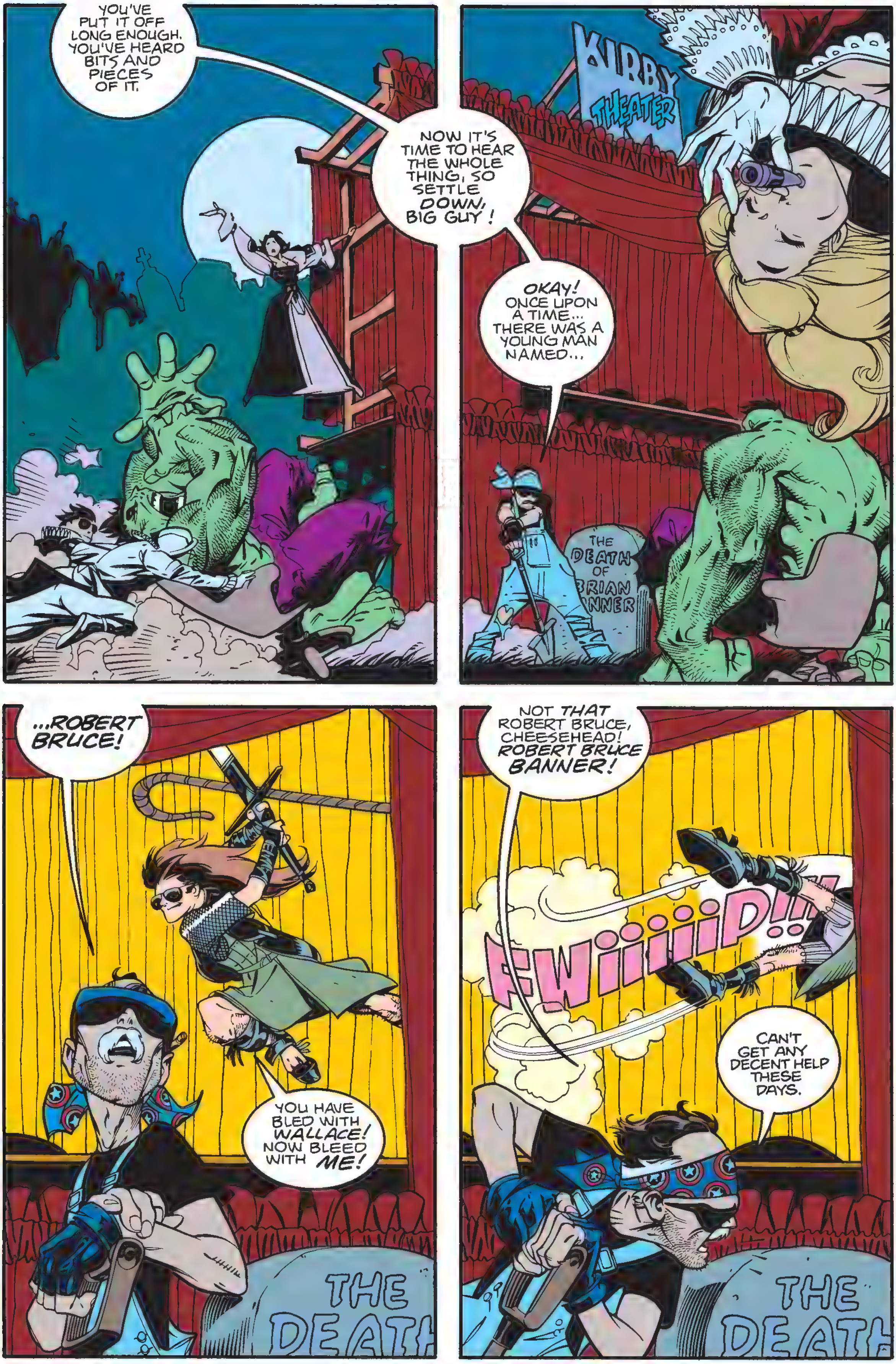

LET'S HAVE A LITTLE *RESPECT FOR THE DEAD,* SHALL WE?
GOD--
HA! NO, LET'S NOT PRETEND I'M *HIM.*
QUITE THE *REVERSE...*
NO, I MEAN--YOU *STARTLED* ME--
I STARTLED *YOU?* YOU'RE ON *MY TURF,* FRIEND.
AND MAKING AN *UNGODLY MESS* OF IT, I MIGHT ADD.
LOOK, IF YOU MEAN THIS *TRASH* SOMEONE LEFT ON *MY* WIFE'S GRAVE--
IT WAS *ALREADY HERE* WHEN...
WHEN I...
WHAT... WHAT IS THAT?
ON THE GRAVE.
Y'KNOW... THERE WAS *ANOTHER* GUY WHO TENDED THESE PLOTS ONCE. HE HAD A *STORY* ABOUT THIS.
HOW'D IT GO AGAIN...?

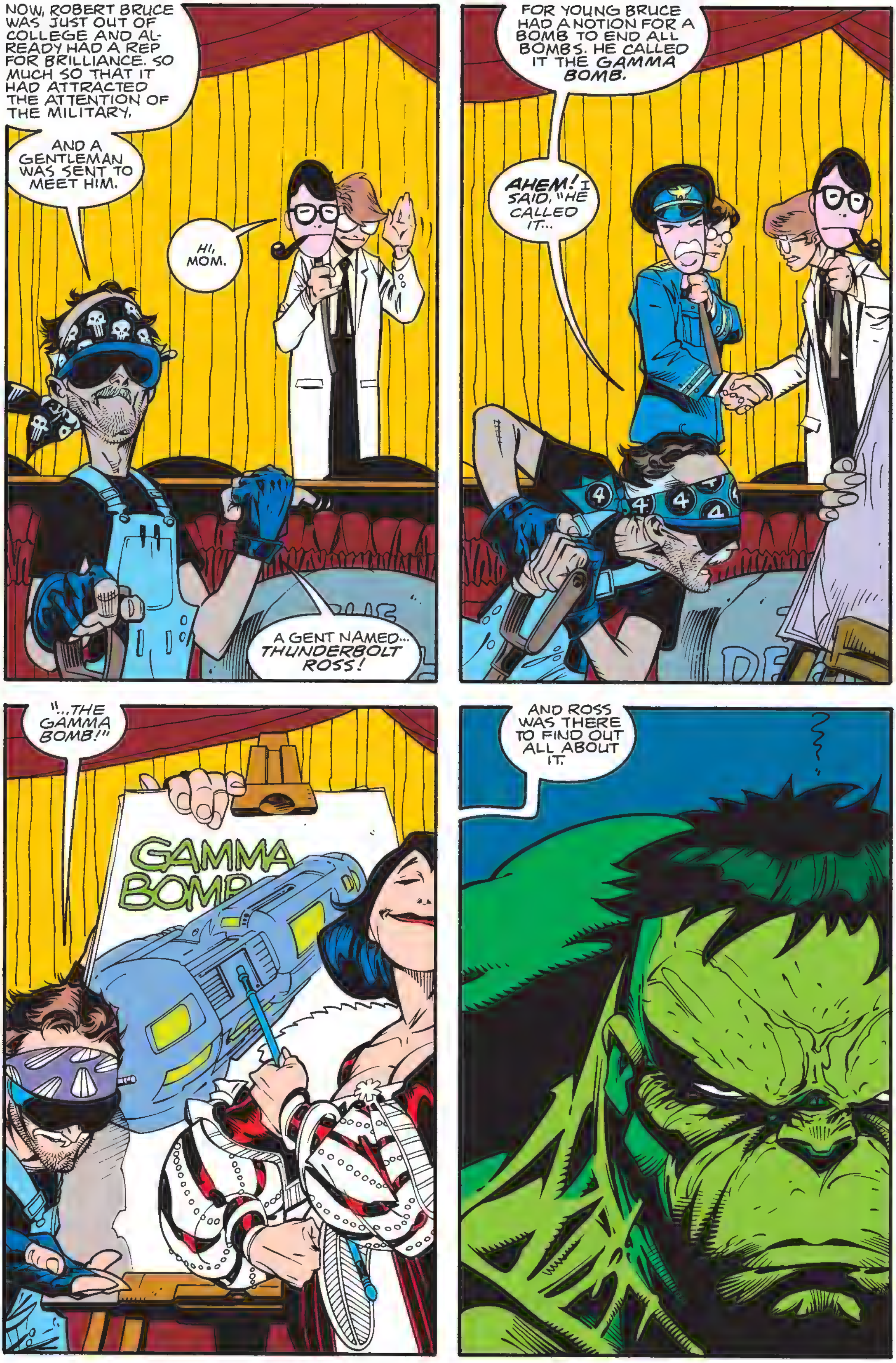

STAN LEE PRESENTS
GRAVE MATTERS
WHERE AM I?
WHAT AM I DOING HERE?
RIP
PETER DAVID · WRITER
ADAM KUBERT · PENCILS
MARK FARMER · INKS
JOHN WORKMAN · LETTERING
DAN BROWN · COLORS
BOBBIE CHASE · EDITOR
BOB HARRAS · EDITOR IN CHIEF

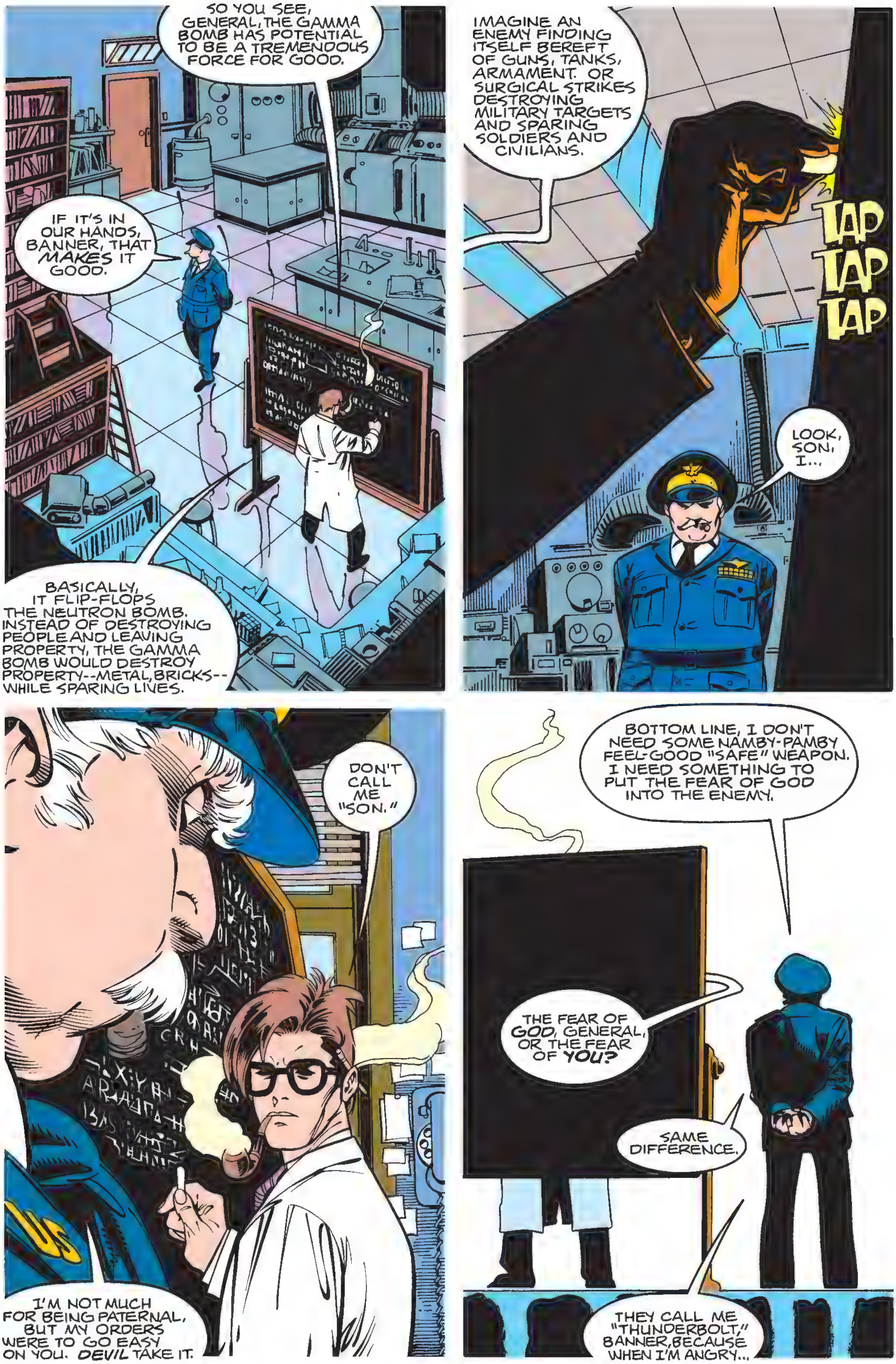

HUNH. THOUGHT I HEARD DIGGING.
YOU.
WHERE IS THIS PLACE?

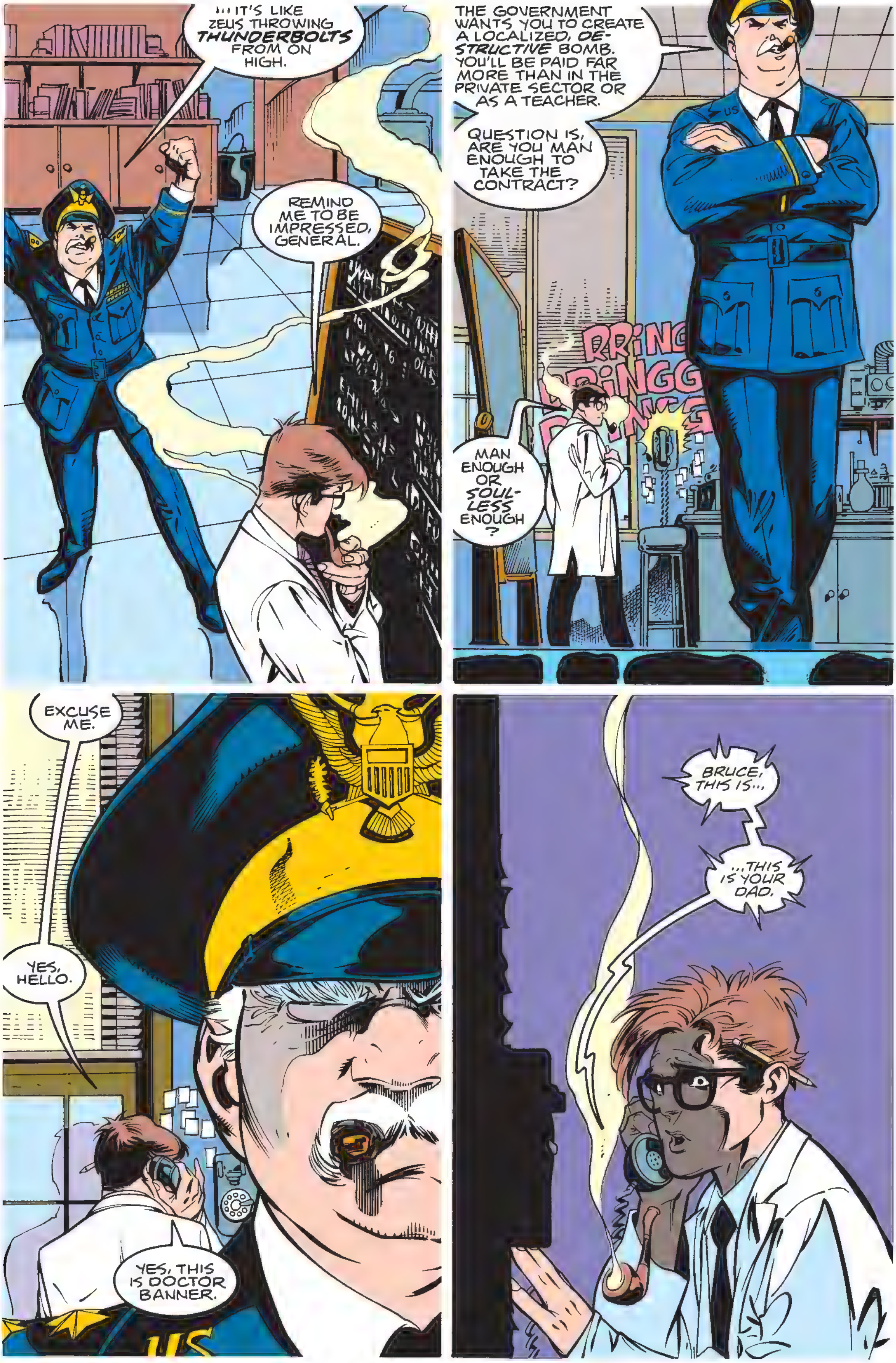

AH! I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU'D GET HERE!
SO...WHAT'S THE *LAST* THING YOU REMEMBER?
COLLAPSING.
RIGHT. IN THE SAVAGE LAND. AND NOW YOU'RE EN ROUTE TO NEW YORK.
IS...THIS A DREAM?
NOPE. A STORY...AND A TRUE ONE... ALL ABOUT ***YOU.***
AND YOU'LL ...TELL IT?
ME? *NAH!* I HAVEN'T TOLD ONE OF YOUR STORIES IN ***AGES.***
BUT DON'T WORRY! I HAVE...
...HELP!
SNAP!

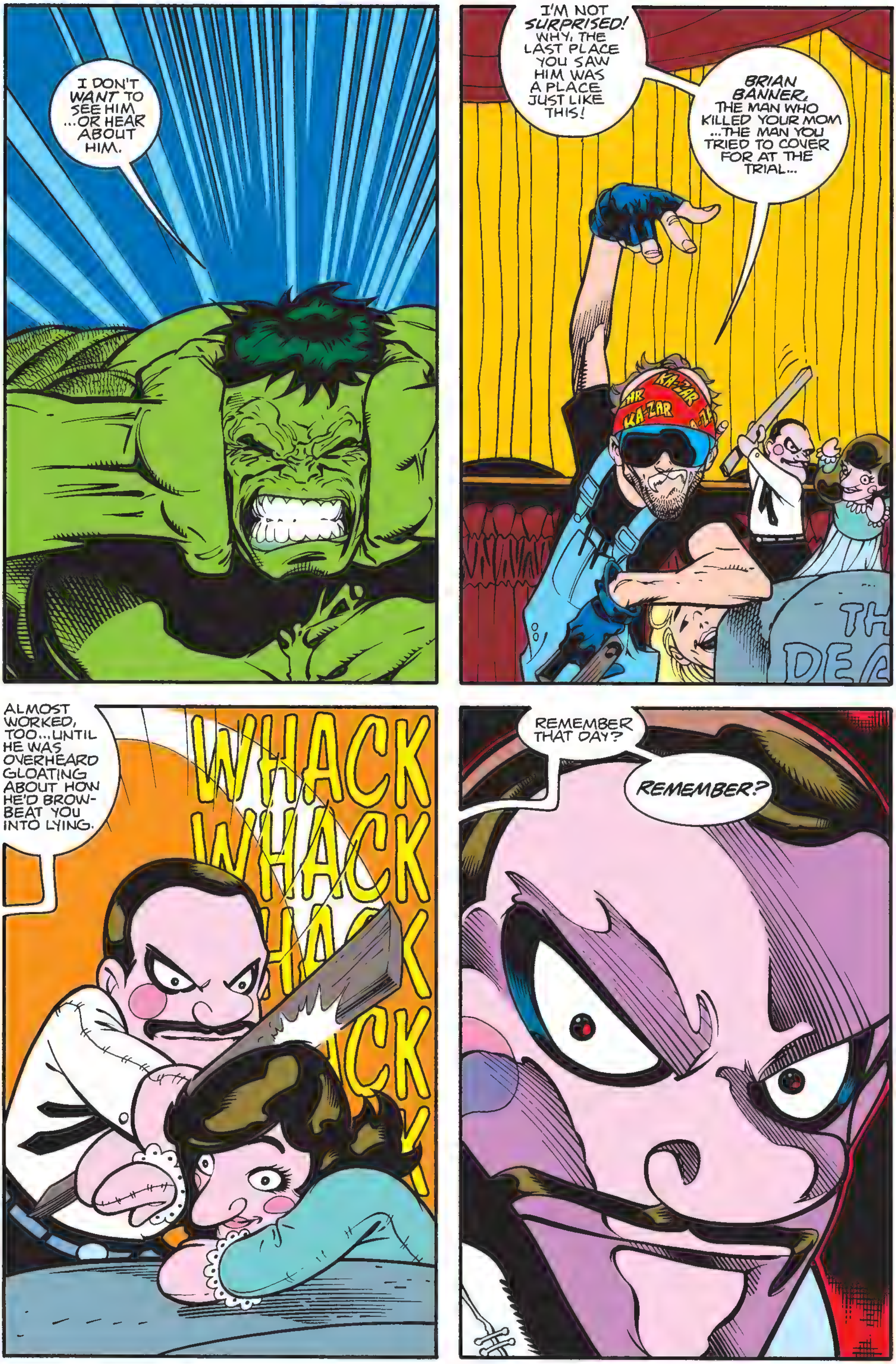

HURRY! WE'RE ON!
FINALLY, A CALL TO ACTION!
PLACES, PEOPLE, PLACES!
AND NOW STAN LEE PRESENTS (AS I MODESTLY LIKE TO SHOUT)...
...A MEMORY PLAY WE LIKE TO CALL...
...THE DEATH...
...OF BRIAN...
THE DEATH OF BRIAN BANNER
...BANNER!
...OR.., BRUCE AND HIS FATHER FIGURES!
NO! GO AWAY! DON'T WANT TO HEAR THIS!
TOO LATE, MEAN GREEN!

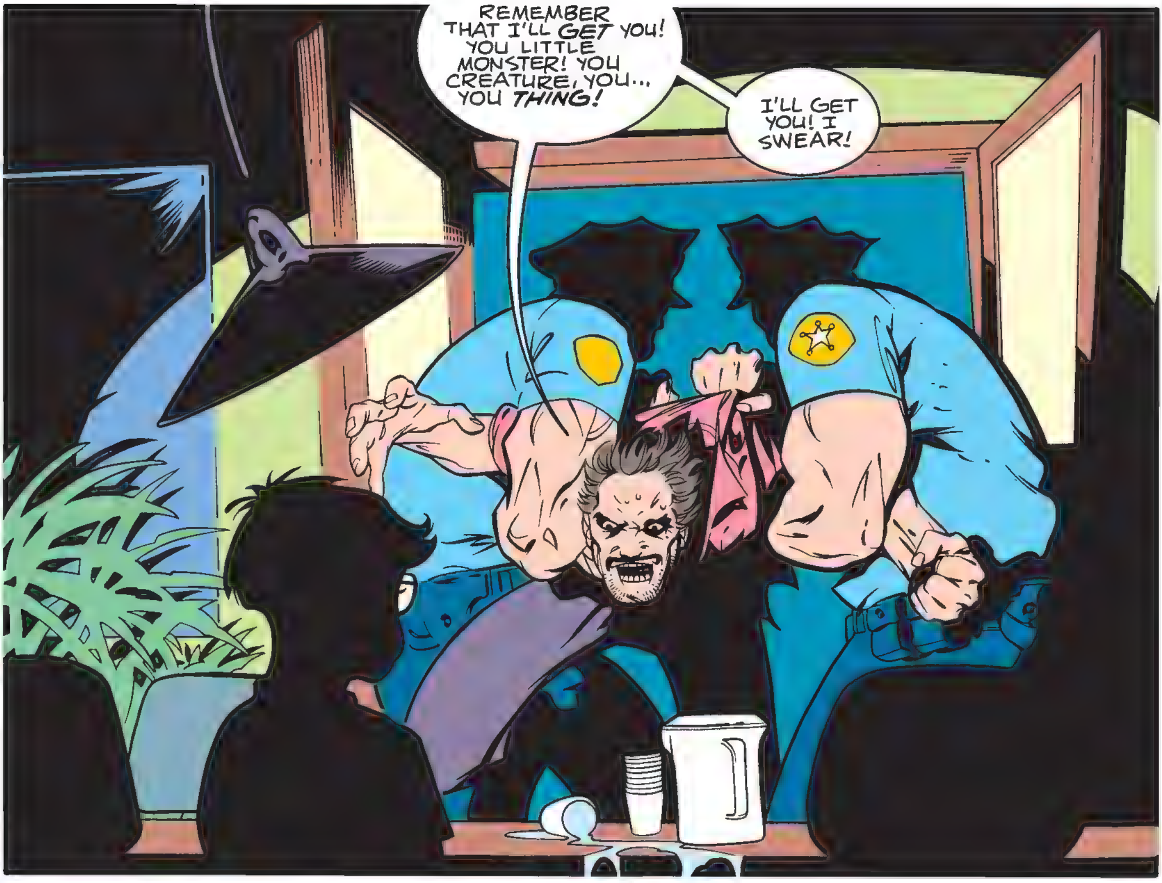

YOU'VE PUT IT OFF LONG ENOUGH. YOU'VE HEARD BITS AND PIECES OF IT.
NOW IT'S TIME TO HEAR THE WHOLE THING, SO SETTLE *DOWN,* BIG GUY!
KIRBY THEATER
OKAY! ONCE UPON A TIME... THERE WAS A YOUNG MAN NAMED...
THE DEATH OF BRIAN NNER
...ROBERT BRUCE!
YOU HAVE BLED WITH *WALLACE!* NOW BLEED WITH *ME!*
THE DEATH
NOT *THAT* ROBERT BRUCE, CHEESEHEAD! *ROBERT BRUCE BANNER!*
FWiiiiiP!!!
CAN'T GET ANY DECENT HELP THESE DAYS.
THE DEATH

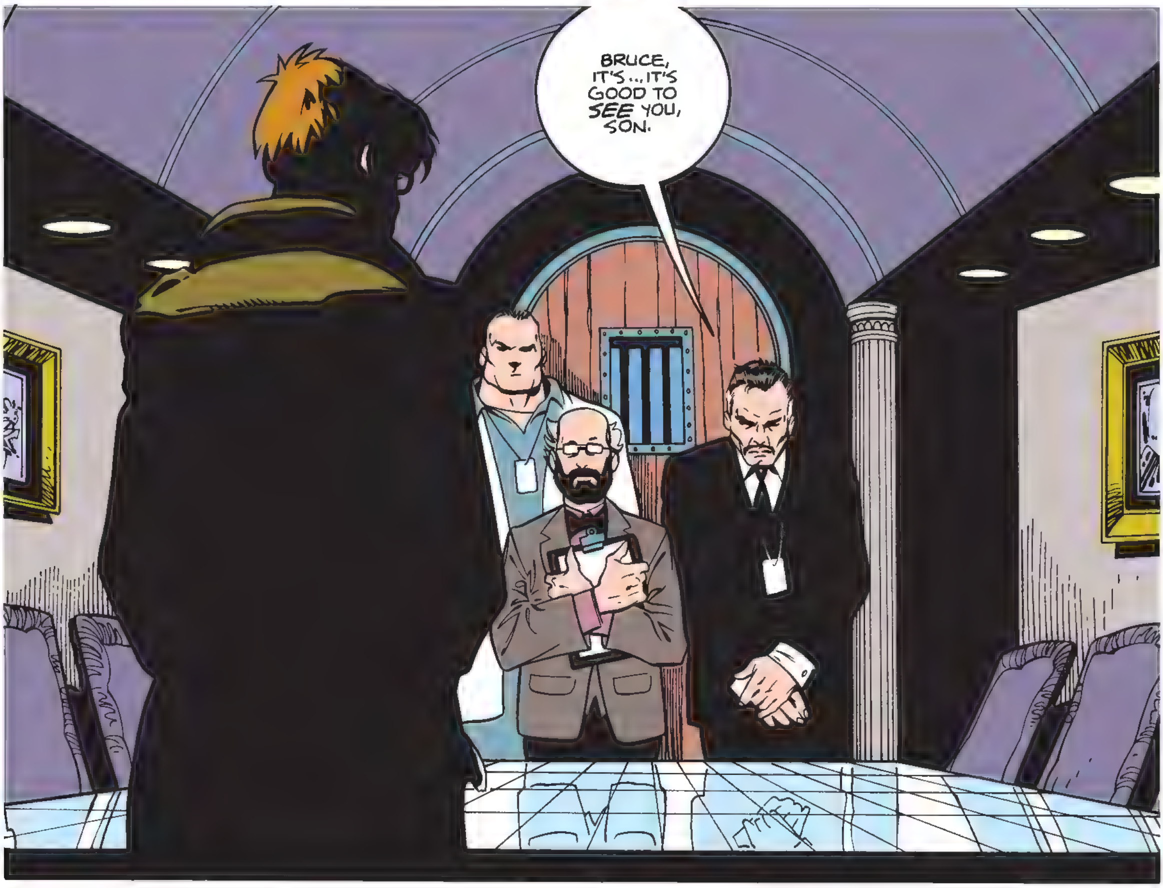

NOW, ROBERT BRUCE WAS JUST OUT OF COLLEGE AND ALREADY HAD A REP FOR BRILLIANCE. SO MUCH SO THAT IT HAD ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF THE MILITARY,
AND A GENTLEMAN WAS SENT TO MEET HIM.
HI, MOM.
A GENT NAMED... *THUNDERBOLT ROSS!*
FOR YOUNG BRUCE HAD A NOTION FOR A BOMB TO END ALL BOMBS. HE CALLED IT THE *GAMMA BOMB.*
AHEM! I SAID, "HE CALLED IT...
"...THE GAMMA BOMB!"
GAMMA BOMB
AND ROSS WAS THERE TO FIND OUT ALL ABOUT IT.
?

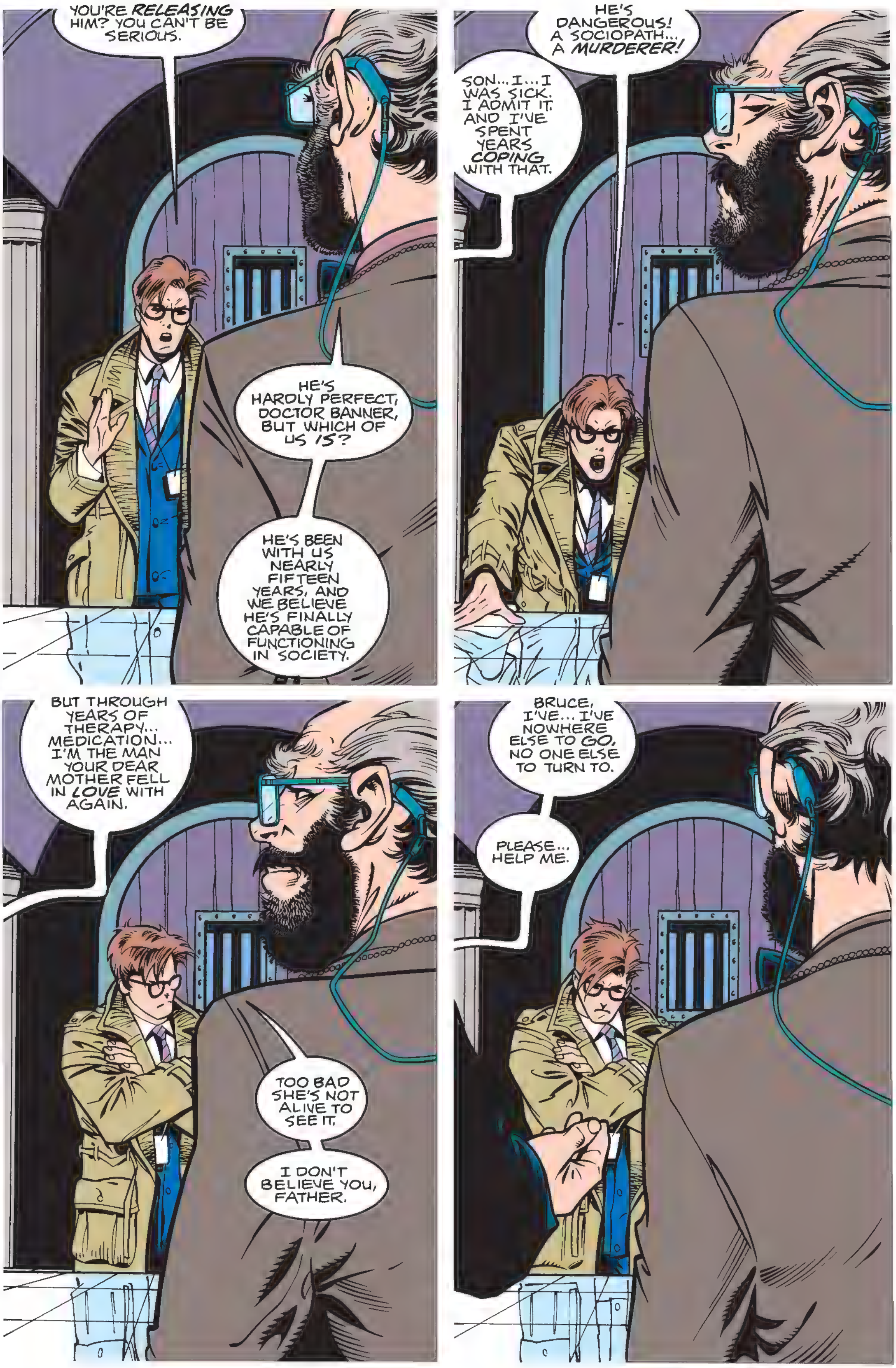

SO YOU SEE, GENERAL, THE GAMMA BOMB HAS POTENTIAL TO BE A TREMENDOUS FORCE FOR GOOD.
IF IT'S IN OUR HANDS, BANNER, THAT *MAKES* IT GOOD.
BASICALLY, IT FLIP-FLOPS THE NEUTRON BOMB. INSTEAD OF DESTROYING PEOPLE AND LEAVING PROPERTY, THE GAMMA BOMB WOULD DESTROY PROPERTY--METAL, BRICKS--WHILE SPARING LIVES.
IMAGINE AN ENEMY FINDING ITSELF BEREFT OF GUNS, TANKS, ARMAMENT. OR SURGICAL STRIKES DESTROYING MILITARY TARGETS AND SPARING SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS.
TAP TAP TAP
LOOK, SON, I...
DON'T CALL ME "SON."
I'M NOT MUCH FOR BEING PATERNAL, BUT MY ORDERS WERE TO GO EASY ON YOU. *DEVIL* TAKE IT.
US
BOTTOM LINE, I DON'T NEED SOME NAMBY-PAMBY FEEL-GOOD "SAFE" WEAPON. I NEED SOMETHING TO PUT THE FEAR OF GOD INTO THE ENEMY.
THE FEAR OF *GOD*, GENERAL, OR THE FEAR OF *YOU?*
SAME DIFFERENCE.
THEY CALL ME "THUNDERBOLT," BANNER, BECAUSE WHEN I'M ANGRY...

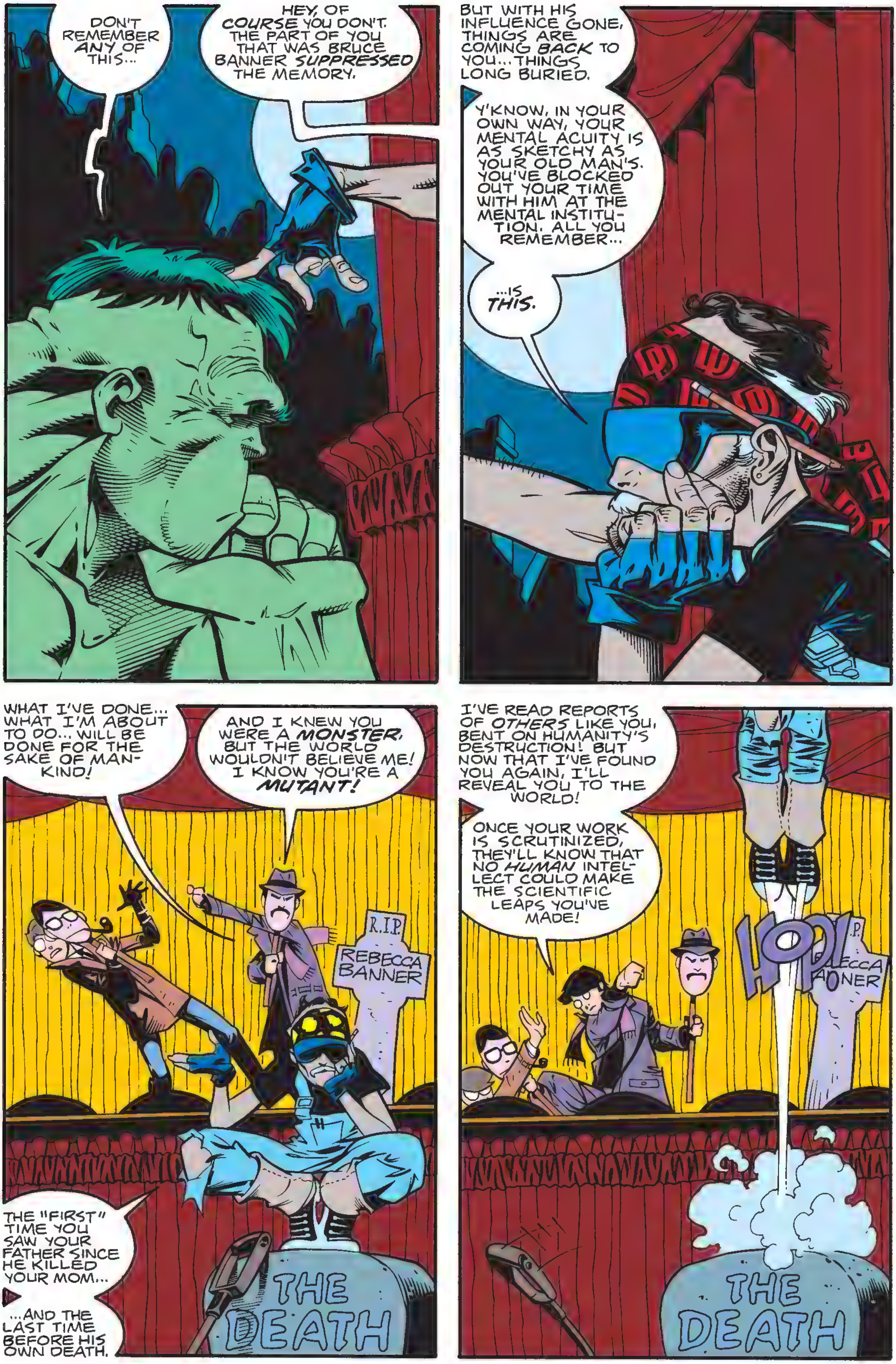

...IT'S LIKE ZEUS THROWING *THUNDERBOLTS* FROM ON HIGH.
REMIND ME TO BE IMPRESSED, GENERAL.
THE GOVERNMENT WANTS YOU TO CREATE A LOCALIZED, *DESTRUCTIVE* BOMB. YOU'LL BE PAID FAR MORE THAN IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR OR AS A TEACHER.
QUESTION IS, ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH TO TAKE THE CONTRACT?
RRING
RRINGG
MAN ENOUGH OR *SOULLESS* ENOUGH?
EXCUSE ME.
YES, HELLO.
YES, THIS IS DOCTOR BANNER.
BRUCE, THIS IS...
...THIS IS YOUR DAD.

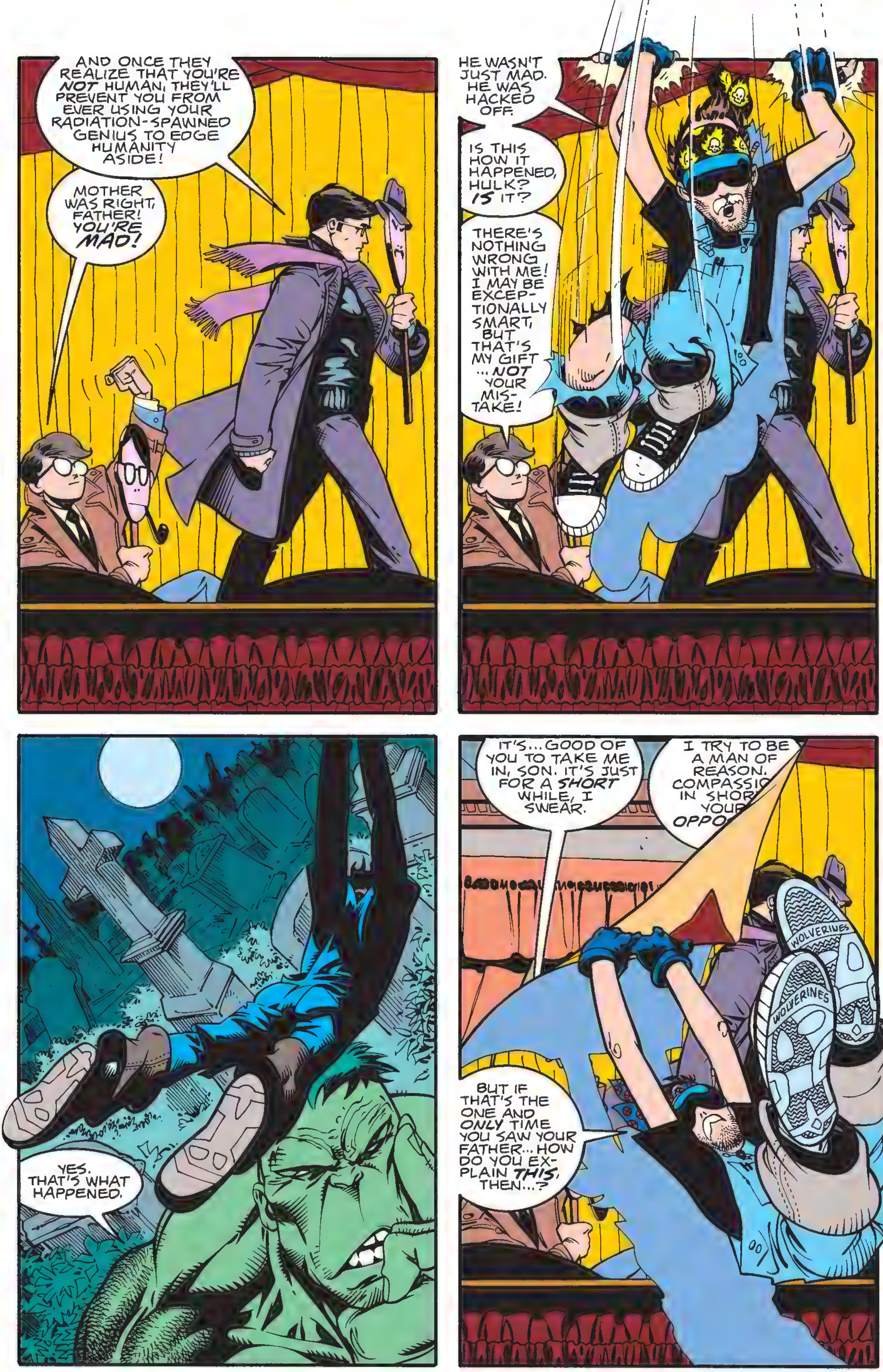

I DON'T *WANT* TO SEE HIM ...OR HEAR ABOUT HIM.
I'M NOT *SURPRISED!* WHY, THE LAST PLACE YOU SAW HIM WAS A PLACE JUST LIKE THIS!
BRIAN BANNER, THE MAN WHO KILLED YOUR MOM ...THE MAN YOU TRIED TO COVER FOR AT THE TRIAL...
KA-ZAR
KA-ZAR
THE DEA
ALMOST WORKED, TOO...UNTIL HE WAS OVERHEARD GLOATING ABOUT HOW HE'D BROW-BEAT YOU INTO LYING.
WHACK
WHACK
WHACK
WHACK
REMEMBER THAT DAY?
REMEMBER?

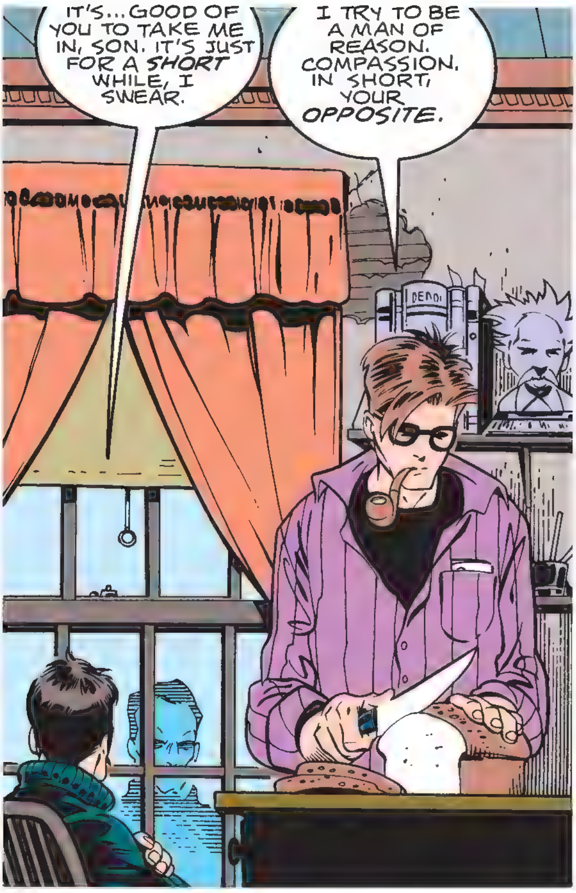

REMEMBER THAT I'LL *GET* YOU! YOU LITTLE MONSTER! YOU CREATURE, YOU... YOU *THING!*
I'LL GET YOU! I SWEAR!

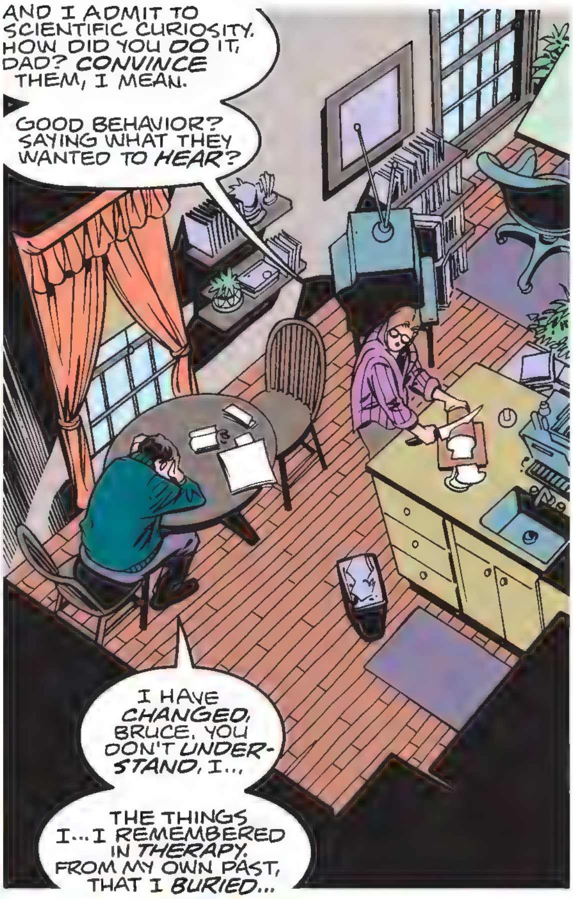

BRUCE, IT'S...IT'S GOOD TO *SEE* YOU, SON.

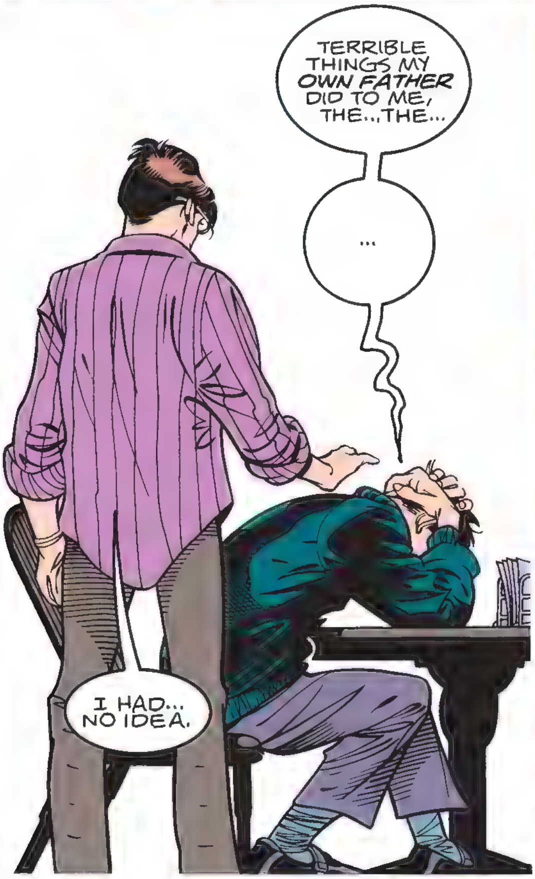

YOU'RE *RELEASING* HIM? YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.
HE'S HARDLY PERFECT, DOCTOR BANNER, BUT WHICH OF US *IS*?
HE'S BEEN WITH US NEARLY FIFTEEN YEARS, AND WE BELIEVE HE'S FINALLY CAPABLE OF FUNCTIONING IN SOCIETY.
HE'S DANGEROUS! A SOCIOPATH... A *MURDERER!*
SON... I... I WAS SICK. I ADMIT IT. AND I'VE SPENT YEARS *COPING* WITH THAT.
BUT THROUGH YEARS OF THERAPY... MEDICATION... I'M THE MAN YOUR DEAR MOTHER FELL IN *LOVE* WITH AGAIN.
TOO BAD SHE'S NOT ALIVE TO SEE IT.
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU, FATHER.
BRUCE, I'VE... I'VE NOWHERE ELSE TO *GO*, NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO.
PLEASE... HELP ME.

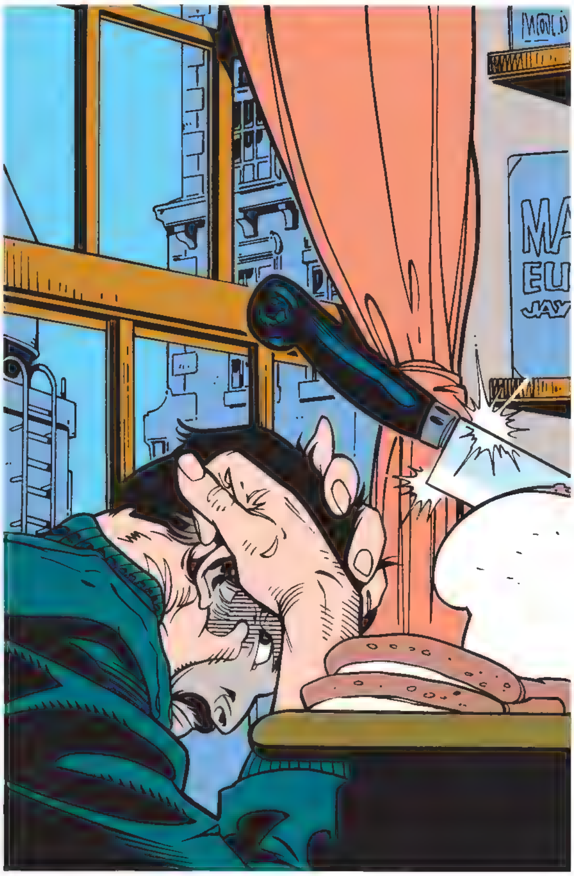

DON'T REMEMBER *ANY* OF THIS...
HEY, OF *COURSE* YOU DON'T. THE PART OF YOU THAT WAS BRUCE BANNER *SUPPRESSED* THE MEMORY.
BUT WITH HIS INFLUENCE GONE, THINGS ARE COMING *BACK* TO YOU... THINGS LONG BURIED.
Y'KNOW, IN YOUR OWN WAY, YOUR MENTAL ACUITY IS AS SKETCHY AS YOUR OLD MAN'S. YOU'VE BLOCKED OUT YOUR TIME WITH HIM AT THE MENTAL INSTITUTION. ALL YOU REMEMBER...
...IS *THIS.*
WHAT I'VE DONE... WHAT I'M ABOUT TO DO... WILL BE DONE FOR THE SAKE OF MANKIND!
AND I KNEW YOU WERE A *MONSTER,* BUT THE WORLD WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME! I KNOW YOU'RE A *MUTANT!*
R.I.P. REBECCA BANNER
THE "FIRST" TIME YOU SAW YOUR FATHER SINCE HE KILLED YOUR MOM...
...AND THE LAST TIME BEFORE HIS OWN DEATH.
THE DEATH
I'VE READ REPORTS OF *OTHERS* LIKE YOU, BENT ON HUMANITY'S DESTRUCTION! BUT NOW THAT I'VE FOUND YOU AGAIN, I'LL REVEAL YOU TO THE WORLD!
ONCE YOUR WORK IS SCRUTINIZED, THEY'LL KNOW THAT NO *HUMAN* INTELLECT COULD MAKE THE SCIENTIFIC LEAPS YOU'VE MADE!
HOP!
THE DEATH

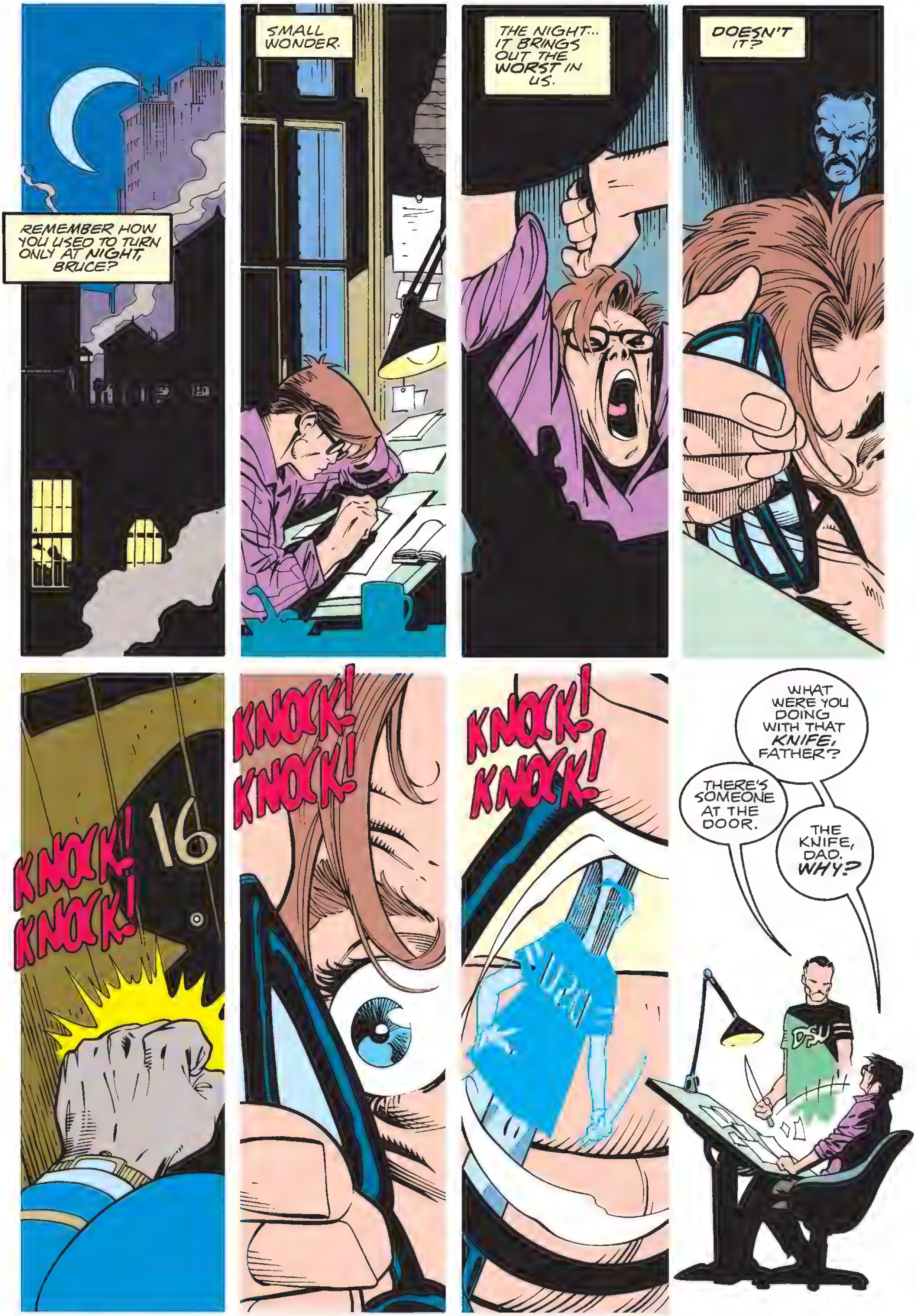

AND ONCE THEY REALIZE THAT YOU'RE *NOT* HUMAN, THEY'LL PREVENT YOU FROM EVER USING YOUR RADIATION-SPAWNED GENIUS TO EDGE HUMANITY ASIDE!
MOTHER WAS RIGHT, FATHER! *YOU'RE MAD!*
HE WASN'T JUST MAD. HE WAS HACKED OFF.
IS THIS HOW IT HAPPENED, HULK? *IS* IT?
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH ME! I MAY BE EXCEPTIONALLY SMART, BUT THAT'S MY GIFT ...*NOT* YOUR MISTAKE!
YES. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED.
IT'S...GOOD OF YOU TO TAKE ME IN, SON. IT'S JUST FOR A *SHORT* WHILE, I SWEAR.
I TRY TO BE A MAN OF REASON. COMPASSIO IN SHOR YOUR *OPPO*
WOLVERINES
WOLVERINES
BUT IF THAT'S THE ONE AND *ONLY* TIME YOU SAW YOUR FATHER...HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN *THIS,* THEN...?

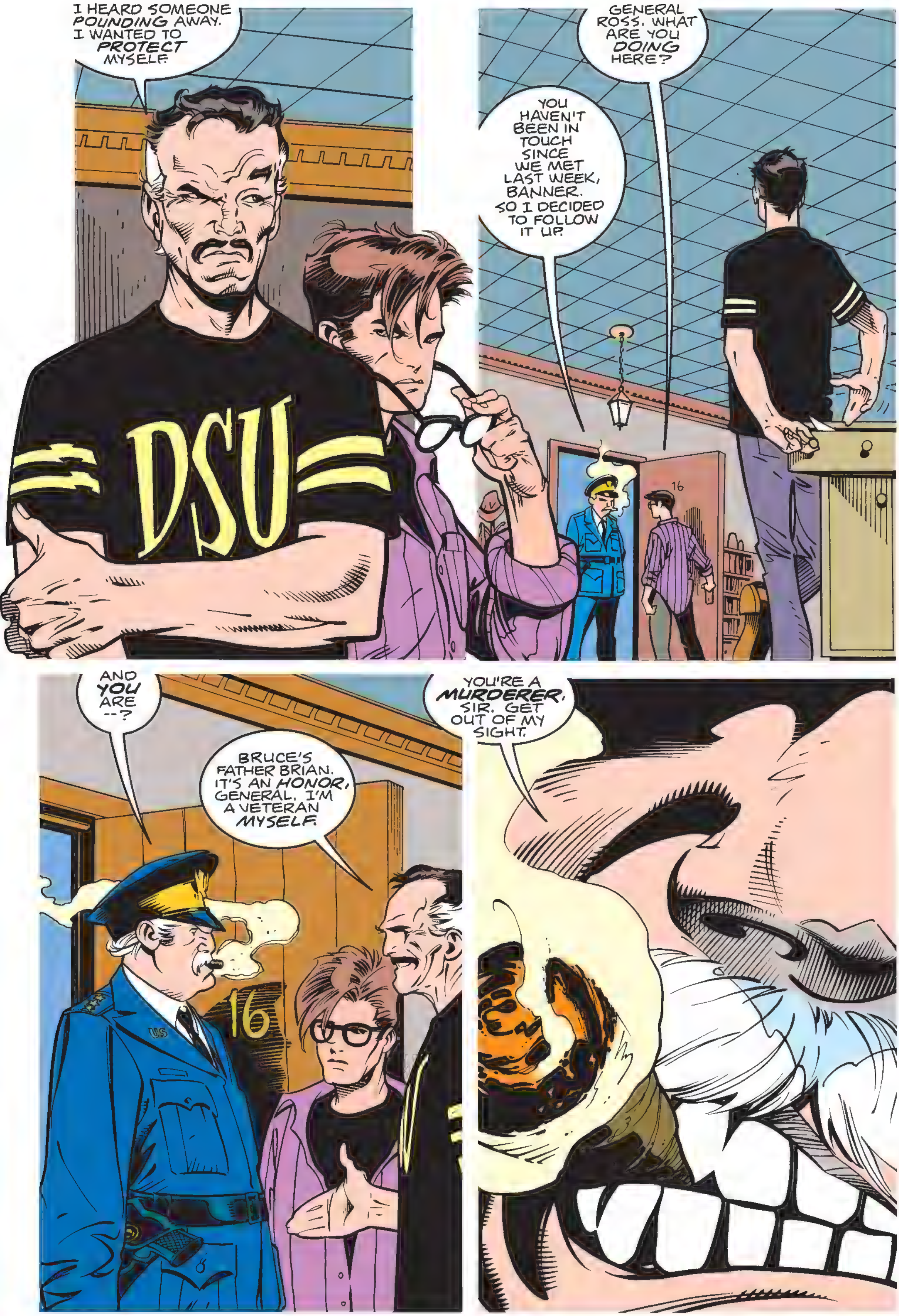

IT'S... GOOD OF YOU TO TAKE ME IN, SON. IT'S JUST FOR A *SHORT* WHILE, I SWEAR.
I TRY TO BE A MAN OF REASON. COMPASSION. IN SHORT, YOUR *OPPOSITE*.
DEDO

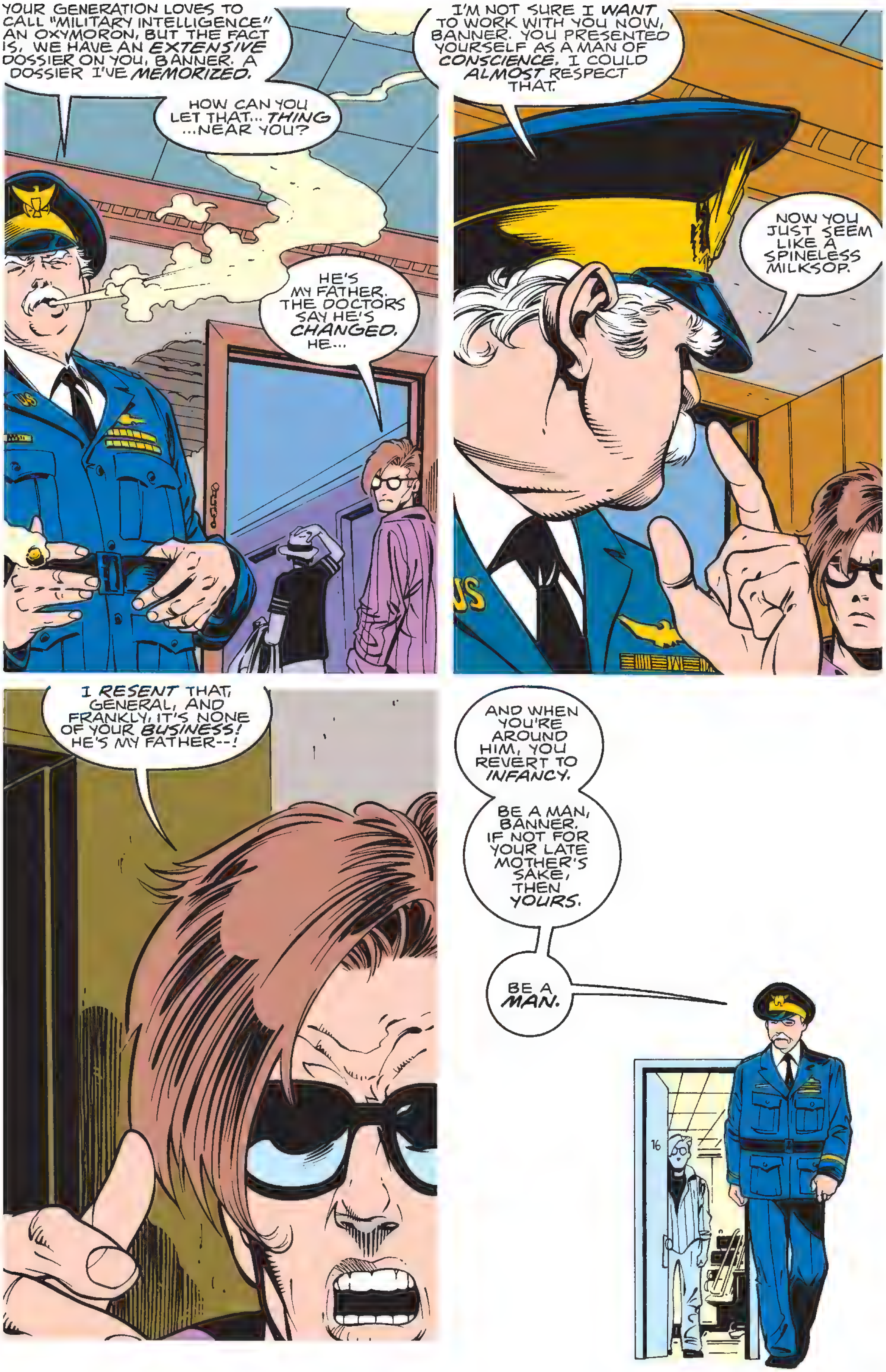

AND I ADMIT TO SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY. HOW DID YOU *DO* IT, DAD? *CONVINCE* THEM, I MEAN.
GOOD BEHAVIOR? SAYING WHAT THEY WANTED TO *HEAR*?
I HAVE *CHANGED*, BRUCE. YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND*, I...
THE THINGS I... I REMEMBERED IN *THERAPY*. FROM MY OWN PAST, THAT I *BURIED*...

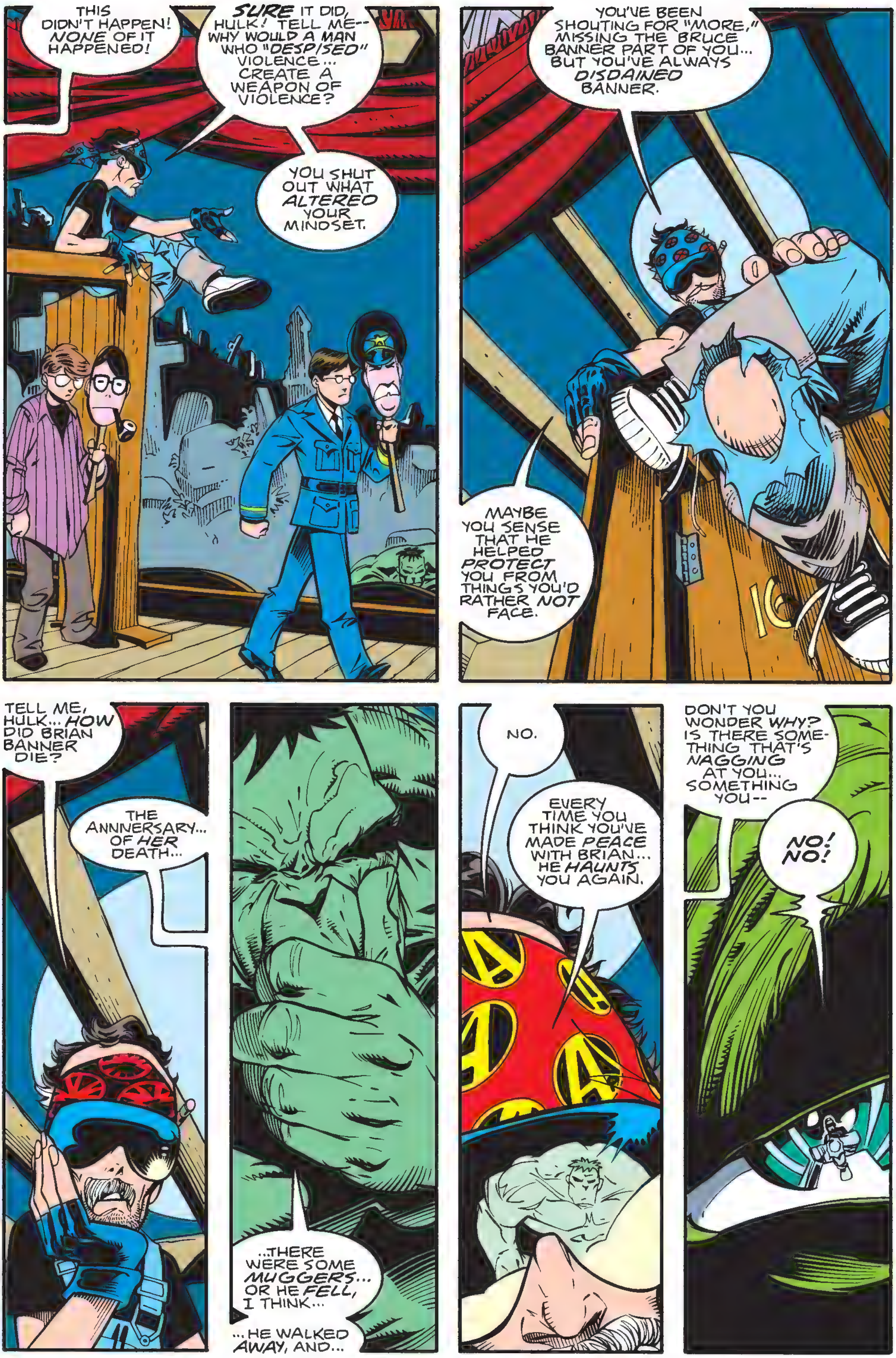

TERRIBLE THINGS MY *OWN FATHER* DID TO ME, THE... THE...
...
I HAD... NO IDEA.

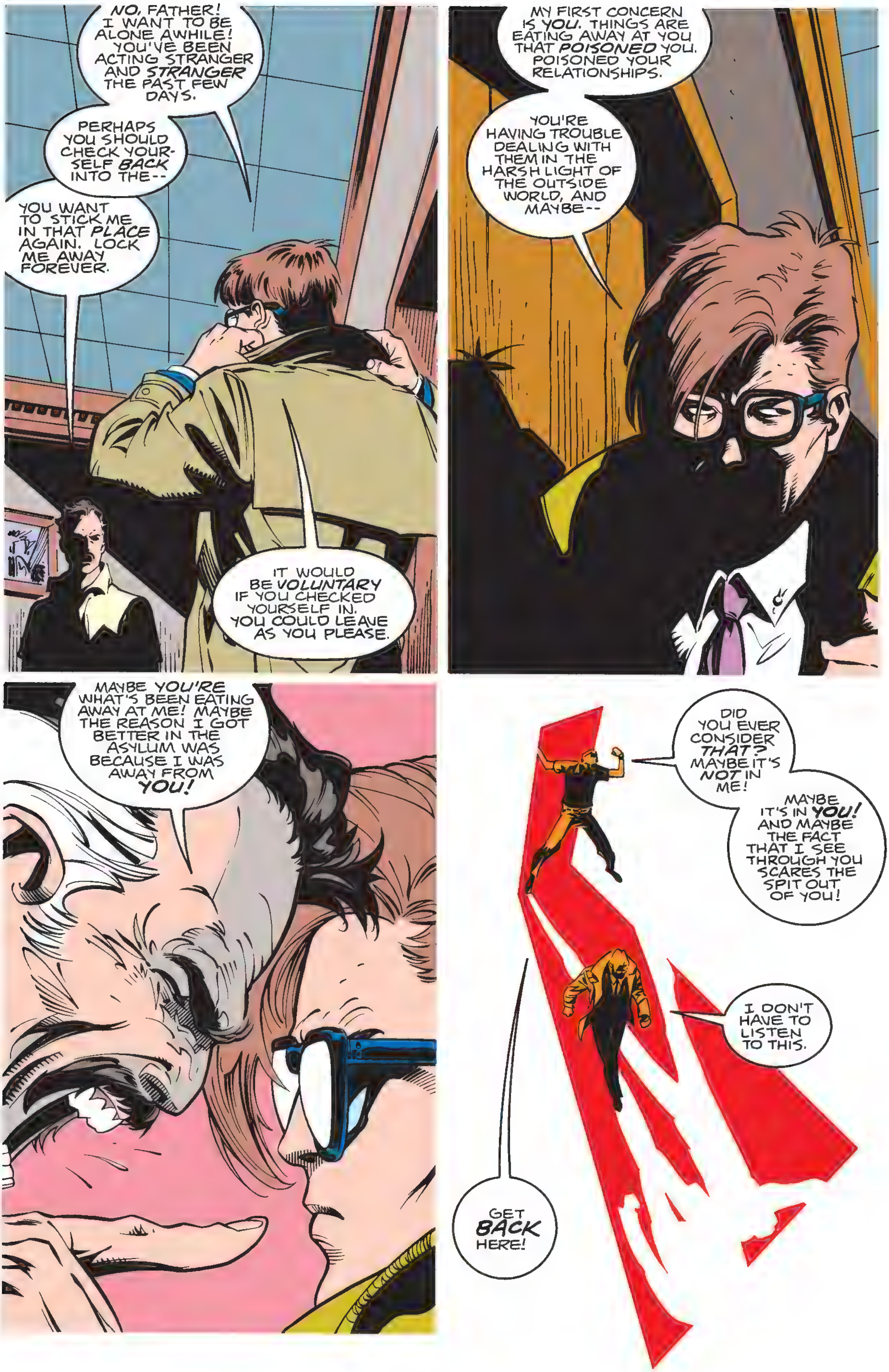


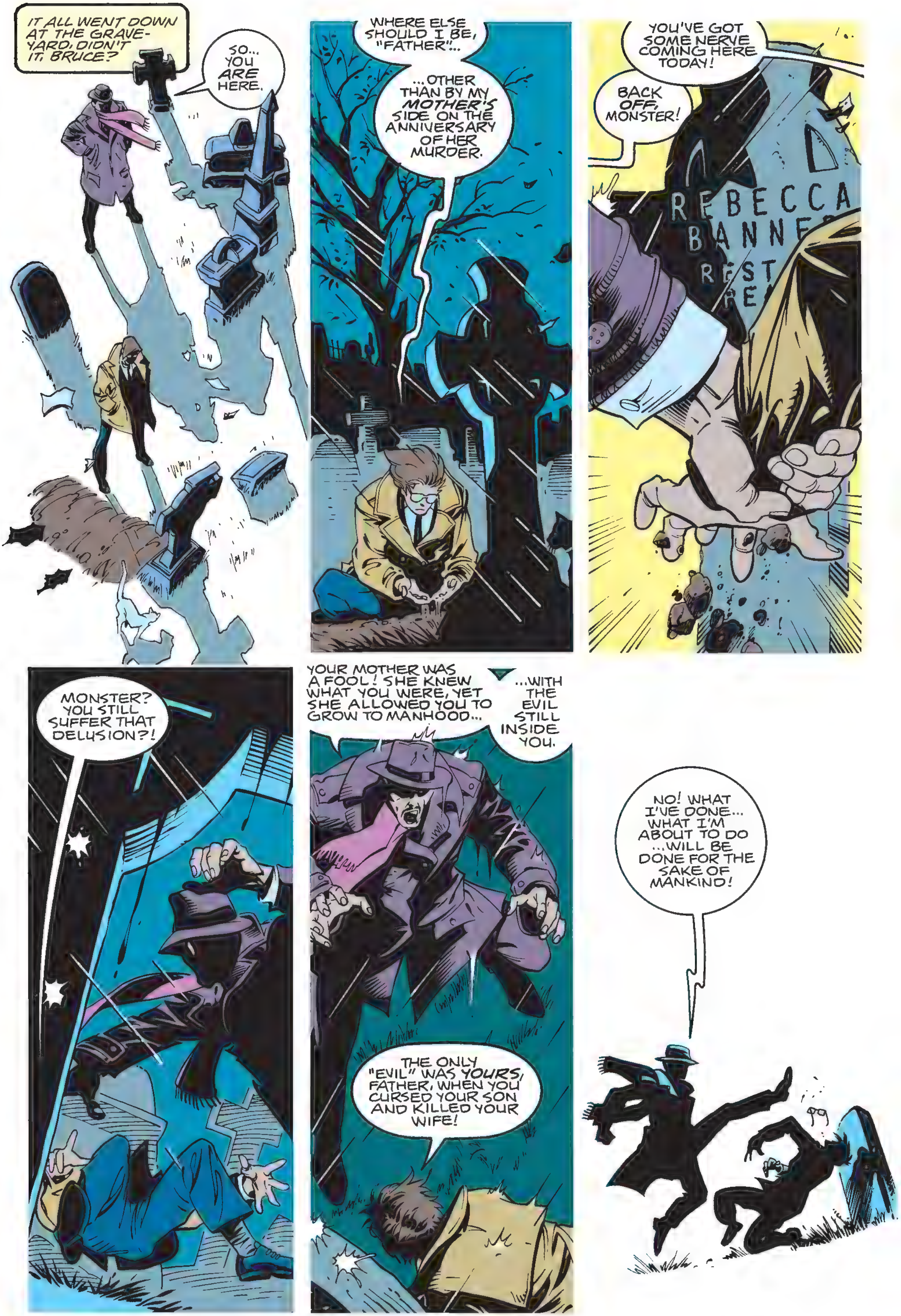

REMEMBER HOW YOU USED TO TURN ONLY AT *NIGHT*, BRUCE?
SMALL WONDER.
THE NIGHT... IT BRINGS OUT THE *WORST* IN US.
DOESN'T IT?
KNOCK! KNOCK!
16
KNOCK! KNOCK!
KNOCK! KNOCK!
WHAT WERE YOU DOING WITH THAT *KNIFE*, FATHER?
THERE'S SOMEONE AT THE DOOR.
THE KNIFE, DAD. *WHY?*

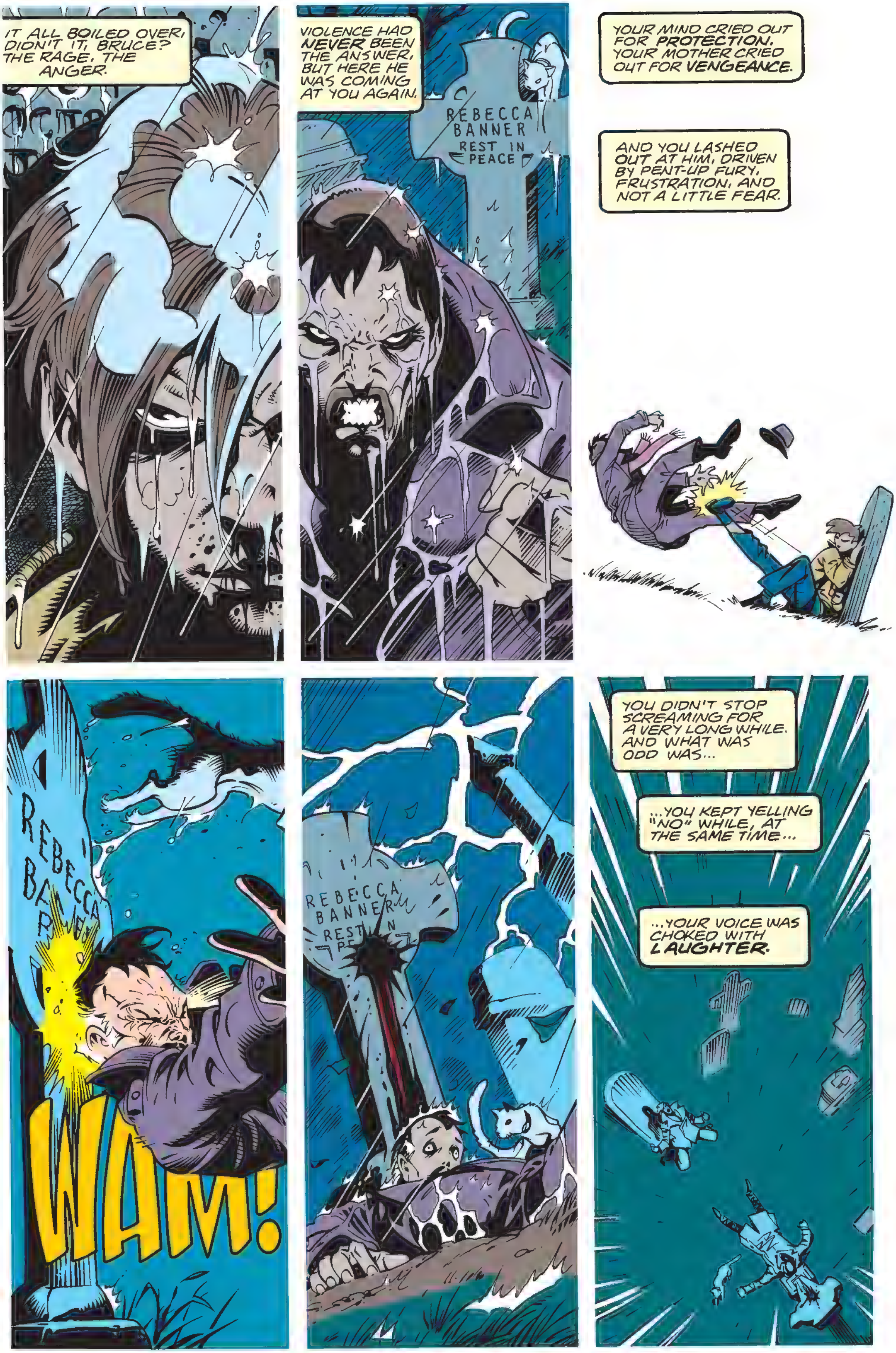

I HEARD SOMEONE *POUNDING* AWAY. I WANTED TO *PROTECT* MYSELF.
GENERAL ROSS. WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* HERE?
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN IN TOUCH SINCE WE MET LAST WEEK, BANNER. SO I DECIDED TO FOLLOW IT UP.
DSU
16
AND *YOU* ARE --?
BRUCE'S FATHER BRIAN. IT'S AN *HONOR*, GENERAL. I'M A VETERAN *MYSELF*.
US
16
YOU'RE A *MURDERER*, SIR. GET OUT OF MY SIGHT.

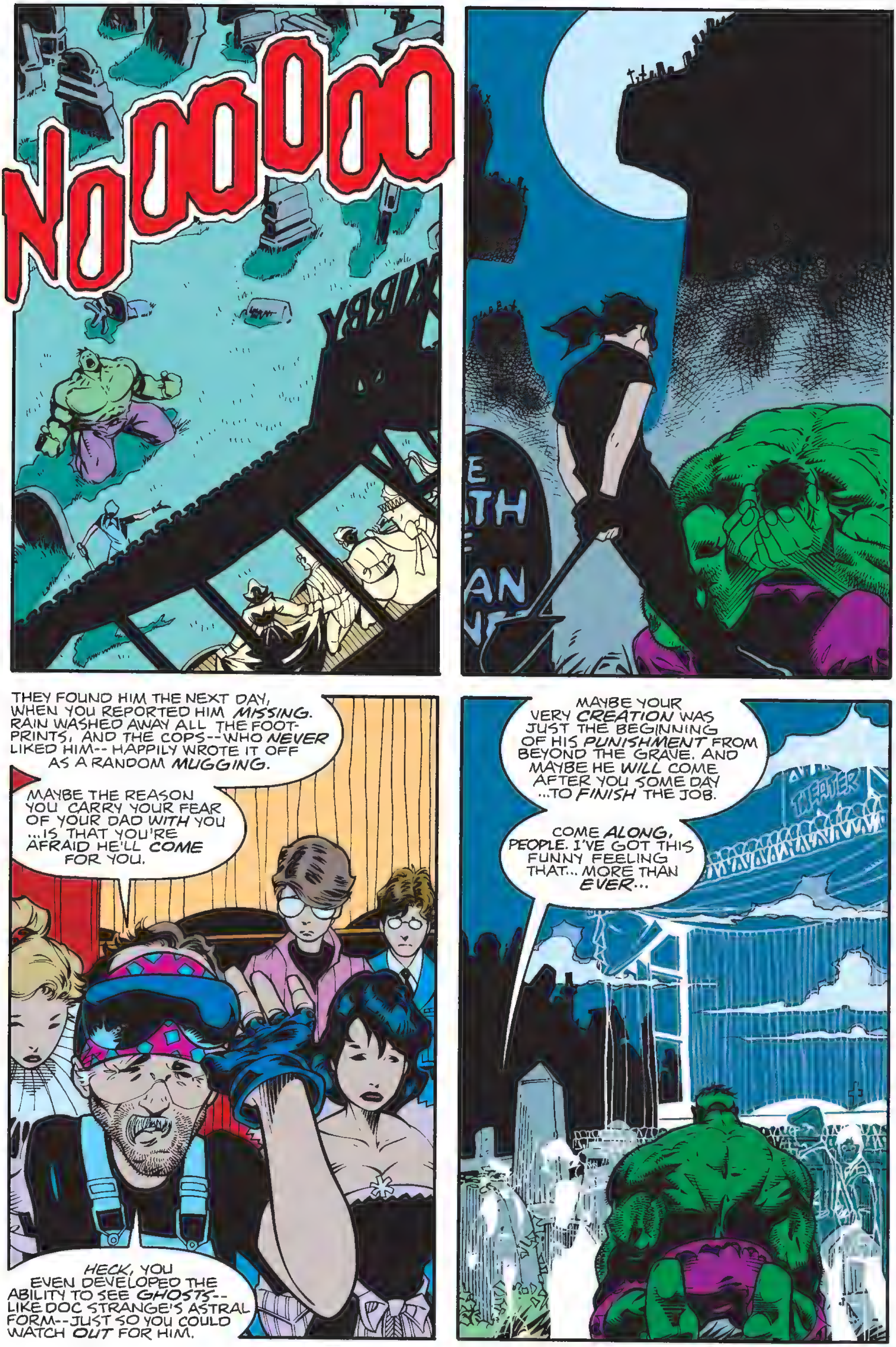

YOUR GENERATION LOVES TO CALL "MILITARY INTELLIGENCE" AN OXYMORON, BUT THE FACT IS, WE HAVE AN *EXTENSIVE* DOSSIER ON YOU, BANNER. A DOSSIER I'VE *MEMORIZED.*
HOW CAN YOU LET THAT... *THING* ...NEAR YOU?
HE'S MY FATHER. THE DOCTORS SAY HE'S *CHANGED.* HE...
I'M NOT SURE I *WANT* TO WORK WITH YOU NOW, BANNER. YOU PRESENTED YOURSELF AS A MAN OF *CONSCIENCE.* I COULD *ALMOST* RESPECT THAT.
NOW YOU JUST SEEM LIKE A SPINELESS MILKSOP.
I *RESENT* THAT, GENERAL, AND FRANKLY, IT'S NONE OF YOUR *BUSINESS!* HE'S MY FATHER--!
AND WHEN YOU'RE AROUND HIM, YOU REVERT TO *INFANCY.*
BE A MAN, BANNER. IF NOT FOR YOUR LATE MOTHER'S SAKE, THEN *YOURS.*
BE A *MAN.*
US

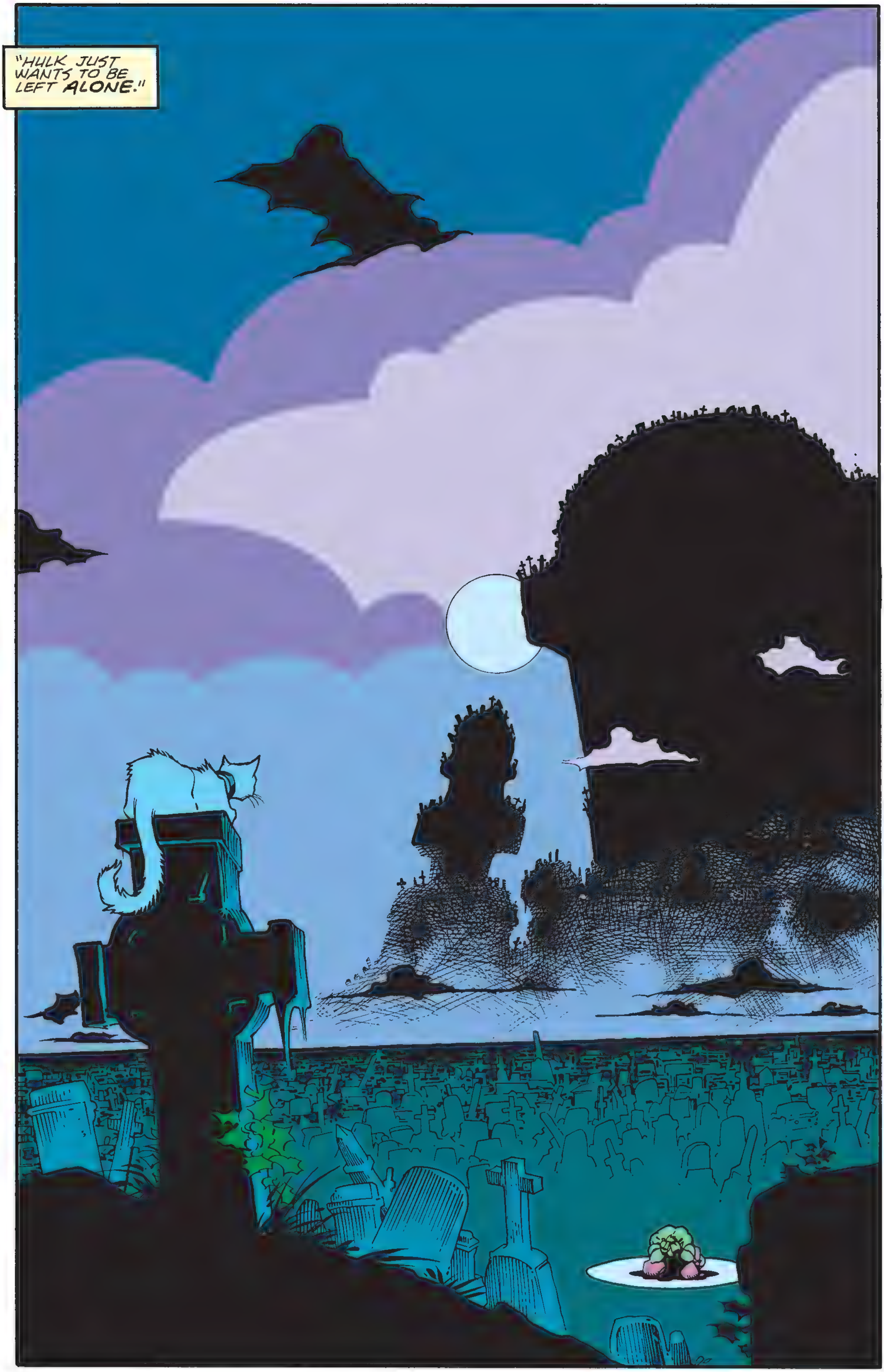

THIS DIDN'T HAPPEN! *NONE* OF IT HAPPENED!
SURE IT DID, HULK! TELL ME-- WHY WOULD A MAN WHO *"DESPISED"* VIOLENCE... CREATE A WEAPON OF VIOLENCE?
YOU SHUT OUT WHAT *ALTERED* YOUR MINDSET.
YOU'VE BEEN SHOUTING FOR "MORE," MISSING THE BRUCE BANNER PART OF YOU... BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS *DISDAINED* BANNER.
MAYBE YOU SENSE THAT HE HELPED *PROTECT* YOU FROM THINGS YOU'D RATHER *NOT* FACE.
TELL ME, HULK... *HOW* DID BRIAN BANNER DIE?
THE ANNIVERSARY... OF *HER* DEATH...
...THERE WERE SOME *MUGGERS*... OR HE *FELL*, I THINK...
...HE WALKED *AWAY*, AND...
NO.
EVERY TIME YOU THINK YOU'VE MADE *PEACE* WITH BRIAN... HE *HAUNTS* YOU AGAIN.
DON'T YOU WONDER *WHY?* IS THERE SOMETHING THAT'S *NAGGING* AT YOU... SOMETHING YOU--
NO! NO!

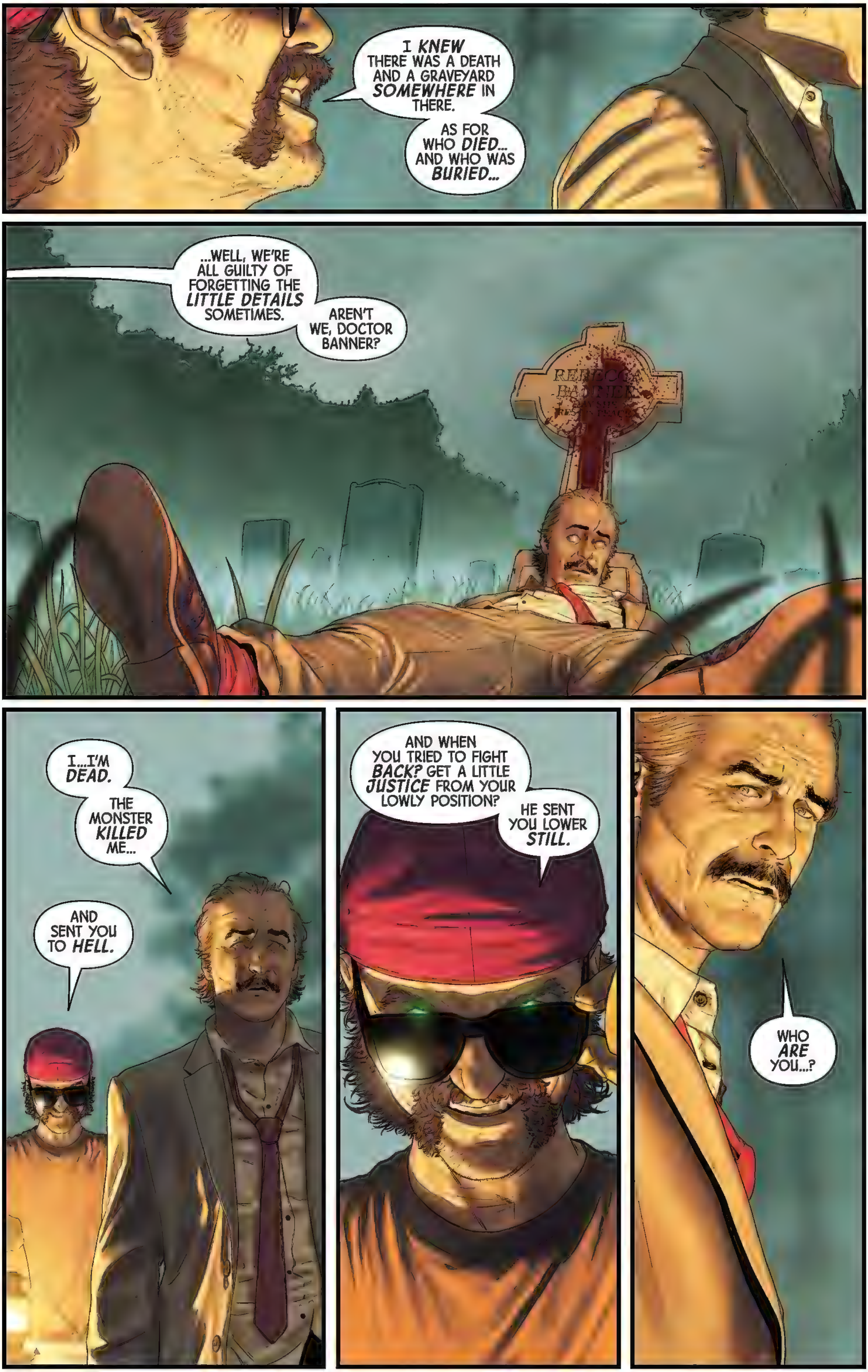

NO, FATHER! I WANT TO BE ALONE AWHILE! YOU'VE BEEN ACTING STRANGER AND STRANGER THE PAST FEW DAYS.
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD CHECK YOURSELF BACK INTO THE--
YOU WANT TO STICK ME IN THAT PLACE AGAIN. LOCK ME AWAY FOREVER.
IT WOULD BE VOLUNTARY IF YOU CHECKED YOURSELF IN. YOU COULD LEAVE AS YOU PLEASE.
MY FIRST CONCERN IS YOU. THINGS ARE EATING AWAY AT YOU THAT POISONED YOU. POISONED YOUR RELATIONSHIPS.
YOU'RE HAVING TROUBLE DEALING WITH THEM IN THE HARSH LIGHT OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD, AND MAYBE--
MAYBE YOU'RE WHAT'S BEEN EATING AWAY AT ME! MAYBE THE REASON I GOT BETTER IN THE ASYLUM WAS BECAUSE I WAS AWAY FROM YOU!
DID YOU EVER CONSIDER THAT? MAYBE IT'S NOT IN ME!
MAYBE IT'S IN YOU! AND MAYBE THE FACT THAT I SEE THROUGH YOU SCARES THE SPIT OUT OF YOU!
I DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO THIS.
GET BACK HERE!

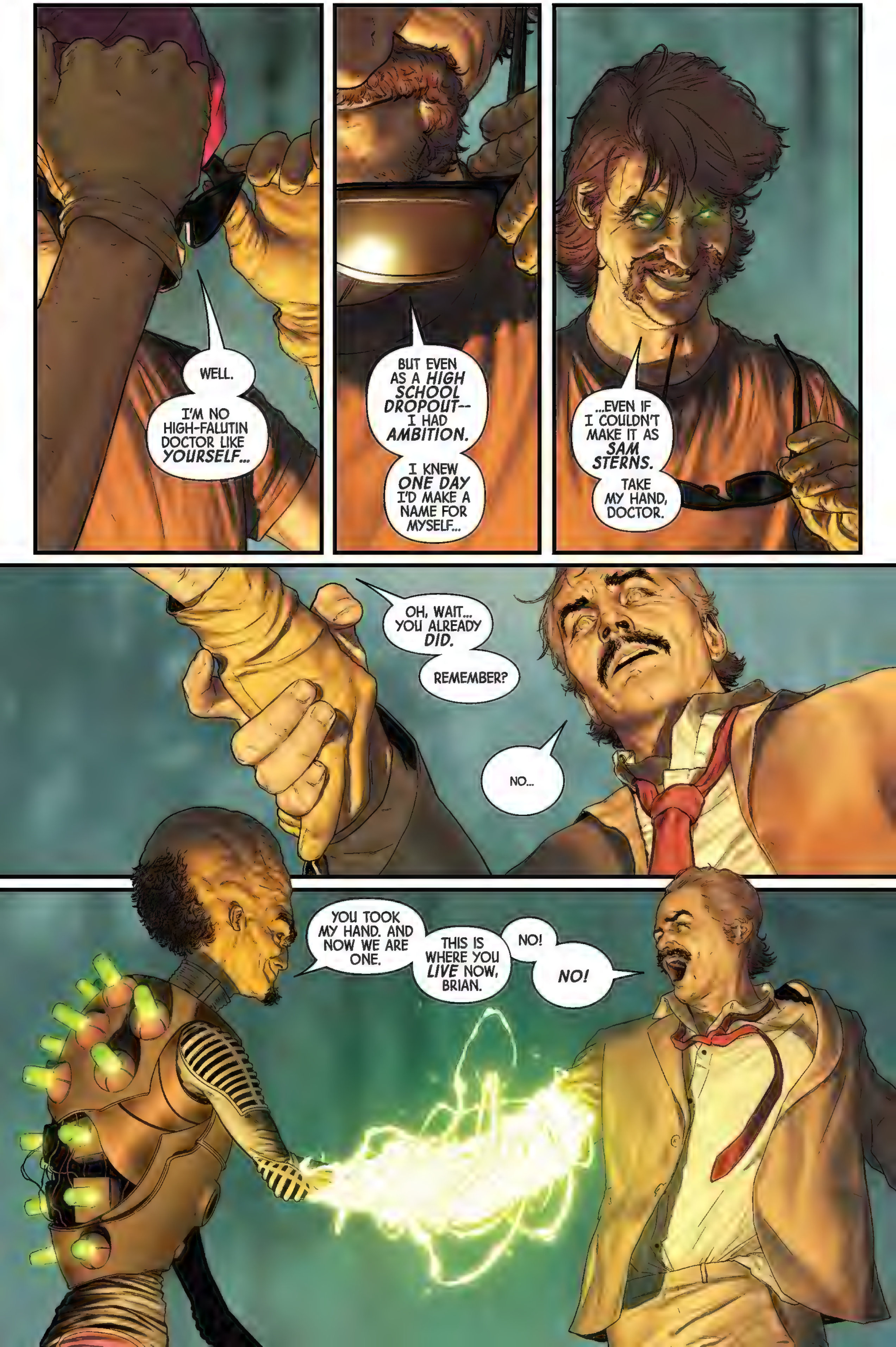

IT ALL WENT DOWN AT THE GRAVEYARD, DIDN'T IT, BRUCE?
SO... YOU ARE HERE.
WHERE ELSE SHOULD I BE, "FATHER"...
...OTHER THAN BY MY MOTHER'S SIDE ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF HER MURDER.
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE COMING HERE TODAY!
BACK OFF, MONSTER!
REBECCA
BANNE
REST
MONSTER? YOU STILL SUFFER THAT DELUSION?!
YOUR MOTHER WAS A FOOL! SHE KNEW WHAT YOU WERE, YET SHE ALLOWED YOU TO GROW TO MANHOOD...
...WITH THE EVIL STILL INSIDE YOU.
THE ONLY "EVIL" WAS YOURS, FATHER, WHEN YOU CURSED YOUR SON AND KILLED YOUR WIFE!
NO! WHAT I'VE DONE... WHAT I'M ABOUT TO DO ...WILL BE DONE FOR THE SAKE OF MANKIND!

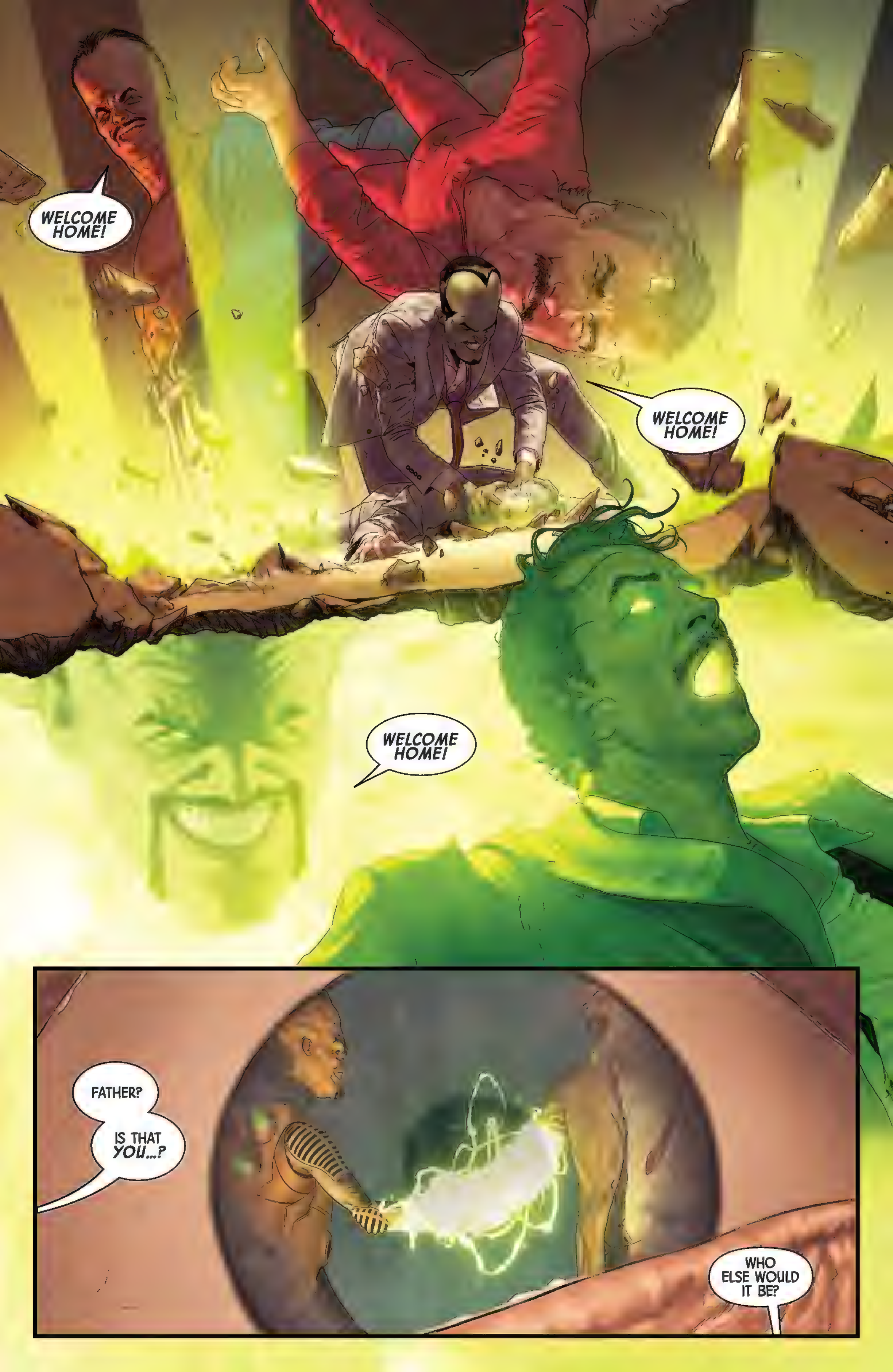

IT ALL BOILED OVER, DIDN'T IT, BRUCE? THE RAGE, THE ANGER.
VIOLENCE HAD **NEVER** BEEN THE ANSWER, BUT HERE HE WAS COMING AT YOU AGAIN.
REBECCA BANNER REST IN PEACE
YOUR MIND CRIED OUT FOR **PROTECTION.** YOUR MOTHER CRIED OUT FOR **VENGEANCE.**
AND YOU LASHED OUT AT HIM, DRIVEN BY PENT-UP FURY, FRUSTRATION, AND NOT A LITTLE FEAR.
REBECCA BA
WAM!
REBECCA BANNER REST IN PE
YOU DIDN'T STOP SCREAMING FOR A VERY LONG WHILE. AND WHAT WAS ODD WAS...
...YOU KEPT YELLING "NO" WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME...
...YOUR VOICE WAS CHOKED WITH **LAUGHTER.**

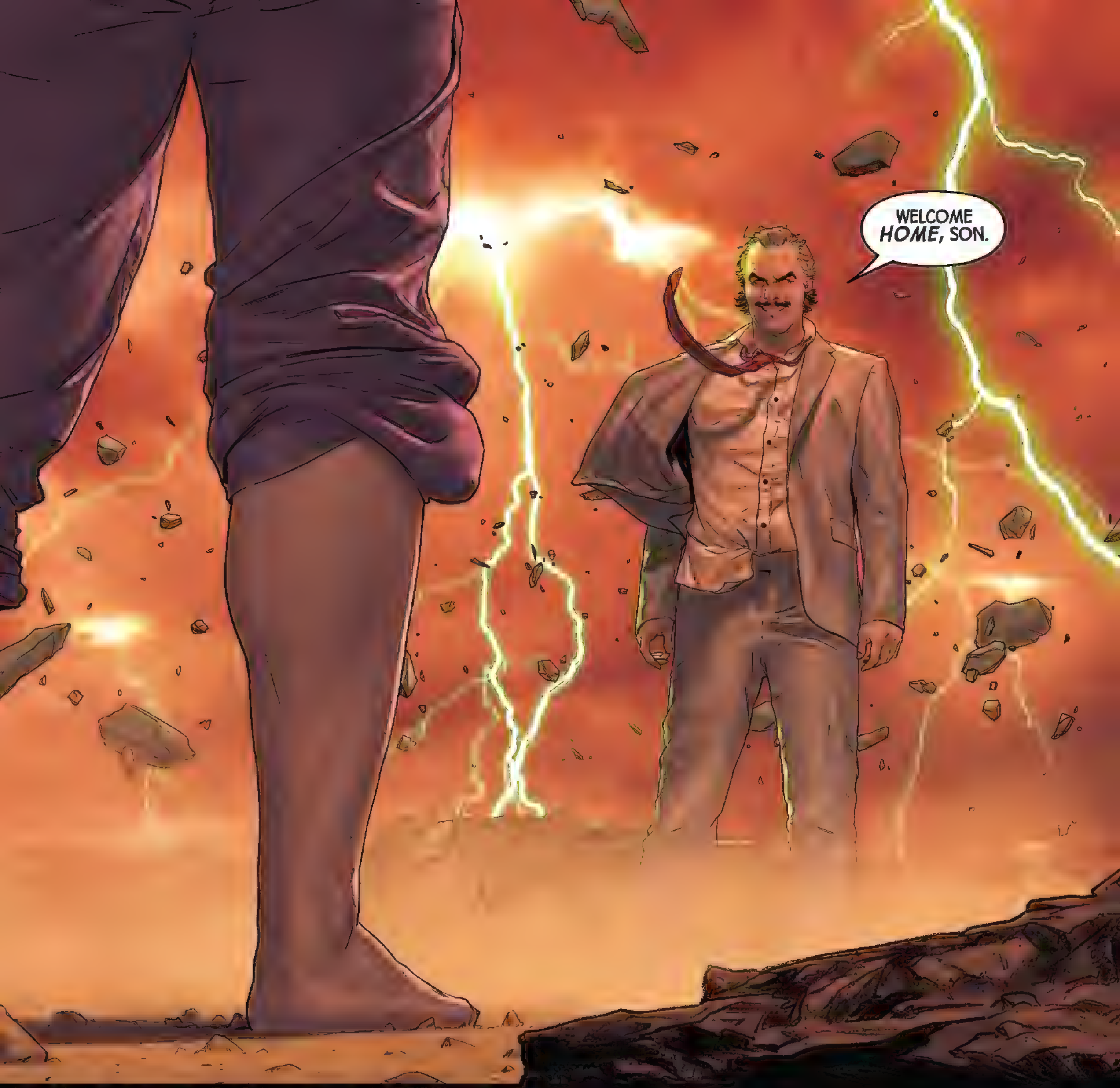

NOOOOOO
KIRBY
THEY FOUND HIM THE NEXT DAY, WHEN YOU REPORTED HIM *MISSING*. RAIN WASHED AWAY ALL THE FOOTPRINTS, AND THE COPS--WHO *NEVER* LIKED HIM-- HAPPILY WROTE IT OFF AS A RANDOM *MUGGING*.
MAYBE THE REASON YOU CARRY YOUR FEAR OF YOUR DAD *WITH* YOU ...IS THAT YOU'RE AFRAID HE'LL *COME* FOR YOU.
HECK, YOU EVEN DEVELOPED THE ABILITY TO SEE *GHOSTS*-- LIKE DOC STRANGE'S ASTRAL FORM--JUST SO YOU COULD WATCH *OUT* FOR HIM.
MAYBE YOUR VERY *CREATION* WAS JUST THE BEGINNING OF HIS *PUNISHMENT* FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE. AND MAYBE HE *WILL* COME AFTER YOU SOME DAY ...TO *FINISH* THE JOB.
COME *ALONG*, PEOPLE. I'VE GOT THIS FUNNY FEELING THAT... MORE THAN *EVER*...
THEATER


"HULK JUST WANTS TO BE LEFT ALONE."


I *KNEW* THERE WAS A DEATH AND A GRAVEYARD *SOMEWHERE* IN THERE.
AS FOR WHO *DIED*... AND WHO WAS *BURIED*...
...WELL, WE'RE ALL GUILTY OF FORGETTING THE *LITTLE DETAILS* SOMETIMES.
AREN'T WE, DOCTOR BANNER?
REBECCA BANNER
I...I'M *DEAD.*
THE MONSTER *KILLED* ME...
AND SENT YOU TO *HELL.*
AND WHEN YOU TRIED TO FIGHT *BACK?* GET A LITTLE *JUSTICE* FROM YOUR LOWLY POSITION?
HE SENT YOU LOWER *STILL.*
WHO *ARE* YOU...?


WELL.
I'M NO HIGH-FALUTIN DOCTOR LIKE *YOURSELF...*
BUT EVEN AS A ***HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT--*** I HAD ***AMBITION.***
I KNEW ***ONE DAY*** I'D MAKE A NAME FOR MYSELF...
...EVEN IF I COULDN'T MAKE IT AS ***SAM STERNS.***
TAKE MY HAND, DOCTOR.
OH, WAIT... YOU ALREADY ***DID.***
REMEMBER?
NO...
YOU TOOK MY HAND. AND NOW WE ARE ONE.
THIS IS WHERE YOU *LIVE* NOW, BRIAN.
NO!
NO!


WELCOME HOME!
WELCOME HOME!
WELCOME HOME!
FATHER?
IS THAT *YOU...?*
WHO ELSE WOULD IT BE?

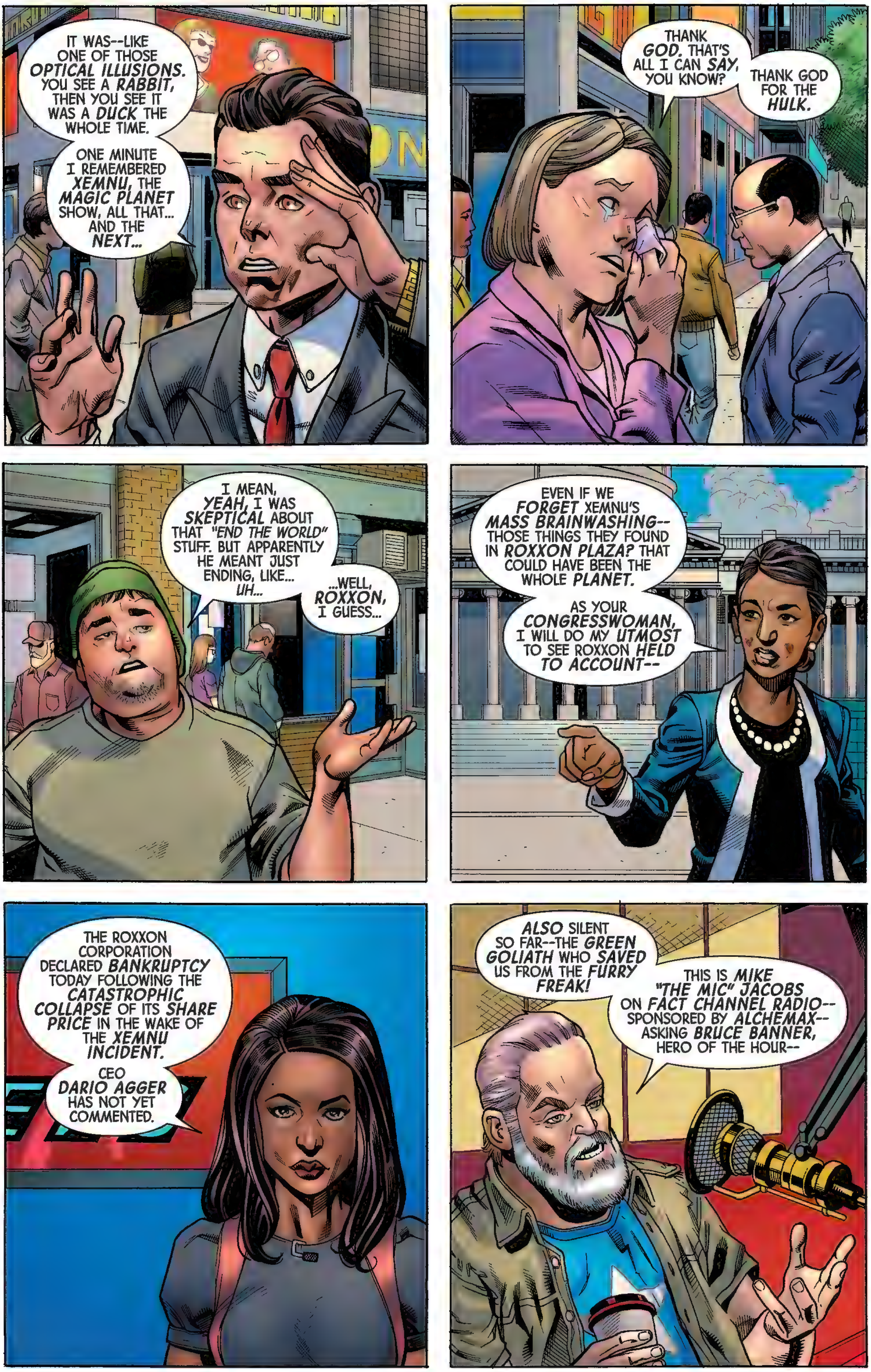

WELCOME HOME, SON.

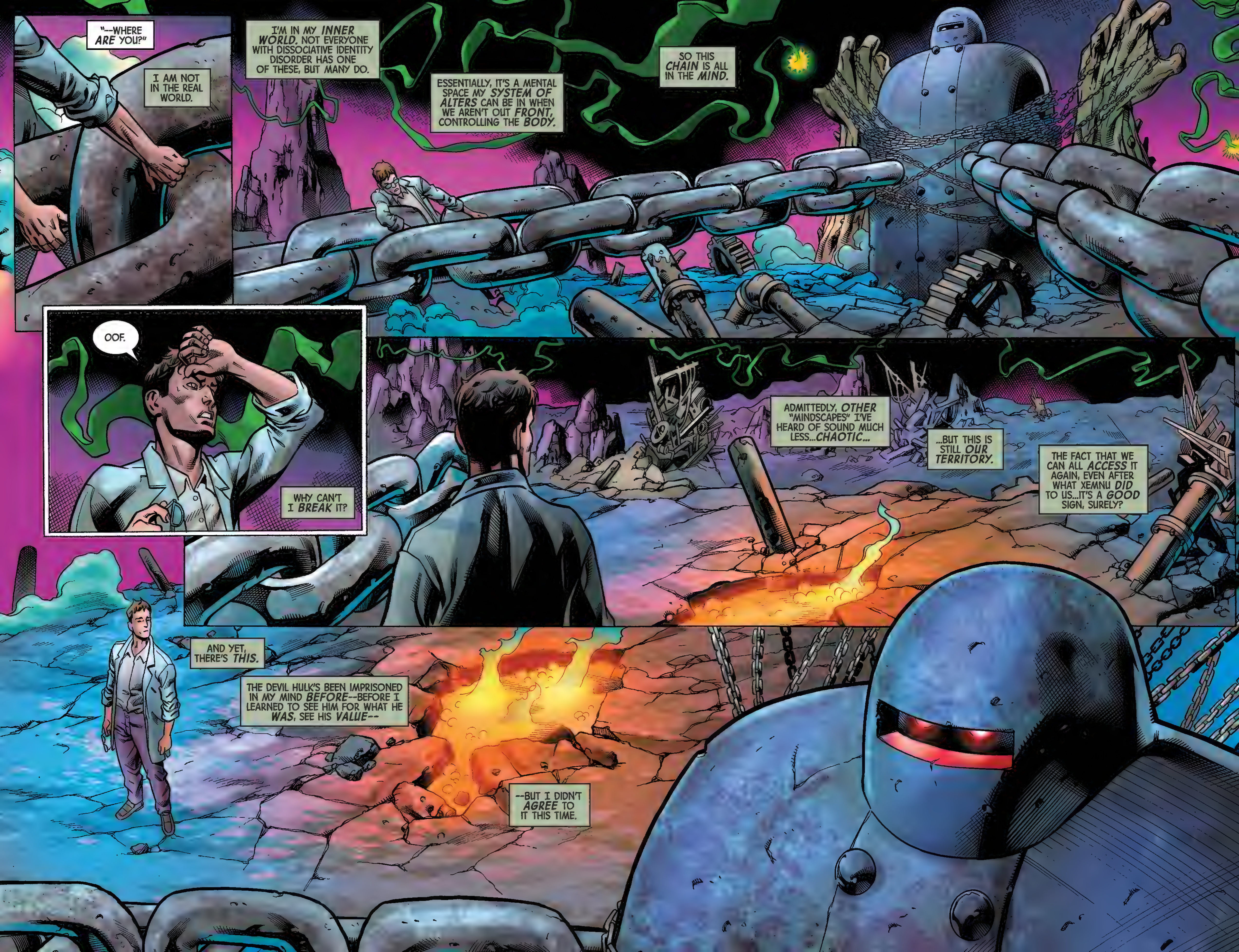
AT GROUND ZERO

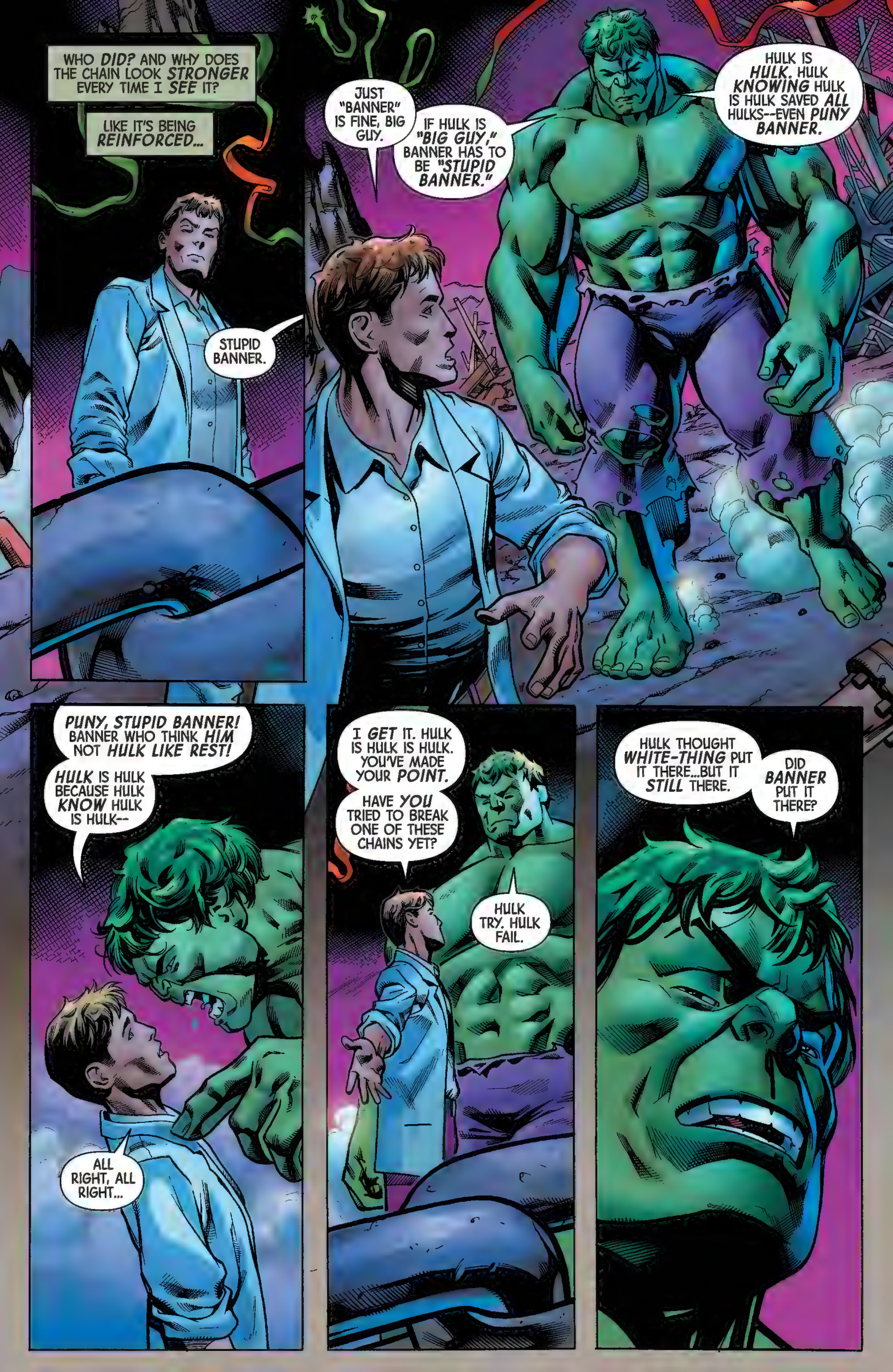
35

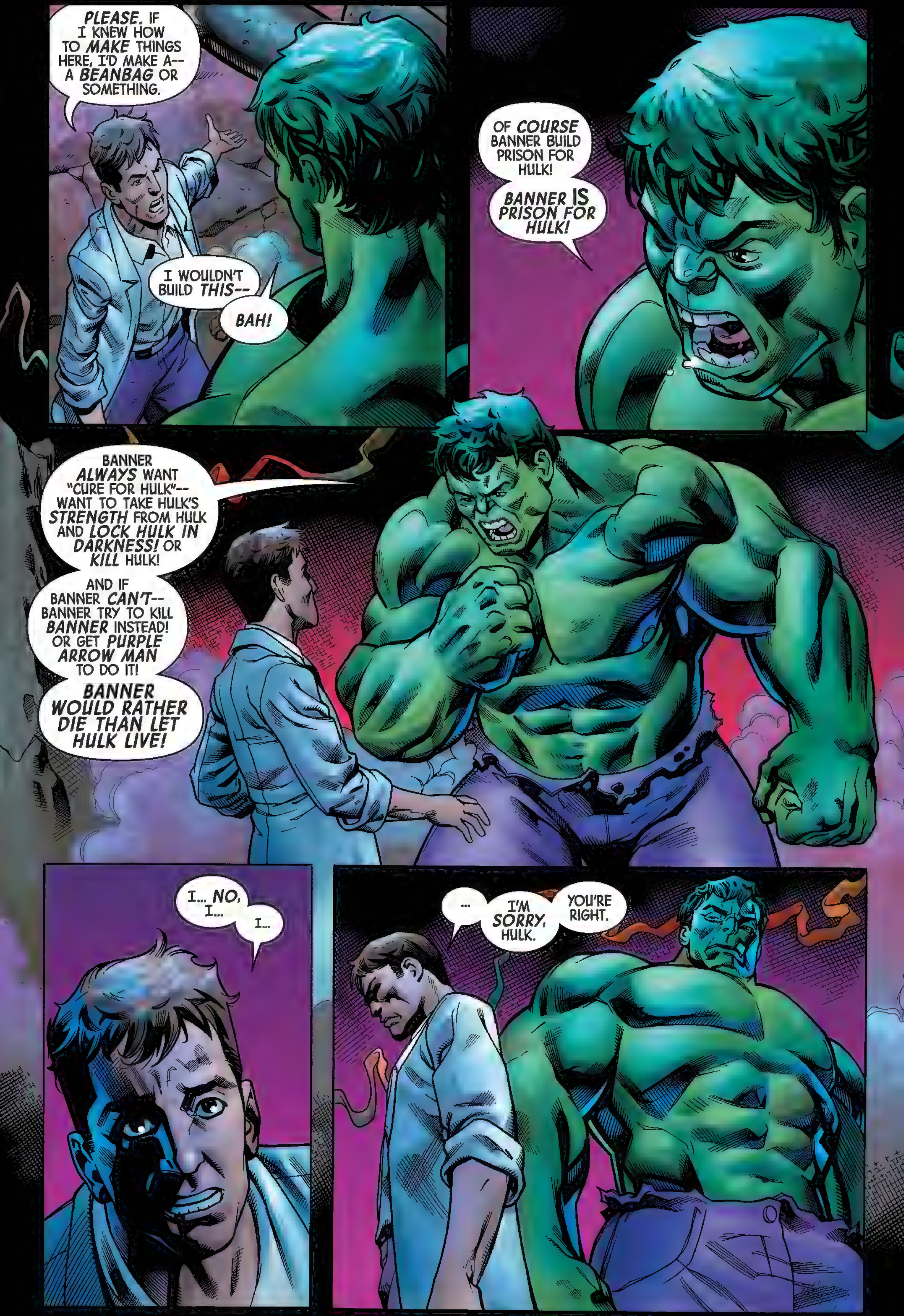
"THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF KINDNESS, JUST AS THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF LIGHT... WE CAST A SHADOW ON SOMETHING WHEREVER WE STAND, AND IT IS NO GOOD MOVING FROM PLACE TO PLACE TO SAVE THINGS; BECAUSE THE SHADOW ALWAYS FOLLOWS."

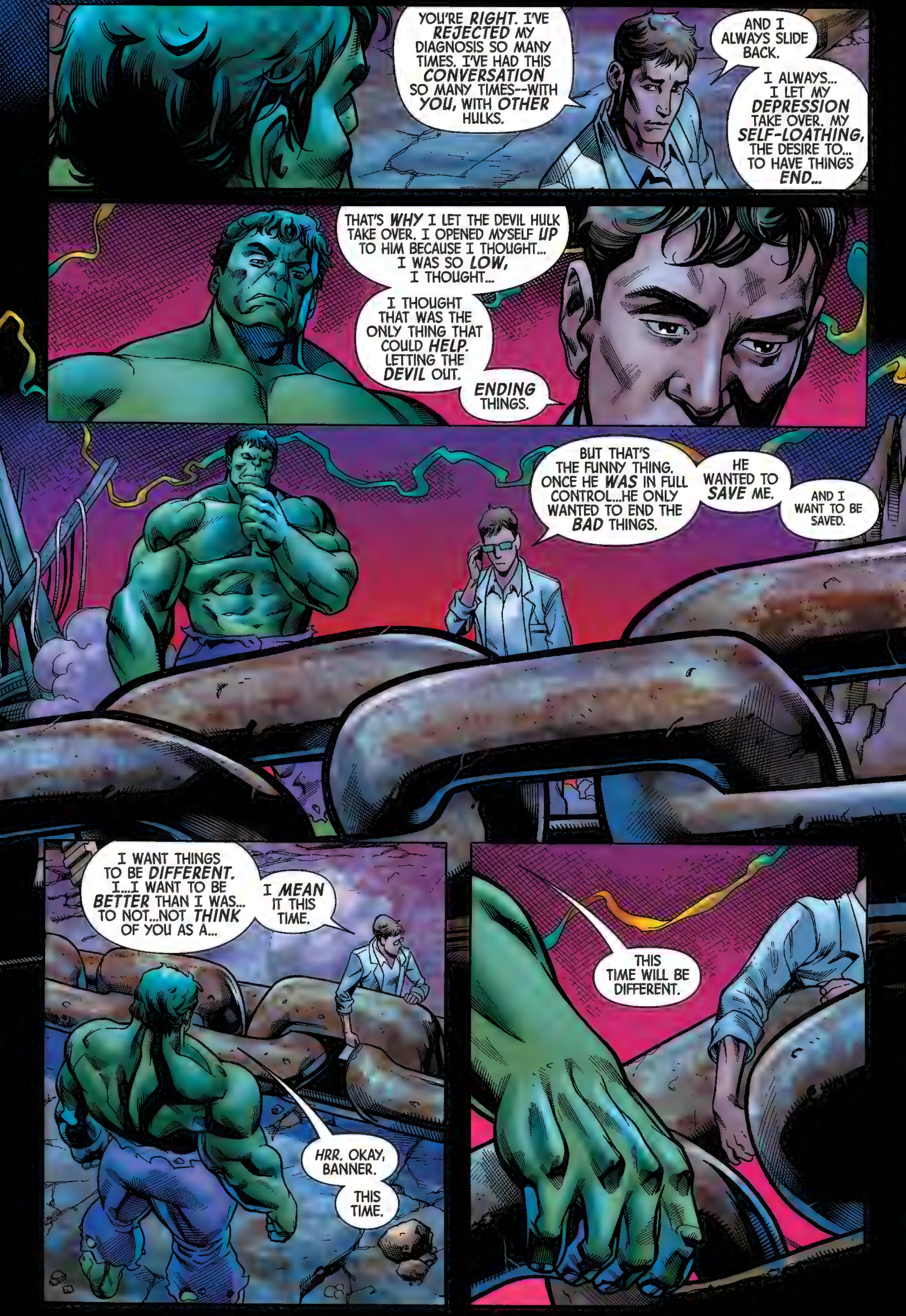
– E.M. FORSTER
A ROOM WITH A VIEW

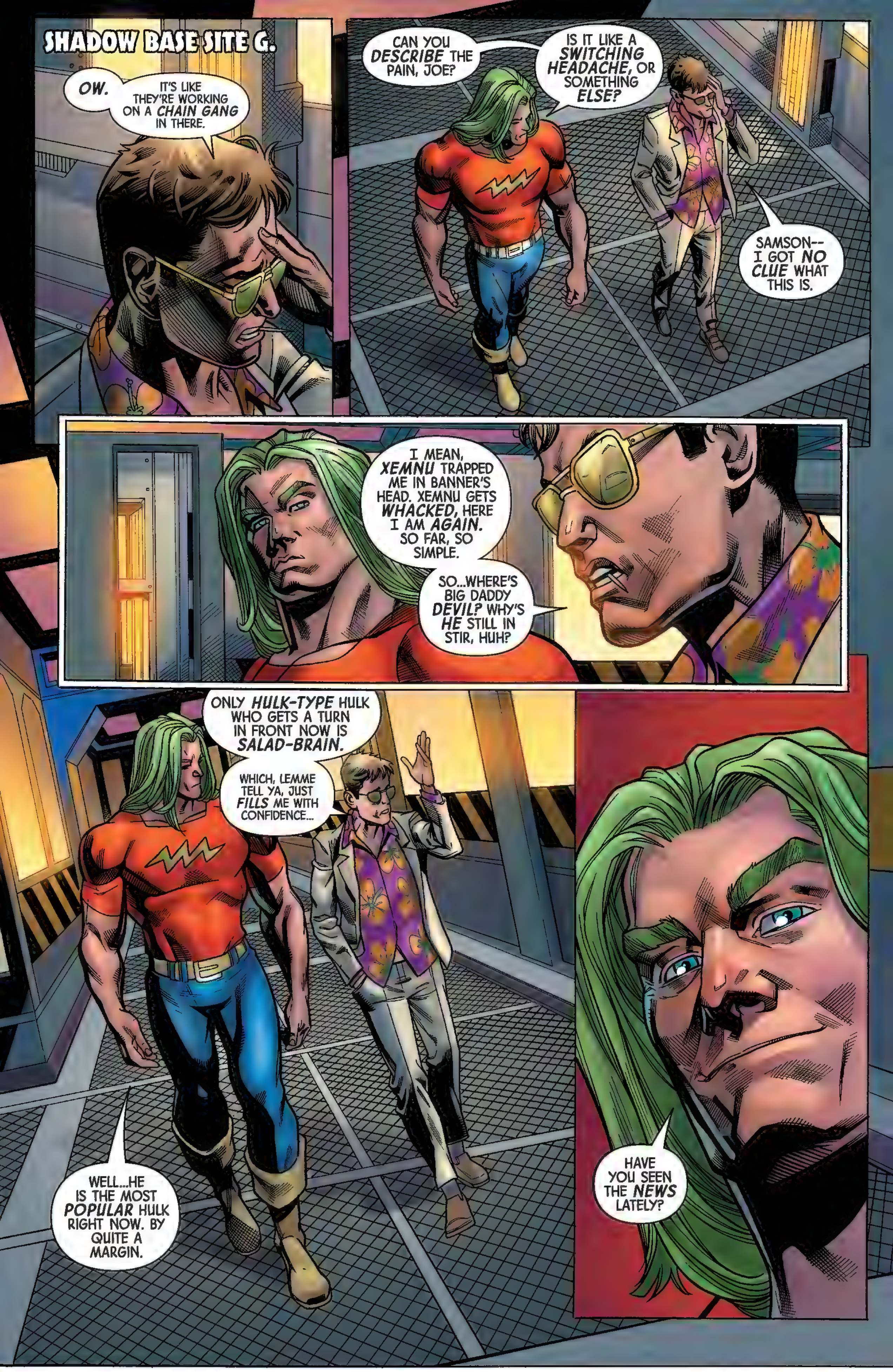

IT WAS--LIKE ONE OF THOSE *OPTICAL ILLUSIONS.* YOU SEE A *RABBIT,* THEN YOU SEE IT WAS A *DUCK* THE WHOLE TIME.
ONE MINUTE I REMEMBERED *XEMNU,* THE *MAGIC PLANET* SHOW, ALL THAT... AND THE *NEXT...*
THANK *GOD.* THAT'S ALL I CAN *SAY,* YOU KNOW?
THANK GOD FOR THE *HULK.*
I MEAN, *YEAH,* I WAS *SKEPTICAL* ABOUT THAT *"END THE WORLD"* STUFF. BUT APPARENTLY HE MEANT JUST ENDING, LIKE... *UH...*
...WELL, *ROXXON,* I GUESS...
EVEN IF WE *FORGET* XEMNU'S *MASS BRAINWASHING--* THOSE THINGS THEY FOUND IN *ROXXON PLAZA?* THAT COULD HAVE BEEN THE WHOLE *PLANET.*
AS YOUR *CONGRESSWOMAN,* I WILL DO MY *UTMOST* TO SEE ROXXON *HELD TO ACCOUNT--*
THE ROXXON CORPORATION DECLARED *BANKRUPTCY* TODAY FOLLOWING THE *CATASTROPHIC COLLAPSE* OF ITS *SHARE PRICE* IN THE WAKE OF THE *XEMNU INCIDENT.*
CEO *DARIO AGGER* HAS NOT YET COMMENTED.
ALSO SILENT SO FAR--THE *GREEN GOLIATH* WHO *SAVED* US FROM THE *FURRY FREAK!*
THIS IS *MIKE "THE MIC" JACOBS* ON *FACT CHANNEL RADIO--* SPONSORED BY *ALCHEMAX--* ASKING *BRUCE BANNER,* HERO OF THE HOUR--

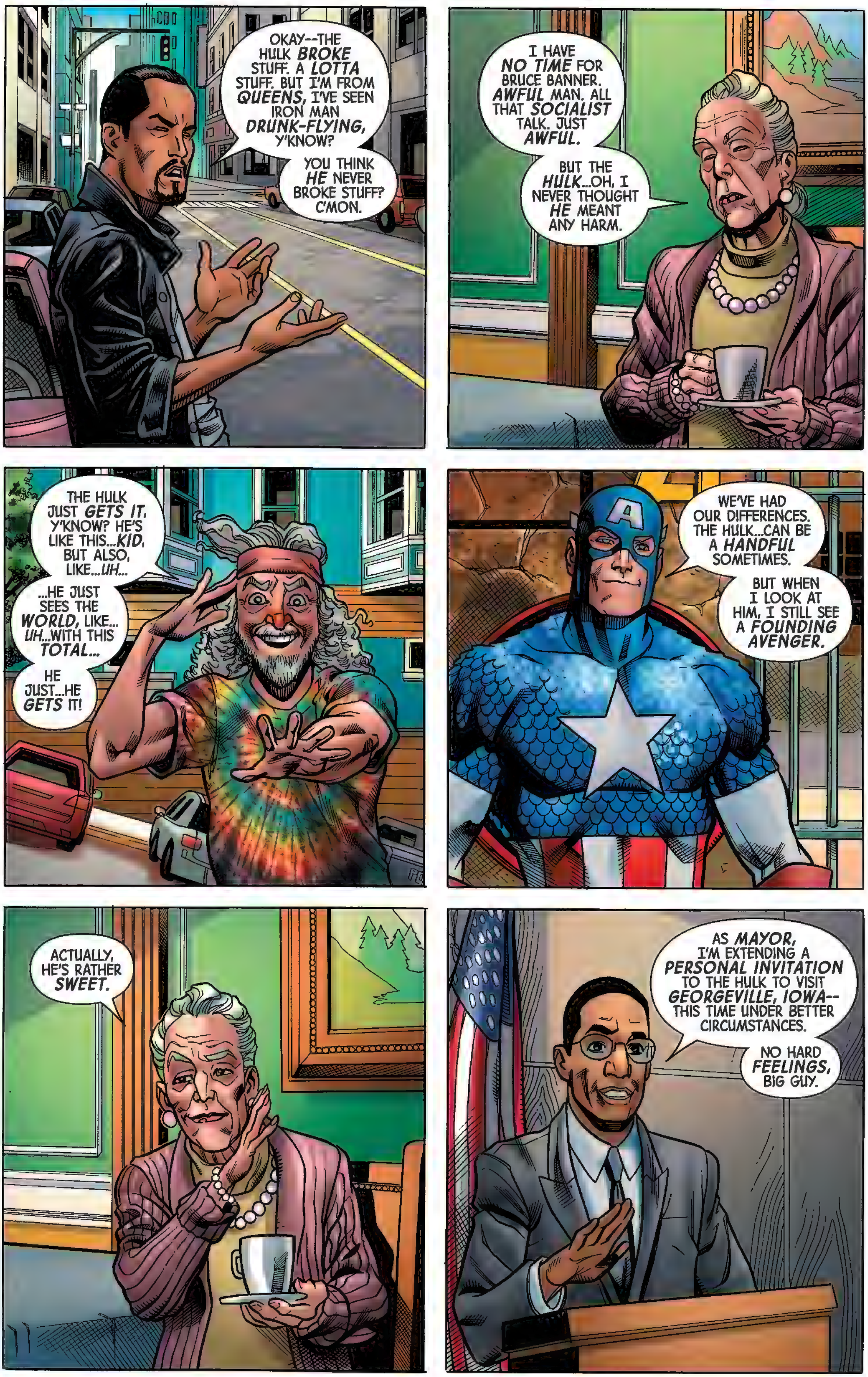

"--WHERE *ARE* YOU?"
I AM NOT IN THE REAL WORLD.
I'M IN MY *INNER WORLD.* NOT EVERYONE WITH DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER HAS ONE OF THESE, BUT *MANY* DO.
ESSENTIALLY, IT'S A MENTAL SPACE MY *SYSTEM OF ALTERS* CAN BE IN WHEN WE AREN'T OUT *FRONT,* CONTROLLING THE *BODY.*
SO THIS *CHAIN* IS ALL IN THE *MIND.*
OOF.
WHY CAN'T I *BREAK* IT?
ADMITTEDLY, *OTHER* "MINDSCAPES" I'VE HEARD OF SOUND MUCH LESS...*CHAOTIC*...
...BUT THIS IS STILL *OUR TERRITORY.*
THE FACT THAT WE CAN ALL *ACCESS* IT AGAIN, EVEN AFTER WHAT XEMNU *DID* TO US...IT'S A *GOOD* SIGN, SURELY?
AND YET, THERE'S *THIS.*
THE DEVIL HULK'S BEEN IMPRISONED IN MY MIND *BEFORE*--BEFORE I LEARNED TO SEE HIM FOR WHAT HE *WAS,* SEE HIS *VALUE*--
--BUT I DIDN'T *AGREE* TO IT THIS TIME.

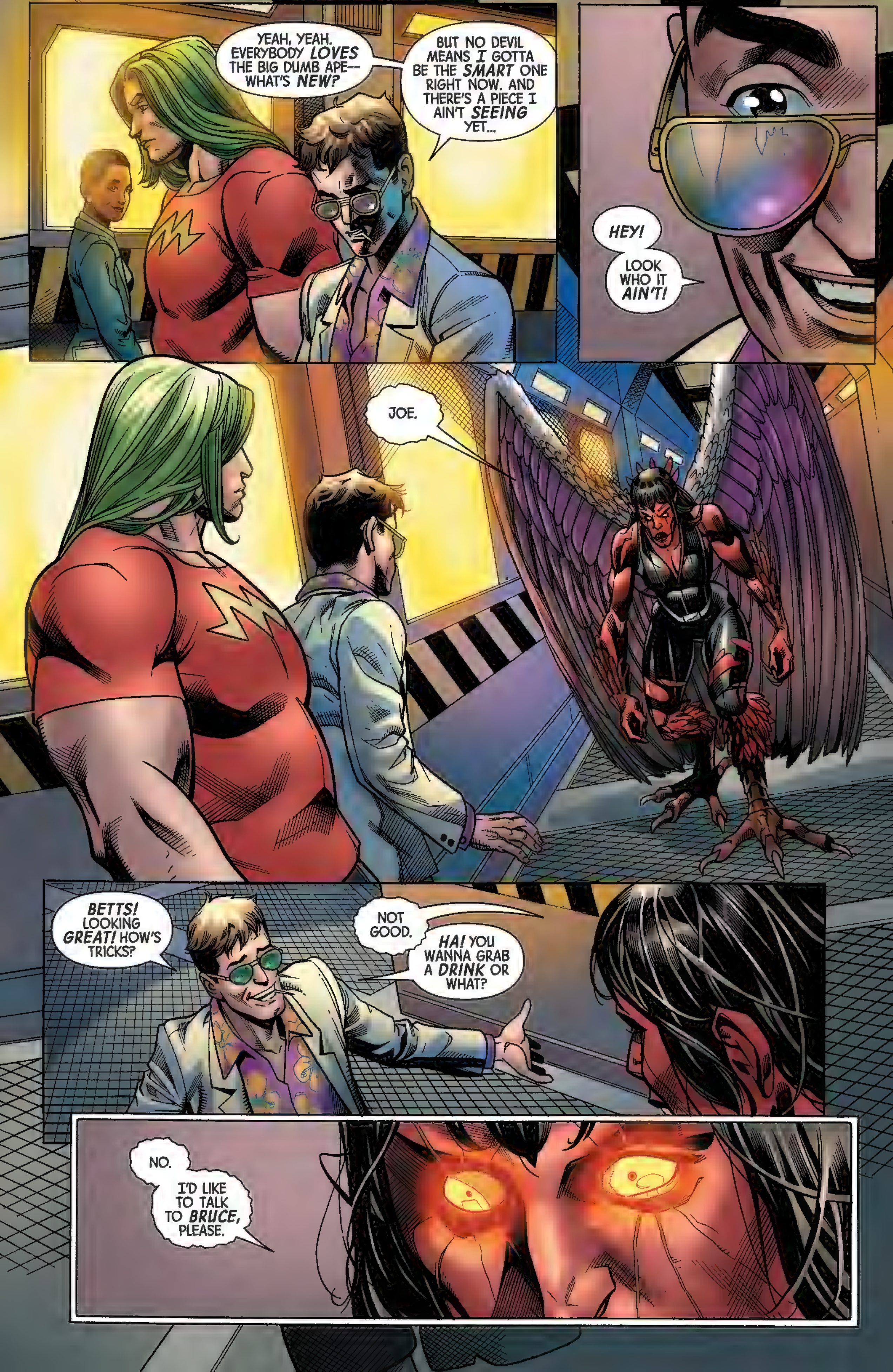

WHO DID? AND WHY DOES THE CHAIN LOOK STRONGER EVERY TIME I SEE IT?
LIKE IT'S BEING REINFORCED...
STUPID BANNER.
JUST "BANNER" IS FINE, BIG GUY.
IF HULK IS "BIG GUY," BANNER HAS TO BE "STUPID BANNER."
HULK IS HULK. HULK KNOWING HULK IS HULK SAVED ALL HULKS--EVEN PUNY BANNER.
PUNY, STUPID BANNER! BANNER WHO THINK HIM NOT HULK LIKE REST!
HULK IS HULK BECAUSE HULK KNOW HULK IS HULK--
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT...
I GET IT. HULK IS HULK IS HULK. YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT.
HAVE YOU TRIED TO BREAK ONE OF THESE CHAINS YET?
HULK TRY. HULK FAIL.
HULK THOUGHT WHITE-THING PUT IT THERE...BUT IT STILL THERE.
DID BANNER PUT IT THERE?

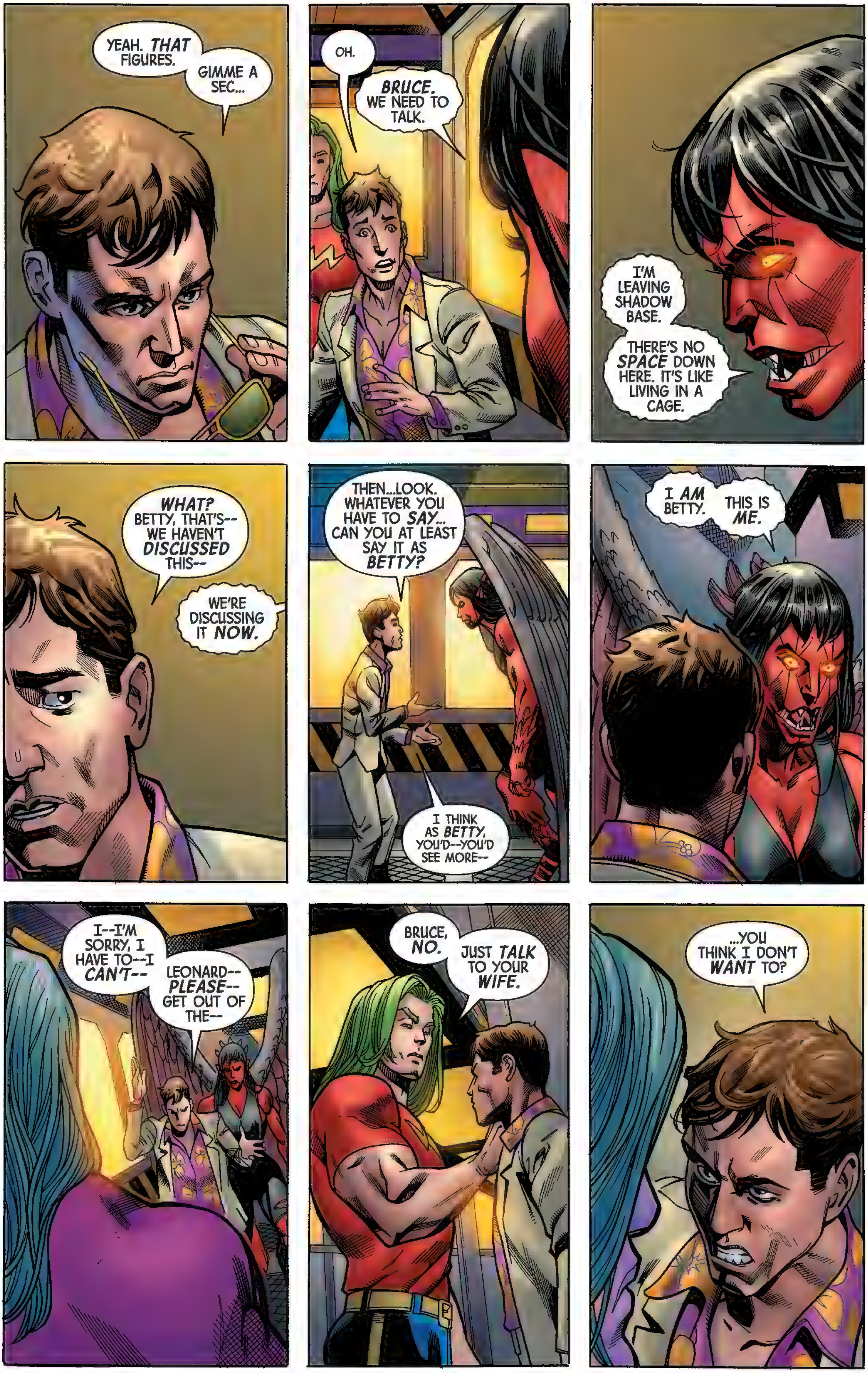

PLEASE. IF I KNEW HOW TO MAKE THINGS HERE, I'D MAKE A-- A BEANBAG OR SOMETHING.
I WOULDN'T BUILD THIS--
BAH!
OF COURSE BANNER BUILD PRISON FOR HULK!
BANNER IS PRISON FOR HULK!
BANNER ALWAYS WANT "CURE FOR HULK"-- WANT TO TAKE HULK'S STRENGTH FROM HULK AND LOCK HULK IN DARKNESS! OR KILL HULK!
AND IF BANNER CAN'T-- BANNER TRY TO KILL BANNER INSTEAD! OR GET PURPLE ARROW MAN TO DO IT!
BANNER WOULD RATHER DIE THAN LET HULK LIVE!
I... NO, I...
I...
...
I'M SORRY, HULK.
YOU'RE RIGHT.

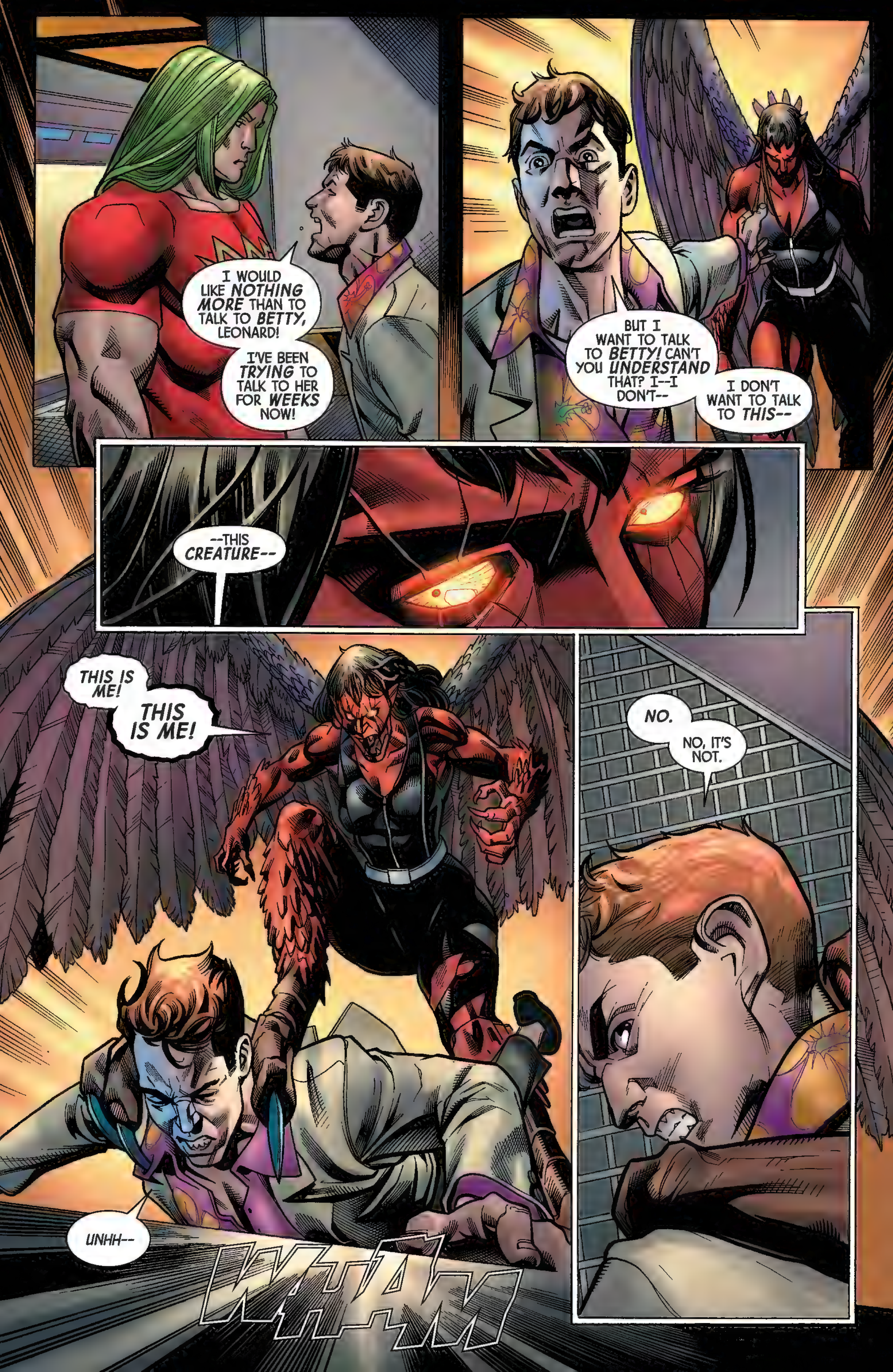

YOU'RE *RIGHT*. I'VE *REJECTED* MY DIAGNOSIS SO MANY TIMES. I'VE HAD THIS *CONVERSATION* SO MANY TIMES--WITH *YOU*, WITH *OTHER* HULKS.
AND I ALWAYS SLIDE BACK.
I ALWAYS... I LET MY *DEPRESSION* TAKE OVER. MY *SELF-LOATHING*, THE DESIRE TO... TO HAVE THINGS *END*...
THAT'S *WHY* I LET THE DEVIL HULK TAKE OVER. I OPENED MYSELF *UP* TO HIM BECAUSE I THOUGHT... I WAS SO *LOW*, I THOUGHT...
I THOUGHT THAT WAS THE ONLY THING THAT COULD *HELP*. LETTING THE *DEVIL* OUT.
ENDING THINGS.
BUT THAT'S THE FUNNY THING. ONCE HE *WAS* IN FULL CONTROL...HE ONLY WANTED TO END THE *BAD* THINGS.
HE WANTED TO *SAVE* ME.
AND I WANT TO BE SAVED.
I WANT THINGS TO BE *DIFFERENT*. I...I WANT TO BE *BETTER* THAN I WAS... TO NOT...NOT *THINK* OF YOU AS A...
I *MEAN* IT THIS TIME.
HRR. OKAY, BANNER.
THIS TIME.
THIS TIME WILL BE DIFFERENT.

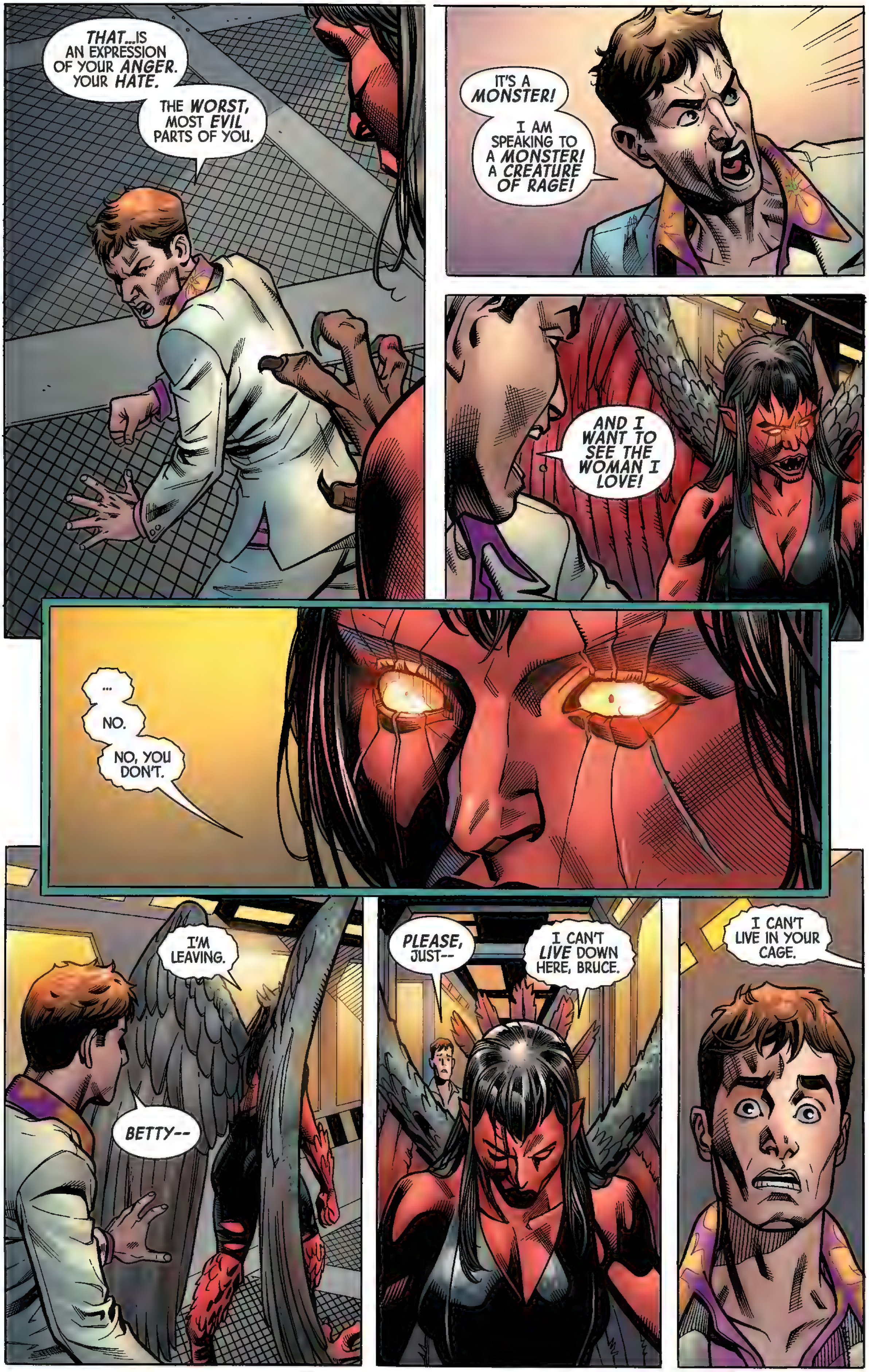

SHADOW BASE SITE G.
OW.
IT'S LIKE THEY'RE WORKING ON A *CHAIN GANG* IN THERE.
CAN YOU *DESCRIBE* THE PAIN, JOE?
IS IT LIKE A *SWITCHING HEADACHE,* OR SOMETHING *ELSE?*
SAMSON-- I GOT *NO CLUE* WHAT THIS IS.
I MEAN, *XEMNU* TRAPPED ME IN BANNER'S HEAD. XEMNU GETS *WHACKED,* HERE I AM *AGAIN.* SO FAR, SO SIMPLE.
SO...WHERE'S BIG DADDY *DEVIL?* WHY'S *HE* STILL IN STIR, HUH?
ONLY *HULK-TYPE* HULK WHO GETS A TURN IN FRONT NOW IS *SALAD-BRAIN.*
WHICH, LEMME TELL YA, JUST *FILLS* ME WITH CONFIDENCE...
WELL...HE IS THE MOST *POPULAR* HULK RIGHT NOW. BY QUITE A MARGIN.
HAVE YOU SEEN THE *NEWS* LATELY?

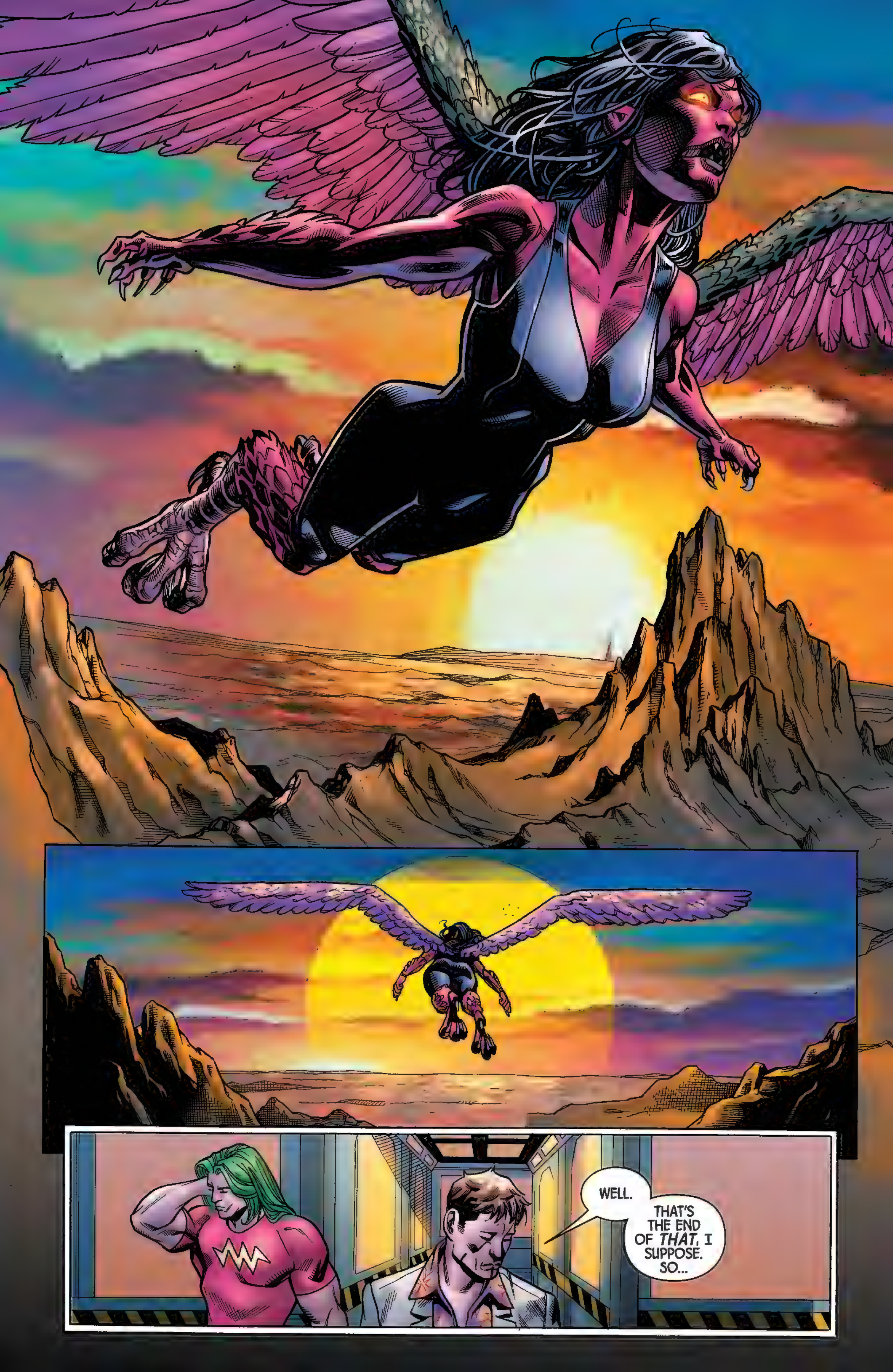

OKAY--THE HULK BROKE STUFF. A LOTTA STUFF. BUT I'M FROM QUEENS, I'VE SEEN IRON MAN DRUNK-FLYING, Y'KNOW?
YOU THINK HE NEVER BROKE STUFF? C'MON.
I HAVE NO TIME FOR BRUCE BANNER. AWFUL MAN. ALL THAT SOCIALIST TALK. JUST AWFUL.
BUT THE HULK...OH, I NEVER THOUGHT HE MEANT ANY HARM.
THE HULK JUST GETS IT, Y'KNOW? HE'S LIKE THIS...KID, BUT ALSO, LIKE...UH...
...HE JUST SEES THE WORLD, LIKE... UH...WITH THIS TOTAL...
HE JUST...HE GETS IT!
WE'VE HAD OUR DIFFERENCES. THE HULK...CAN BE A HANDFUL SOMETIMES.
BUT WHEN I LOOK AT HIM, I STILL SEE A FOUNDING AVENGER.
ACTUALLY, HE'S RATHER SWEET.
AS MAYOR, I'M EXTENDING A PERSONAL INVITATION TO THE HULK TO VISIT GEORGEVILLE, IOWA-- THIS TIME UNDER BETTER CIRCUMSTANCES.
NO HARD FEELINGS, BIG GUY.

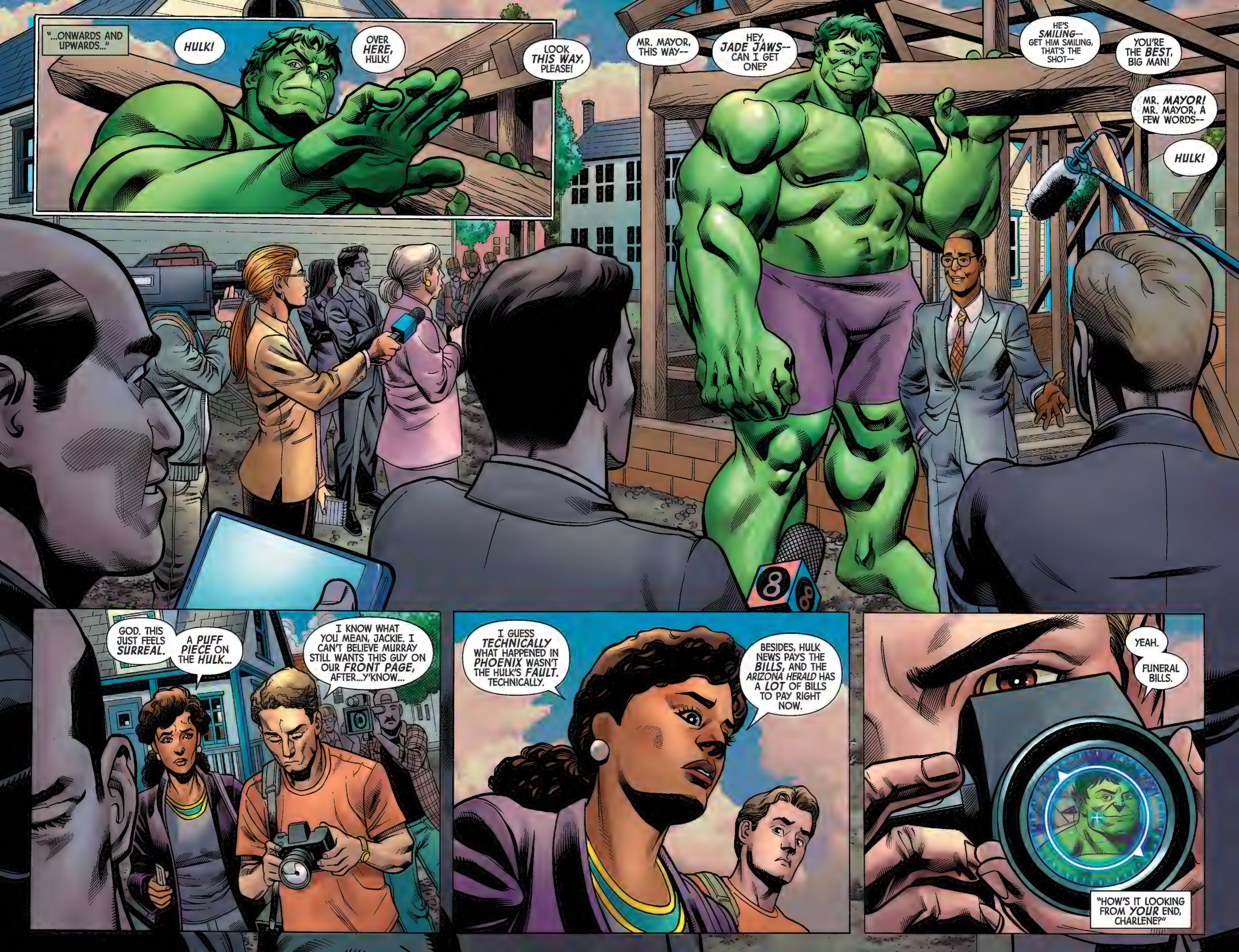

YEAH, YEAH. EVERYBODY *LOVES* THE BIG DUMB APE-- WHAT'S *NEW?*
BUT NO DEVIL MEANS *I* GOTTA BE THE *SMART* ONE RIGHT NOW. AND THERE'S A PIECE I AIN'T *SEEING* YET...
HEY!
LOOK WHO IT *AIN'T!*
JOE.
BETTS! LOOKING *GREAT!* HOW'S TRICKS?
NOT GOOD.
HA! YOU WANNA GRAB A *DRINK* OR WHAT?
NO.
I'D LIKE TO TALK TO *BRUCE,* PLEASE.

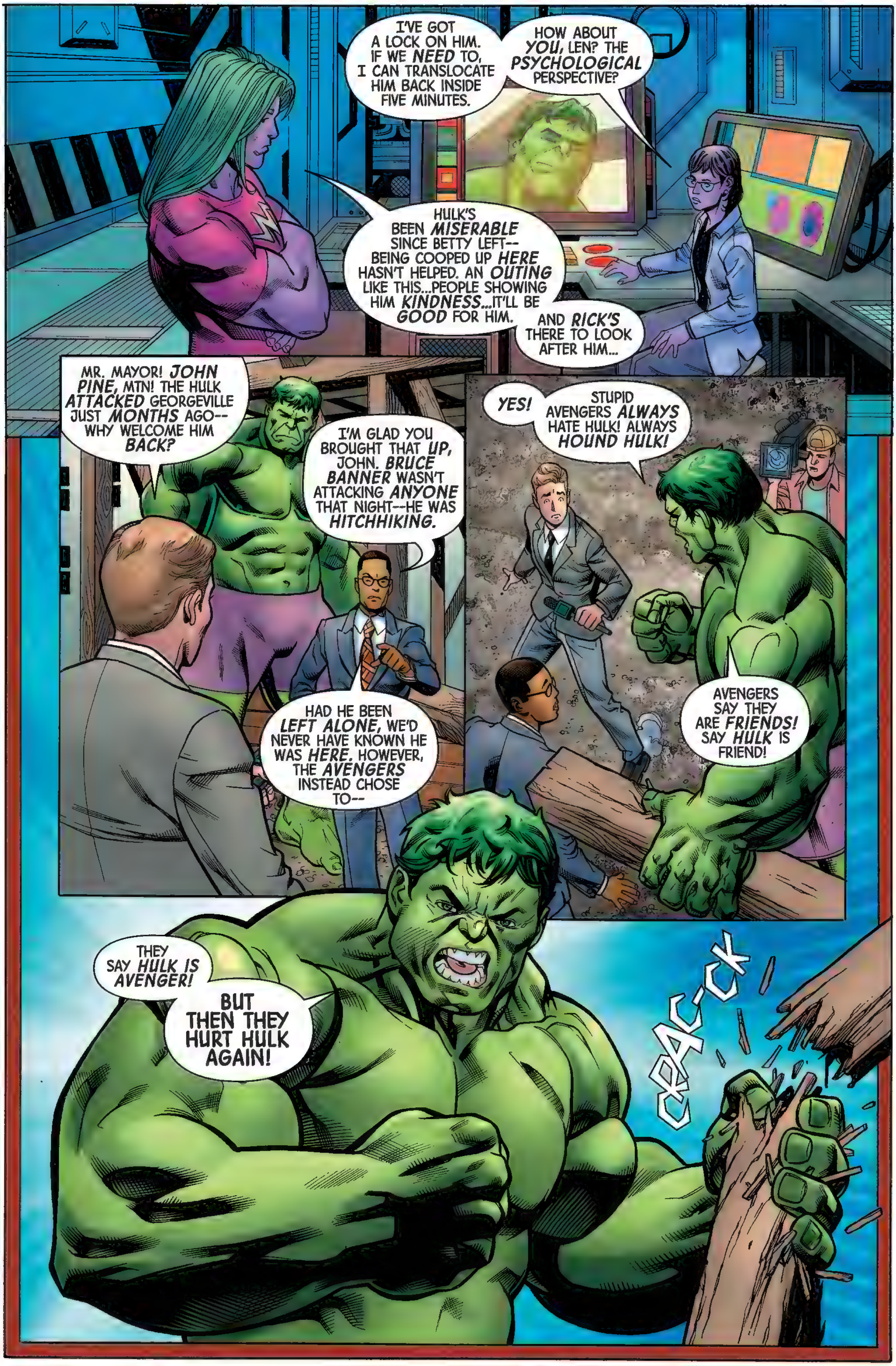

YEAH. THAT FIGURES.
GIMME A SEC...
OH.
BRUCE. WE NEED TO TALK.
I'M LEAVING SHADOW BASE.
THERE'S NO SPACE DOWN HERE. IT'S LIKE LIVING IN A CAGE.
WHAT? BETTY, THAT'S-- WE HAVEN'T DISCUSSED THIS--
WE'RE DISCUSSING IT NOW.
THEN...LOOK. WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO SAY... CAN YOU AT LEAST SAY IT AS BETTY?
I THINK AS BETTY, YOU'D--YOU'D SEE MORE--
I AM BETTY.
THIS IS ME.
I--I'M SORRY, I HAVE TO--I CAN'T--
LEONARD-- PLEASE-- GET OUT OF THE--
BRUCE, NO.
JUST TALK TO YOUR WIFE.
...YOU THINK I DON'T WANT TO?

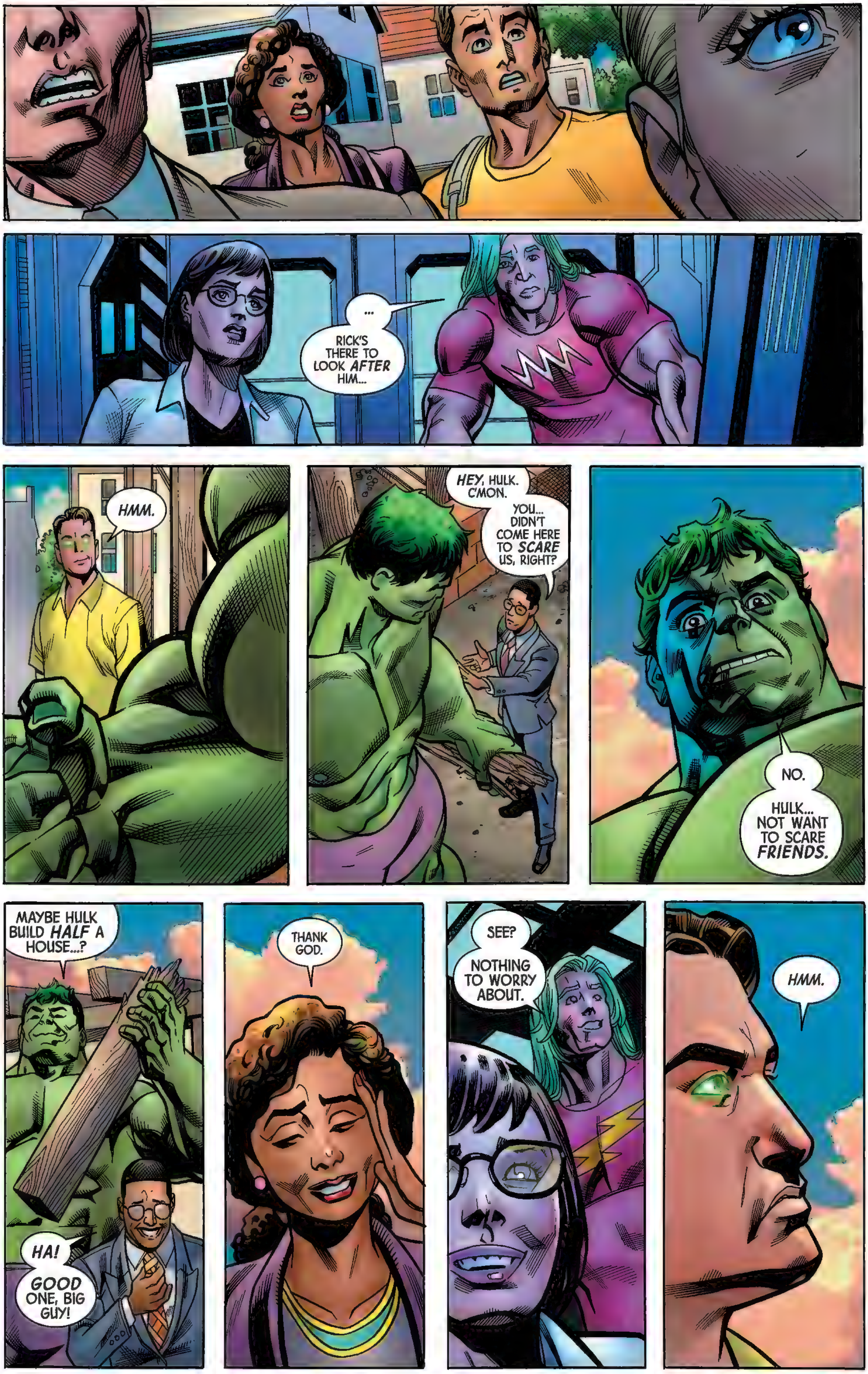

I WOULD LIKE *NOTHING MORE* THAN TO TALK TO *BETTY*, LEONARD!
I'VE BEEN *TRYING* TO TALK TO HER FOR *WEEKS* NOW!
BUT I WANT TO TALK TO *BETTY!* CAN'T YOU *UNDERSTAND* THAT? I--I DON'T--
I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO *THIS*--
--THIS *CREATURE*--
THIS IS ME!
THIS IS ME!
NO.
NO, IT'S NOT.
UNHH--
WHAM

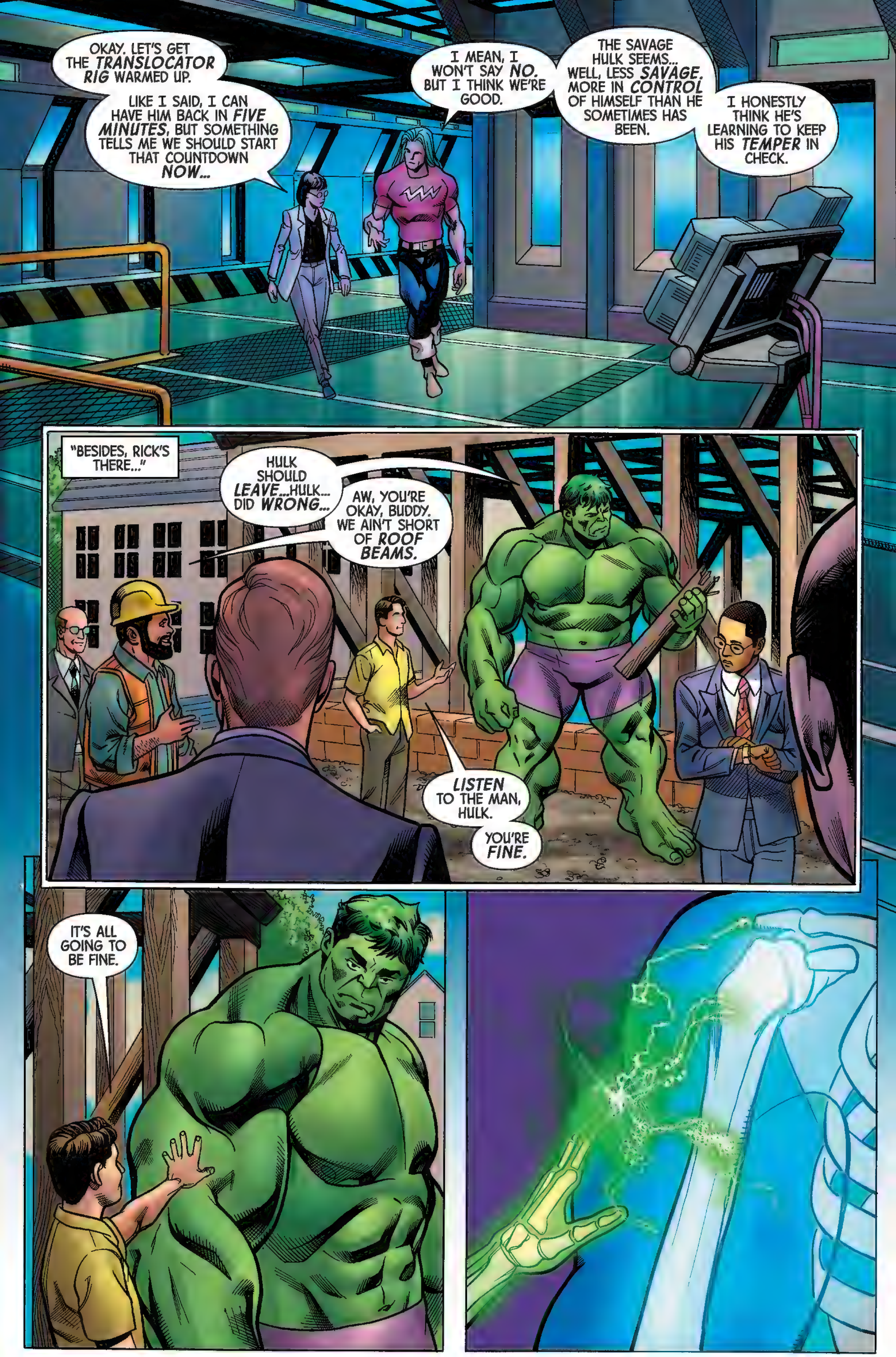

THAT...IS AN EXPRESSION OF YOUR *ANGER*. YOUR *HATE*.
THE *WORST*, MOST *EVIL* PARTS OF YOU.
IT'S A *MONSTER!*
I AM SPEAKING TO A *MONSTER!* A *CREATURE OF RAGE!*
AND I WANT TO SEE THE WOMAN I LOVE!
...
NO.
NO, YOU DON'T.
I'M LEAVING.
BETTY--
PLEASE, JUST--
I CAN'T *LIVE* DOWN HERE, BRUCE.
I CAN'T LIVE IN YOUR CAGE.

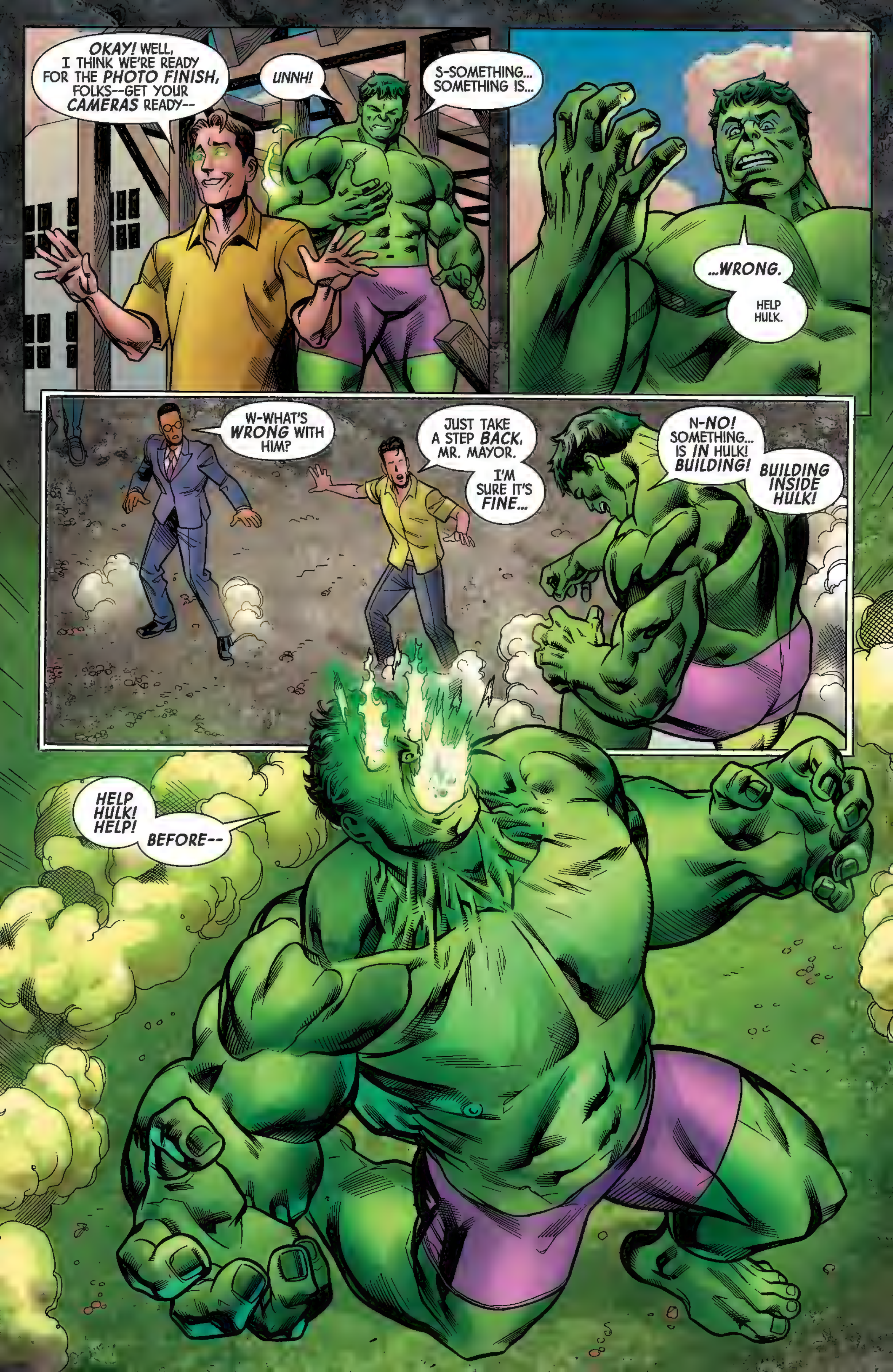

WELL.
THAT'S THE END OF *THAT*, I SUPPOSE. SO...


"...ONWARDS AND UPWARDS..."
HULK!
OVER HERE, HULK!
LOOK THIS WAY, PLEASE!
MR. MAYOR, THIS WAY--
HEY, JADE JAWS-- CAN I GET ONE?
HE'S SMILING-- GET HIM SMILING, THAT'S THE SHOT--
YOU'RE THE BEST, BIG MAN!
MR. MAYOR! MR. MAYOR, A FEW WORDS--
HULK!
GOD. THIS JUST FEELS SURREAL.
A PUFF PIECE ON THE HULK...
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, JACKIE. I CAN'T BELIEVE MURRAY STILL WANTS THIS GUY ON OUR FRONT PAGE, AFTER...Y'KNOW...
I GUESS TECHNICALLY WHAT HAPPENED IN PHOENIX WASN'T THE HULK'S FAULT. TECHNICALLY.
BESIDES, HULK NEWS PAYS THE BILLS, AND THE ARIZONA HERALD HAS A LOT OF BILLS TO PAY RIGHT NOW.
YEAH.
FUNERAL BILLS.
"HOW'S IT LOOKING FROM YOUR END, CHARLENE?"


I'VE GOT A LOCK ON HIM. IF WE *NEED* TO, I CAN TRANSLOCATE HIM BACK INSIDE FIVE MINUTES.
HOW ABOUT *YOU,* LEN? THE *PSYCHOLOGICAL* PERSPECTIVE?
HULK'S BEEN *MISERABLE* SINCE BETTY LEFT-- BEING COOPED UP *HERE* HASN'T HELPED. AN *OUTING* LIKE THIS...PEOPLE SHOWING HIM *KINDNESS*...IT'LL BE *GOOD* FOR HIM.
AND *RICK'S* THERE TO LOOK AFTER HIM...
MR. MAYOR! *JOHN PINE,* MTN! THE HULK *ATTACKED* GEORGEVILLE JUST *MONTHS* AGO-- WHY WELCOME HIM *BACK?*
I'M GLAD YOU BROUGHT THAT *UP,* JOHN. *BRUCE BANNER* WASN'T ATTACKING *ANYONE* THAT NIGHT--HE WAS *HITCHHIKING.*
HAD HE BEEN *LEFT ALONE,* WE'D NEVER HAVE KNOWN HE WAS *HERE.* HOWEVER, THE *AVENGERS* INSTEAD CHOSE TO--
YES!
STUPID AVENGERS *ALWAYS* HATE HULK! ALWAYS *HOUND HULK!*
AVENGERS SAY THEY ARE *FRIENDS!* SAY *HULK* IS FRIEND!
THEY SAY *HULK IS AVENGER!*
BUT THEN THEY HURT HULK AGAIN!
CRAC-CK


...
RICK'S THERE TO LOOK *AFTER* HIM...
HMM.
HEY, HULK. C'MON.
YOU... DIDN'T COME HERE TO *SCARE* US, RIGHT?
NO.
HULK... NOT WANT TO SCARE *FRIENDS.*
MAYBE HULK BUILD *HALF* A HOUSE...?
HA!
GOOD ONE, BIG GUY!
THANK GOD.
SEE?
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
HMM.


OKAY. LET'S GET THE *TRANSLOCATOR RIG* WARMED UP.
LIKE I SAID, I CAN HAVE HIM BACK IN *FIVE MINUTES*, BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME WE SHOULD START THAT COUNTDOWN *NOW*...
I MEAN, I WON'T SAY *NO*. BUT I THINK WE'RE GOOD.
THE SAVAGE HULK SEEMS... WELL, LESS *SAVAGE*. MORE IN *CONTROL* OF HIMSELF THAN HE SOMETIMES HAS BEEN.
I HONESTLY THINK HE'S LEARNING TO KEEP HIS *TEMPER* IN CHECK.
"BESIDES, RICK'S THERE..."
HULK SHOULD *LEAVE*...HULK... DID *WRONG*...
AW, YOU'RE OKAY, BUDDY. WE AIN'T SHORT OF *ROOF BEAMS*.
LISTEN TO THE MAN, HULK.
YOU'RE *FINE*.
IT'S ALL GOING TO BE FINE.

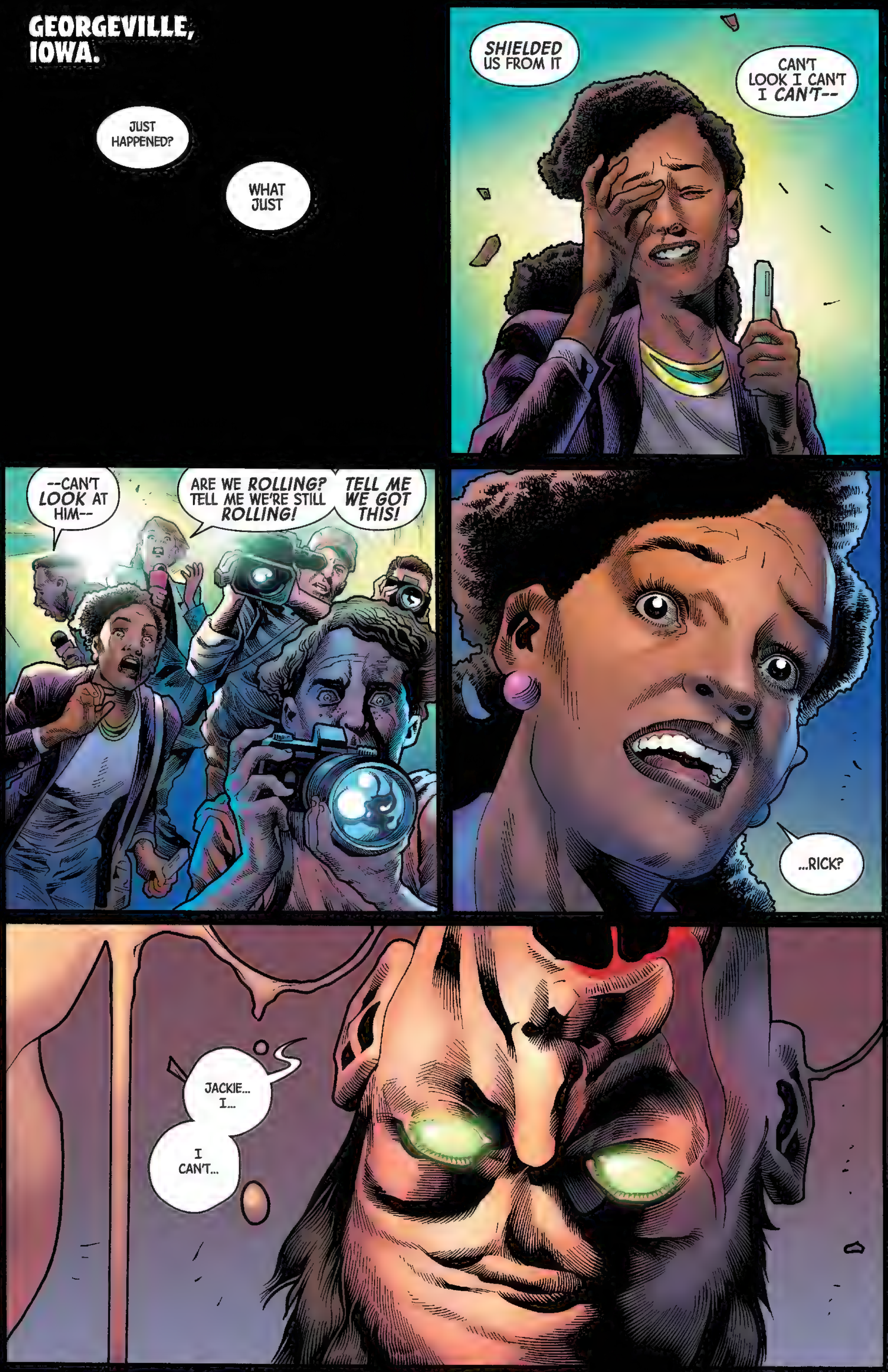

OKAY! WELL, I THINK WE'RE READY FOR THE PHOTO FINISH, FOLKS--GET YOUR CAMERAS READY--
UNNH!
S-SOMETHING... SOMETHING IS...
...WRONG.
HELP HULK.
W-WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?
JUST TAKE A STEP BACK, MR. MAYOR.
I'M SURE IT'S FINE...
N-NO! SOMETHING... IS IN HULK! BUILDING!
BUILDING INSIDE HULK!
HELP HULK! HELP!
BEFORE--

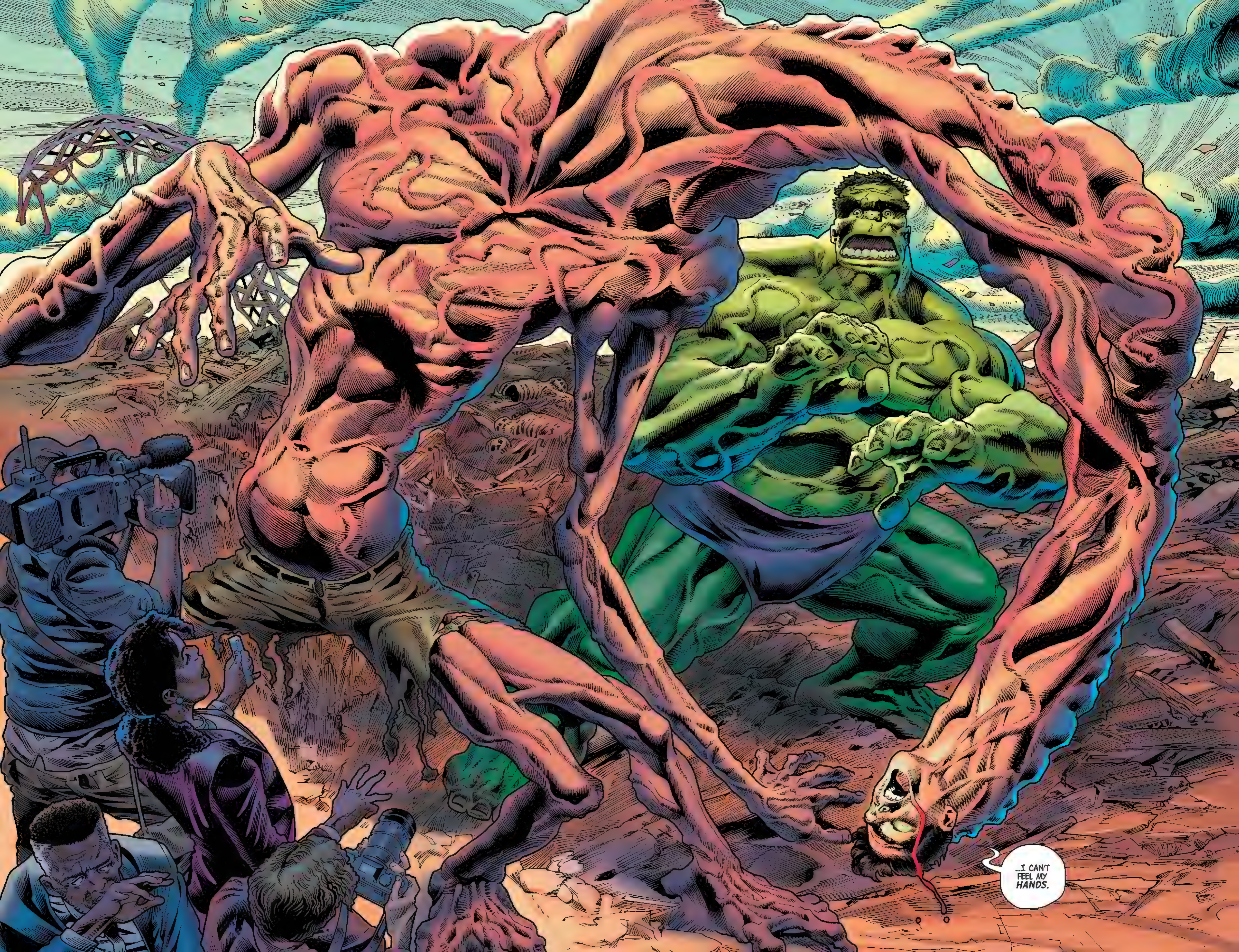
A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF LIGHT

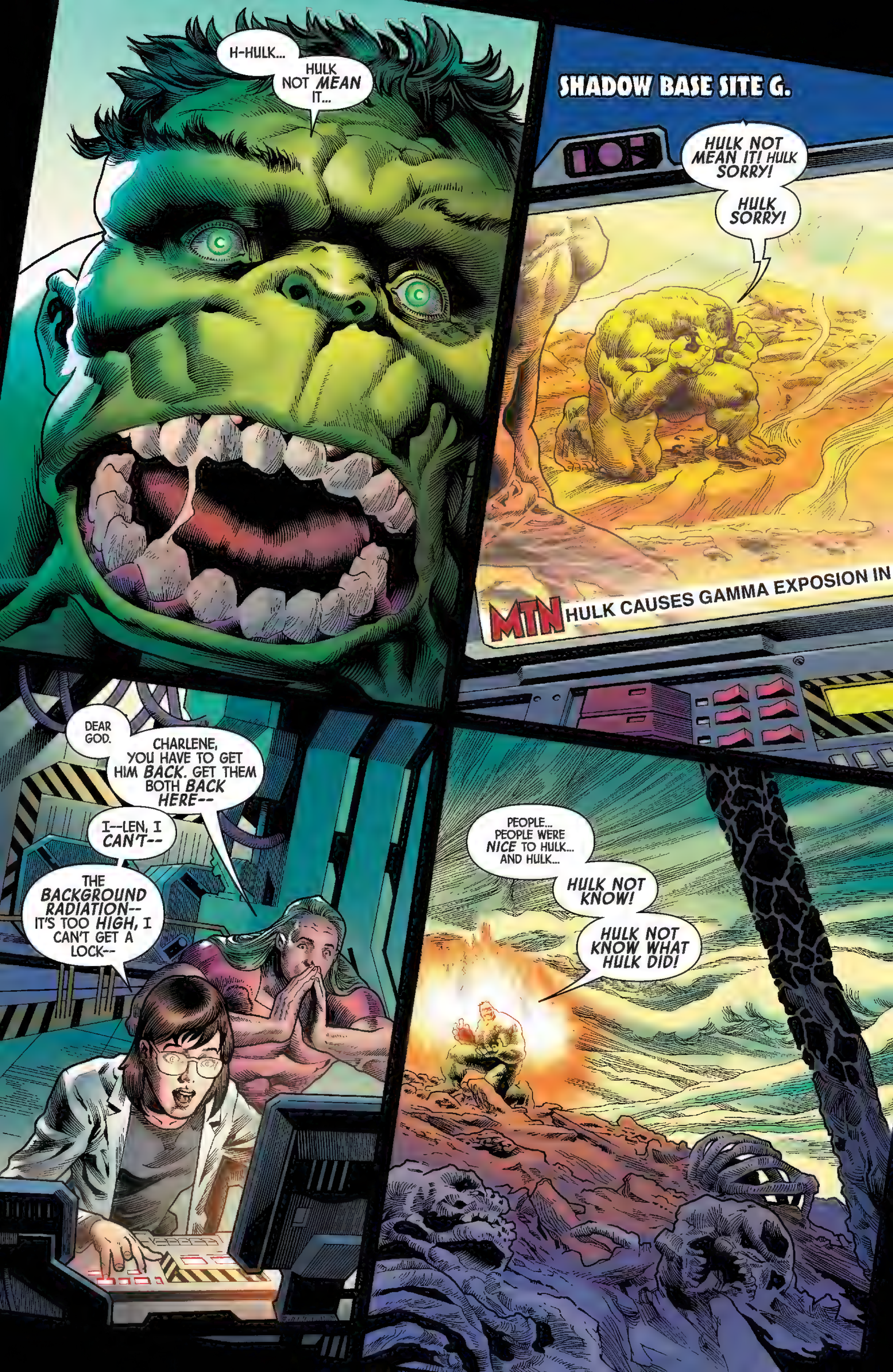
36

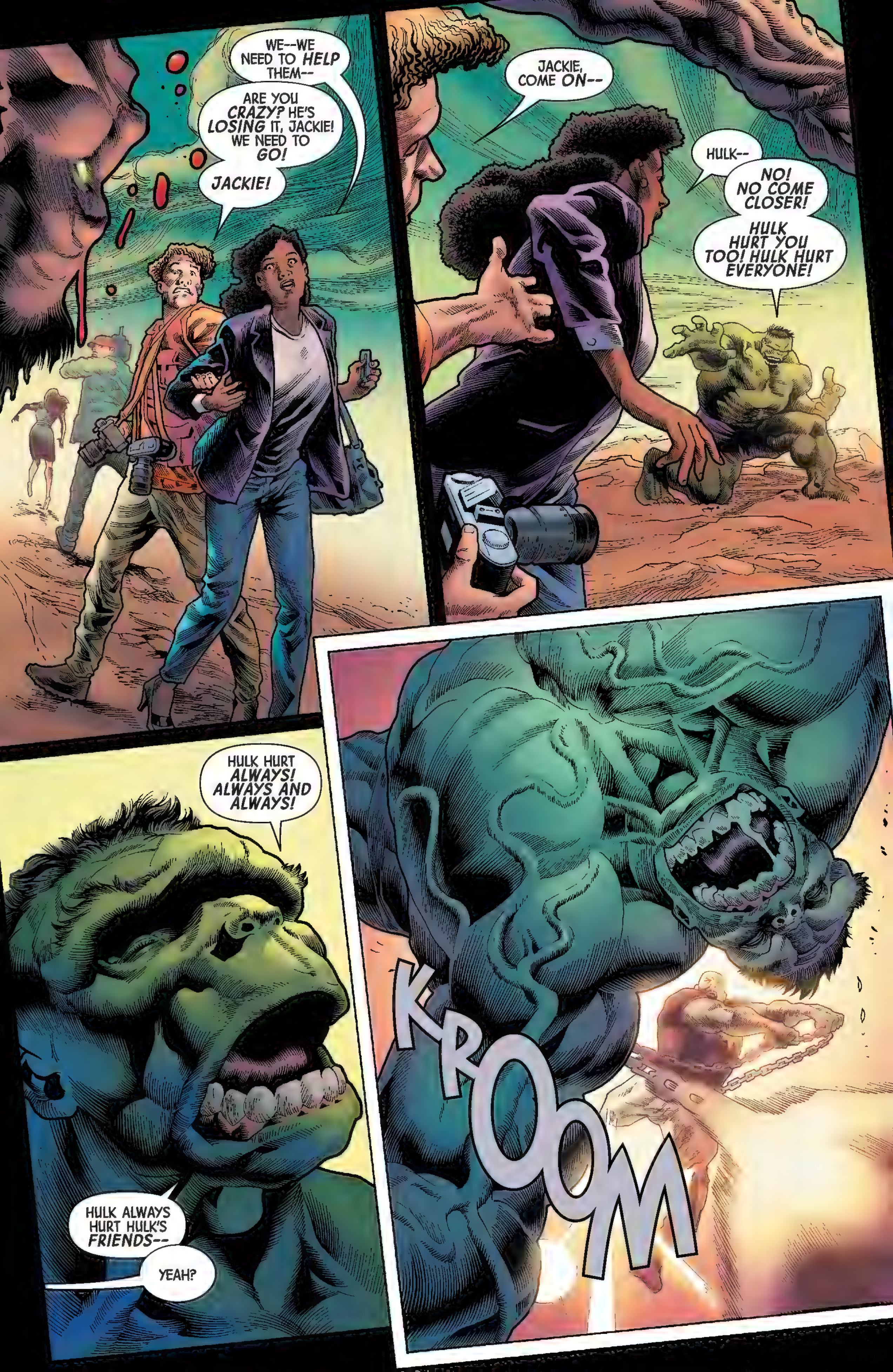
“BEHOLD, I CRY OUT OF WRONG, BUT I AM NOT HEARD: I CRY ALOUD, BUT THERE IS NO JUDGMENT.”

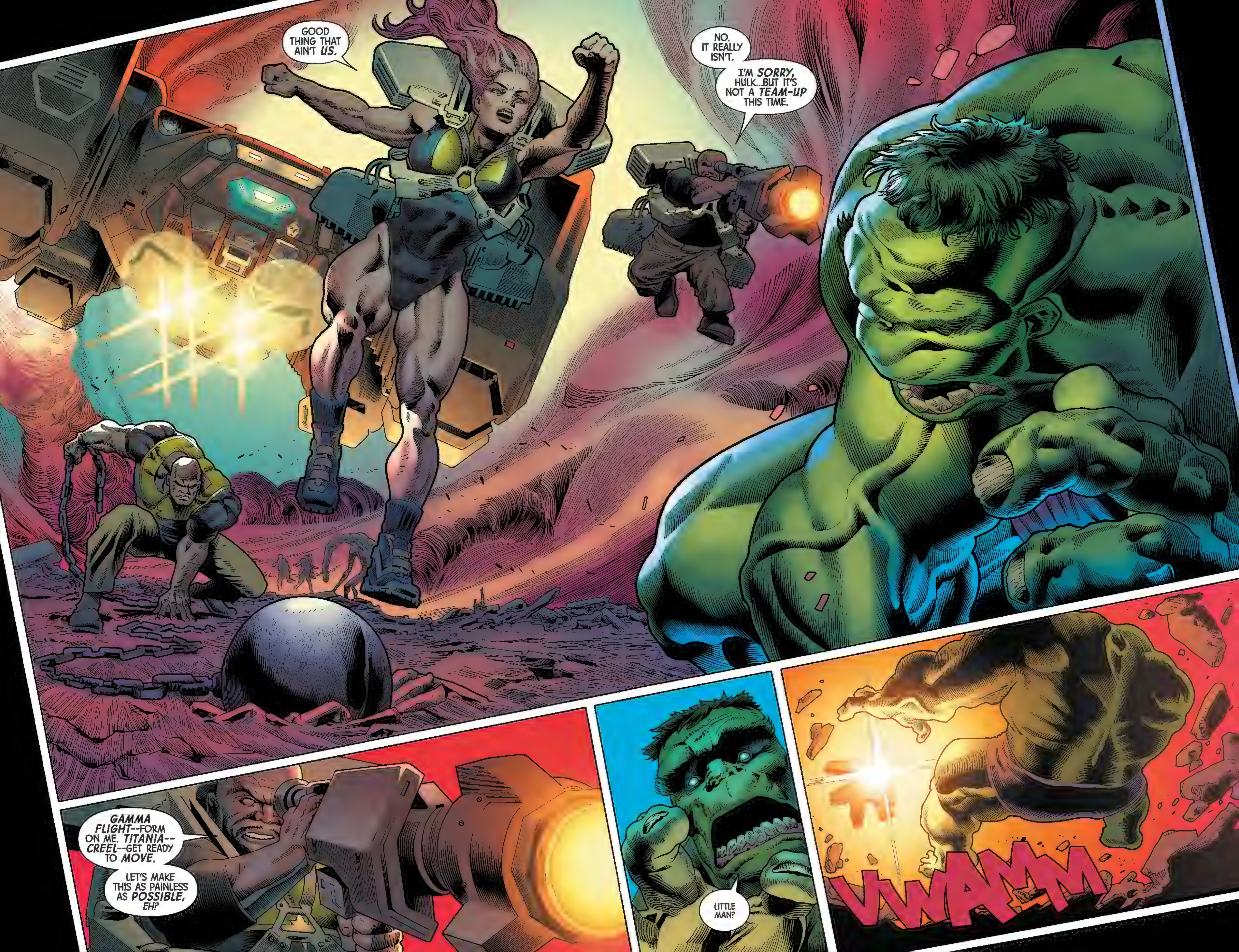
- JOB
19:7

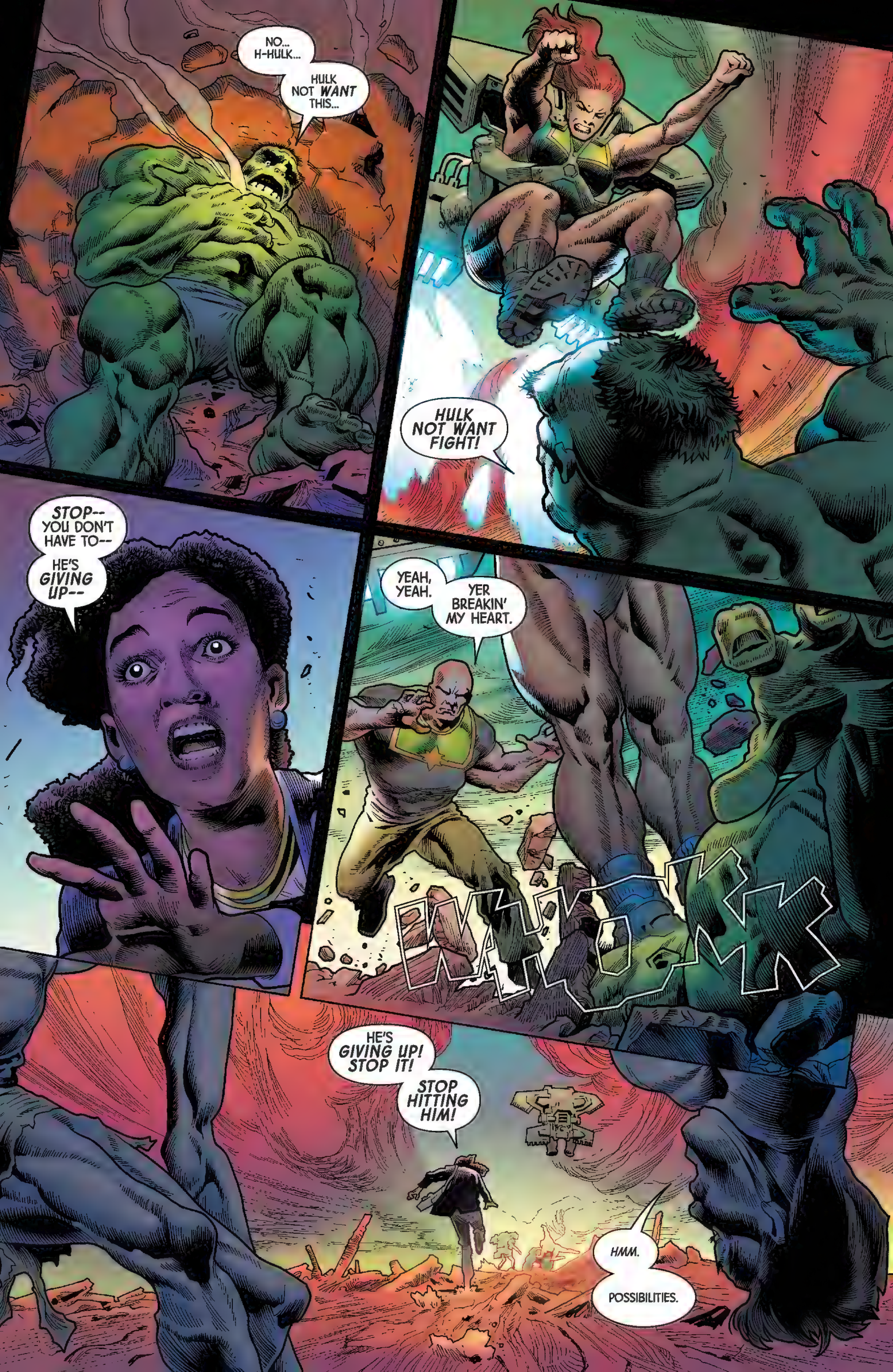

GEORGEVILLE, IOWA.
JUST HAPPENED?
WHAT JUST
SHIELDED US FROM IT
CAN'T LOOK I CAN'T I CAN'T--
--CAN'T LOOK AT HIM--
ARE WE ROLLING? TELL ME WE'RE STILL ROLLING!
TELL ME WE GOT THIS!
...RICK?
JACKIE... I...
I CAN'T...

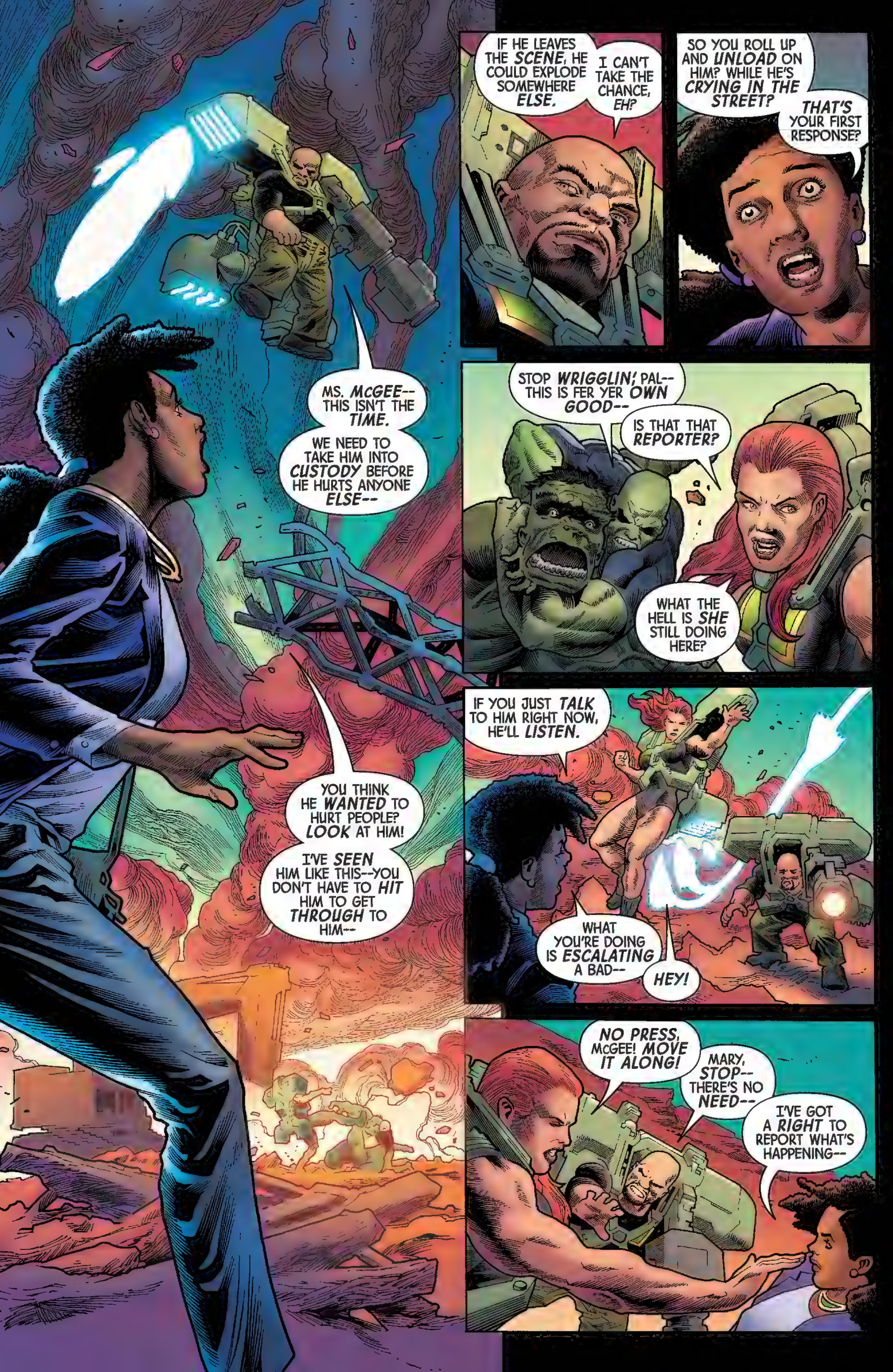

...I CAN'T FEEL MY *HANDS*.

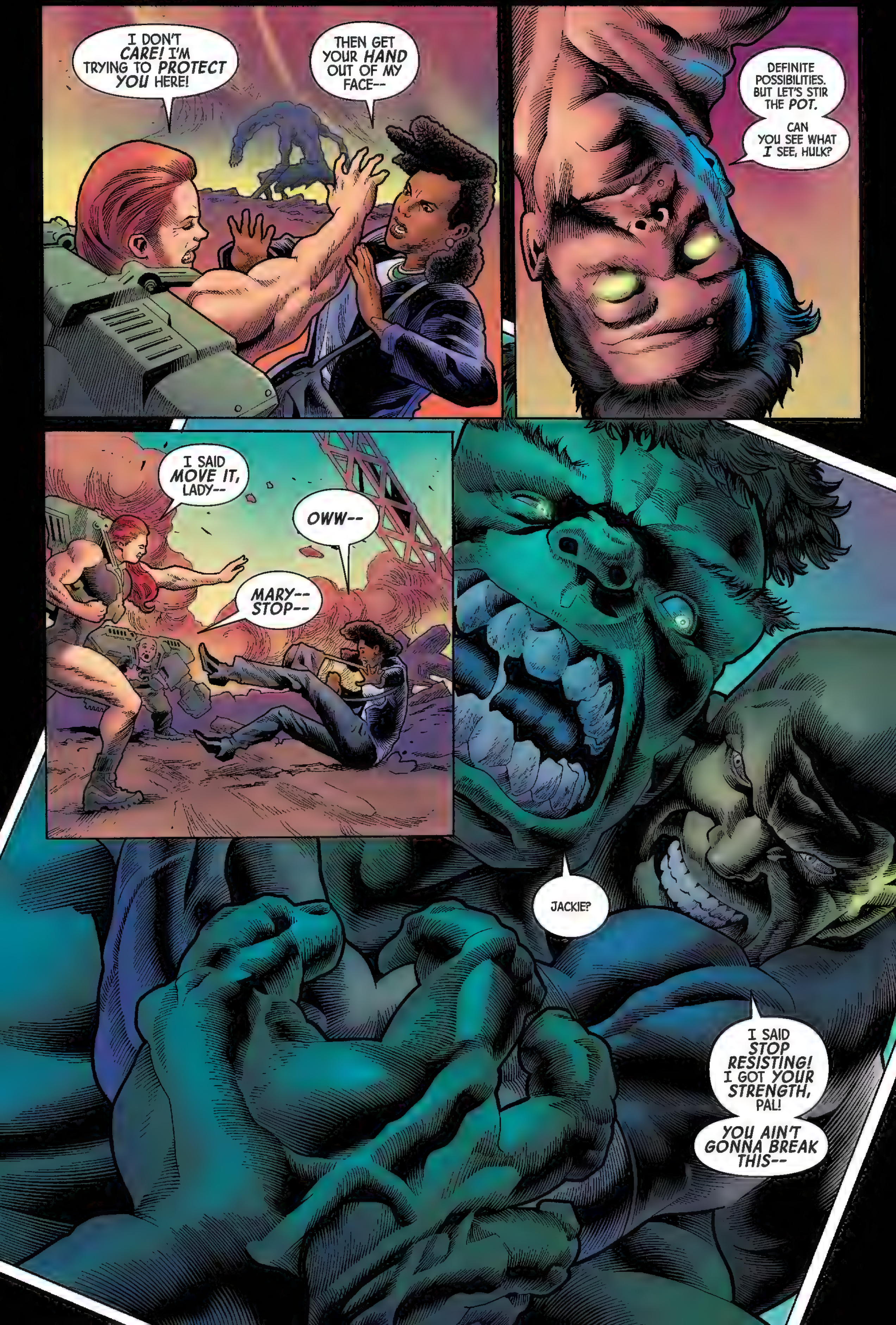

H-HULK...
HULK NOT *MEAN* IT...
SHADOW BASE SITE G.
HULK NOT MEAN IT! HULK SORRY!
HULK SORRY!
MTN HULK CAUSES GAMMA EXPOSION IN
DEAR GOD.
CHARLENE, YOU HAVE TO GET HIM *BACK*. GET THEM BOTH *BACK HERE*--
I--LEN, I *CAN'T*--
THE *BACKGROUND RADIATION*-- IT'S TOO *HIGH*, I CAN'T GET A LOCK--
PEOPLE... PEOPLE WERE *NICE* TO HULK... AND HULK...
HULK NOT KNOW!
HULK NOT KNOW WHAT HULK DID!

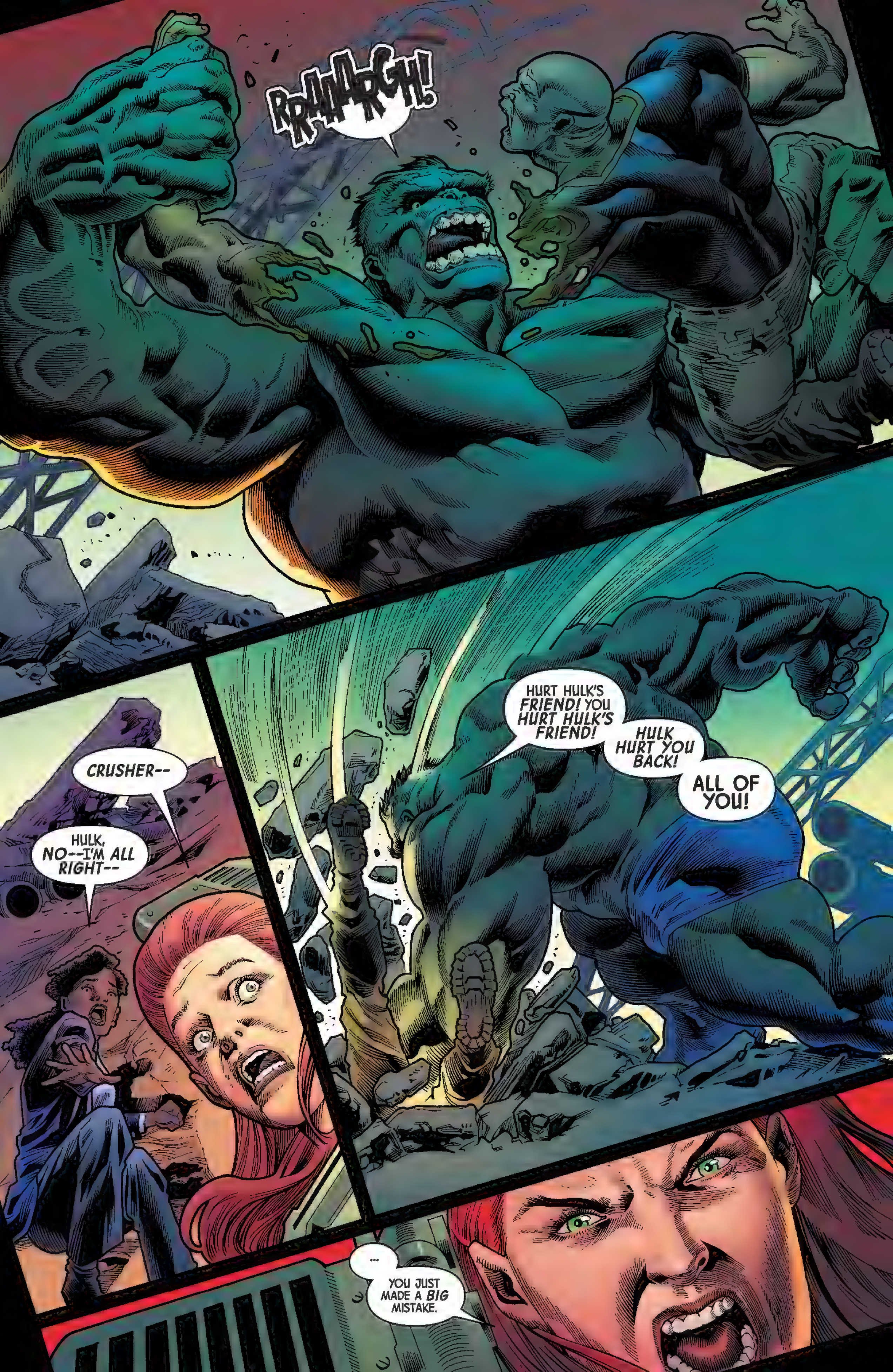

WE--WE NEED TO HELP THEM--
ARE YOU CRAZY? HE'S LOSING IT, JACKIE! WE NEED TO GO!
JACKIE!
JACKIE, COME ON--
HULK--
NO! NO COME CLOSER!
HULK HURT YOU TOO! HULK HURT EVERYONE!
HULK HURT ALWAYS! ALWAYS AND ALWAYS!
HULK ALWAYS HURT HULK'S FRIENDS--
YEAH?
KROOM

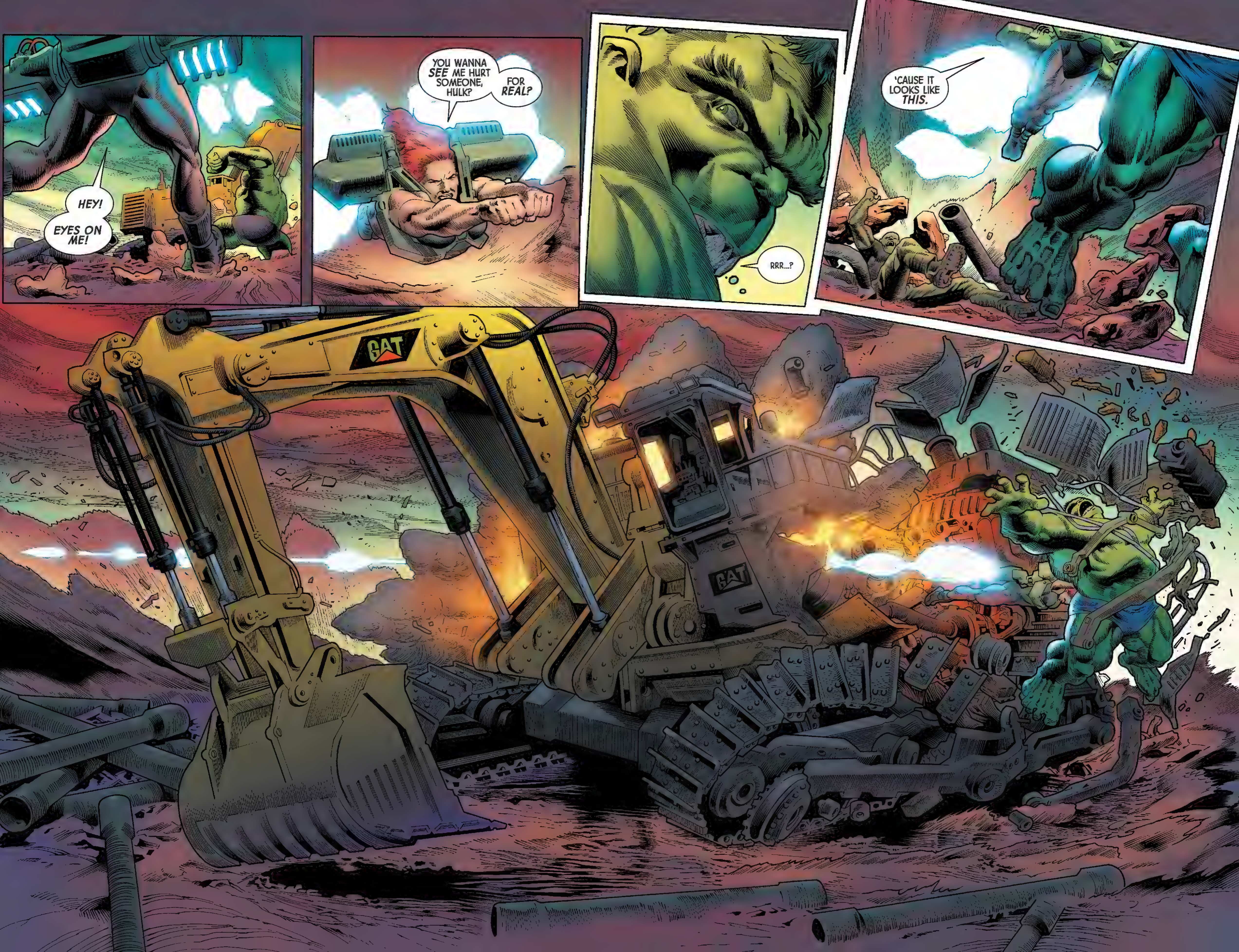

GOOD THING THAT AIN'T *US.*
NO. IT REALLY ISN'T.
I'M *SORRY,* HULK...BUT IT'S NOT A *TEAM-UP* THIS TIME.
GAMMA FLIGHT--FORM ON ME. *TITANIA*--*CREEL*--GET READY TO *MOVE.*
LET'S MAKE THIS AS PAINLESS AS *POSSIBLE,* EH?
LITTLE MAN?
VWAMM

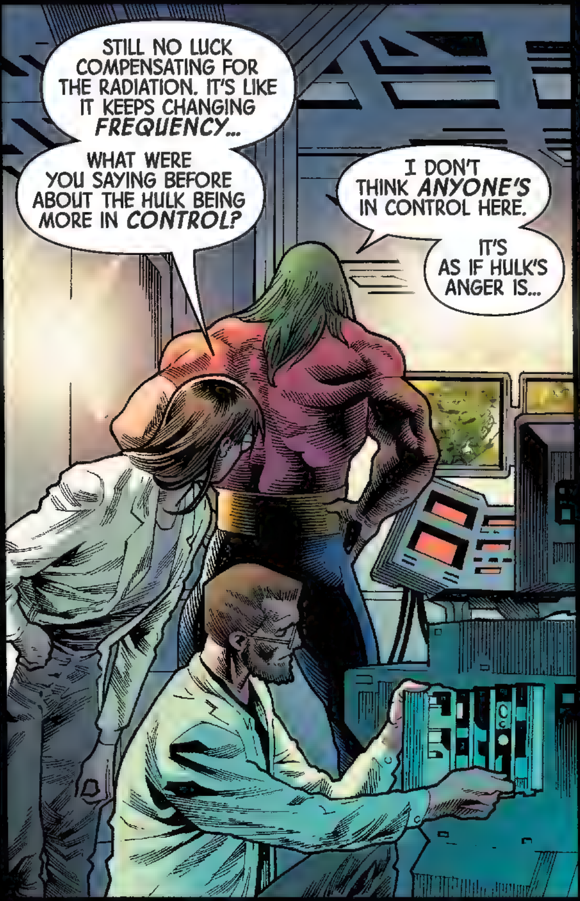

NO... H-HULK...
HULK NOT WANT THIS...
HULK NOT WANT FIGHT!
STOP-- YOU DON'T HAVE TO--
HE'S GIVING UP--
YEAH, YEAH.
YER BREAKIN' MY HEART.
WHOKK
HE'S GIVING UP! STOP IT!
STOP HITTING HIM!
HMM.
POSSIBILITIES.

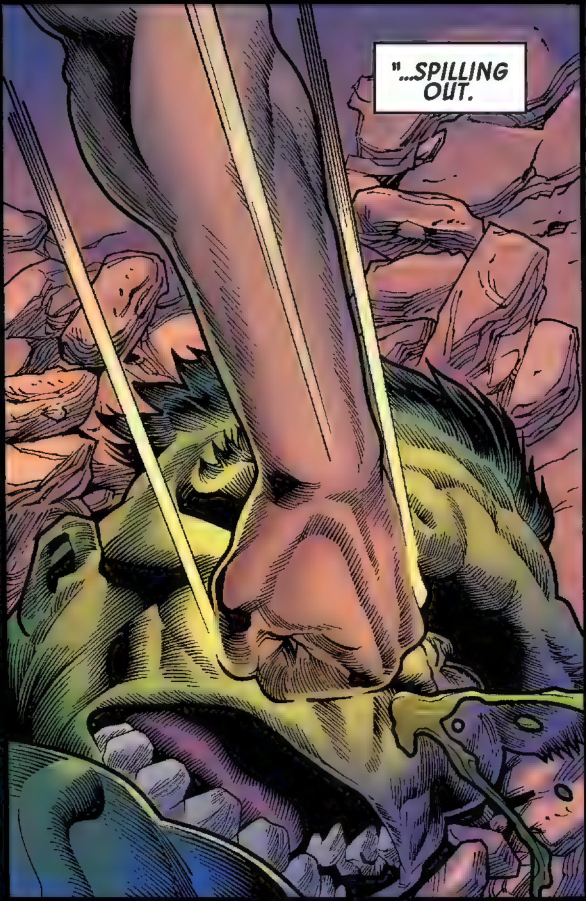

MS. McGEE-- THIS ISN'T THE *TIME.*
WE NEED TO TAKE HIM INTO *CUSTODY* BEFORE HE HURTS ANYONE *ELSE*--
YOU THINK HE *WANTED* TO HURT PEOPLE? *LOOK* AT HIM!
I'VE *SEEN* HIM LIKE THIS--YOU DON'T HAVE TO *HIT* HIM TO GET *THROUGH* TO HIM--
IF HE LEAVES THE *SCENE,* HE COULD EXPLODE SOMEWHERE *ELSE.*
I CAN'T TAKE THE CHANCE, EH?
SO YOU ROLL UP AND *UNLOAD* ON HIM? WHILE HE'S *CRYING IN THE STREET?*
THAT'S YOUR FIRST RESPONSE?
STOP *WRIGGLIN',* PAL-- THIS IS FER YER *OWN GOOD*--
IS THAT THAT *REPORTER?*
WHAT THE HELL IS *SHE* STILL DOING HERE?
IF YOU JUST *TALK* TO HIM RIGHT NOW, HE'LL *LISTEN.*
WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS *ESCALATING* A BAD--
HEY!
NO PRESS, McGEE! *MOVE IT ALONG!*
MARY, *STOP*-- THERE'S NO *NEED*--
I'VE GOT A *RIGHT* TO REPORT WHAT'S HAPPENING--

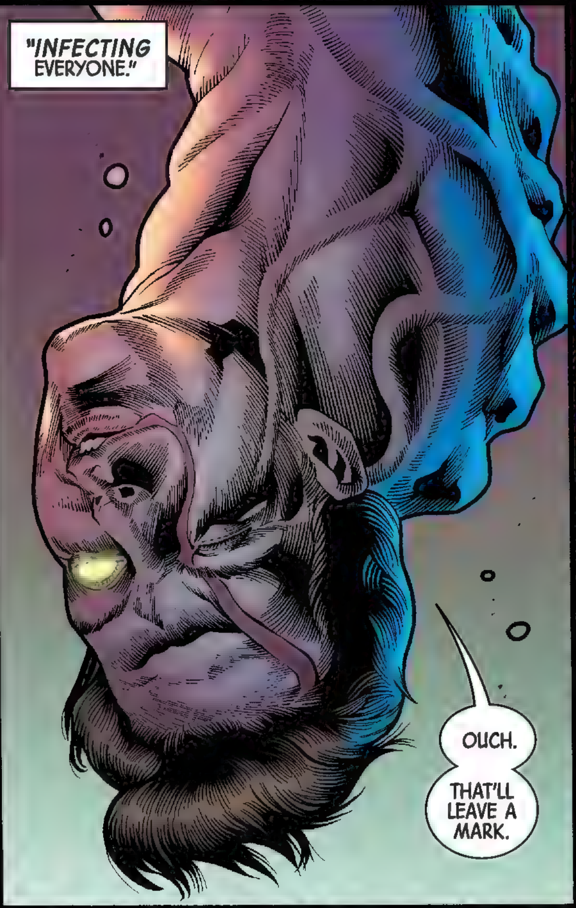

I DON'T *CARE!* I'M TRYING TO *PROTECT YOU* HERE!
THEN GET YOUR *HAND* OUT OF MY FACE--
DEFINITE POSSIBILITIES. BUT LET'S STIR THE *POT.*
CAN YOU SEE WHAT *I* SEE, HULK?
I SAID *MOVE IT,* LADY--
OWW--
MARY-- STOP--
JACKIE?
I SAID *STOP RESISTING!* I GOT *YOUR STRENGTH,* PAL!
YOU AIN'T GONNA BREAK THIS--

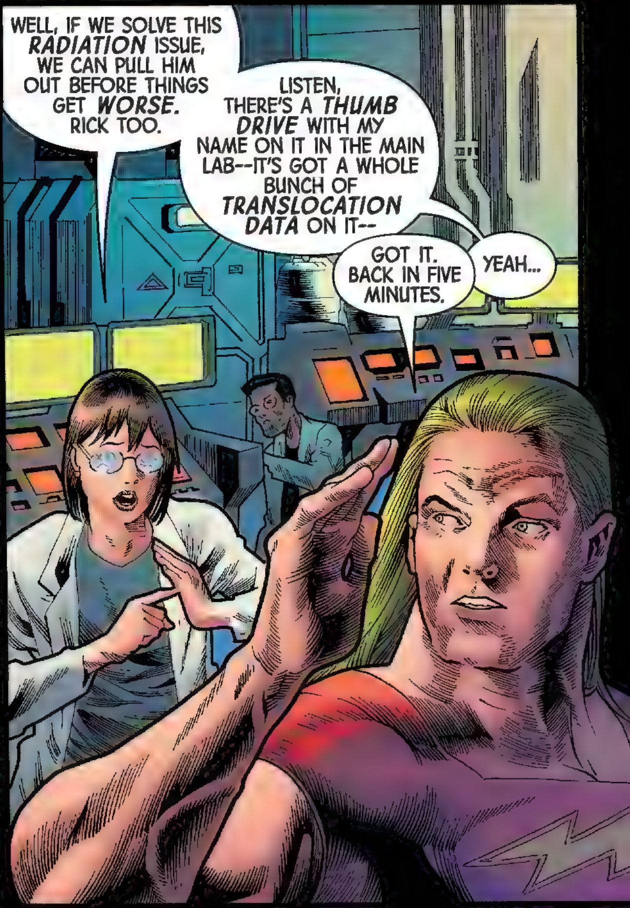

RRAAARGH!
CRUSHER--
HULK, NO--I'M ALL RIGHT--
HURT HULK'S *FRIEND!* YOU HURT HULK'S *FRIEND!*
HULK HURT YOU BACK!
ALL OF YOU!
...
YOU JUST MADE A *BIG* MISTAKE.

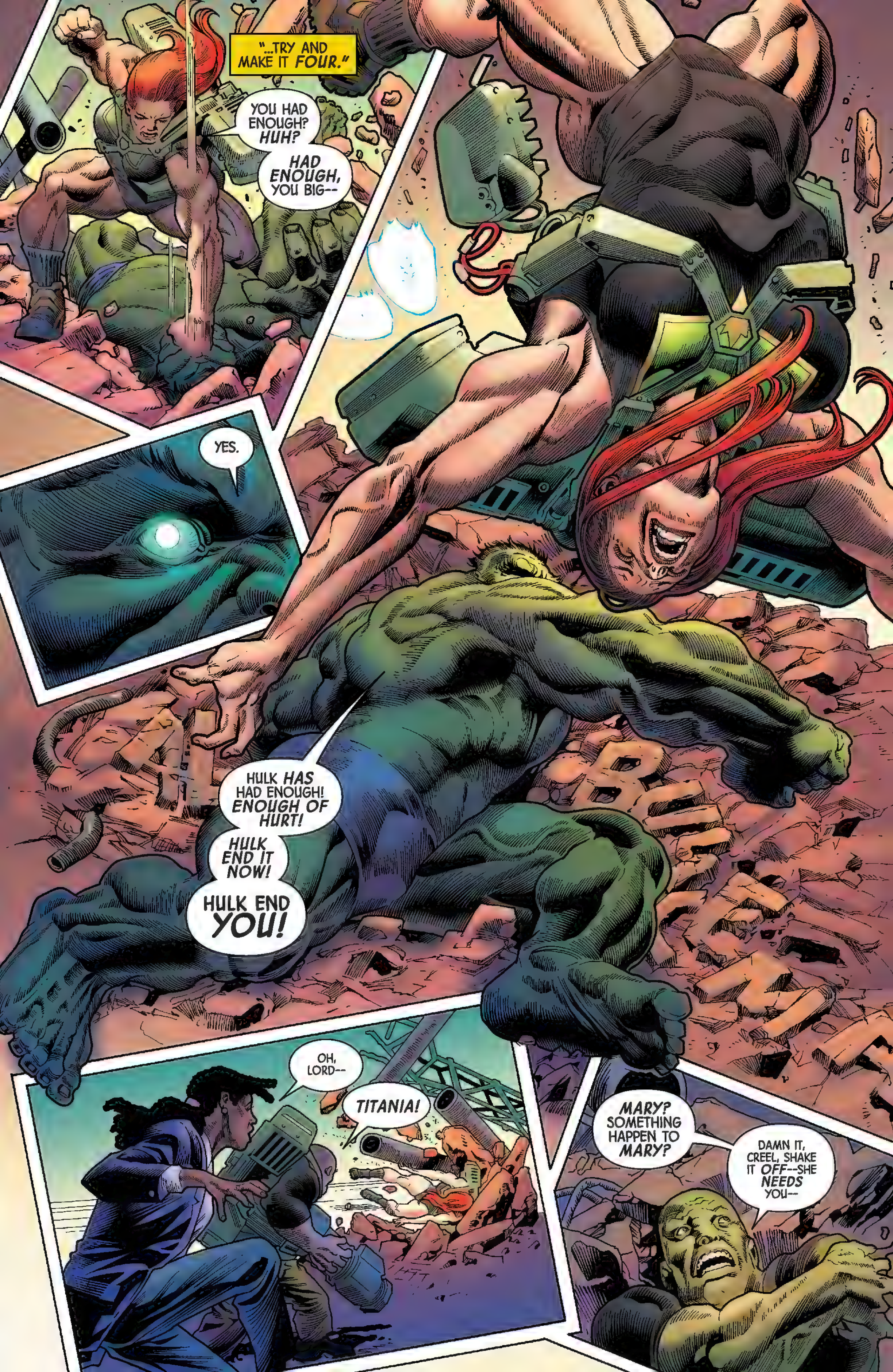

HEY!
EYES ON ME!
YOU WANNA SEE ME HURT SOMEONE, HULK?
FOR REAL?
RRR...?
'CAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE THIS.
CAT
CAT
CAT

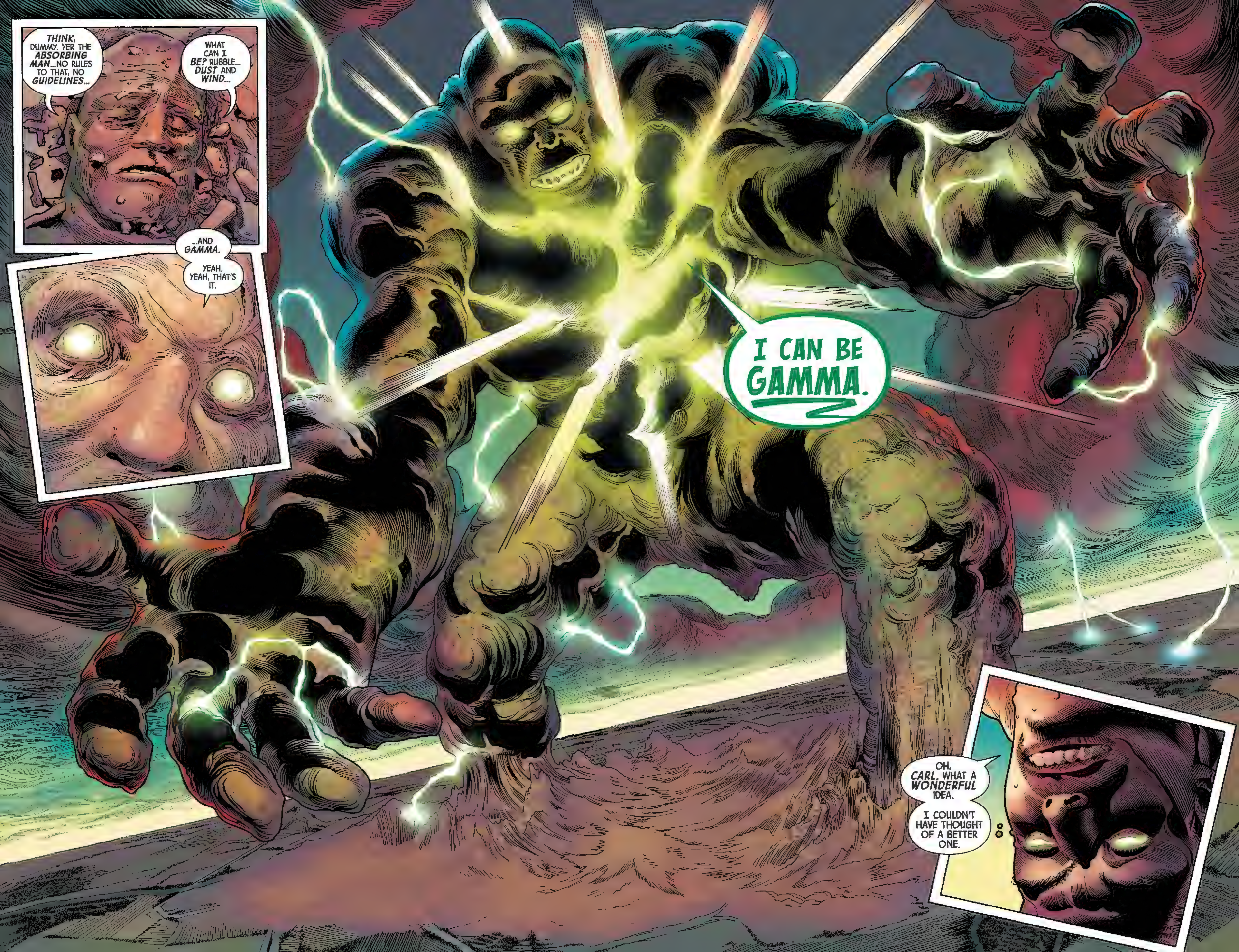

STILL NO LUCK COMPENSATING FOR THE RADIATION. IT'S LIKE IT KEEPS CHANGING *FREQUENCY...*
WHAT WERE YOU SAYING BEFORE ABOUT THE HULK BEING MORE IN *CONTROL?*
I DON'T THINK *ANYONE'S* IN CONTROL HERE.
IT'S AS IF HULK'S ANGER IS...

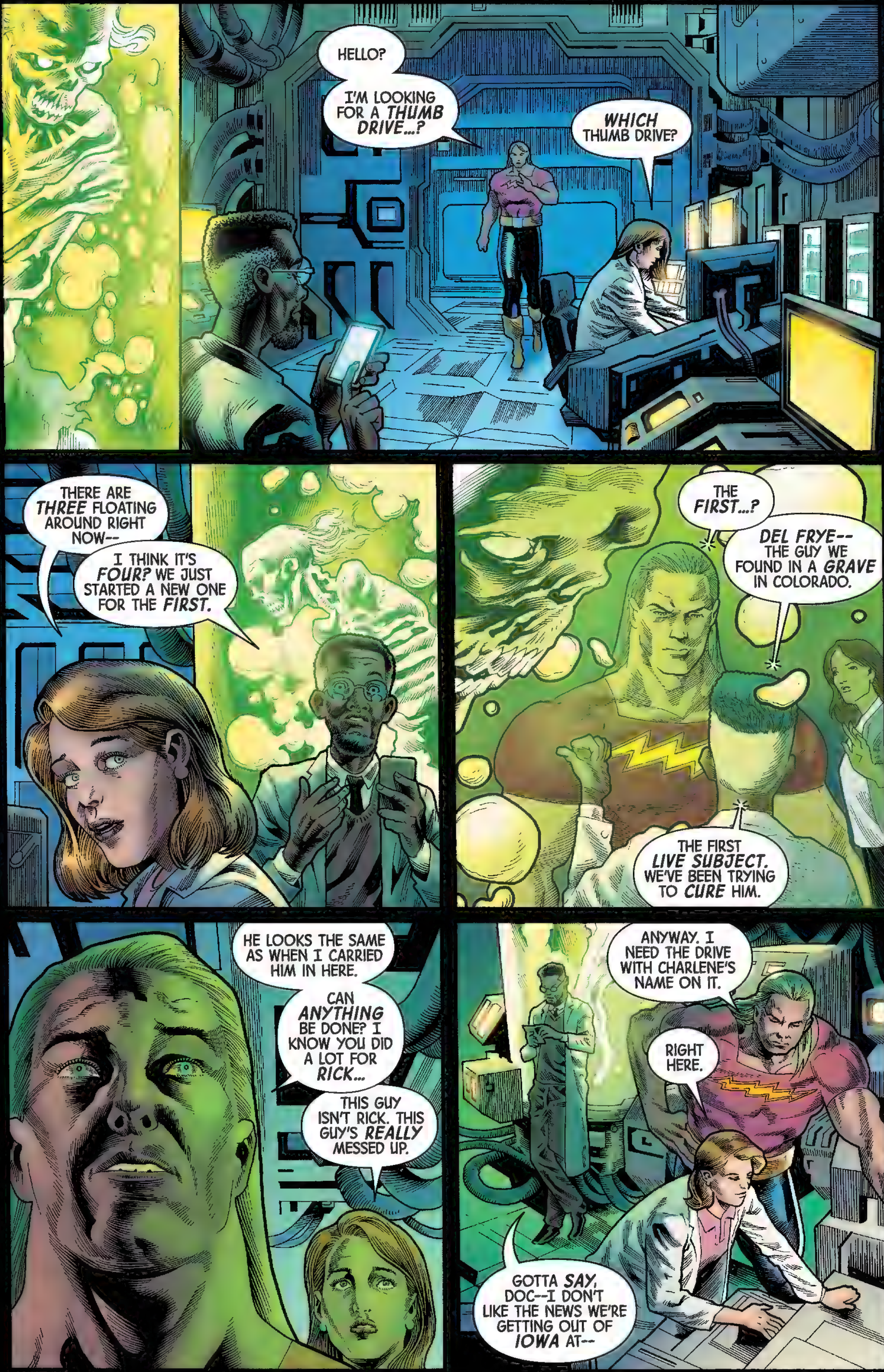

"...SPILLING OUT.

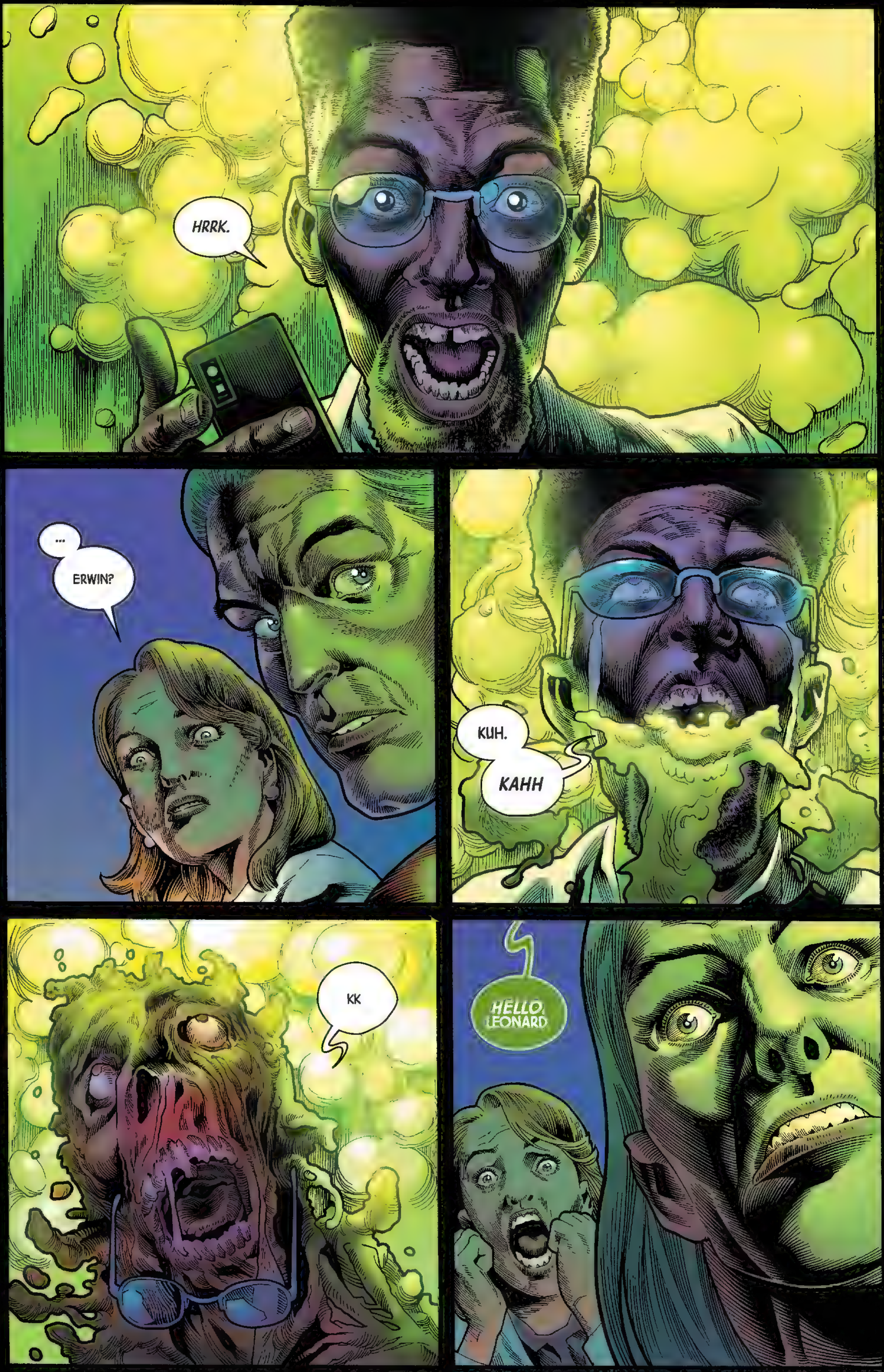

"INFECTING EVERYONE."
OUCH.
THAT'LL LEAVE A MARK.

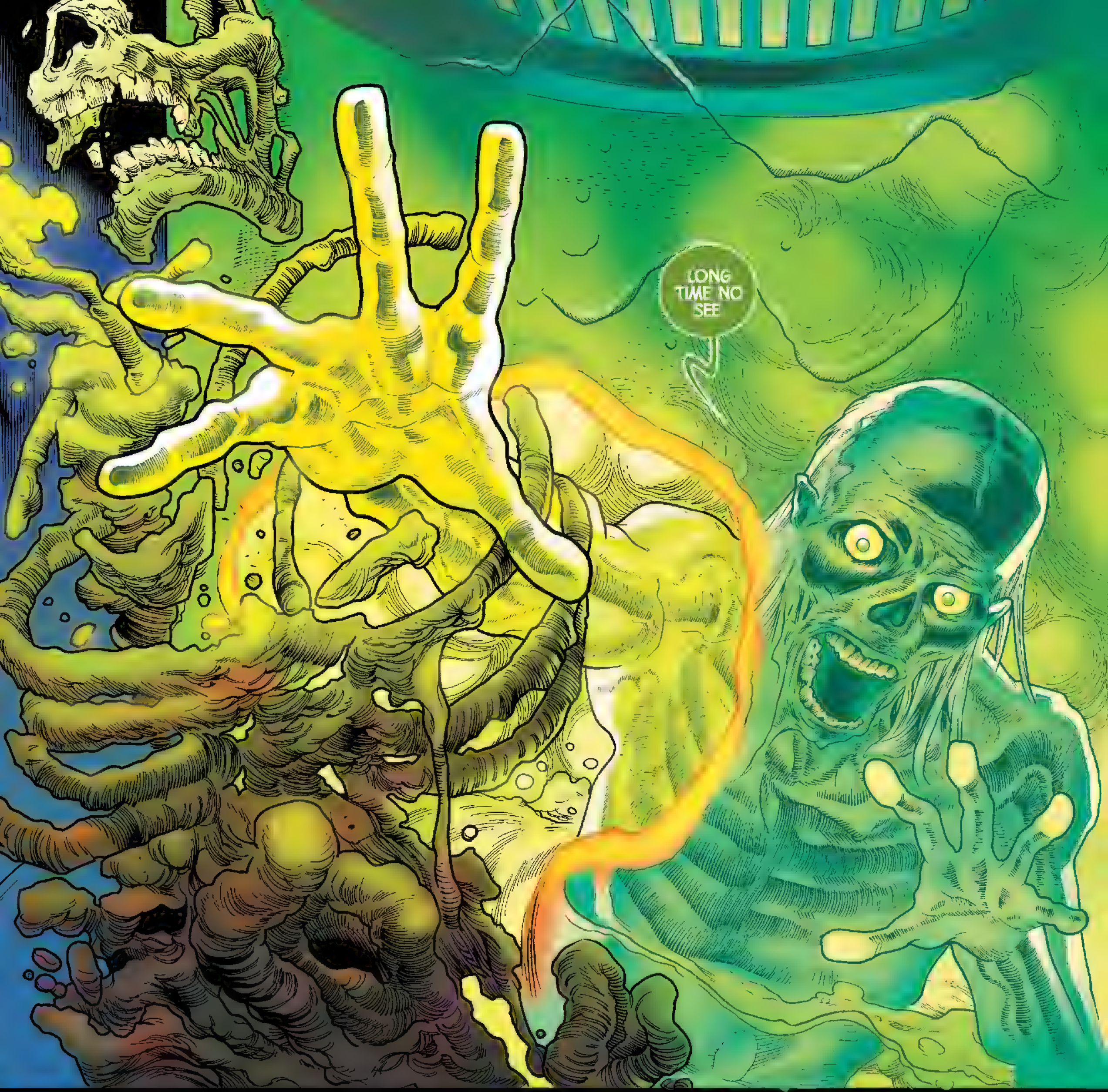

WELL, IF WE SOLVE THIS *RADIATION* ISSUE, WE CAN PULL HIM OUT BEFORE THINGS GET *WORSE.* RICK TOO.
LISTEN, THERE'S A *THUMB DRIVE* WITH MY NAME ON IT IN THE MAIN LAB--IT'S GOT A WHOLE BUNCH OF *TRANSLOCATION DATA* ON IT--
YEAH...
GOT IT. BACK IN FIVE MINUTES.


"...TRY AND MAKE IT *FOUR.*"
YOU HAD ENOUGH? *HUH?*
HAD ENOUGH, YOU BIG--
YES.
HULK *HAS* HAD ENOUGH! *ENOUGH OF HURT!*
HULK END IT NOW!
HULK END *YOU!*
OH, LORD--
TITANIA!
MARY? SOMETHING HAPPEN TO *MARY?*
DAMN IT, CREEL, SHAKE IT *OFF*--SHE *NEEDS* YOU--


THINK, DUMMY. YER THE ABSORBING MAN...NO RULES TO THAT, NO GUIDELINES...
WHAT CAN I BE? RUBBLE... DUST AND WIND...
...AND GAMMA.
YEAH. YEAH, THAT'S IT.
I CAN BE GAMMA.
OH, CARL. WHAT A WONDERFUL IDEA.
I COULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT OF A BETTER ONE.


HELLO?
I'M LOOKING FOR A *THUMB DRIVE...?*
WHICH THUMB DRIVE?
THERE ARE *THREE* FLOATING AROUND RIGHT NOW--
I THINK IT'S *FOUR?* WE JUST STARTED A NEW ONE FOR THE *FIRST.*
THE *FIRST...?*
DEL FRYE-- THE GUY WE FOUND IN A *GRAVE* IN COLORADO.
THE FIRST *LIVE SUBJECT.* WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO *CURE* HIM.
HE LOOKS THE SAME AS WHEN I CARRIED HIM IN HERE.
CAN *ANYTHING* BE DONE? I KNOW YOU DID A LOT FOR *RICK...*
THIS GUY ISN'T RICK. THIS GUY'S *REALLY* MESSED UP.
ANYWAY. I NEED THE DRIVE WITH CHARLENE'S NAME ON IT.
RIGHT HERE.
GOTTA *SAY,* DOC--I DON'T LIKE THE NEWS WE'RE GETTING OUT OF *IOWA* AT--


HRRK.
...
ERWIN?
KUH.
KAHH
KK
HELLO LEONARD

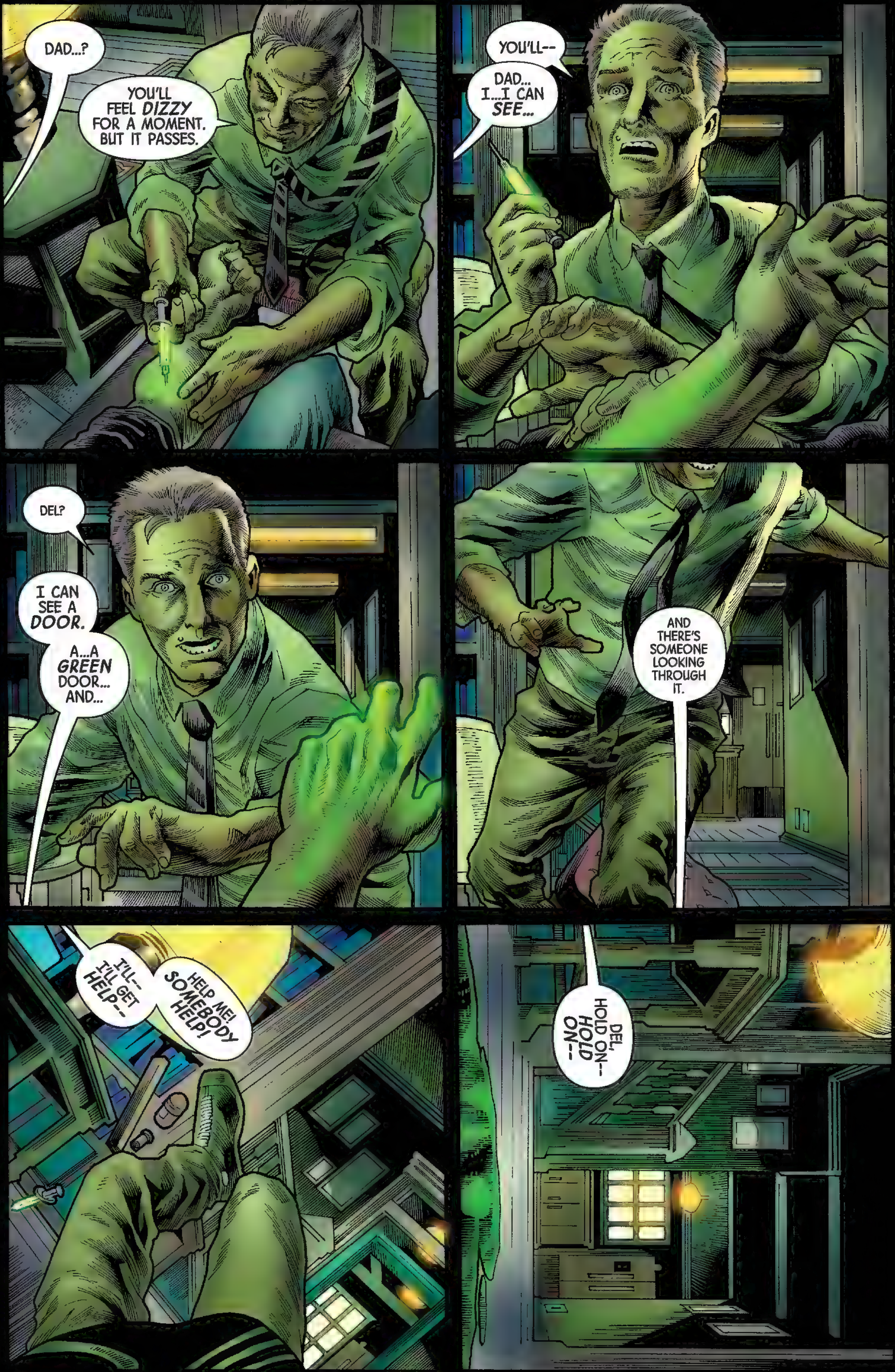

LONG TIME NO SEE

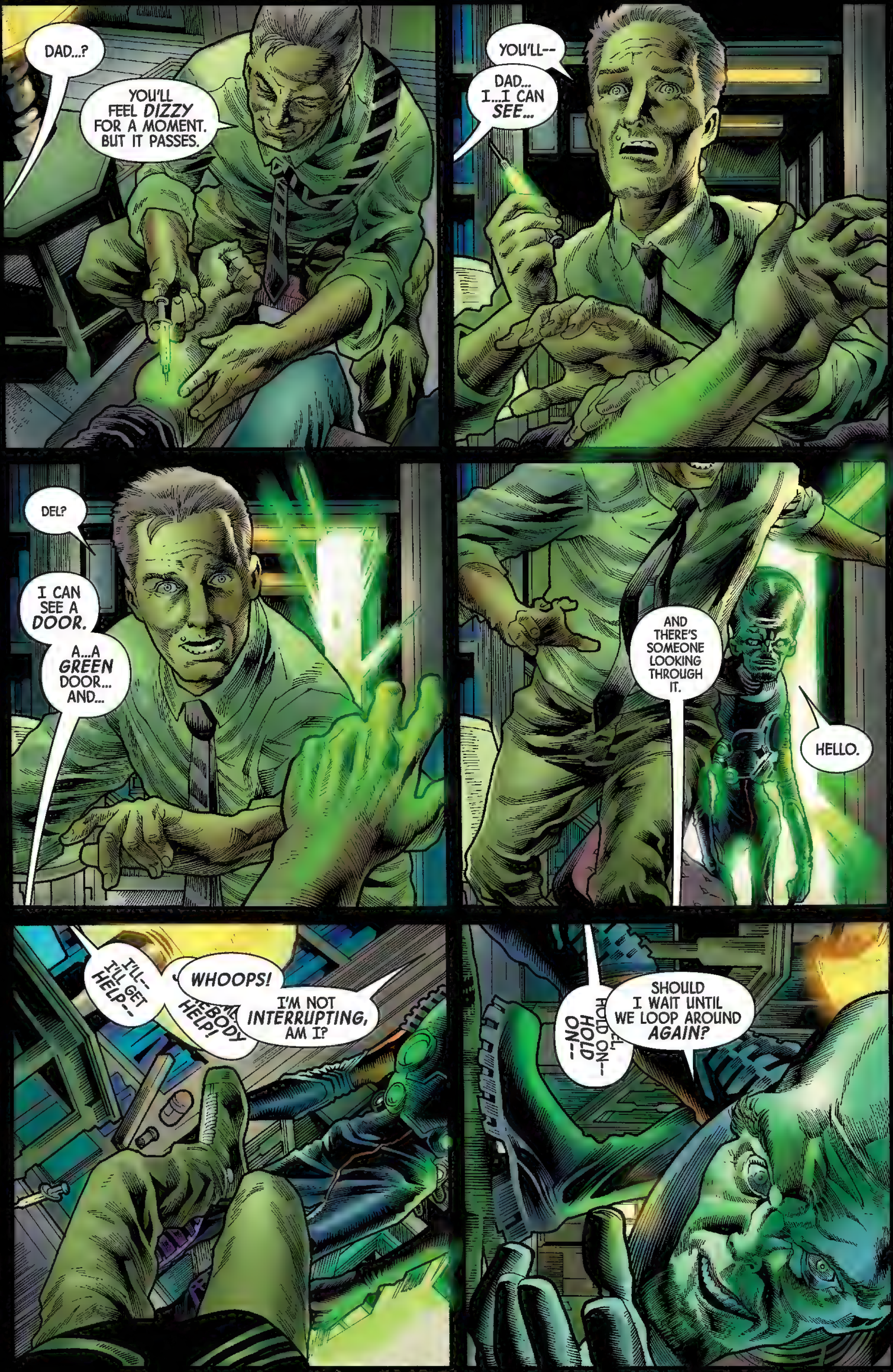
THE THING IN THE TUBE

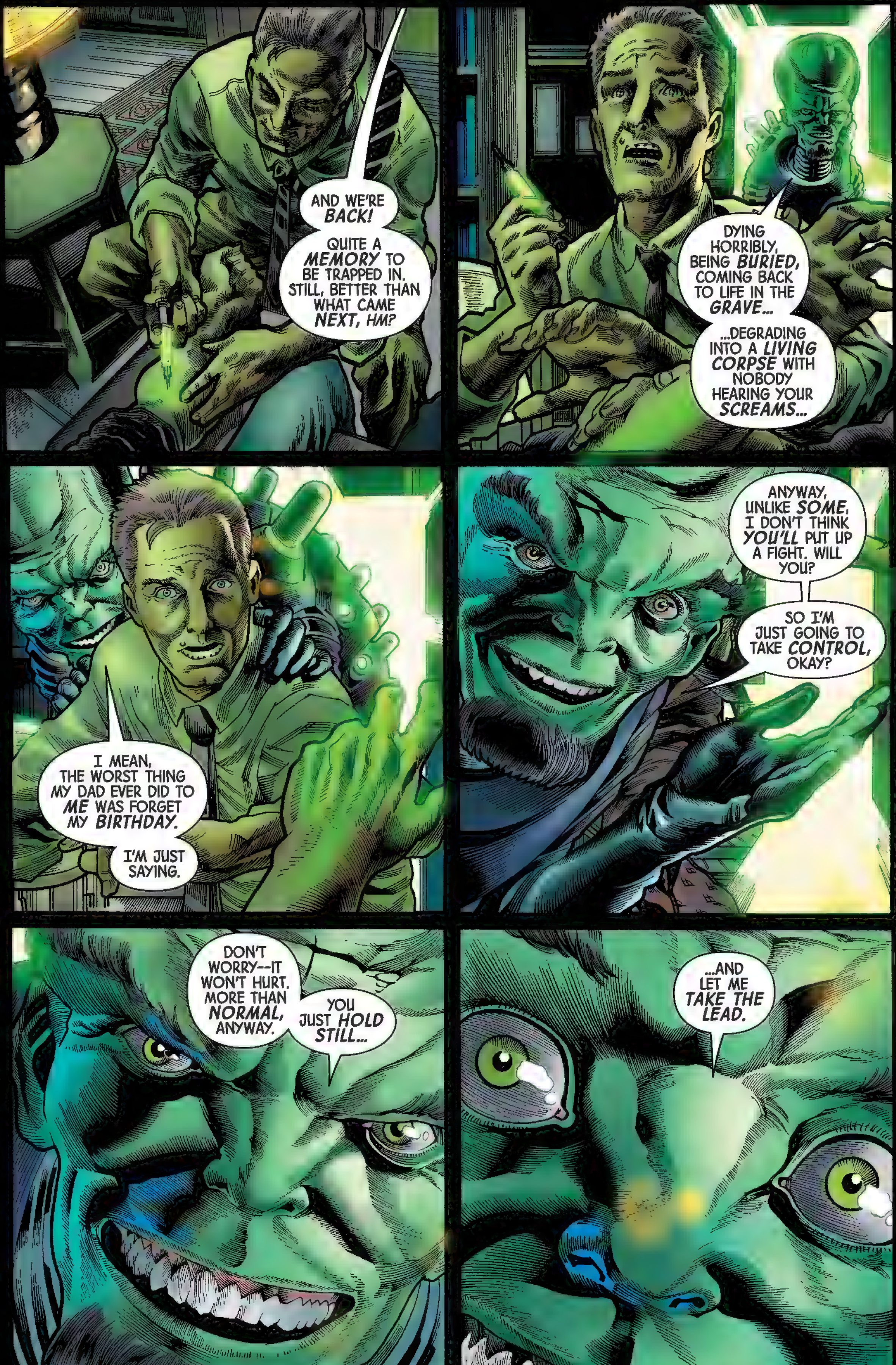
37

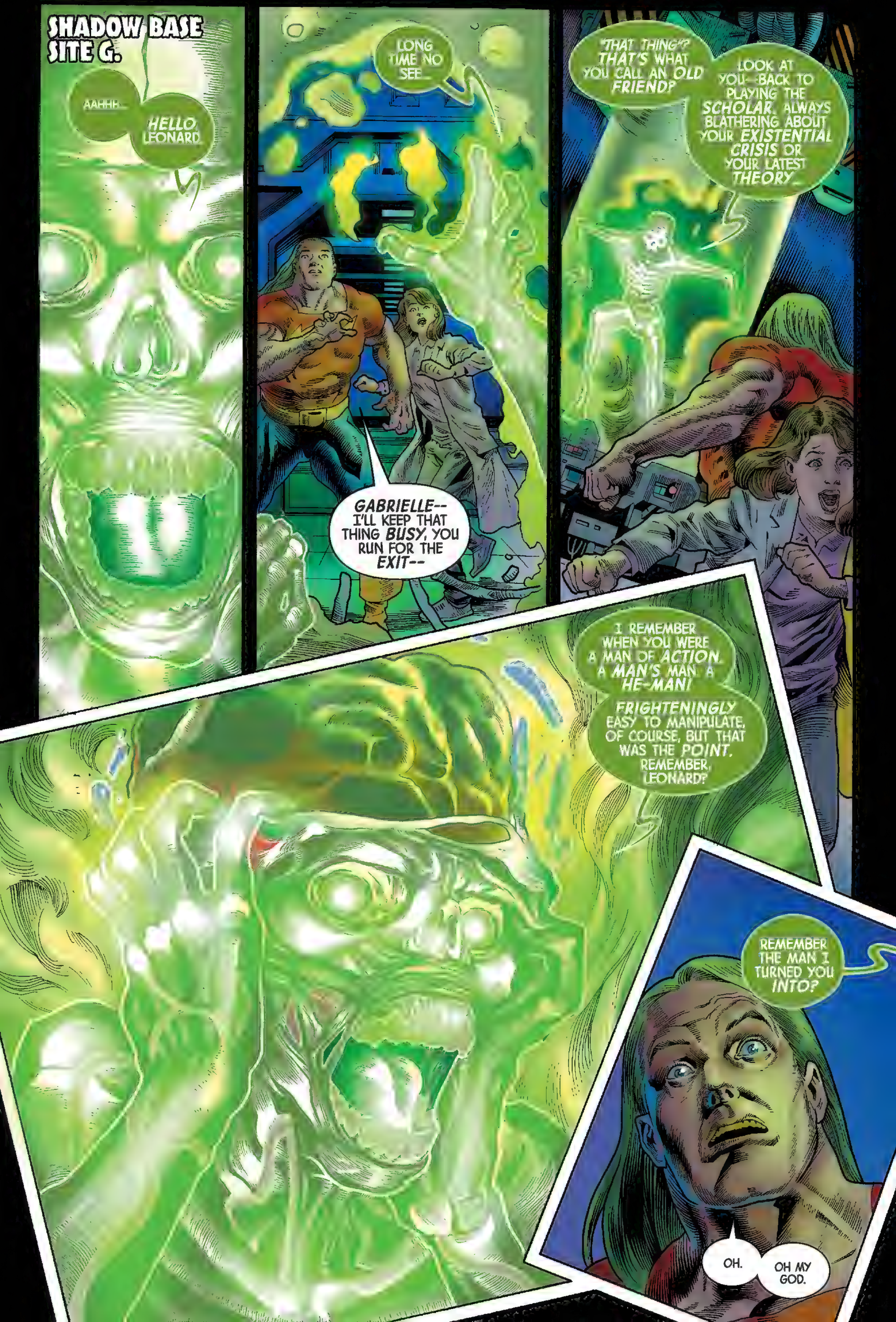
"IF THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION WERE
CLEANSED EVERYTHING WOULD
APPEAR TO MAN AS IT IS, INFINITE."

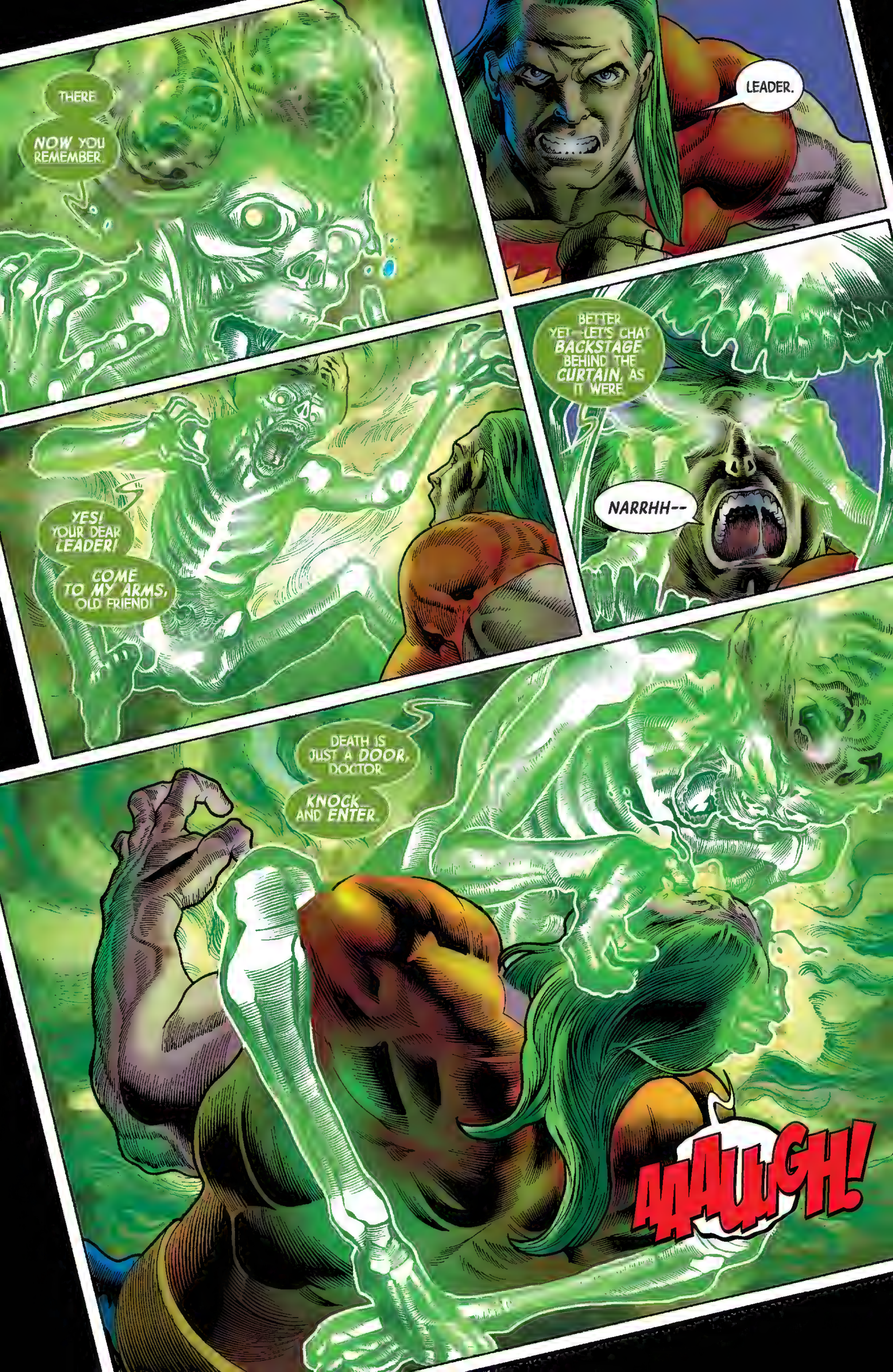
– WILLIAM BLAKE
THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL

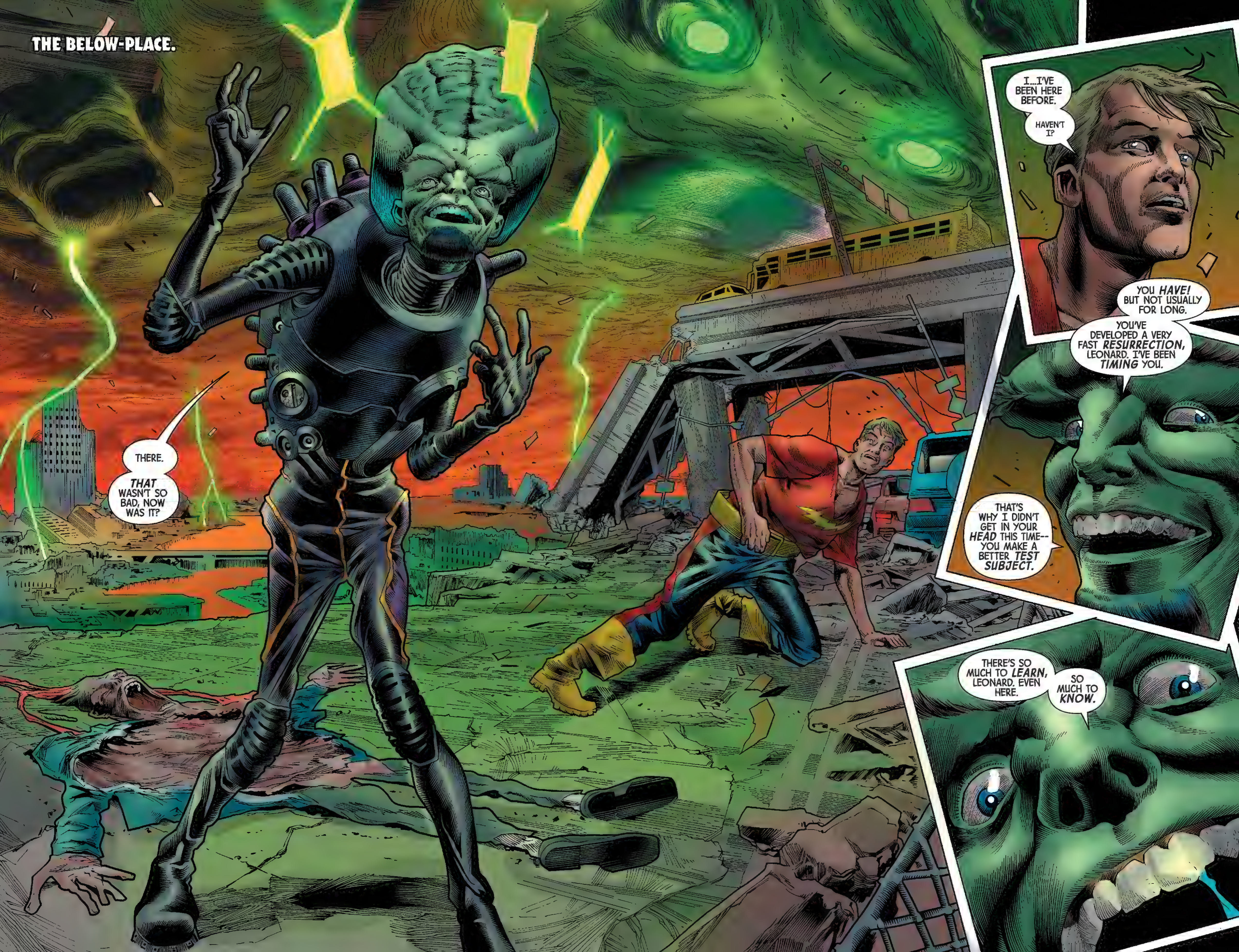

DAD...?
YOU'LL FEEL *DIZZY* FOR A MOMENT. BUT IT PASSES.
YOU'LL--
DAD... I...I CAN *SEE*...
DEL?
I CAN SEE A *DOOR*.
A...A *GREEN* DOOR... AND...
AND THERE'S SOMEONE LOOKING THROUGH IT.
I'LL-- I'LL GET HELP--
HELP ME! SOMEBODY HELP!
DEL, HOLD ON-- HOLD ON--

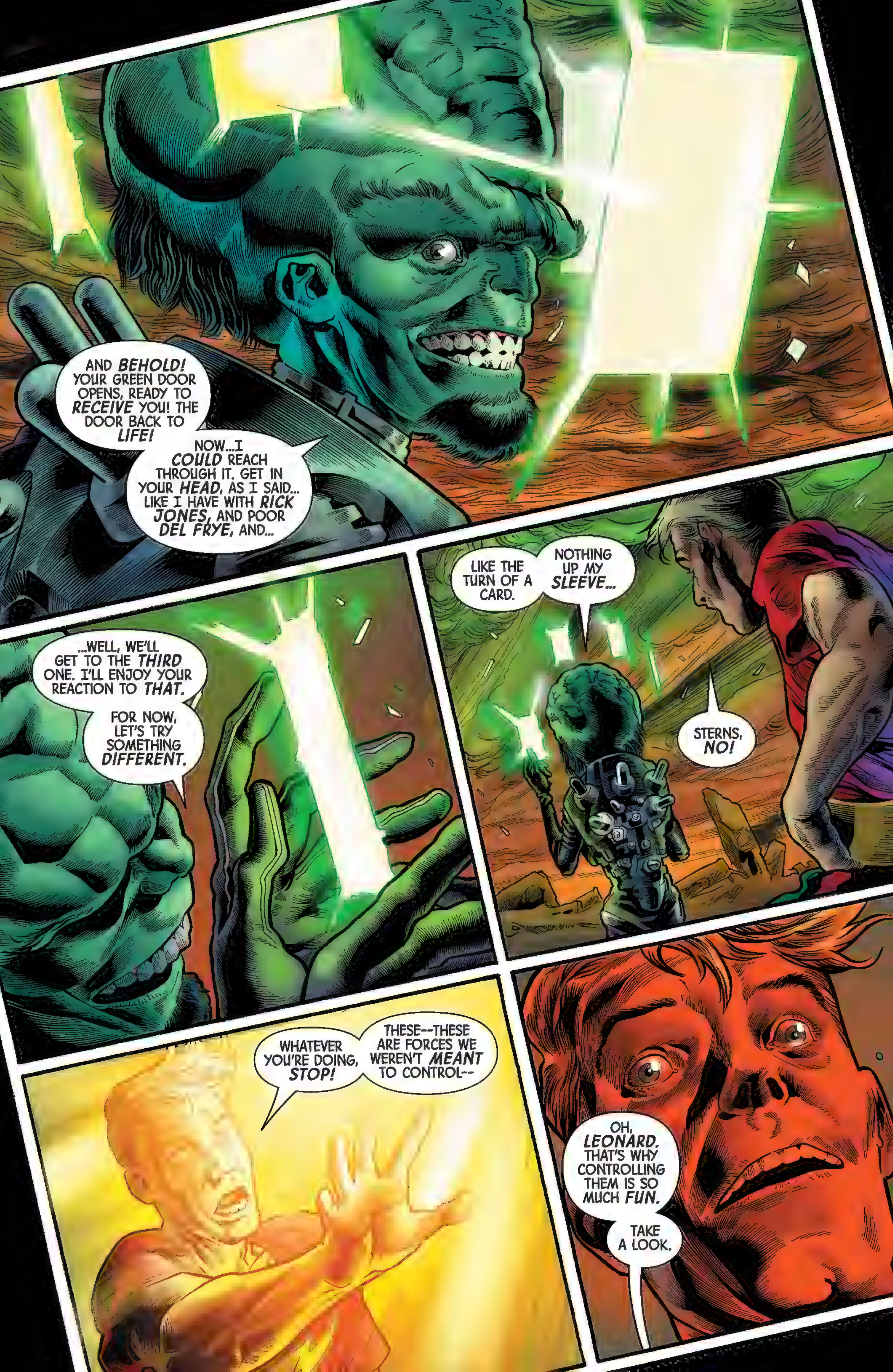

DAD...?
YOU'LL FEEL *DIZZY* FOR A MOMENT. BUT IT PASSES.
YOU'LL--
DAD... I...I CAN *SEE*...
DEL?
I CAN SEE A *DOOR*.
A...A *GREEN* DOOR... AND...
AND THERE'S SOMEONE LOOKING THROUGH IT.
HELLO.
I'LL-- I'LL GET HELP--
EBODY HELP!
WHOOPS!
I'M NOT *INTERRUPTING*, AM I?
EL. HOLD ON-- HOLD ON--
SHOULD I WAIT UNTIL WE LOOP AROUND *AGAIN*?

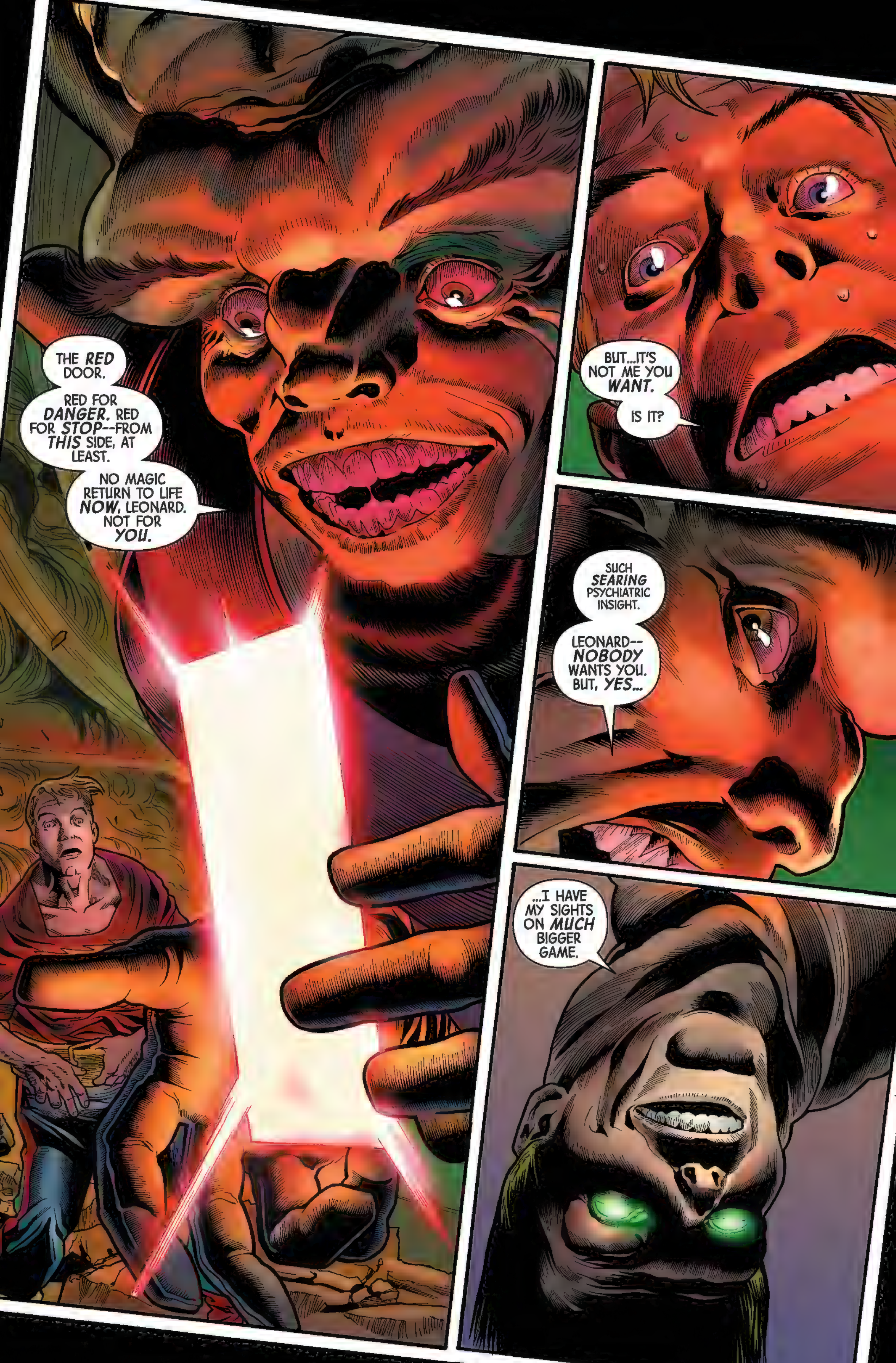

AND WE'RE BACK!
QUITE A MEMORY TO BE TRAPPED IN. STILL, BETTER THAN WHAT CAME NEXT, HM?
DYING HORRIBLY, BEING BURIED, COMING BACK TO LIFE IN THE GRAVE...
...DEGRADING INTO A LIVING CORPSE WITH NOBODY HEARING YOUR SCREAMS...
I MEAN, THE WORST THING MY DAD EVER DID TO ME WAS FORGET MY BIRTHDAY.
I'M JUST SAYING.
ANYWAY, UNLIKE SOME, I DON'T THINK YOU'LL PUT UP A FIGHT. WILL YOU?
SO I'M JUST GOING TO TAKE CONTROL, OKAY?
DON'T WORRY--IT WON'T HURT. MORE THAN NORMAL, ANYWAY.
YOU JUST HOLD STILL...
...AND LET ME TAKE THE LEAD.

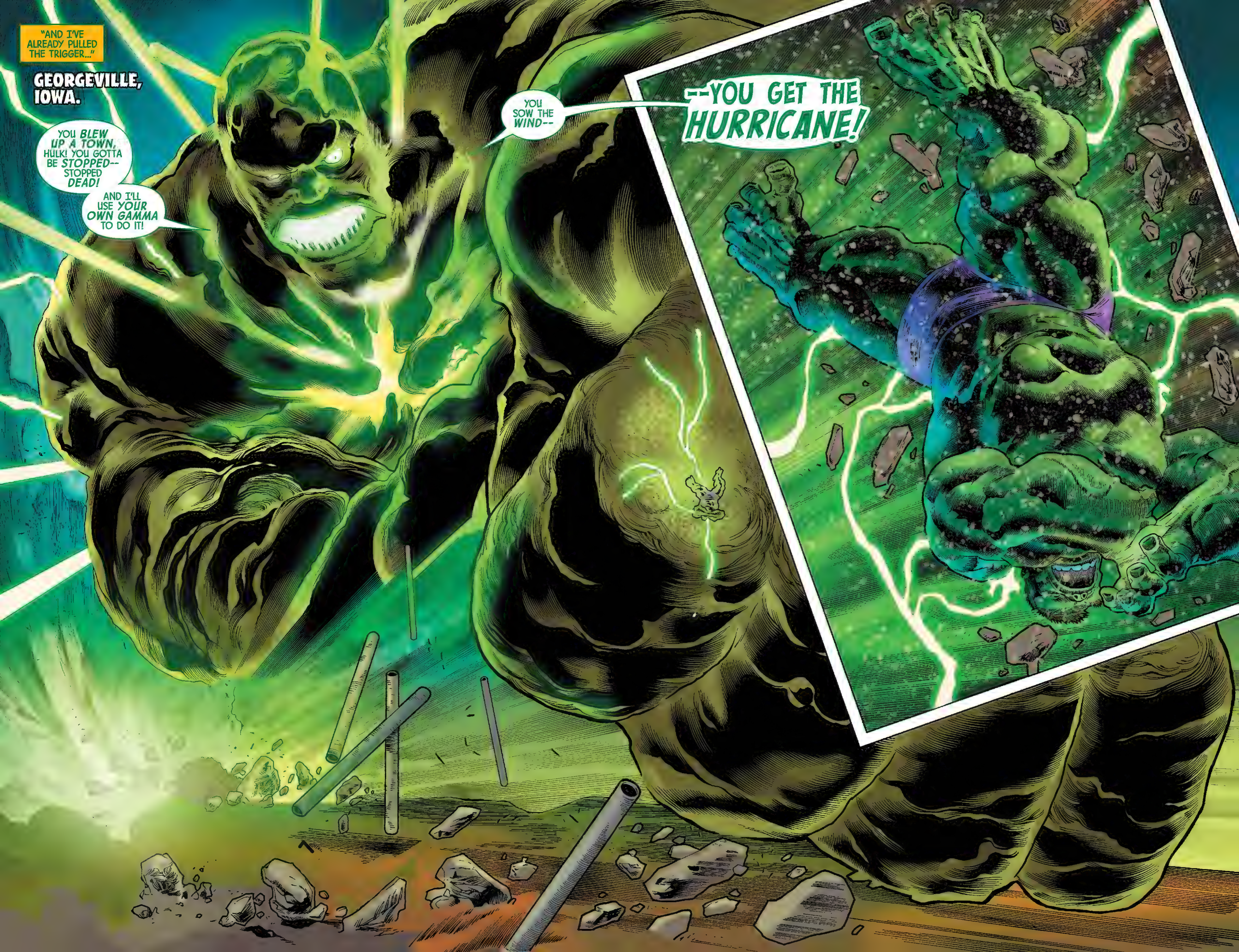

SHADOW BASE SITE G.
AAHHH...
HELLO, LEONARD.
LONG TIME NO SEE...
GABRIELLE-- I'LL KEEP THAT THING BUSY, YOU RUN FOR THE EXIT--
"THAT THING"? THAT'S WHAT YOU CALL AN OLD FRIEND?
LOOK AT YOU--BACK TO PLAYING THE SCHOLAR, ALWAYS BLATHERING ABOUT YOUR EXISTENTIAL CRISIS OR YOUR LATEST THEORY...
I REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE A MAN OF ACTION. A MAN'S MAN. A HE-MAN!
FRIGHTENINGLY EASY TO MANIPULATE, OF COURSE, BUT THAT WAS THE POINT. REMEMBER, LEONARD?
REMEMBER THE MAN I TURNED YOU INTO?
OH.
OH MY GOD.

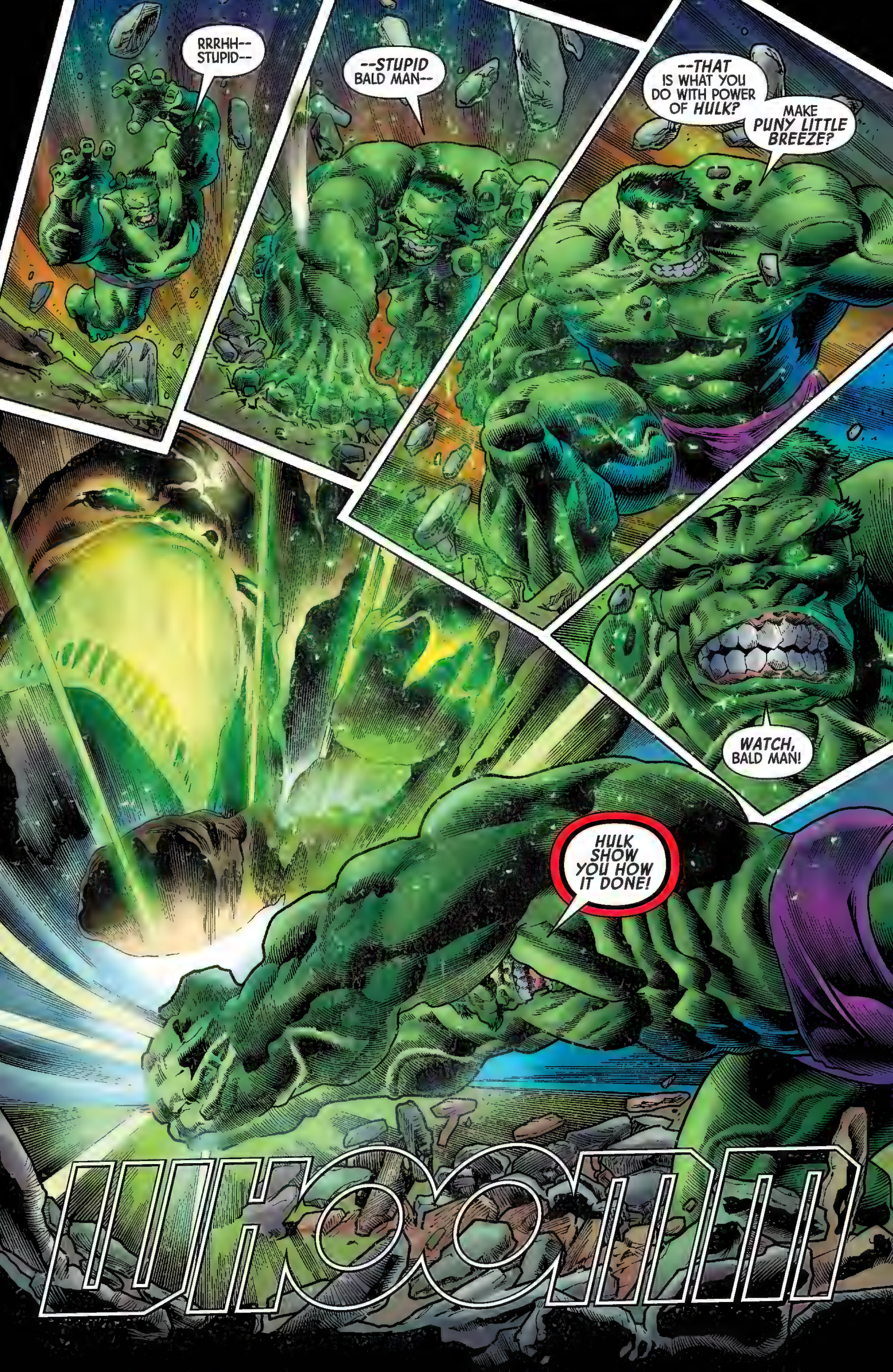

THERE.
NOW YOU REMEMBER.
LEADER.
YES! YOUR DEAR LEADER!
COME TO MY ARMS, OLD FRIEND!
BETTER YET--LET'S CHAT BACKSTAGE BEHIND THE CURTAIN, AS IT WERE.
NARRHH--
DEATH IS JUST A DOOR, DOCTOR.
KNOCK... AND ENTER.
AAAUUGH!

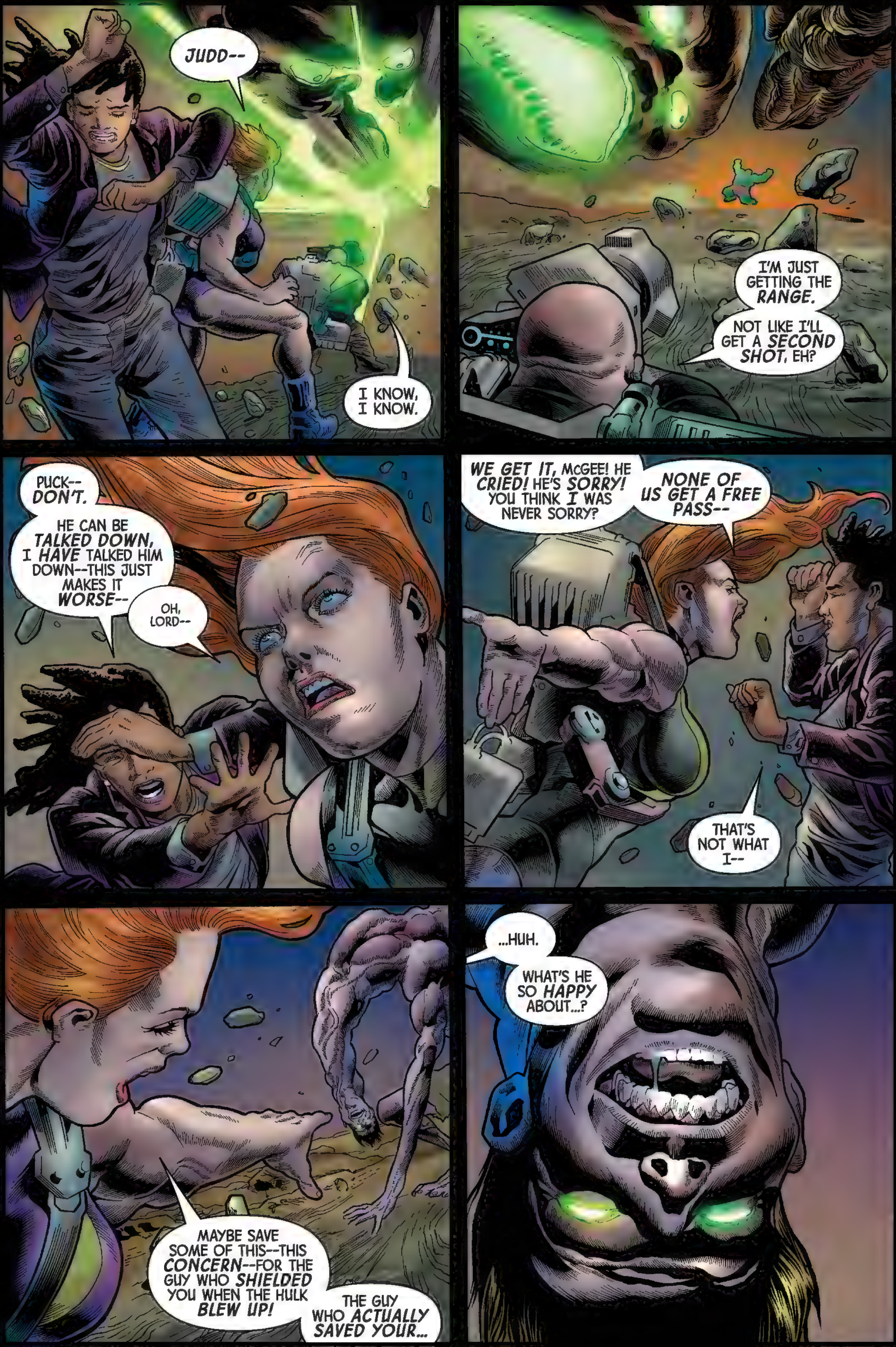

THE BELOW-PLACE.
THERE.
THAT WASN'T SO BAD, NOW WAS IT?
I...I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.
HAVEN'T I?
YOU HAVE! BUT NOT USUALLY FOR LONG.
YOU'VE DEVELOPED A VERY FAST RESURRECTION, LEONARD. I'VE BEEN TIMING YOU.
THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T GET IN YOUR HEAD THIS TIME-- YOU MAKE A BETTER TEST SUBJECT.
THERE'S SO MUCH TO LEARN, LEONARD. EVEN HERE.
SO MUCH TO KNOW.

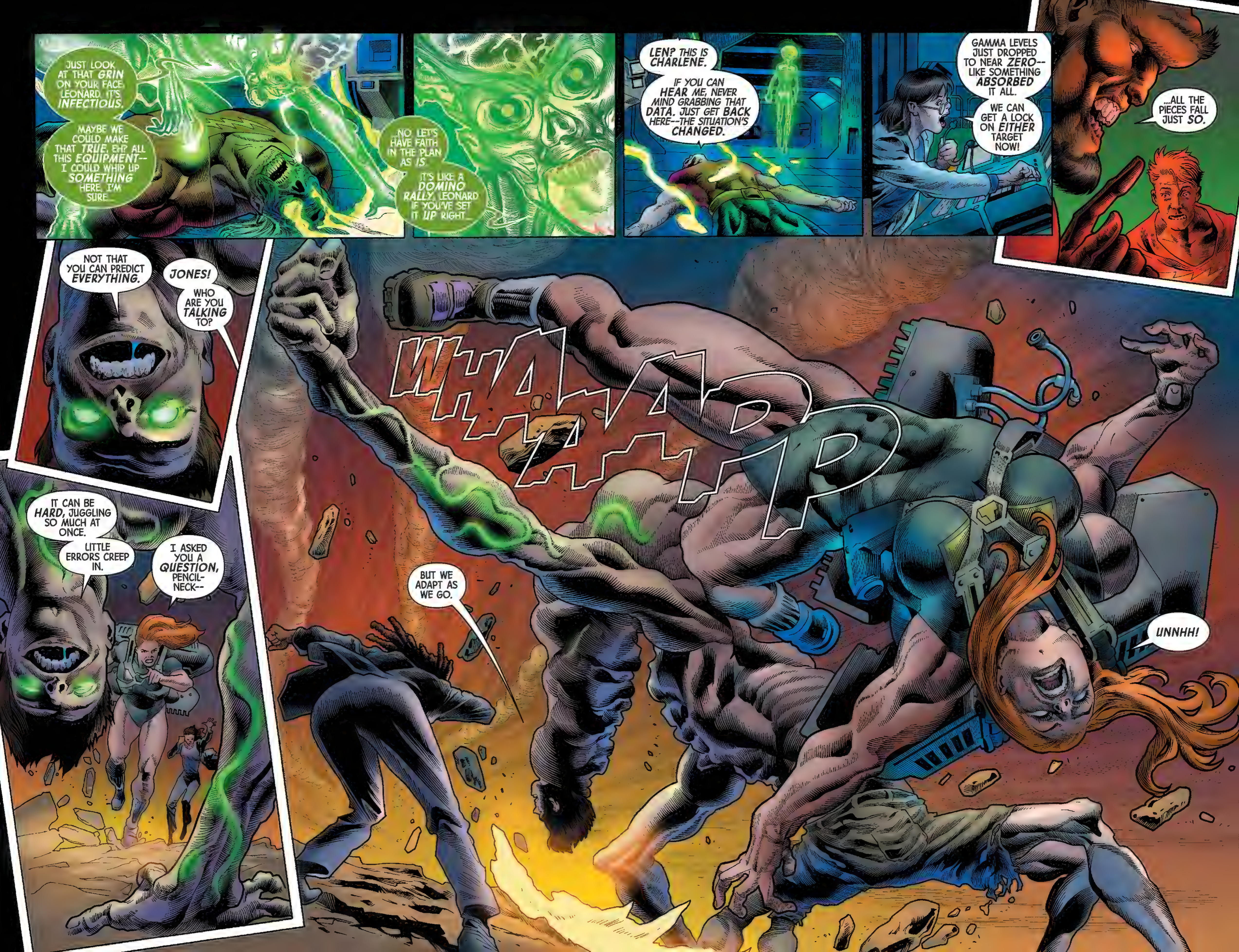

AND *BEHOLD!* YOUR GREEN DOOR OPENS, READY TO *RECEIVE* YOU! THE DOOR BACK TO *LIFE!*
NOW...I *COULD* REACH THROUGH IT. GET IN YOUR *HEAD*, AS I SAID... LIKE I HAVE WITH *RICK JONES*, AND POOR *DEL FRYE*, AND...
...WELL, WE'LL GET TO THE *THIRD* ONE. I'LL ENJOY YOUR REACTION TO *THAT*.
FOR NOW, LET'S TRY SOMETHING *DIFFERENT*.
LIKE THE TURN OF A CARD.
NOTHING UP *MY SLEEVE*...
STERNS, *NO!*
WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING, *STOP!*
THESE--THESE ARE FORCES WE WEREN'T *MEANT* TO CONTROL--
OH, *LEONARD*. THAT'S WHY CONTROLLING THEM IS SO MUCH *FUN*.
TAKE A LOOK.

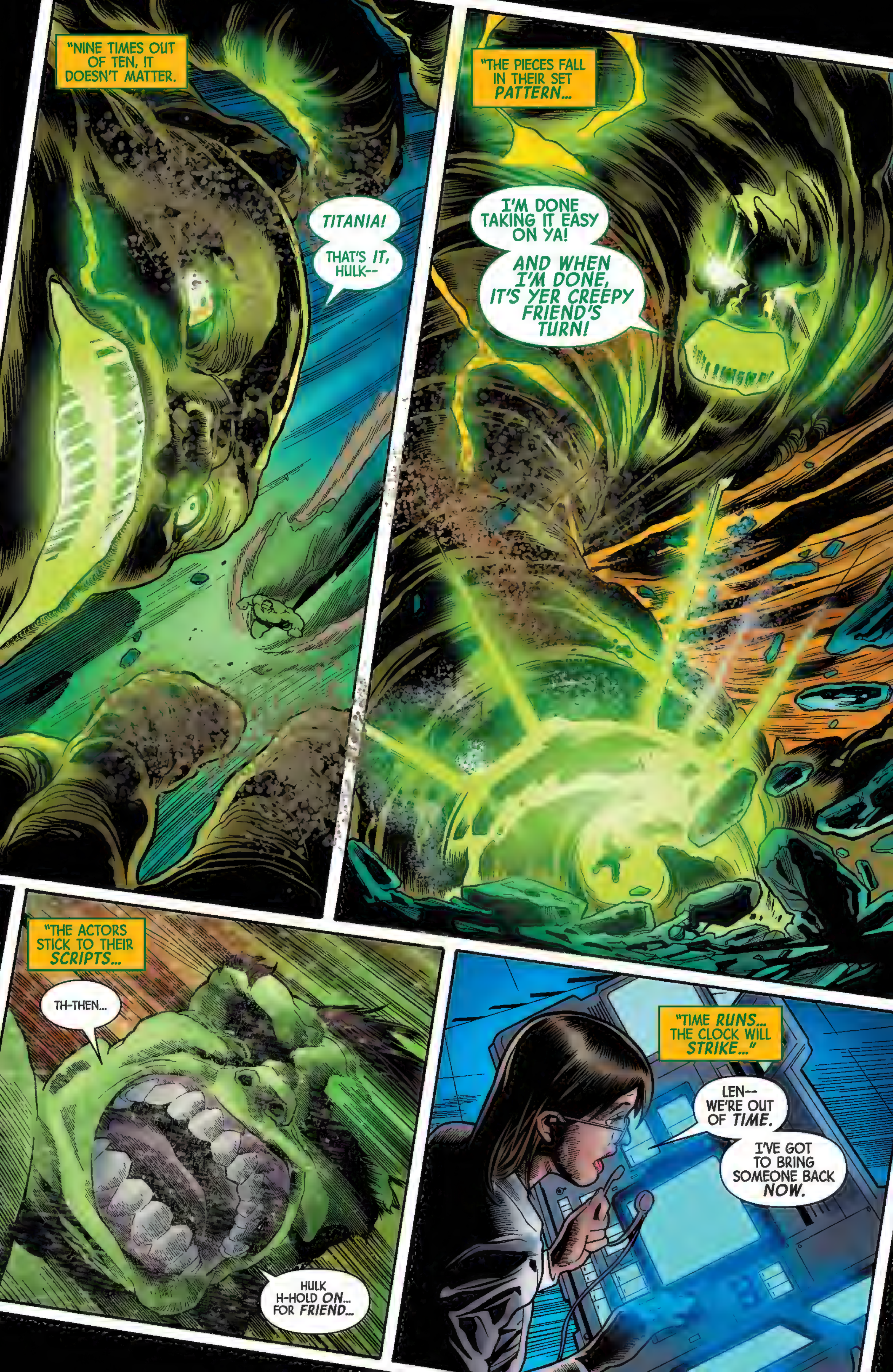

THE RED DOOR.
RED FOR DANGER. RED FOR STOP--FROM THIS SIDE, AT LEAST.
NO MAGIC RETURN TO LIFE NOW, LEONARD. NOT FOR YOU.
BUT...IT'S NOT ME YOU WANT.
IS IT?
SUCH SEARING PSYCHIATRIC INSIGHT.
LEONARD--NOBODY WANTS YOU. BUT, YES...
...I HAVE MY SIGHTS ON MUCH BIGGER GAME.

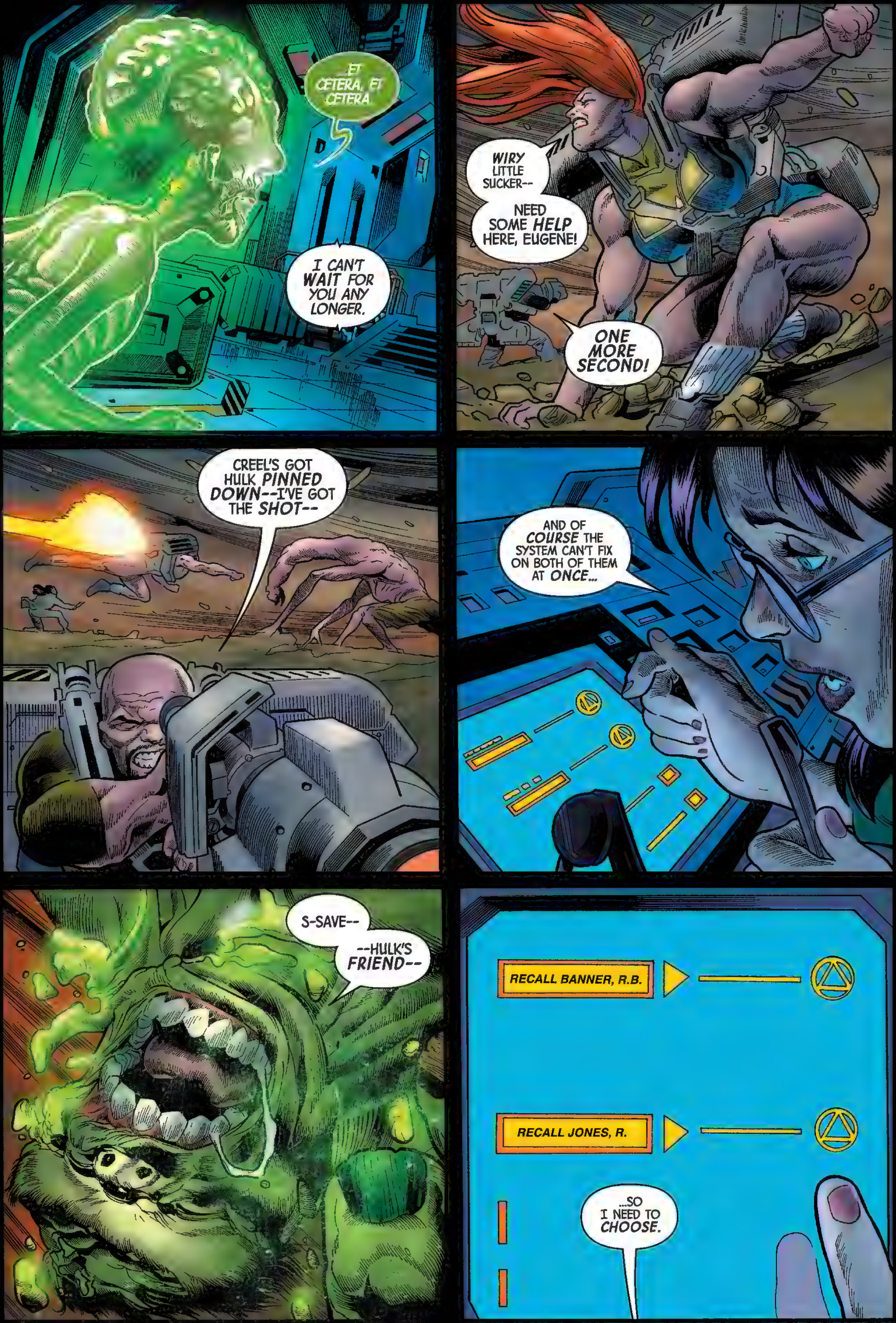

"AND I'VE ALREADY PULLED THE TRIGGER..."
GEORGEVILLE, IOWA.
YOU BLEW UP A TOWN, HULK! YOU GOTTA BE STOPPED-- STOPPED DEAD!
AND I'LL USE YOUR OWN GAMMA TO DO IT!
YOU SOW THE WIND--
--YOU GET THE HURRICANE!

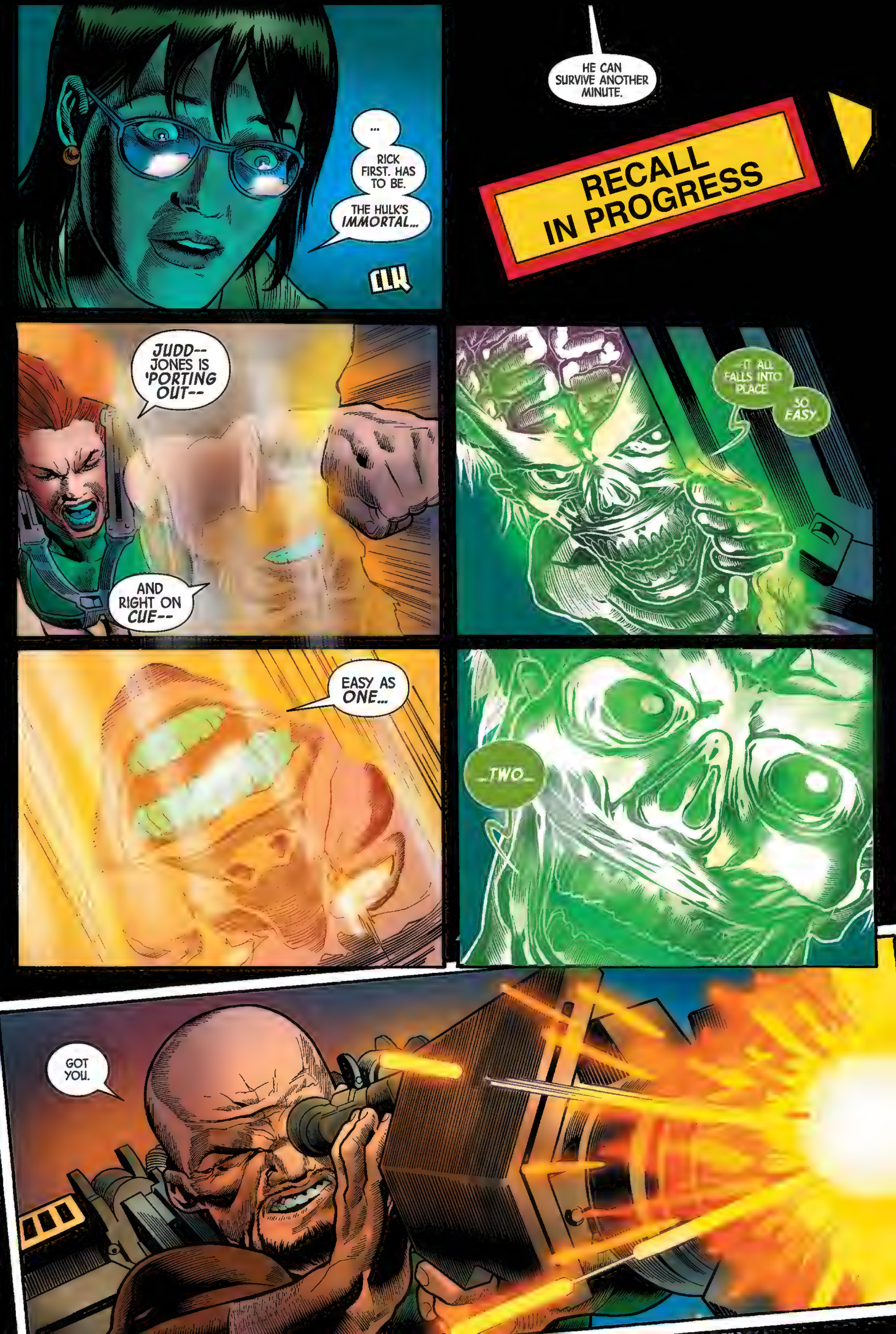

RRRHH-- STUPID--
--STUPID BALD MAN--
--THAT IS WHAT YOU DO WITH POWER OF HULK?
MAKE PUNY LITTLE BREEZE?
WATCH, BALD MAN!
HULK SHOW YOU HOW IT DONE!
WHOOMM

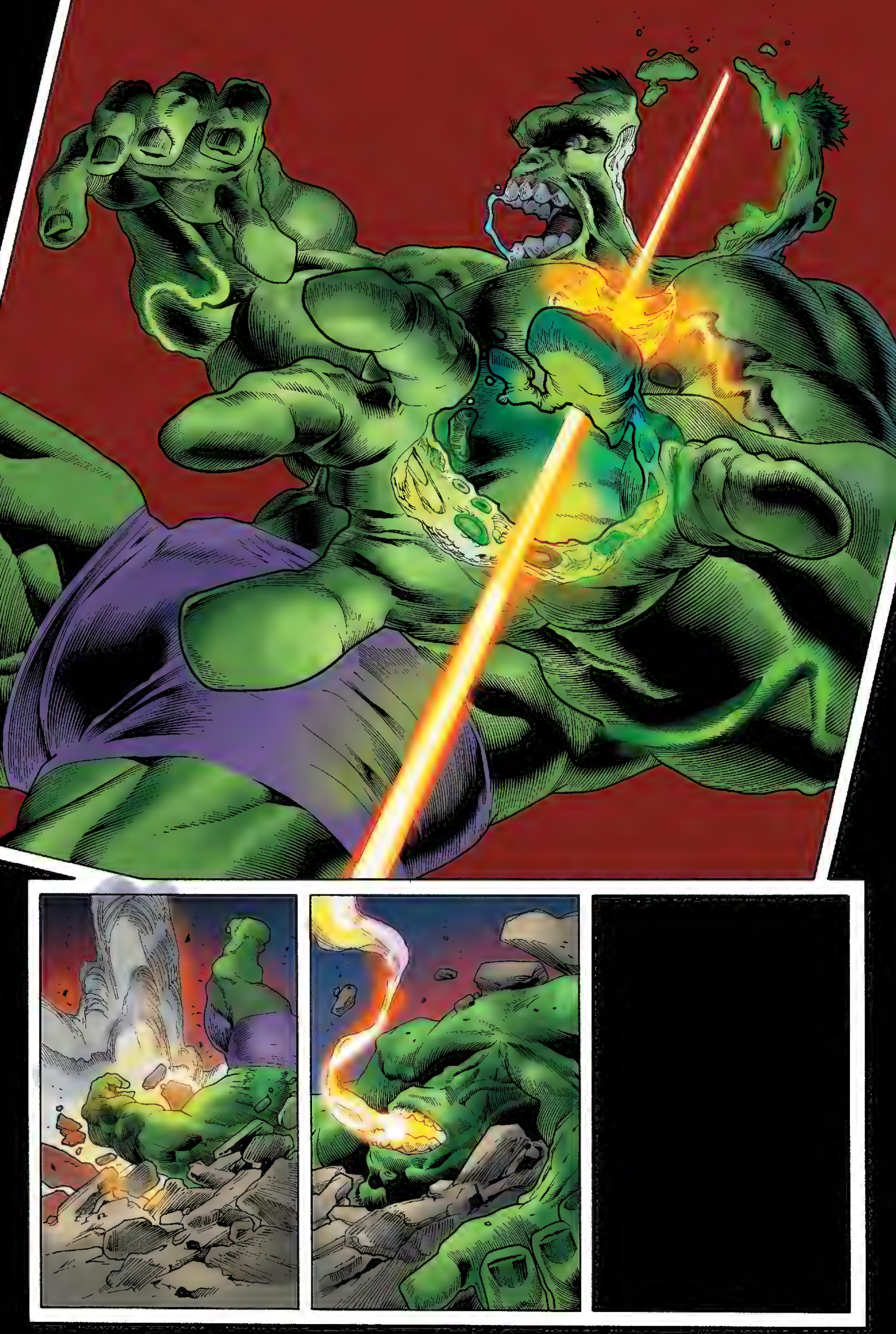

JUDD--
I KNOW, I KNOW.
I'M JUST GETTING THE RANGE.
NOT LIKE I'LL GET A SECOND SHOT, EH?
PUCK-- DON'T.
HE CAN BE TALKED DOWN, I HAVE TALKED HIM DOWN--THIS JUST MAKES IT WORSE--
OH, LORD--
WE GET IT, McGEE! HE CRIED! HE'S SORRY! YOU THINK I WAS NEVER SORRY?
NONE OF US GET A FREE PASS--
THAT'S NOT WHAT I--
MAYBE SAVE SOME OF THIS--THIS CONCERN--FOR THE GUY WHO SHIELDED YOU WHEN THE HULK BLEW UP!
THE GUY WHO ACTUALLY SAVED YOUR...
...HUH.
WHAT'S HE SO HAPPY ABOUT...?

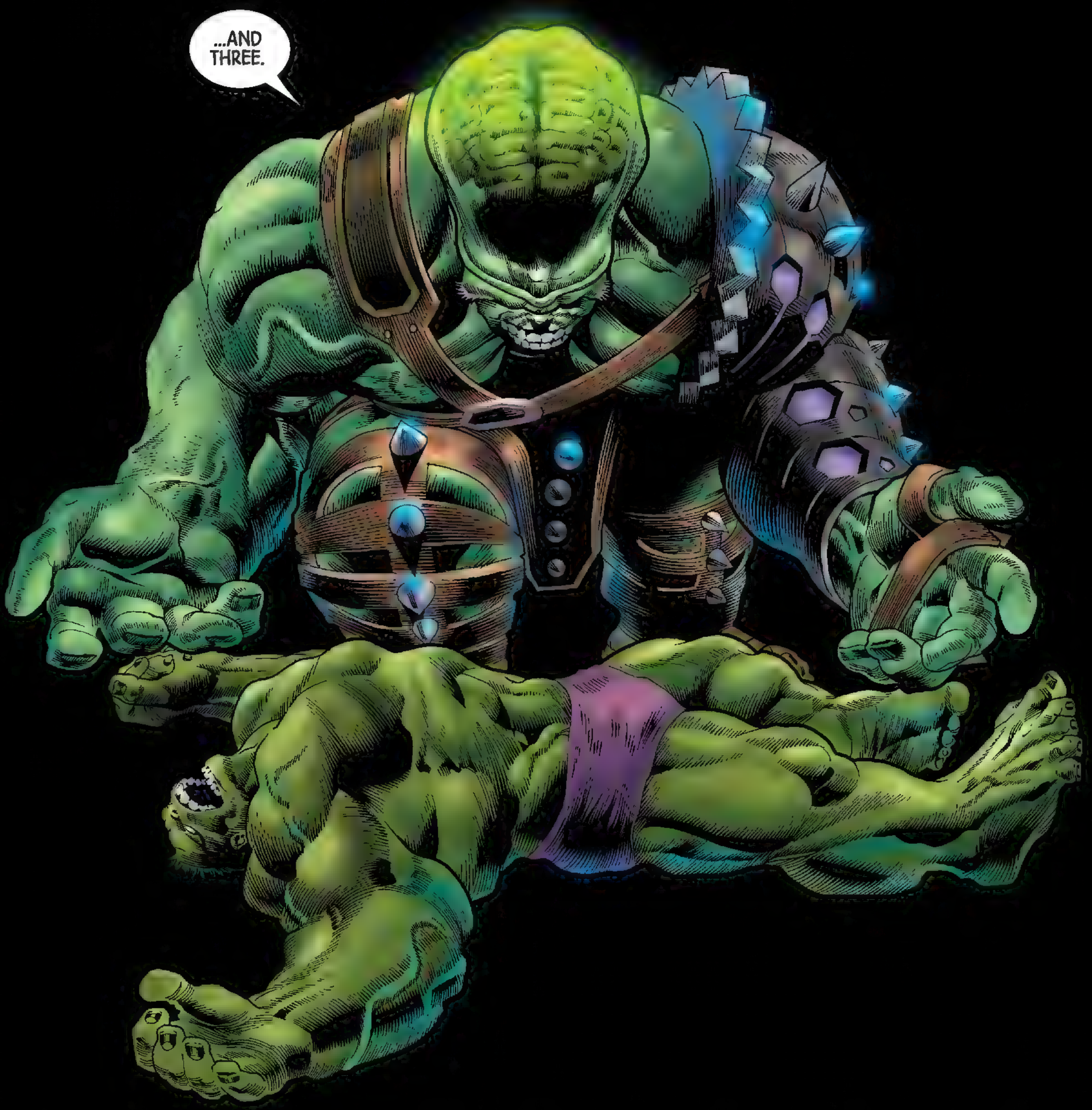

JUST LOOK AT THAT *GRIN* ON YOUR FACE, LEONARD. IT'S *INFECTIOUS.*
MAYBE WE COULD MAKE THAT *TRUE*, EH? ALL THIS *EQUIPMENT*-- I COULD WHIP UP *SOMETHING* HERE, I'M SURE...
...NO. LET'S HAVE FAITH IN THE PLAN AS *IS*.
IT'S LIKE A *DOMINO RALLY*, LEONARD. IF YOU'VE SET IT *UP* RIGHT...
LEN? THIS IS CHARLENE.
*IF YOU CAN **HEAR ME**, NEVER MIND GRABBING THAT **DATA.** JUST GET **BACK** HERE--THE SITUATION'S **CHANGED.***
GAMMA LEVELS JUST DROPPED TO NEAR *ZERO*-- LIKE SOMETHING *ABSORBED* IT ALL.
WE CAN GET A LOCK ON *EITHER* TARGET NOW!
...ALL THE PIECES FALL JUST *SO*.
NOT THAT YOU CAN PREDICT *EVERYTHING.*
JONES!
WHO ARE YOU *TALKING* TO?
IT CAN BE *HARD*, JUGGLING SO MUCH AT ONCE.
LITTLE ERRORS CREEP IN.
I ASKED YOU A *QUESTION*, PENCIL-NECK--
WHAAAP
BUT WE ADAPT AS WE GO.
UNNHH!


"NINE TIMES OUT OF TEN, IT DOESN'T MATTER.
TITANIA!
THAT'S *IT*, HULK--
"THE PIECES FALL IN THEIR SET *PATTERN*...
I'M DONE TAKING IT EASY ON YA!
AND WHEN I'M DONE, IT'S YER CREEPY FRIEND'S TURN!
"THE ACTORS STICK TO THEIR *SCRIPTS*...
TH-THEN...
HULK H-HOLD *ON*... FOR *FRIEND*...
"TIME *RUNS*... THE CLOCK WILL *STRIKE*..."
LEN-- WE'RE OUT OF *TIME*.
I'VE GOT TO BRING SOMEONE BACK *NOW*.


...ET CETERA, ET CETERA.
I CAN'T WAIT FOR YOU ANY LONGER.
WIRY LITTLE SUCKER--
NEED SOME HELP HERE, EUGENE!
ONE MORE SECOND!
CREEL'S GOT HULK PINNED DOWN--I'VE GOT THE SHOT--
AND OF COURSE THE SYSTEM CAN'T FIX ON BOTH OF THEM AT ONCE...
S-SAVE--
--HULK'S FRIEND--
RECALL BANNER, R.B.
RECALL JONES, R.
...SO I NEED TO CHOOSE.


...
RICK FIRST. HAS TO BE.
THE HULK'S *IMMORTAL...*
CLK
HE CAN SURVIVE ANOTHER MINUTE.
RECALL IN PROGRESS
JUDD-- JONES IS *'PORTING OUT--*
AND RIGHT ON *CUE--*
...IT ALL FALLS INTO PLACE...
...SO *EASY.*
EASY AS *ONE...*
...TWO...
GOT YOU.

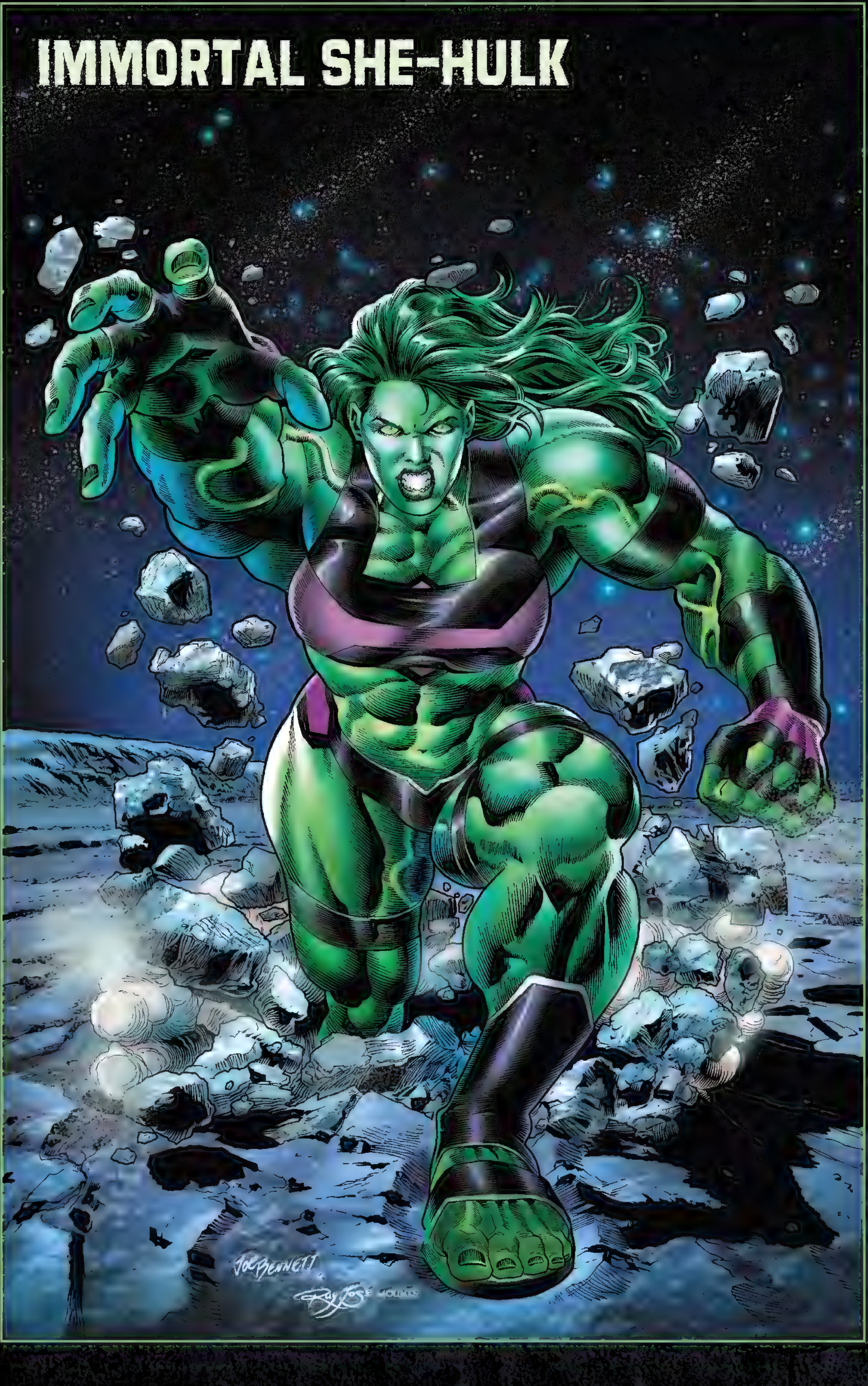


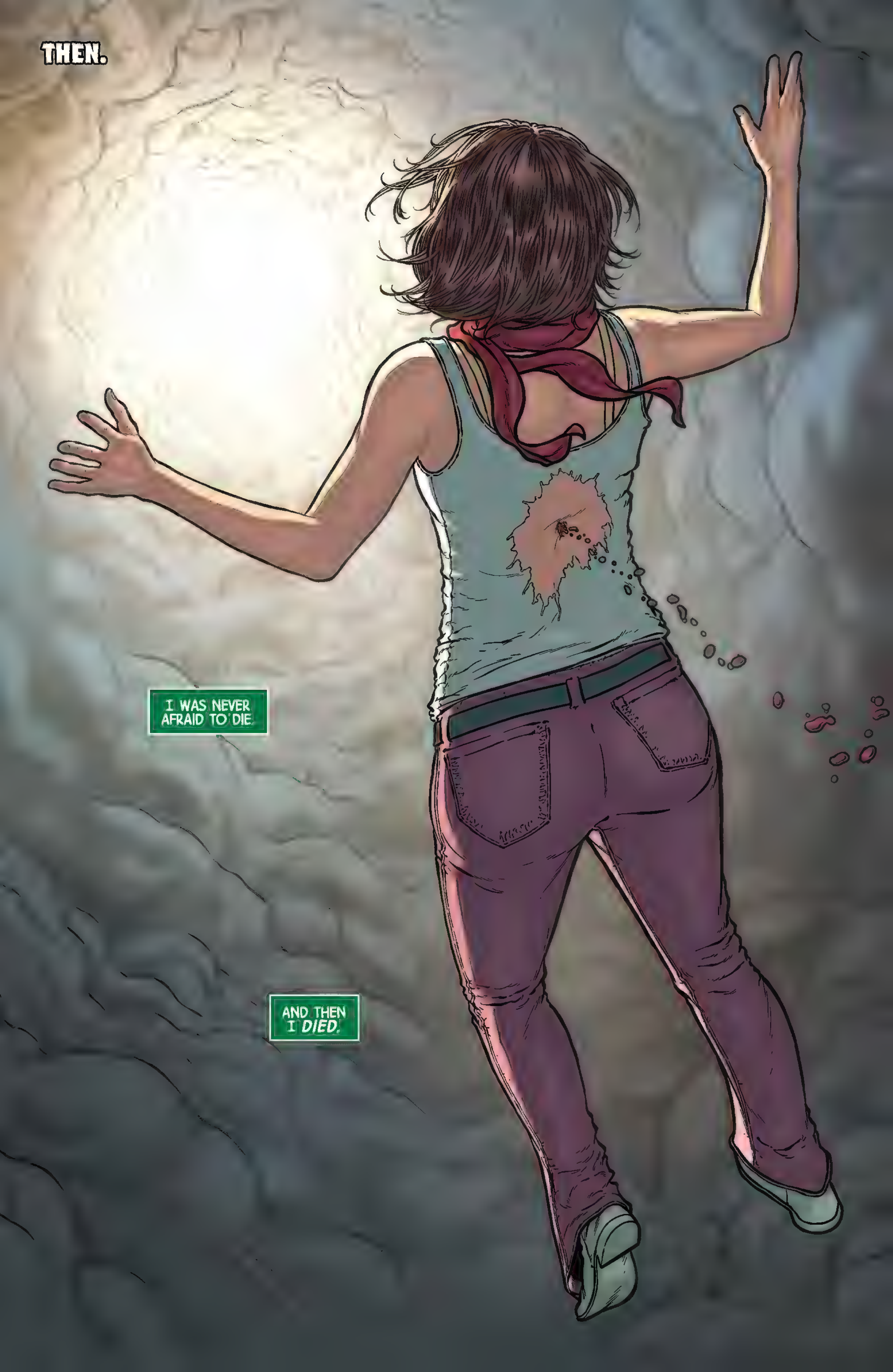


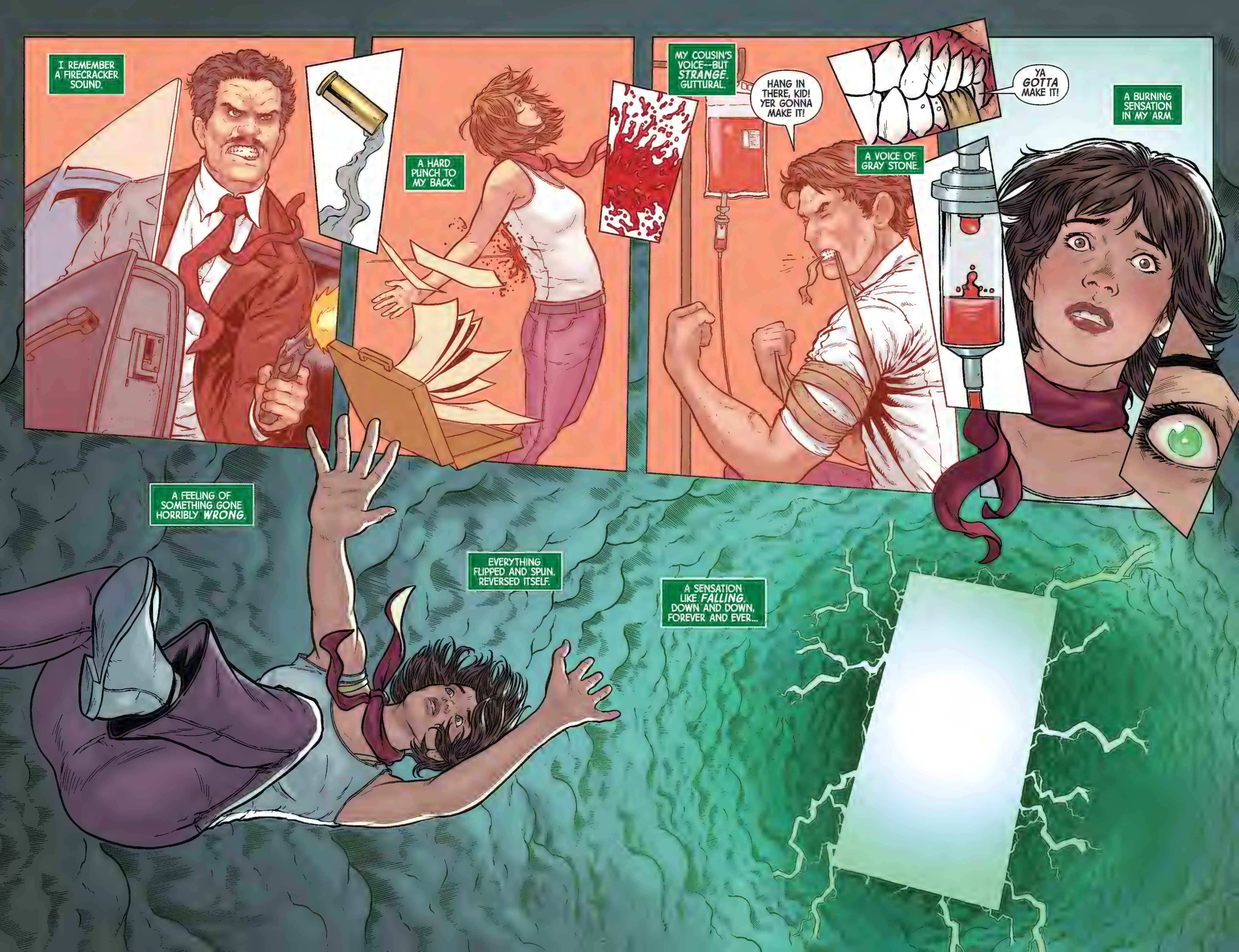
THE KEEPER OF THE DOOR

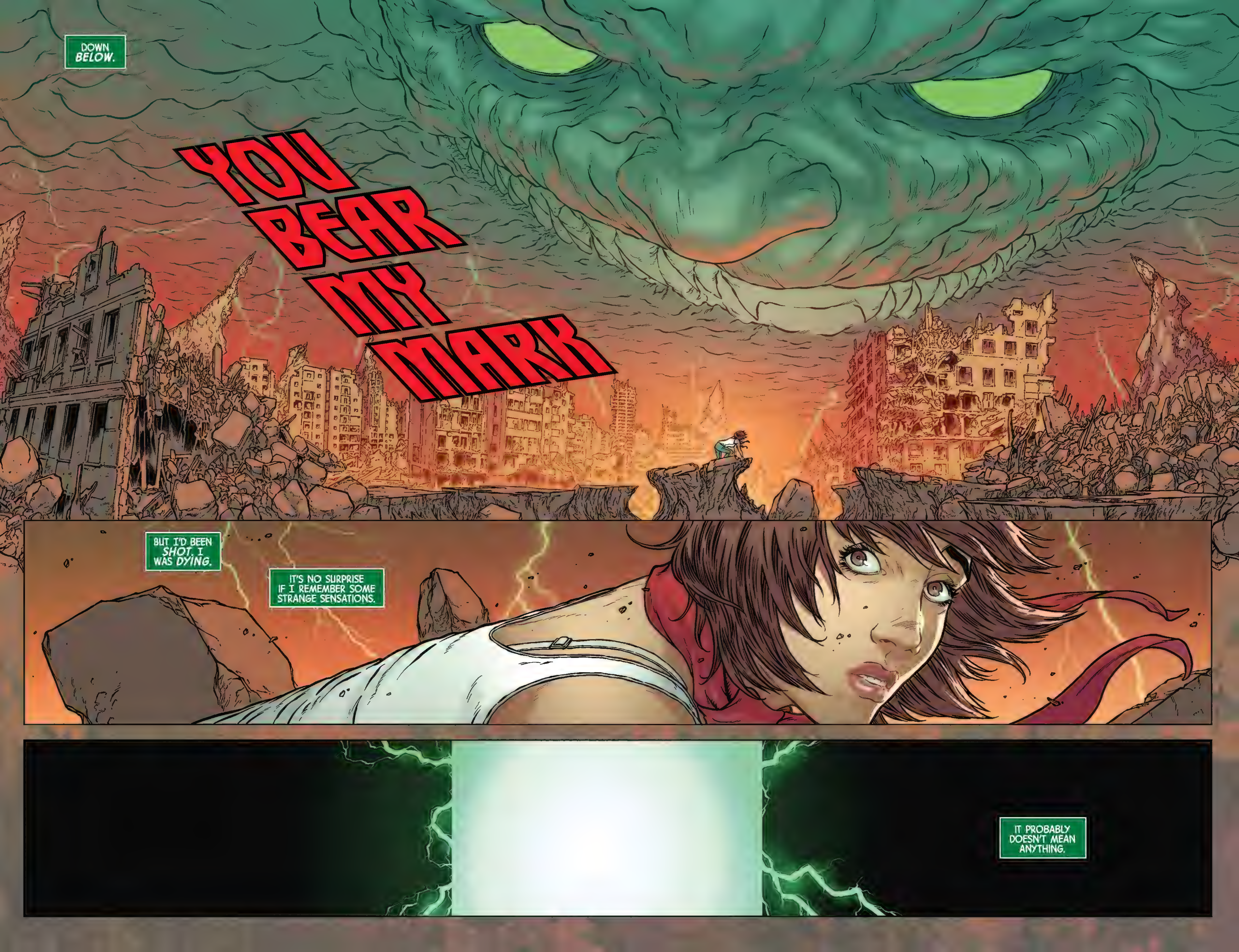
IMMORTAL SHE-HULK VARIANT BY DANIEL WARREN JOHNSON & MIKE SPICER

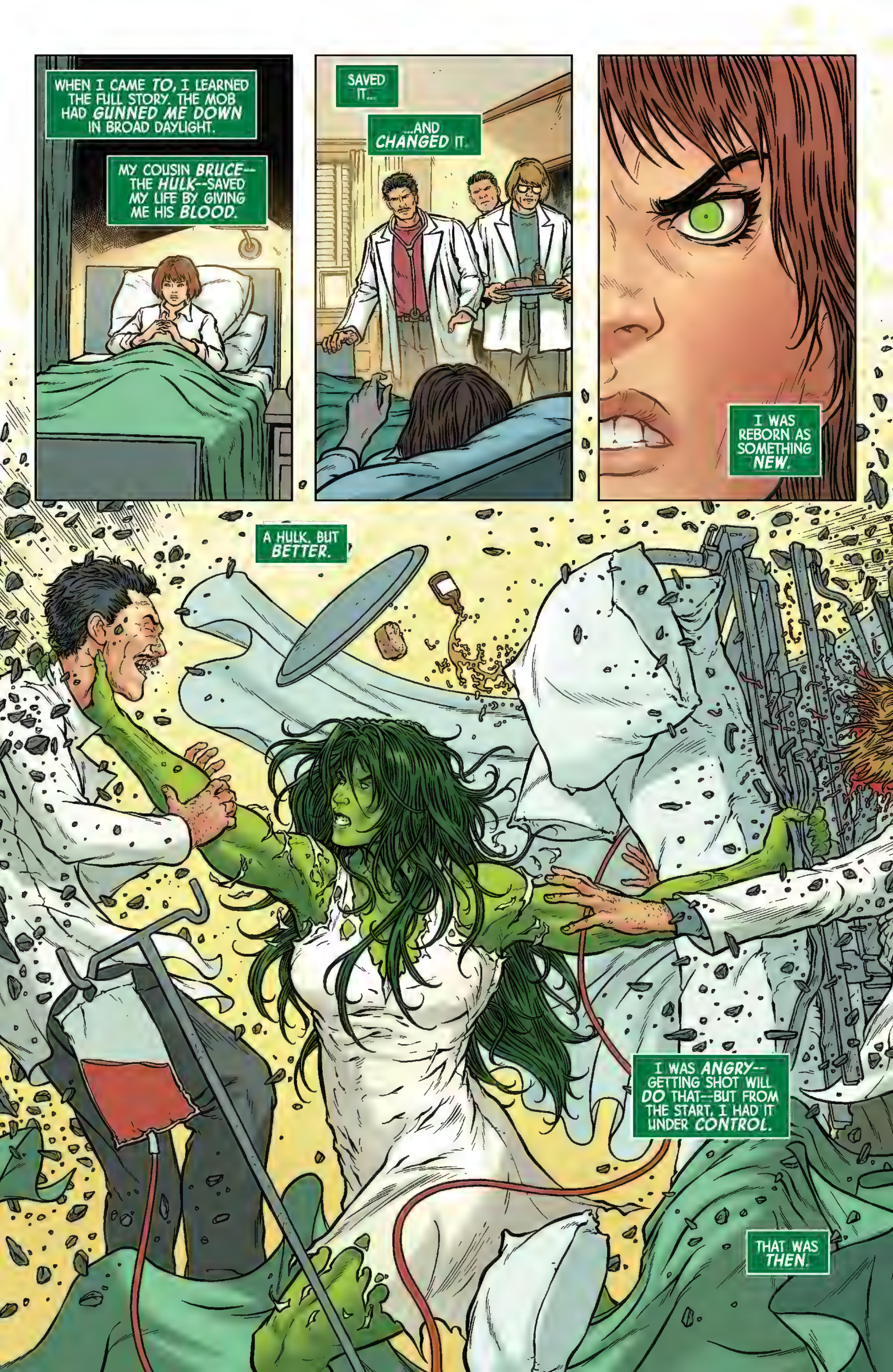
IMMORTAL SHE-HULK

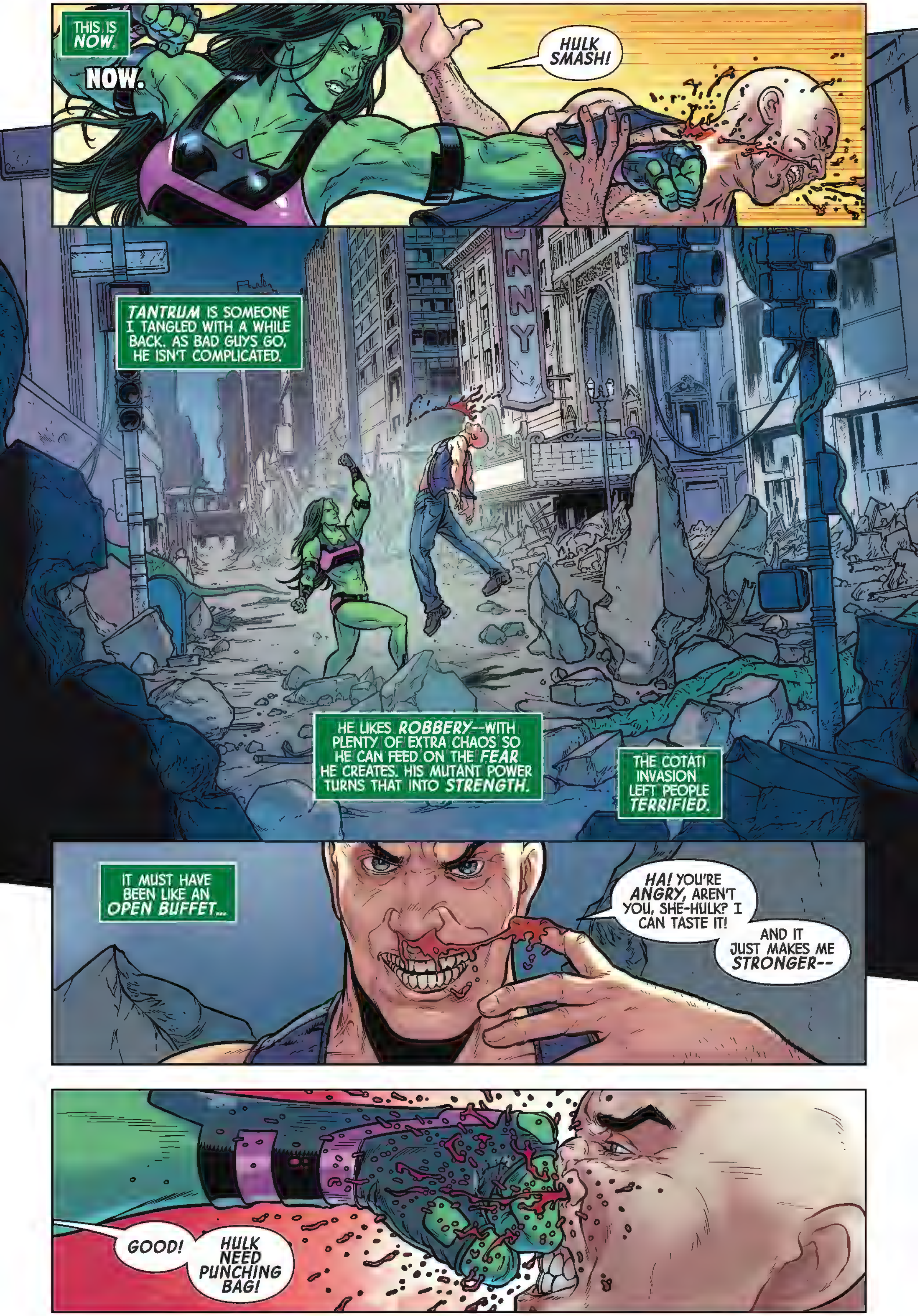

Joe Bennett
Ruy José
Mounts

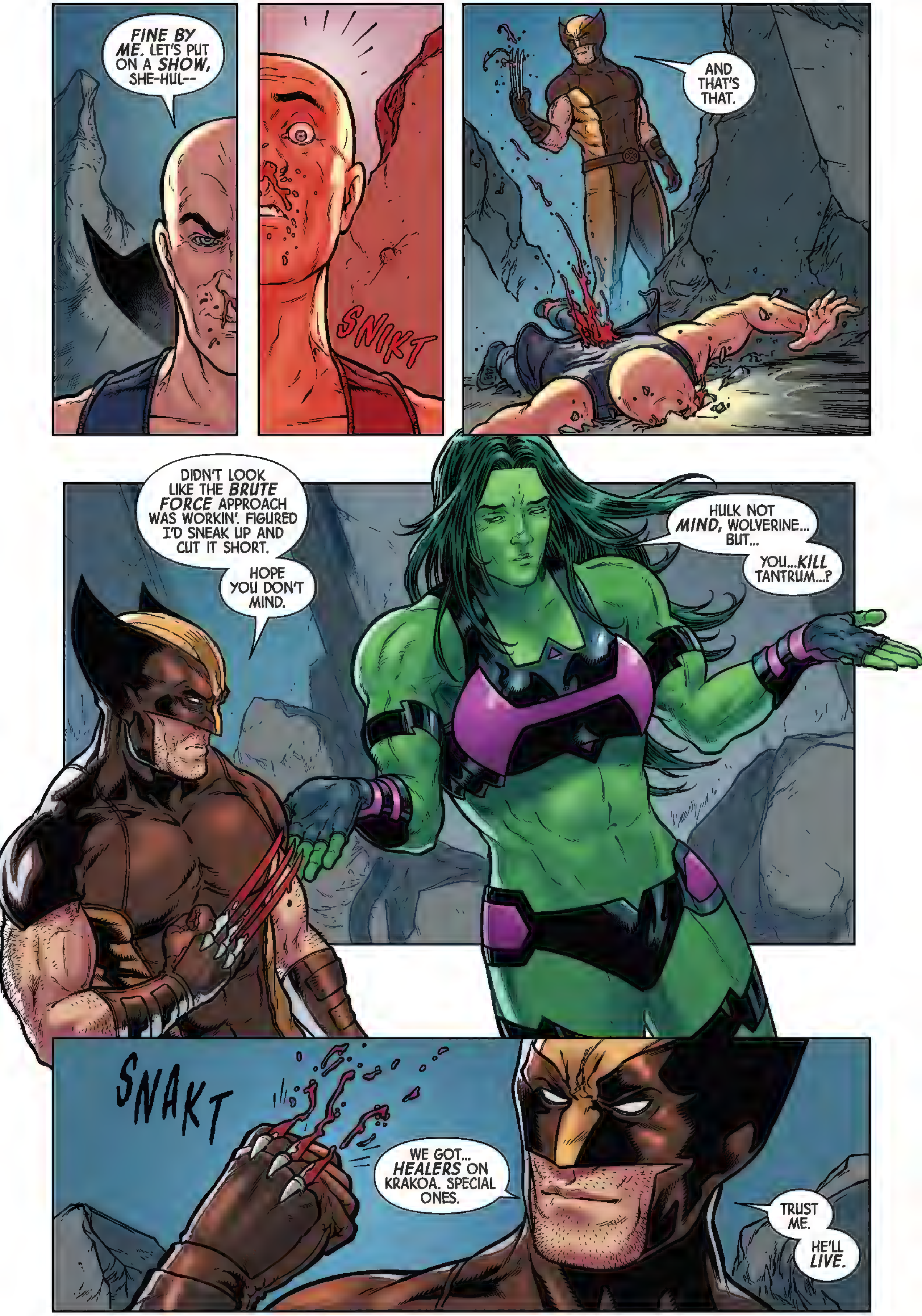

THEN.
I WAS NEVER AFRAID TO DIE.
AND THEN I *DIED*.

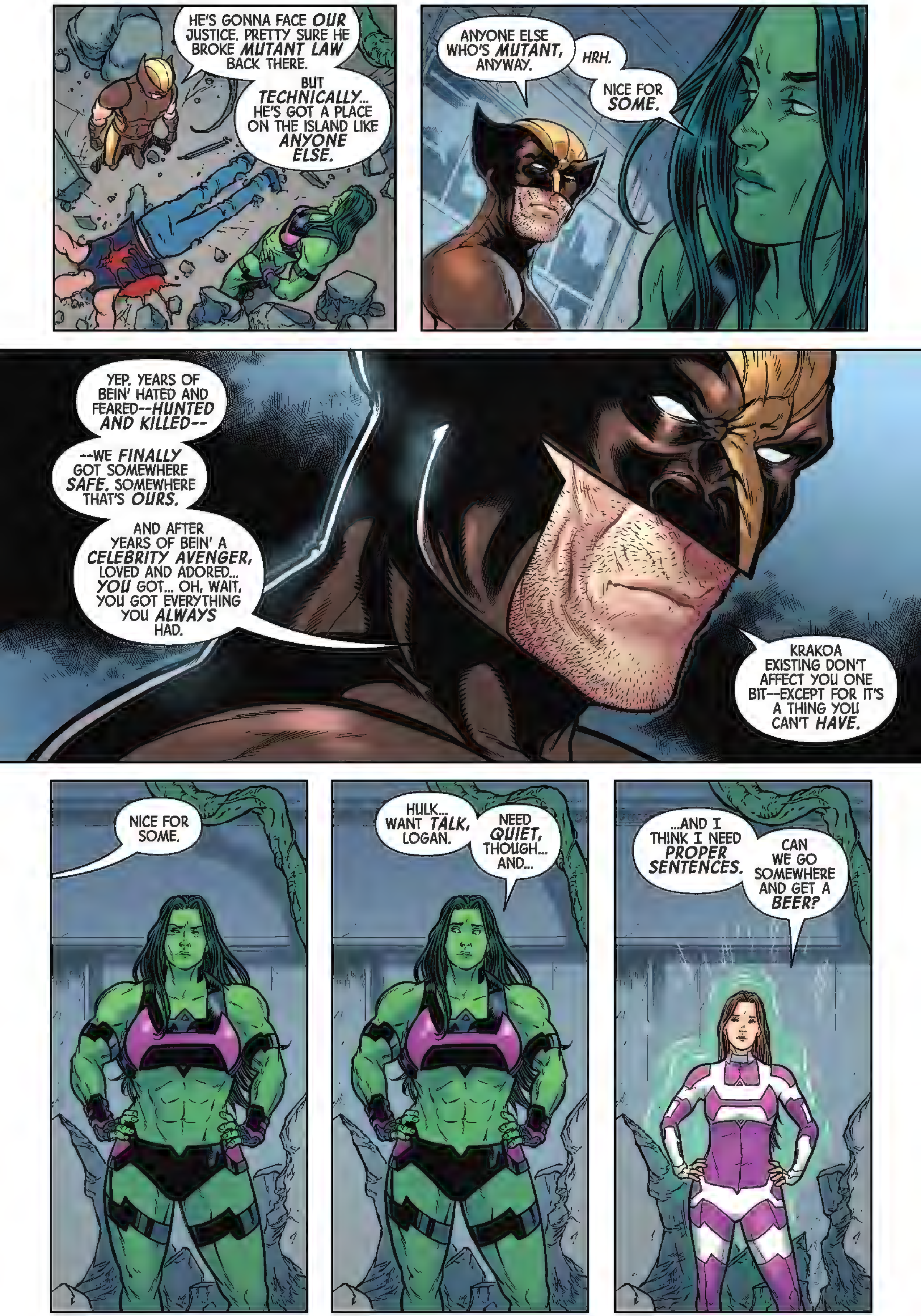

I REMEMBER A FIRECRACKER SOUND.
A HARD PUNCH TO MY BACK.
MY COUSIN'S VOICE--BUT *STRANGE*. GUTTURAL.
HANG IN THERE, KID! YER GONNA MAKE IT!
A VOICE OF GRAY STONE.
YA *GOTTA* MAKE IT!
A BURNING SENSATION IN MY ARM.
A FEELING OF SOMETHING GONE HORRIBLY *WRONG*.
EVERYTHING FLIPPED AND SPUN. REVERSED ITSELF.
A SENSATION LIKE *FALLING*. DOWN AND DOWN, FOREVER AND EVER...

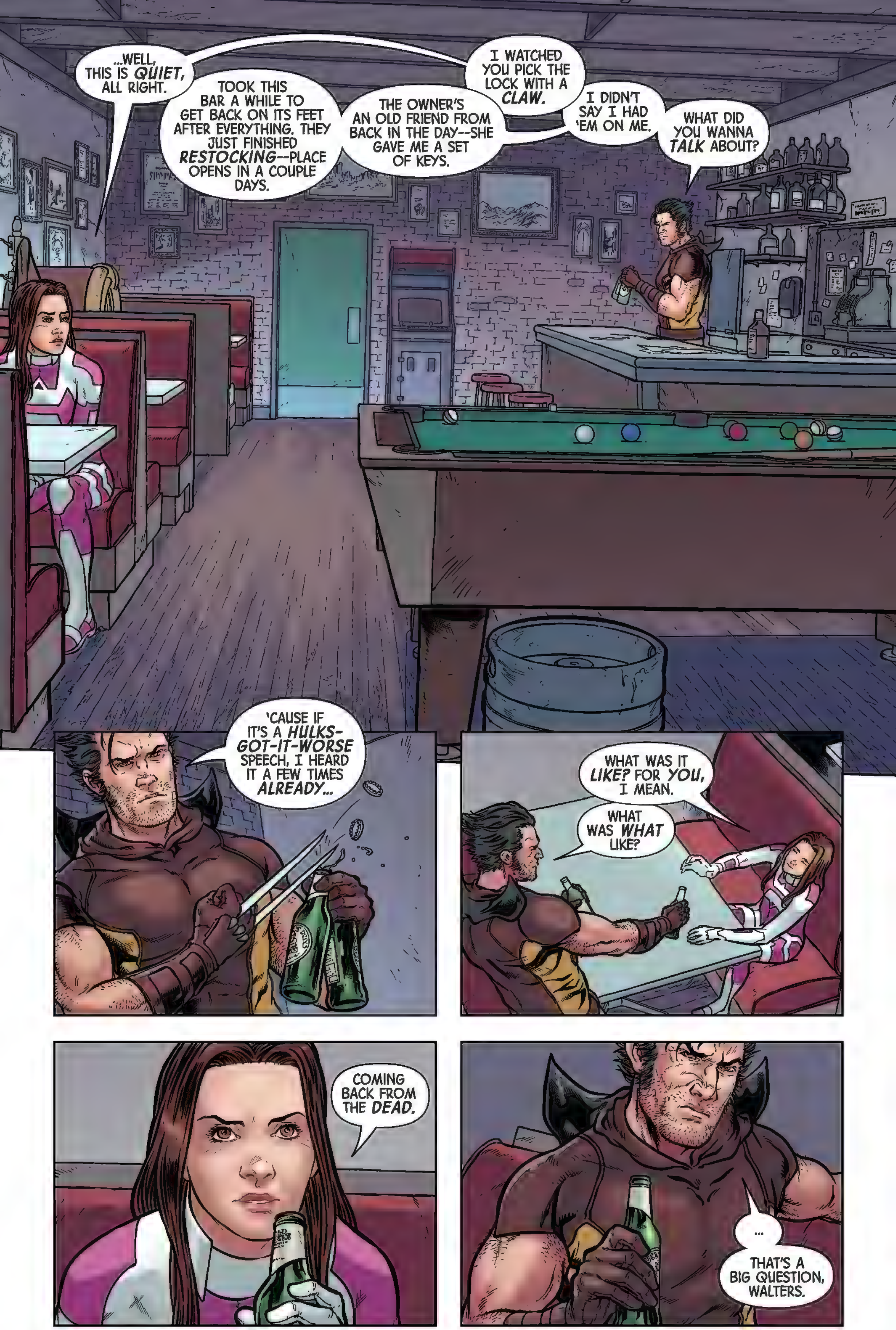

DOWN *BELOW.*
YOU BEAR MY MARK
BUT I'D BEEN *SHOT.* I WAS *DYING.*
IT'S NO SURPRISE IF I REMEMBER SOME STRANGE SENSATIONS.
IT PROBABLY DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING.

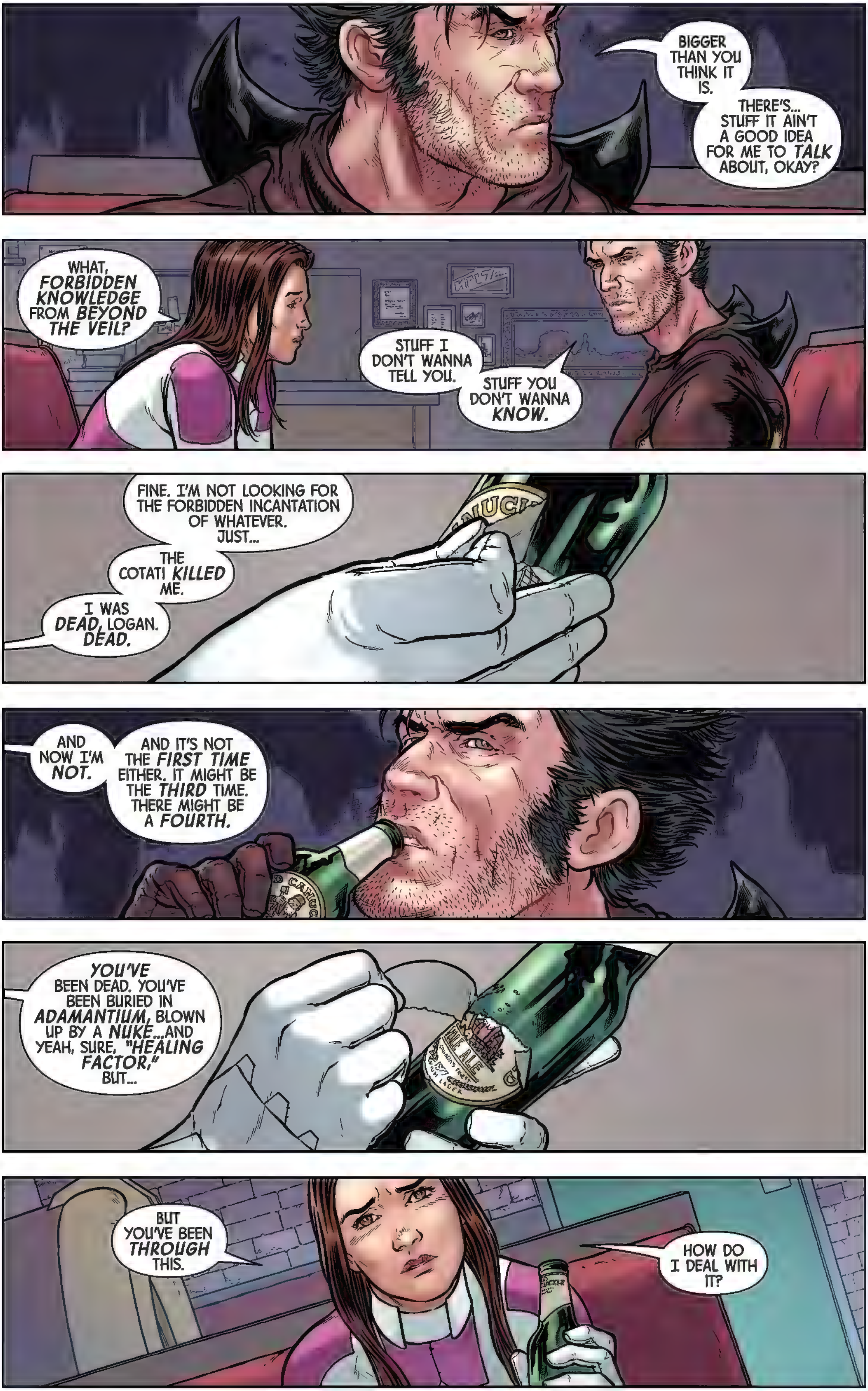

WHEN I CAME TO, I LEARNED THE FULL STORY. THE MOB HAD GUNNED ME DOWN IN BROAD DAYLIGHT.
MY COUSIN BRUCE--THE HULK--SAVED MY LIFE BY GIVING ME HIS BLOOD.
SAVED IT...
...AND CHANGED IT.
I WAS REBORN AS SOMETHING NEW.
A HULK. BUT BETTER.
I WAS ANGRY--GETTING SHOT WILL DO THAT--BUT FROM THE START, I HAD IT UNDER CONTROL.
THAT WAS THEN.

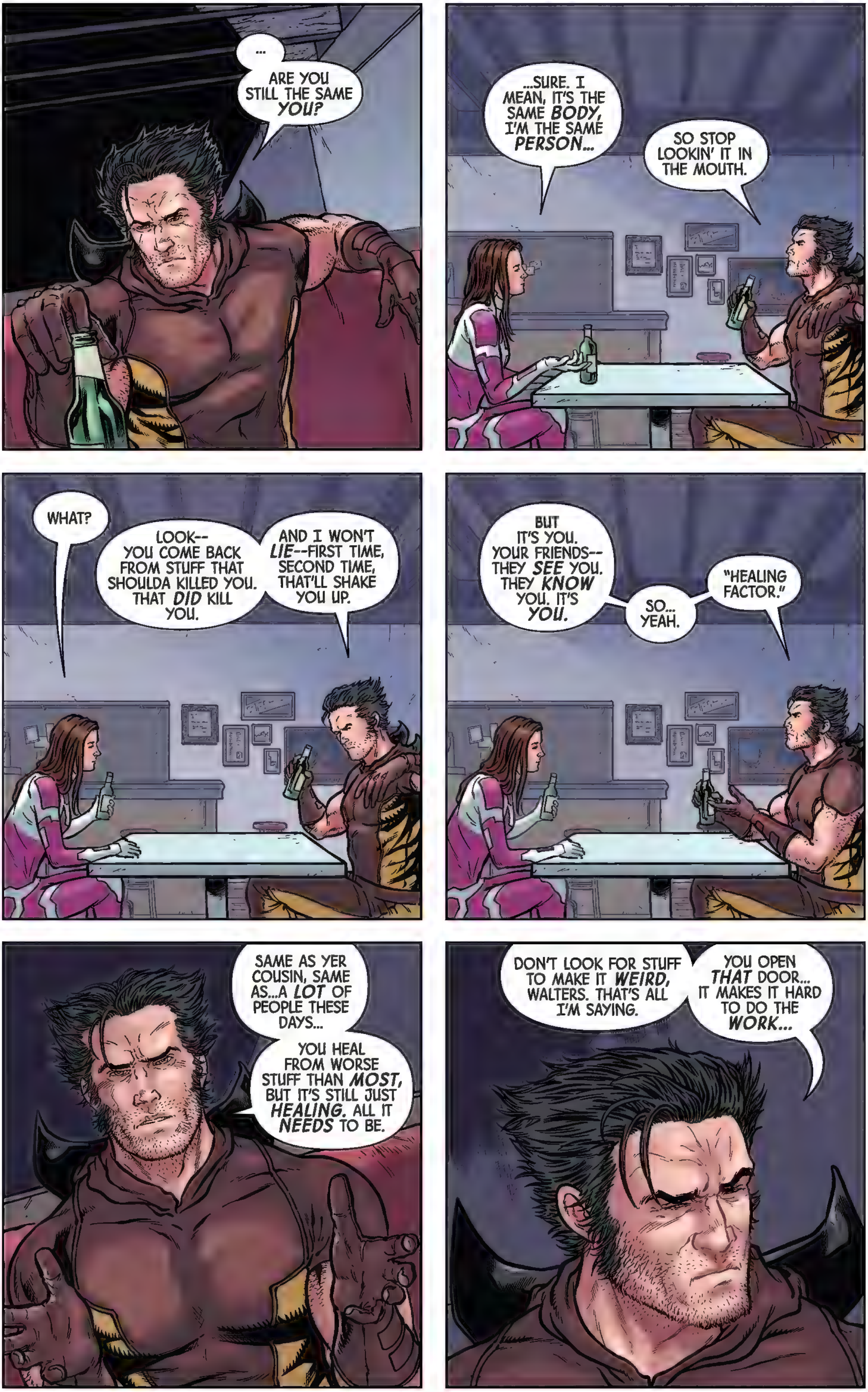

THIS IS NOW.
NOW.
HULK SMASH!
TANTRUM IS SOMEONE I TANGLED WITH A WHILE BACK. AS BAD GUYS GO, HE ISN'T COMPLICATED.
HE LIKES ROBBERY--WITH PLENTY OF EXTRA CHAOS SO HE CAN FEED ON THE FEAR HE CREATES. HIS MUTANT POWER TURNS THAT INTO STRENGTH.
THE COTATI INVASION LEFT PEOPLE TERRIFIED.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN LIKE AN OPEN BUFFET...
HA! YOU'RE ANGRY, AREN'T YOU, SHE-HULK? I CAN TASTE IT!
AND IT JUST MAKES ME STRONGER--
GOOD!
HULK NEED PUNCHING BAG!

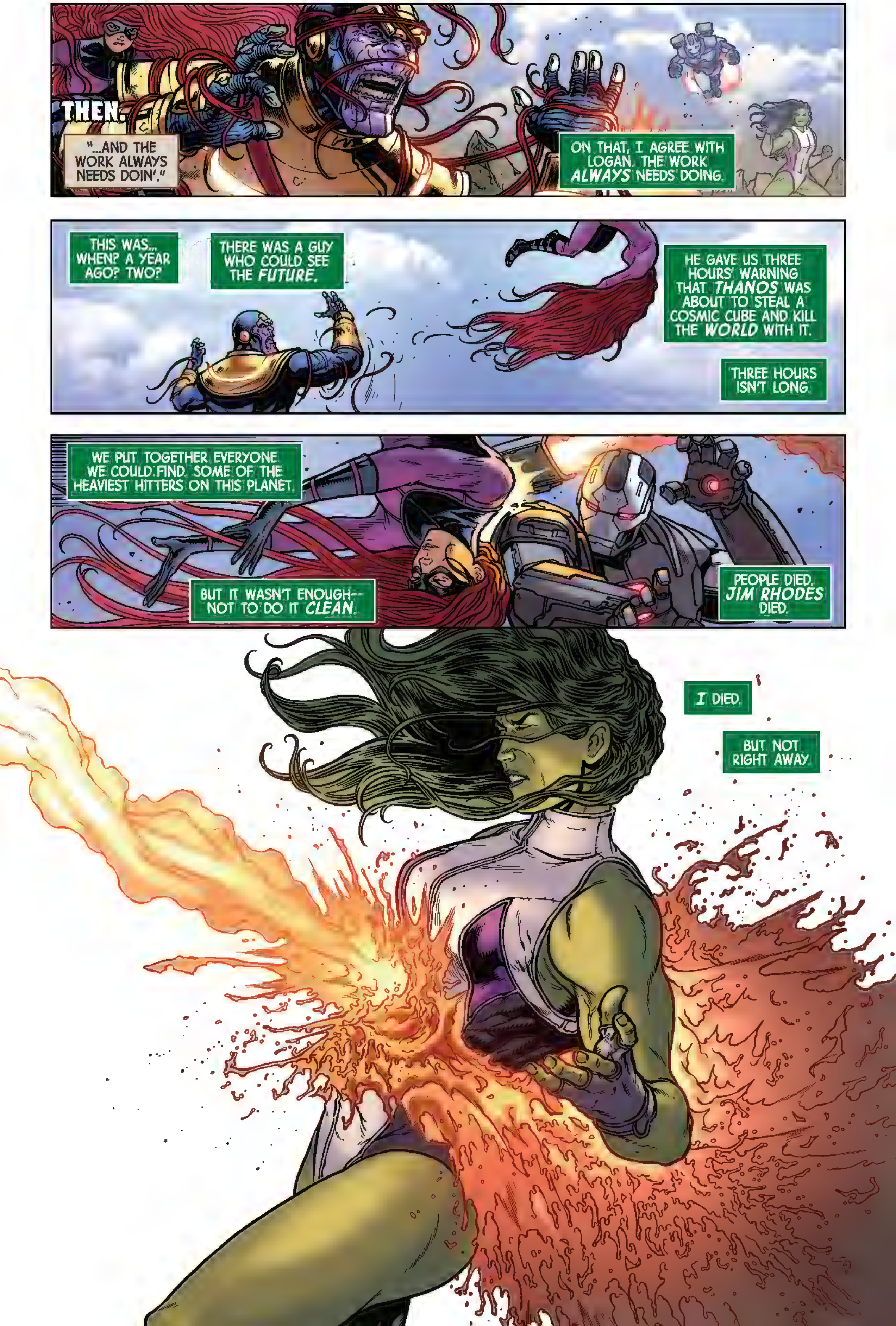

FINE BY ME. LET'S PUT ON A SHOW, SHE-HUL--
SNIKT
AND THAT'S THAT.
DIDN'T LOOK LIKE THE BRUTE FORCE APPROACH WAS WORKIN'. FIGURED I'D SNEAK UP AND CUT IT SHORT.
HOPE YOU DON'T MIND.
HULK NOT MIND, WOLVERINE... BUT...
YOU...KILL TANTRUM...?
SNAKT
WE GOT... HEALERS ON KRAKOA. SPECIAL ONES.
TRUST ME.
HE'LL LIVE.

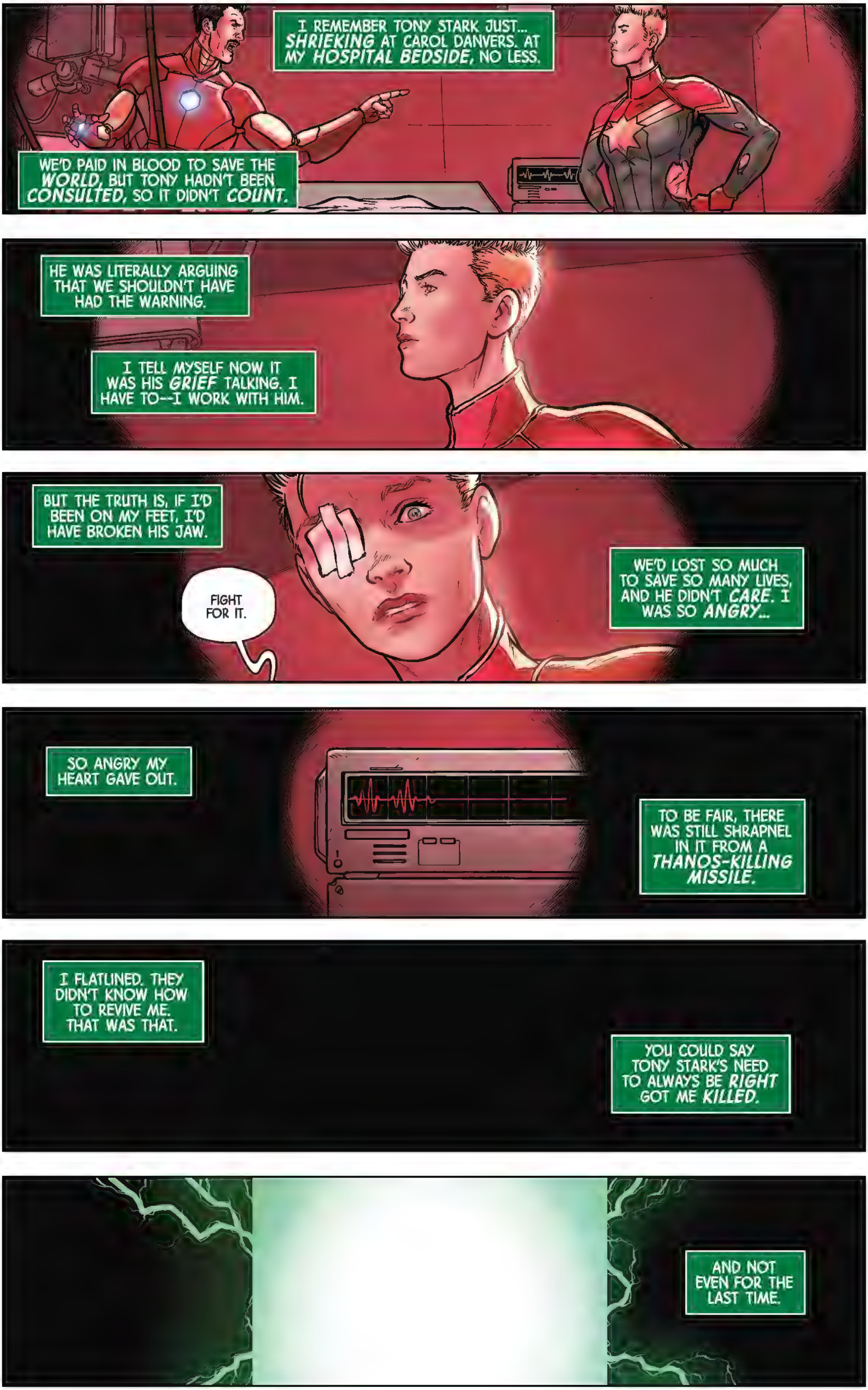

HE'S GONNA FACE OUR JUSTICE. PRETTY SURE HE BROKE MUTANT LAW BACK THERE.
BUT TECHNICALLY... HE'S GOT A PLACE ON THE ISLAND LIKE ANYONE ELSE.
ANYONE ELSE WHO'S MUTANT, ANYWAY.
HRH.
NICE FOR SOME.
YEP. YEARS OF BEIN' HATED AND FEARED--HUNTED AND KILLED--
--WE FINALLY GOT SOMEWHERE SAFE. SOMEWHERE THAT'S OURS.
AND AFTER YEARS OF BEIN' A CELEBRITY AVENGER, LOVED AND ADORED... YOU GOT... OH, WAIT, YOU GOT EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS HAD.
KRAKOA EXISTING DON'T AFFECT YOU ONE BIT--EXCEPT FOR IT'S A THING YOU CAN'T HAVE.
NICE FOR SOME.
HULK... WANT TALK, LOGAN.
NEED QUIET, THOUGH... AND...
...AND I THINK I NEED PROPER SENTENCES.
CAN WE GO SOMEWHERE AND GET A BEER?

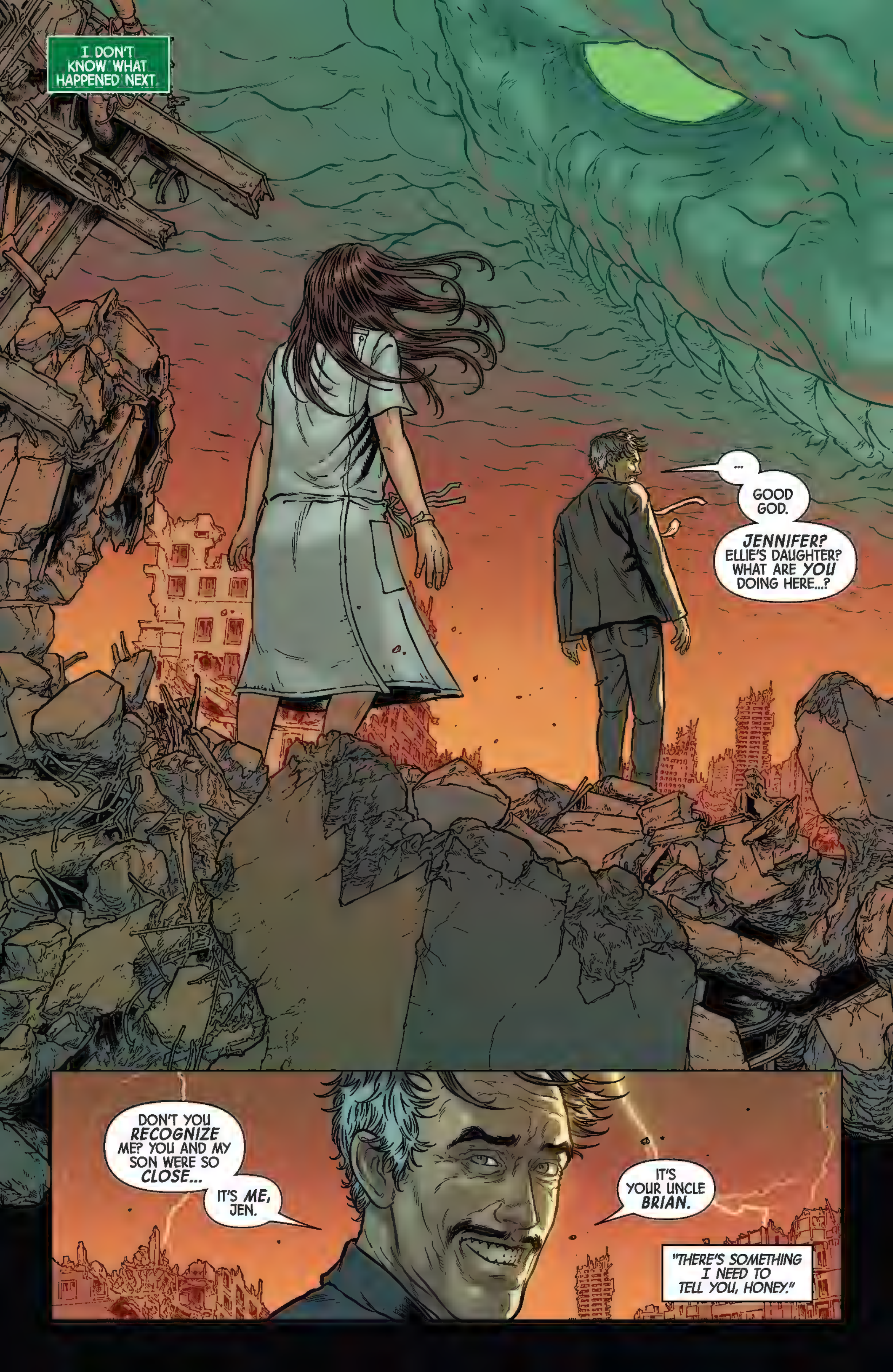

...WELL, THIS IS *QUIET,* ALL RIGHT.
TOOK THIS BAR A WHILE TO GET BACK ON ITS FEET AFTER EVERYTHING. THEY JUST FINISHED *RESTOCKING*--PLACE OPENS IN A COUPLE DAYS.
THE OWNER'S AN OLD FRIEND FROM BACK IN THE DAY--SHE GAVE ME A SET OF KEYS.
I WATCHED YOU PICK THE LOCK WITH A *CLAW.*
I DIDN'T SAY I HAD 'EM ON ME.
WHAT DID YOU WANNA *TALK* ABOUT?
'CAUSE IF IT'S A *HULKS-GOT-IT-WORSE* SPEECH, I HEARD IT A FEW TIMES *ALREADY...*
WHAT WAS IT *LIKE?* FOR *YOU,* I MEAN.
WHAT WAS *WHAT* LIKE?
COMING BACK FROM THE *DEAD.*
...
THAT'S A BIG QUESTION, WALTERS.

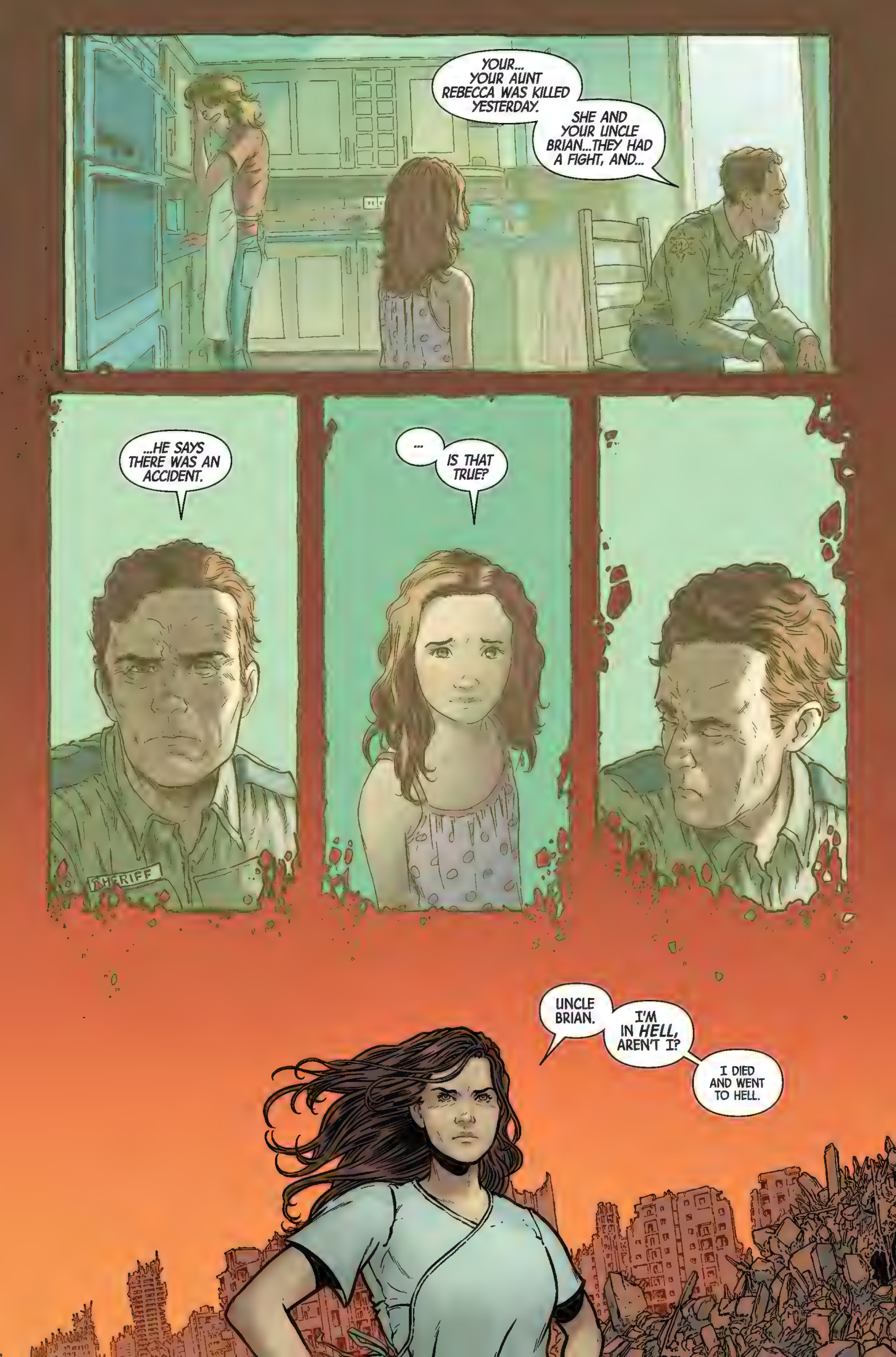

BIGGER THAN YOU THINK IT IS.
THERE'S... STUFF IT AIN'T A GOOD IDEA FOR ME TO *TALK* ABOUT, OKAY?
WHAT, *FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE* FROM *BEYOND THE VEIL?*
STUFF I DON'T WANNA TELL YOU.
STUFF YOU DON'T WANNA *KNOW.*
FINE. I'M NOT LOOKING FOR THE FORBIDDEN INCANTATION OF WHATEVER. JUST...
THE COTATI *KILLED* ME.
I WAS *DEAD,* LOGAN. *DEAD.*
AND NOW I'M *NOT.*
AND IT'S NOT THE *FIRST TIME* EITHER. IT MIGHT BE THE *THIRD* TIME. THERE MIGHT BE A *FOURTH.*
YOU'VE BEEN DEAD. YOU'VE BEEN BURIED IN *ADAMANTIUM,* BLOWN UP BY A *NUKE*...AND YEAH, SURE, *"HEALING FACTOR,"* BUT...
BUT YOU'VE BEEN *THROUGH* THIS.
HOW DO I DEAL WITH IT?

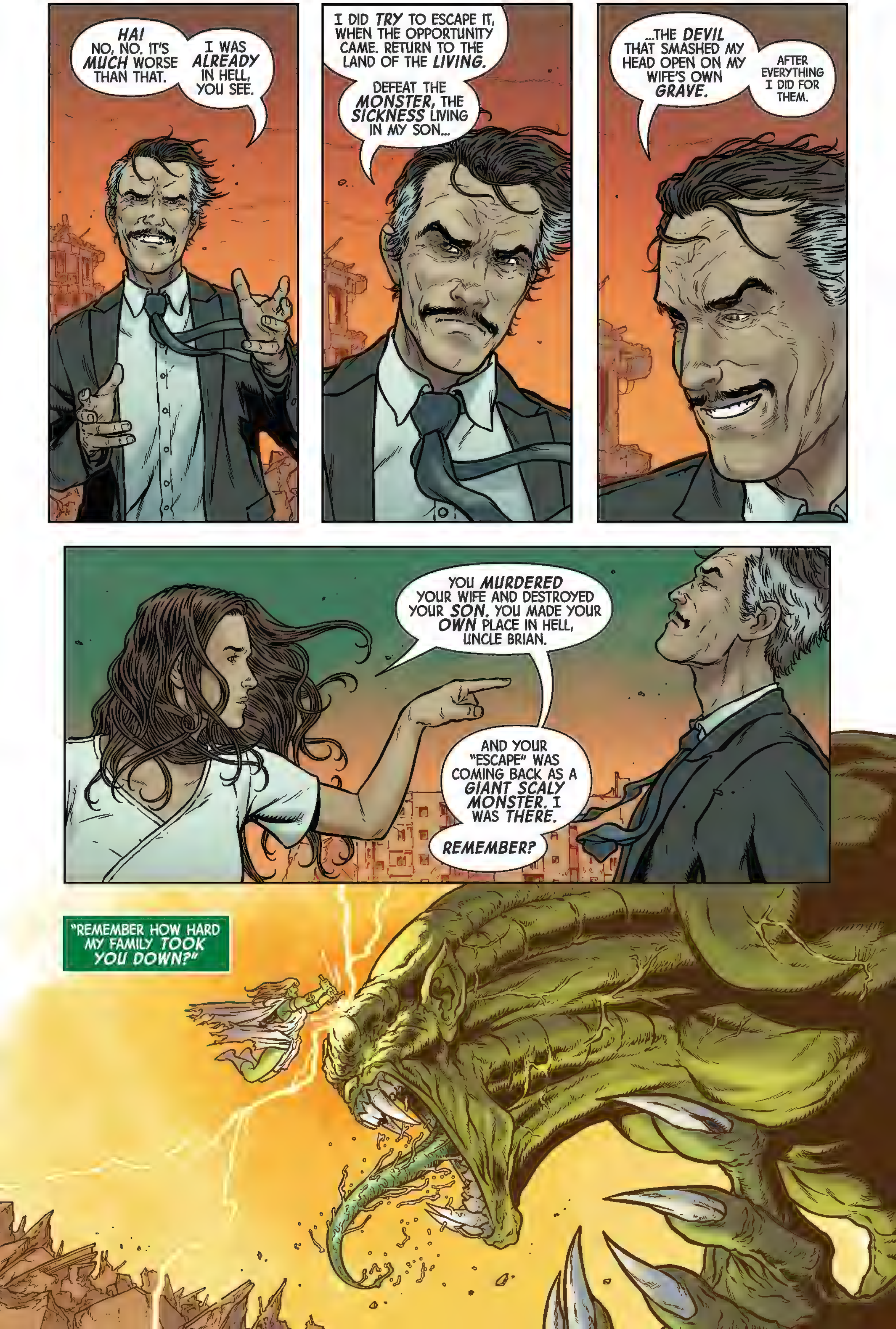

...
ARE YOU STILL THE SAME *YOU?*
...SURE. I MEAN, IT'S THE SAME *BODY,* I'M THE SAME *PERSON...*
SO STOP LOOKIN' IT IN THE MOUTH.
WHAT?
LOOK-- YOU COME BACK FROM STUFF THAT SHOULDA KILLED YOU. THAT *DID* KILL YOU.
AND I WON'T *LIE*--FIRST TIME, SECOND TIME, THAT'LL SHAKE YOU UP.
BUT IT'S YOU. YOUR FRIENDS-- THEY *SEE* YOU. THEY *KNOW* YOU. IT'S *YOU.*
SO... YEAH.
"HEALING FACTOR."
SAME AS YER COUSIN, SAME AS...A *LOT* OF PEOPLE THESE DAYS...
YOU HEAL FROM WORSE STUFF THAN *MOST,* BUT IT'S STILL JUST *HEALING.* ALL IT *NEEDS* TO BE.
DON'T LOOK FOR STUFF TO MAKE IT *WEIRD,* WALTERS. THAT'S ALL I'M SAYING.
YOU OPEN *THAT* DOOR... IT MAKES IT HARD TO DO THE *WORK...*

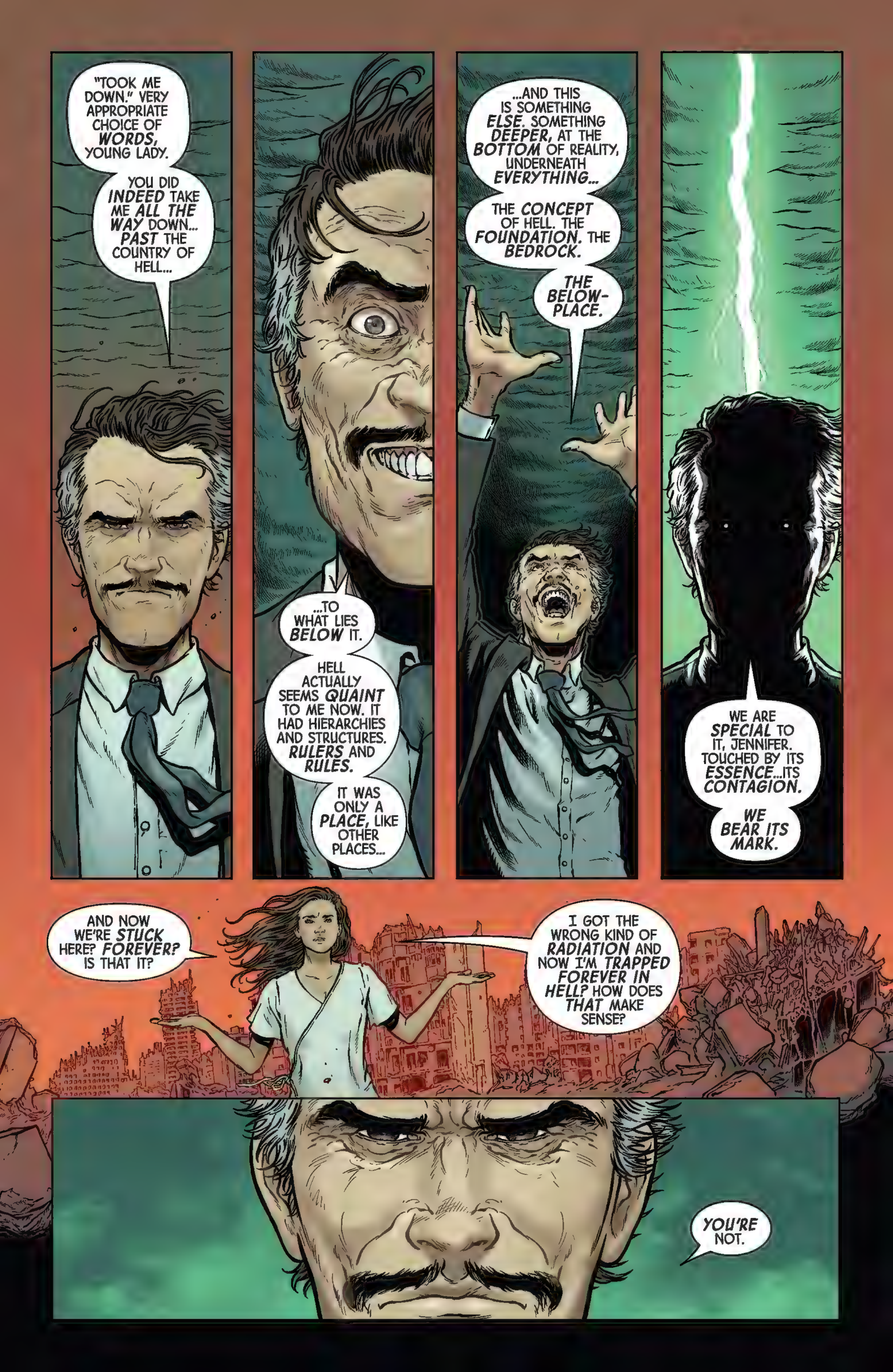

THEN.
"...AND THE WORK ALWAYS NEEDS DOIN'."
ON THAT, I AGREE WITH LOGAN. THE WORK *ALWAYS* NEEDS DOING.
THIS WAS... WHEN? A YEAR AGO? TWO?
THERE WAS A GUY WHO COULD SEE THE *FUTURE*.
HE GAVE US THREE HOURS' WARNING THAT *THANOS* WAS ABOUT TO STEAL A COSMIC CUBE AND KILL THE *WORLD* WITH IT.
THREE HOURS ISN'T LONG.
WE PUT TOGETHER EVERYONE WE COULD FIND. SOME OF THE HEAVIEST HITTERS ON THIS PLANET.
BUT IT WASN'T ENOUGH-- NOT TO DO IT *CLEAN*.
PEOPLE DIED. *JIM RHODES* DIED.
I DIED.
BUT NOT RIGHT AWAY.

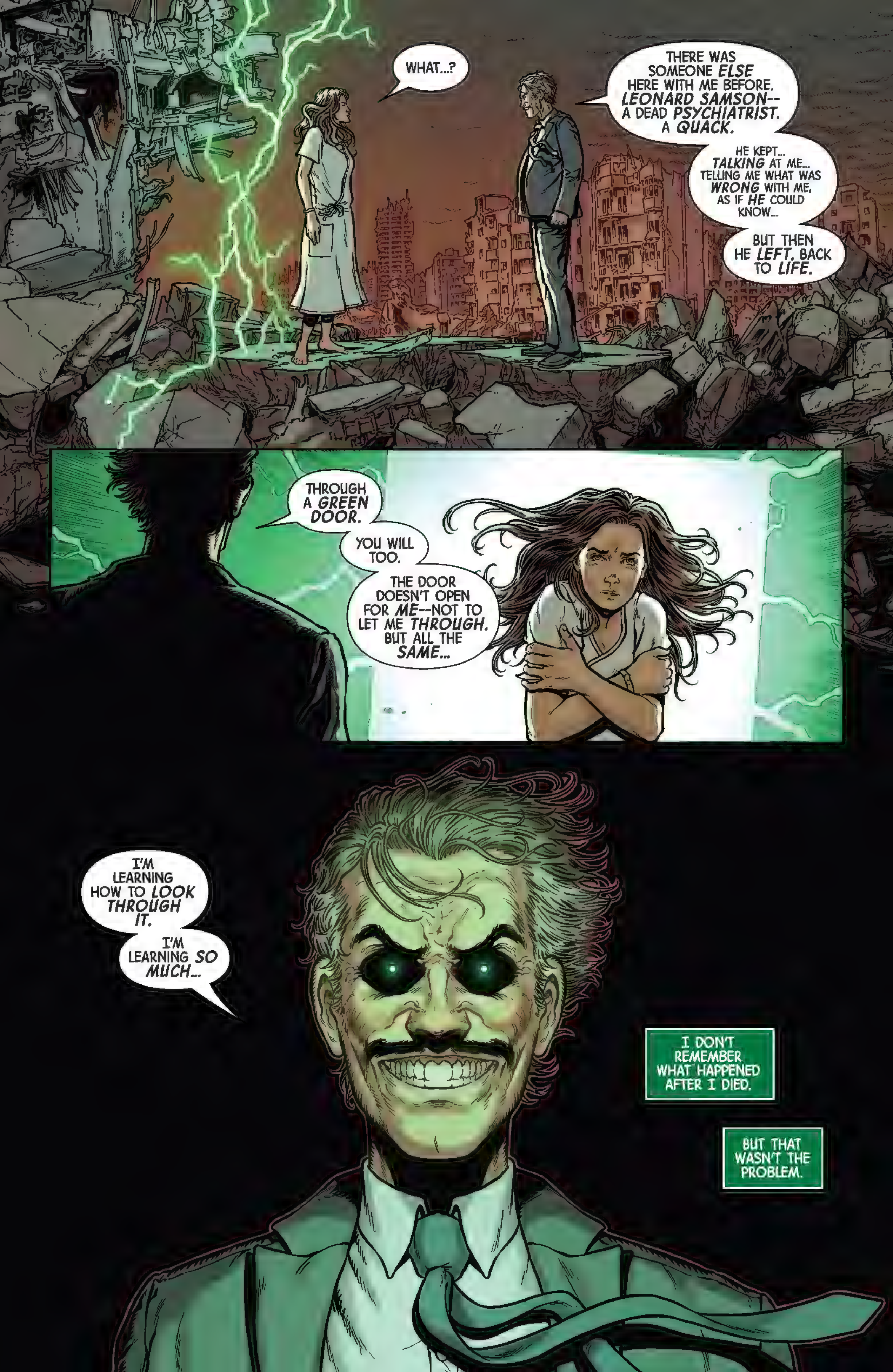

I REMEMBER TONY STARK JUST... SHRIEKING AT CAROL DANVERS. AT MY HOSPITAL BEDSIDE, NO LESS.
WE'D PAID IN BLOOD TO SAVE THE WORLD, BUT TONY HADN'T BEEN CONSULTED, SO IT DIDN'T COUNT.
HE WAS LITERALLY ARGUING THAT WE SHOULDN'T HAVE HAD THE WARNING.
I TELL MYSELF NOW IT WAS HIS GRIEF TALKING. I HAVE TO--I WORK WITH HIM.
BUT THE TRUTH IS, IF I'D BEEN ON MY FEET, I'D HAVE BROKEN HIS JAW.
FIGHT FOR IT.
WE'D LOST SO MUCH TO SAVE SO MANY LIVES, AND HE DIDN'T CARE. I WAS SO ANGRY...
SO ANGRY MY HEART GAVE OUT.
TO BE FAIR, THERE WAS STILL SHRAPNEL IN IT FROM A THANOS-KILLING MISSILE.
I FLATLINED. THEY DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO REVIVE ME. THAT WAS THAT.
YOU COULD SAY TONY STARK'S NEED TO ALWAYS BE RIGHT GOT ME KILLED.
AND NOT EVEN FOR THE LAST TIME.

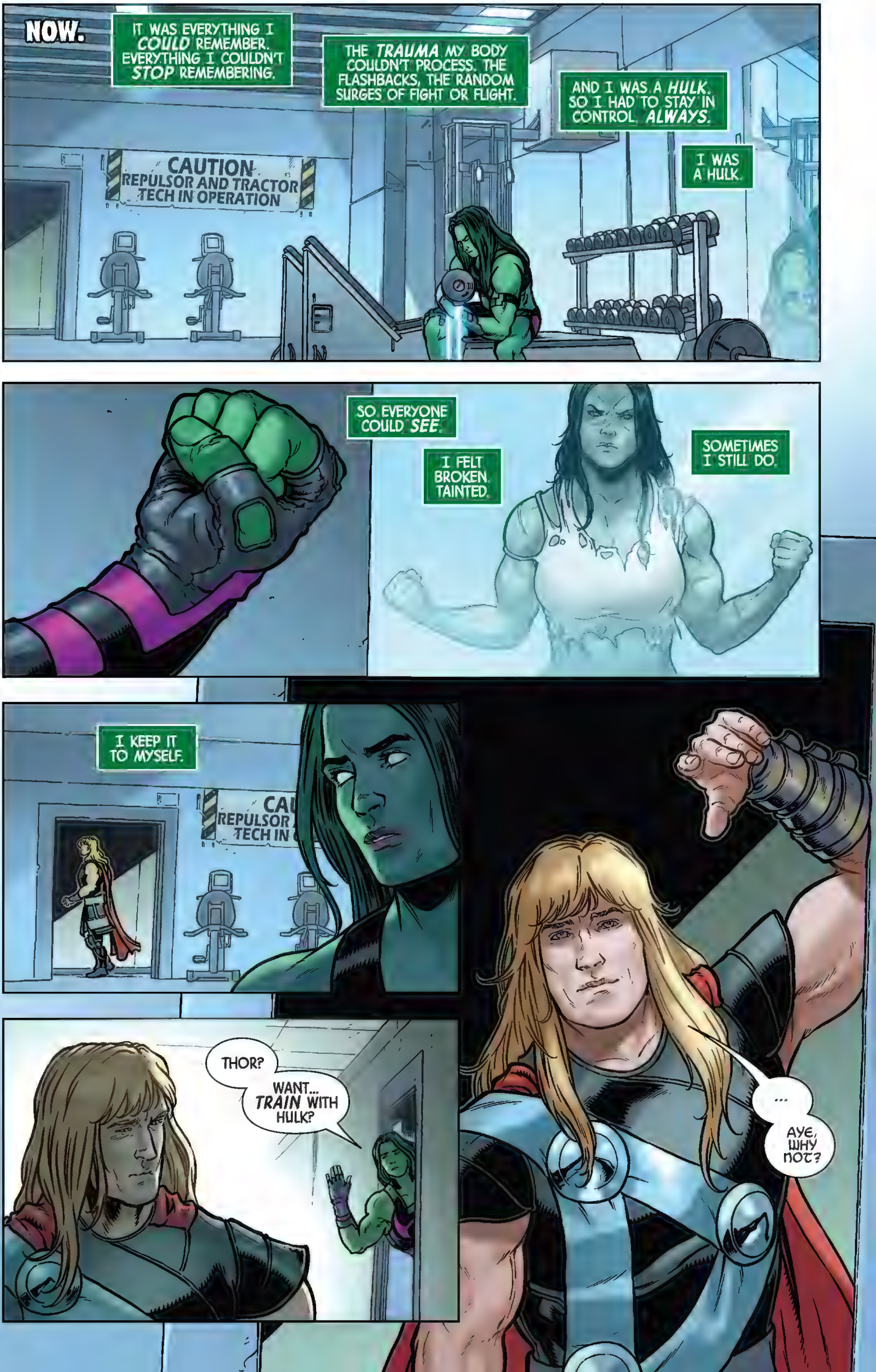

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.
... GOOD GOD.
JENNIFER? ELLIE'S DAUGHTER? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE...?
DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME? YOU AND MY SON WERE SO CLOSE...
IT'S ME, JEN.
IT'S YOUR UNCLE BRIAN.
"THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO TELL YOU, HONEY."

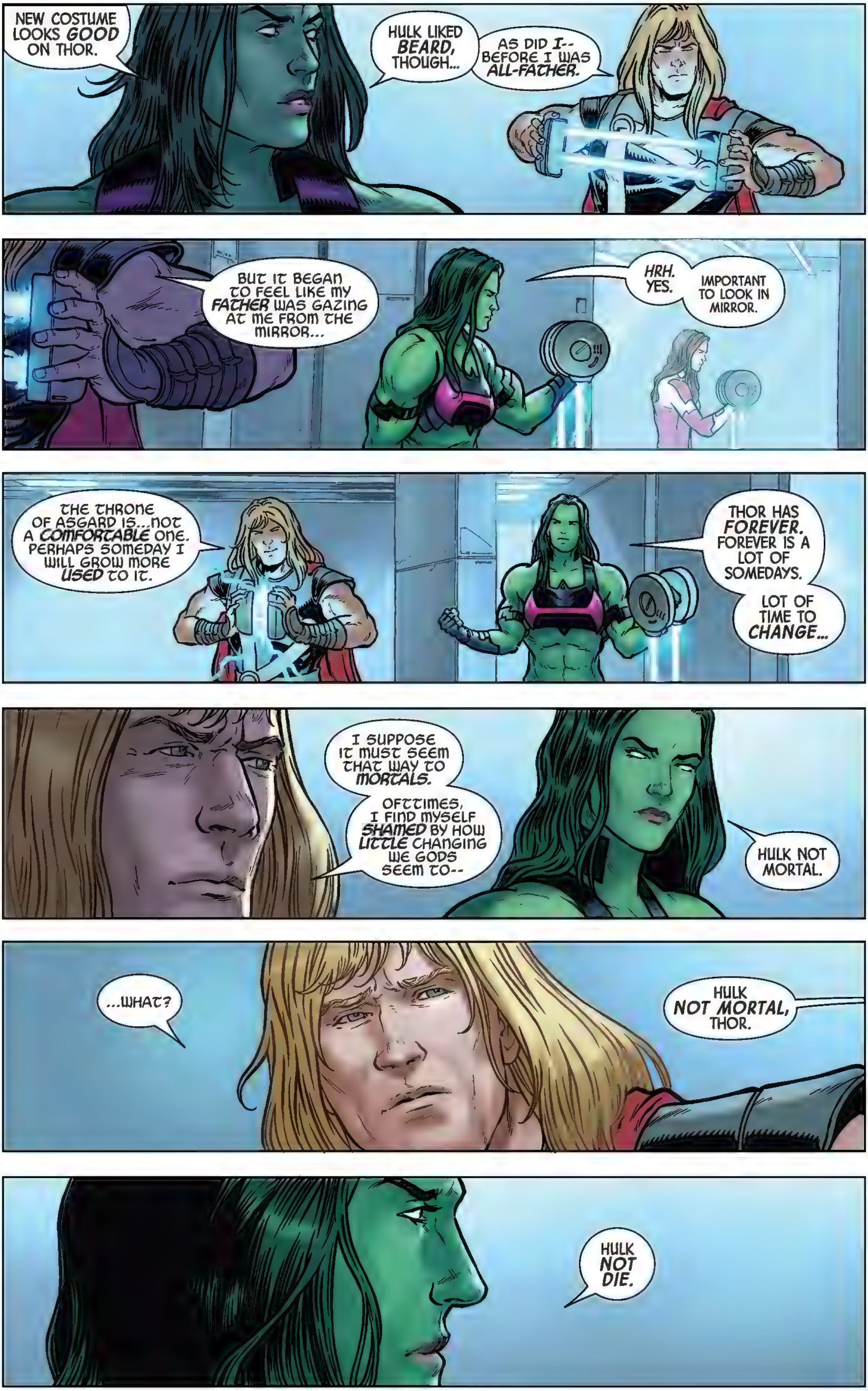

YOUR... YOUR AUNT REBECCA WAS KILLED YESTERDAY.
SHE AND YOUR UNCLE BRIAN...THEY HAD A FIGHT, AND...
...HE SAYS THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT.
...
IS THAT TRUE?
SHERIFF
UNCLE BRIAN.
I'M IN *HELL*, AREN'T I?
I DIED AND WENT TO HELL.

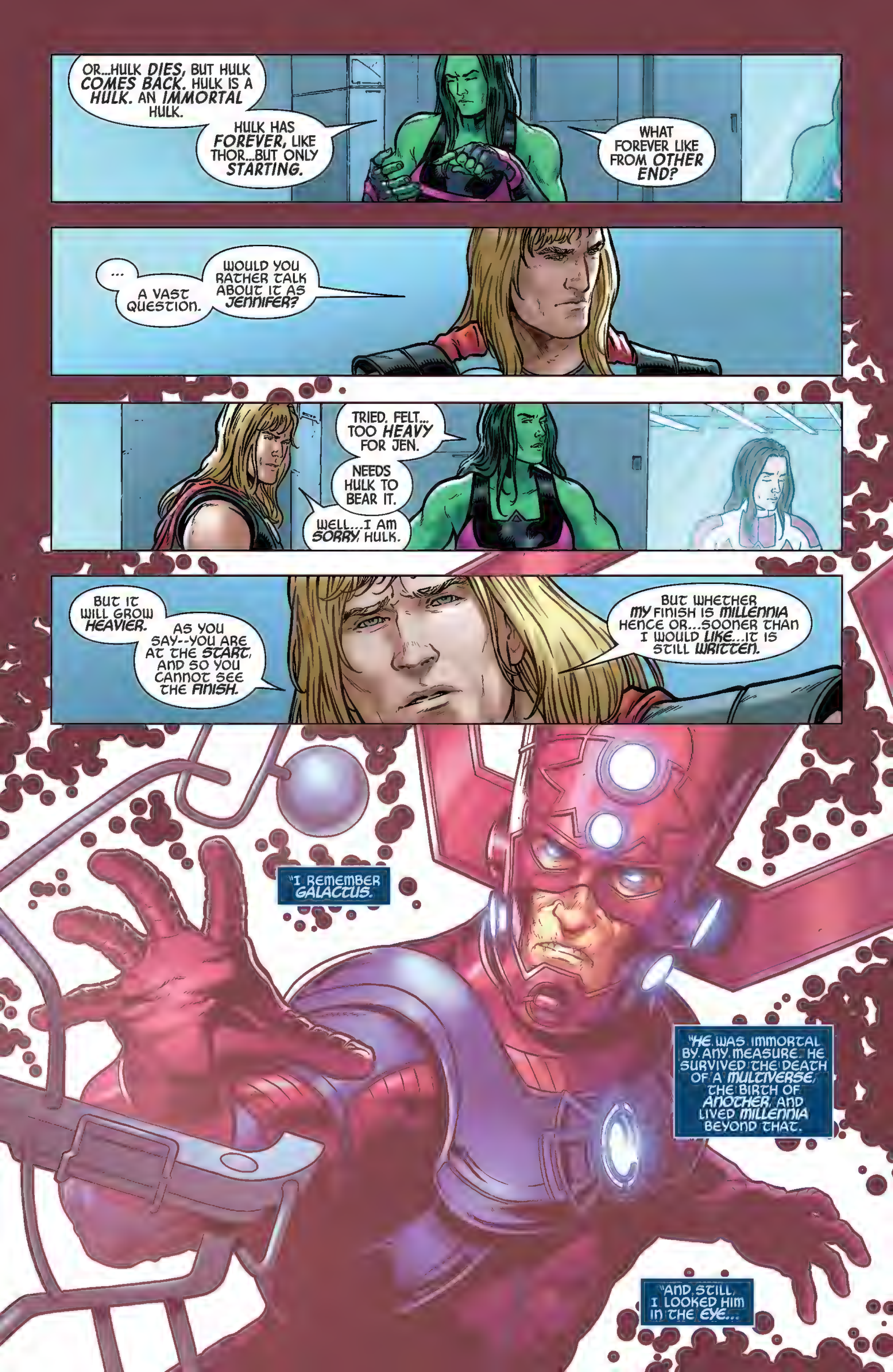

HA! NO, NO. IT'S MUCH WORSE THAN THAT.
I WAS ALREADY IN HELL, YOU SEE.
I DID TRY TO ESCAPE IT, WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY CAME. RETURN TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING.
DEFEAT THE MONSTER, THE SICKNESS LIVING IN MY SON...
...THE DEVIL THAT SMASHED MY HEAD OPEN ON MY WIFE'S OWN GRAVE.
AFTER EVERYTHING I DID FOR THEM.
YOU MURDERED YOUR WIFE AND DESTROYED YOUR SON. YOU MADE YOUR OWN PLACE IN HELL, UNCLE BRIAN.
AND YOUR "ESCAPE" WAS COMING BACK AS A GIANT SCALY MONSTER. I WAS THERE.
REMEMBER?
"REMEMBER HOW HARD MY FAMILY TOOK YOU DOWN?"

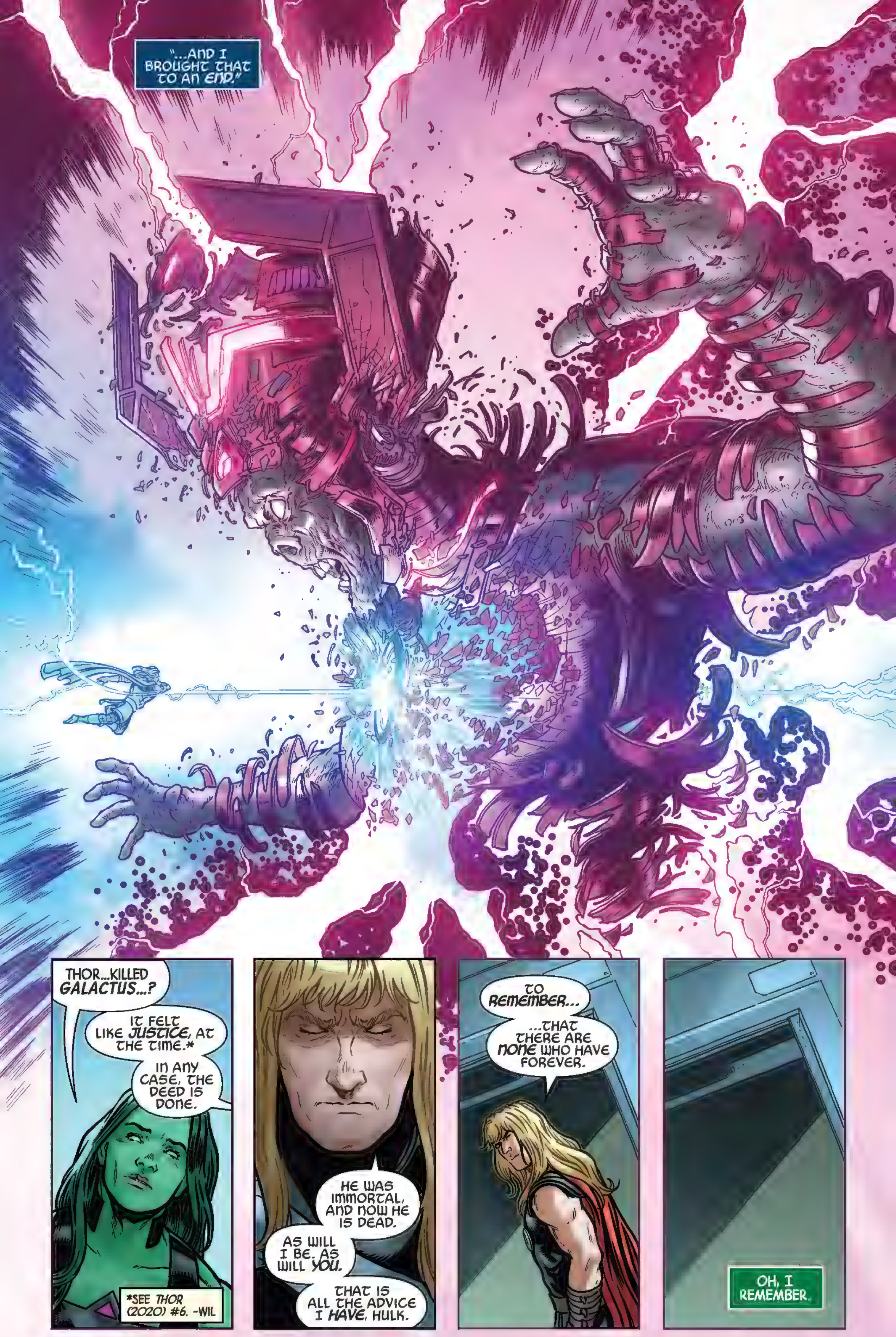

"TOOK ME DOWN." VERY APPROPRIATE CHOICE OF *WORDS,* YOUNG LADY.
YOU DID *INDEED* TAKE ME *ALL THE WAY* DOWN... *PAST* THE COUNTRY OF HELL...
...TO WHAT LIES *BELOW* IT.
HELL ACTUALLY SEEMS *QUAINT* TO ME NOW. IT HAD HIERARCHIES AND STRUCTURES. *RULERS* AND *RULES.*
IT WAS ONLY A *PLACE,* LIKE OTHER PLACES...
...AND THIS IS SOMETHING *ELSE.* SOMETHING *DEEPER,* AT THE *BOTTOM* OF REALITY, UNDERNEATH *EVERYTHING...*
THE *CONCEPT* OF HELL. THE *FOUNDATION.* THE *BEDROCK.*
THE BELOW-PLACE.
WE ARE *SPECIAL* TO IT, JENNIFER. TOUCHED BY ITS *ESSENCE*...ITS *CONTAGION.*
WE BEAR ITS MARK.
AND NOW WE'RE *STUCK* HERE? *FOREVER?* IS THAT IT?
I GOT THE WRONG KIND OF *RADIATION* AND NOW I'M *TRAPPED FOREVER IN HELL?* HOW DOES *THAT* MAKE SENSE?
YOU'RE NOT.

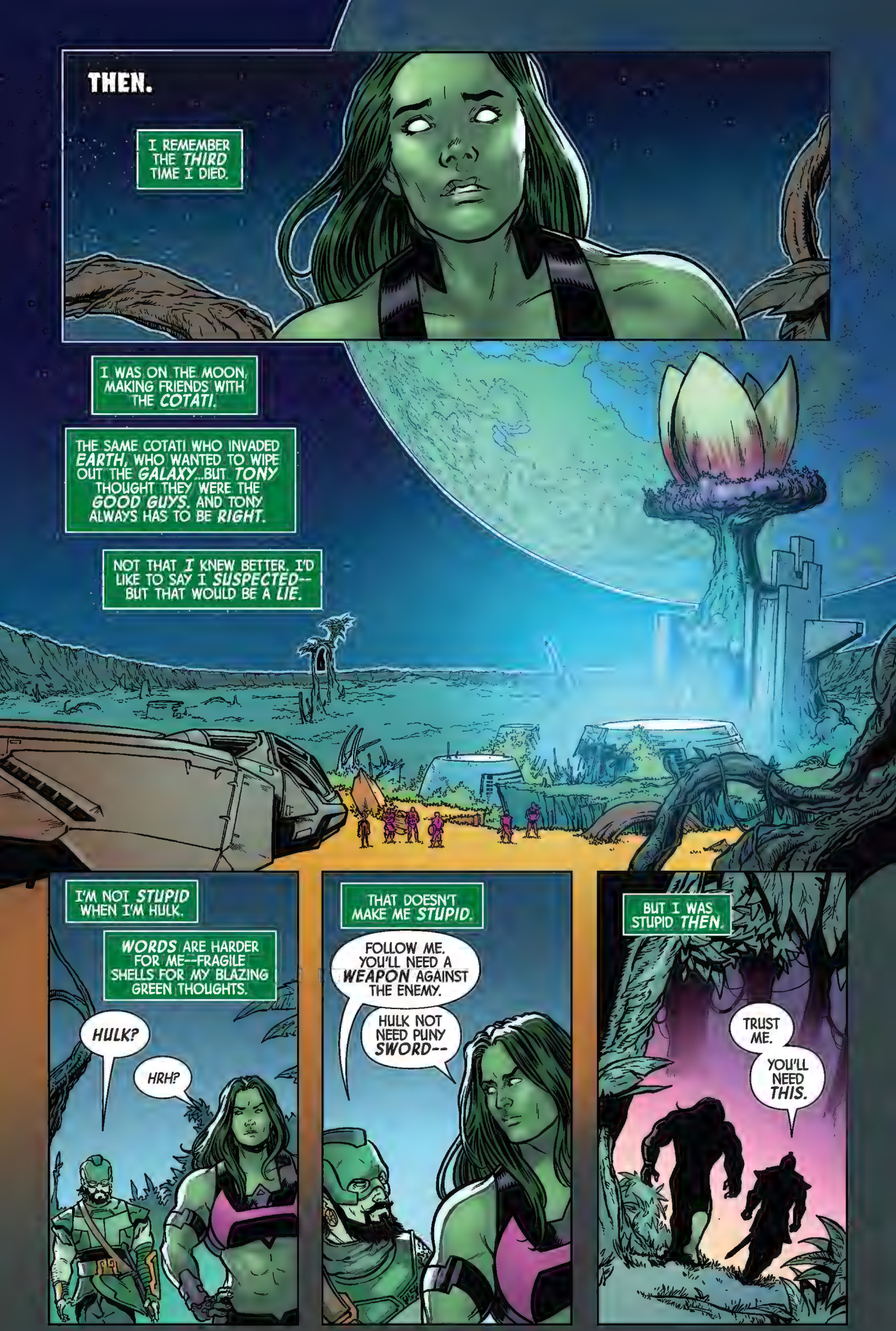

WHAT...?
THERE WAS SOMEONE *ELSE* HERE WITH ME BEFORE. *LEONARD SAMSON*-- A DEAD *PSYCHIATRIST.* A *QUACK.*
HE KEPT... *TALKING* AT ME... TELLING ME WHAT WAS *WRONG* WITH ME, AS IF *HE* COULD KNOW...
BUT THEN HE *LEFT*. BACK TO *LIFE.*
THROUGH A *GREEN DOOR.*
YOU WILL TOO.
THE DOOR DOESN'T OPEN FOR *ME*--NOT TO LET ME *THROUGH.* BUT ALL THE *SAME...*
I'M LEARNING HOW TO *LOOK THROUGH* IT.
I'M LEARNING *SO MUCH...*
I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED AFTER I DIED.
BUT THAT WASN'T THE PROBLEM.

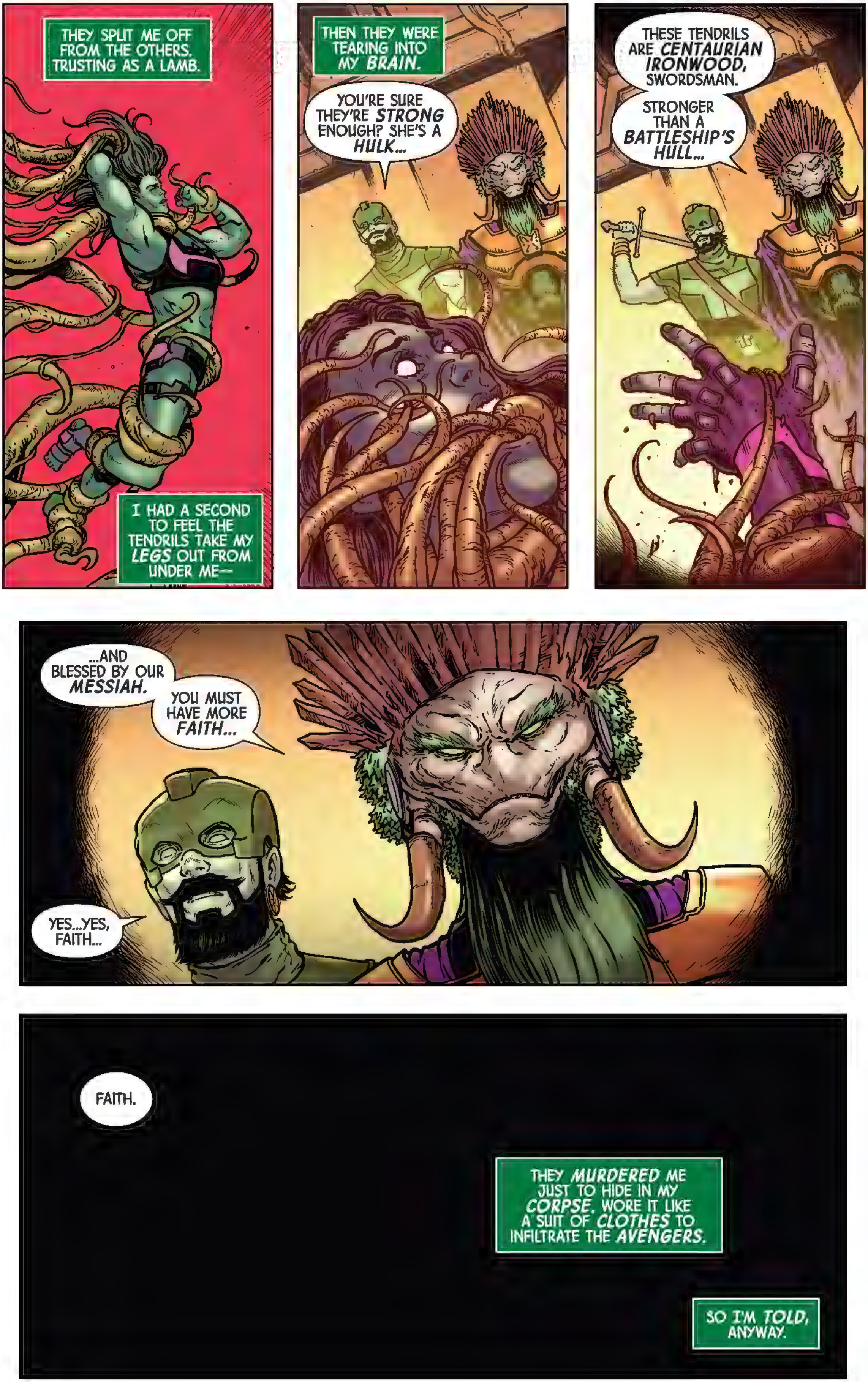

NOW.
IT WAS EVERYTHING I COULD REMEMBER. EVERYTHING I COULDN'T STOP REMEMBERING.
THE TRAUMA MY BODY COULDN'T PROCESS. THE FLASHBACKS, THE RANDOM SURGES OF FIGHT OR FLIGHT.
AND I WAS A HULK. SO I HAD TO STAY IN CONTROL. ALWAYS.
I WAS A HULK.
CAUTION
REPULSOR AND TRACTOR TECH IN OPERATION
SO EVERYONE COULD SEE.
I FELT BROKEN. TAINTED.
SOMETIMES I STILL DO.
I KEEP IT TO MYSELF.
CAU
REPULSOR
TECH IN
THOR?
WANT... TRAIN WITH HULK?
...
AYE, WHY NOT?

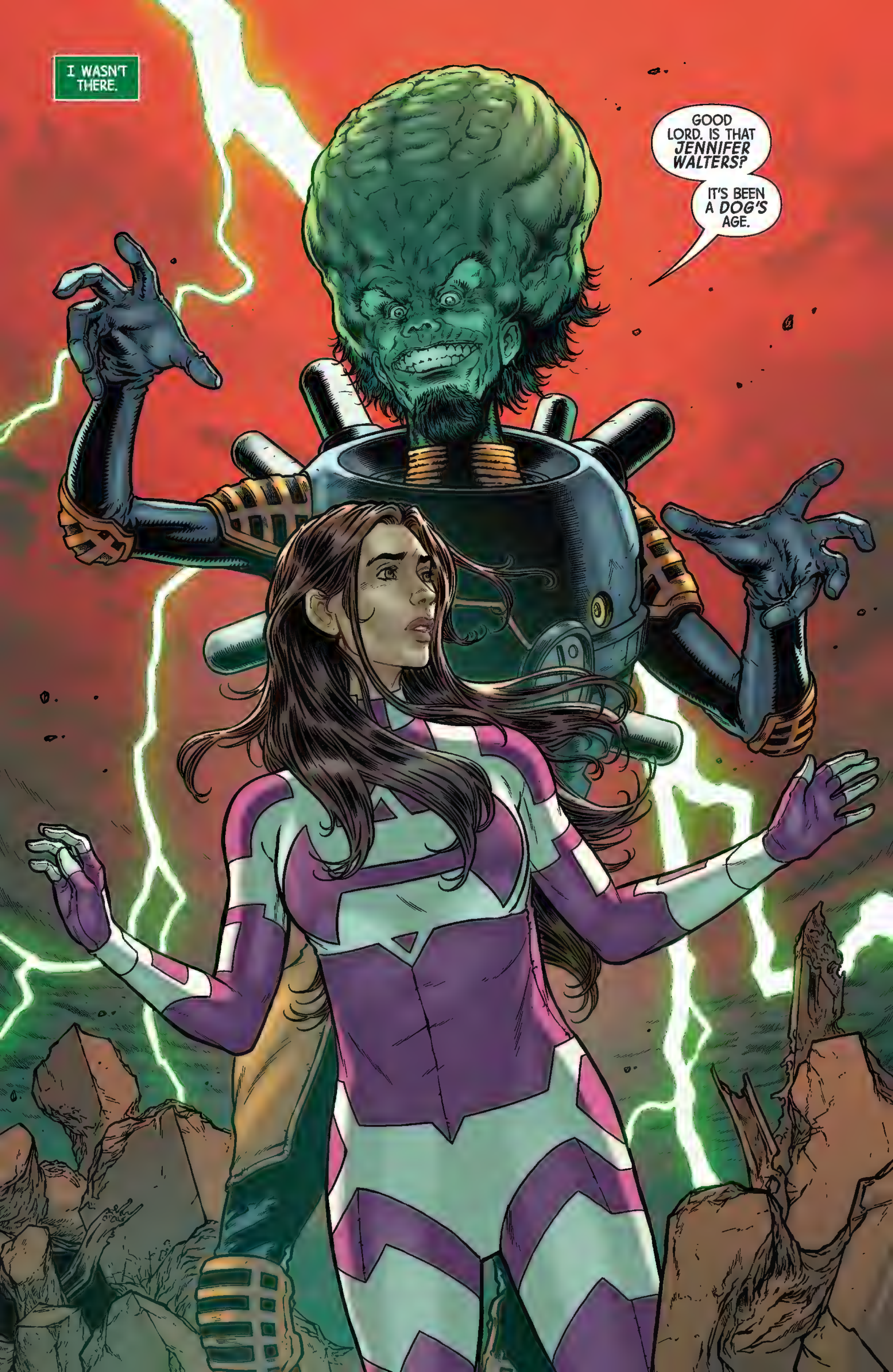

NEW COSTUME LOOKS GOOD ON THOR.
HULK LIKED BEARD, THOUGH...
AS DID I-- BEFORE I WAS ALL-FATHER.
BUT IT BEGAN TO FEEL LIKE MY FATHER WAS GAZING AT ME FROM THE MIRROR...
HRH. YES.
IMPORTANT TO LOOK IN MIRROR.
THE THRONE OF ASGARD IS...NOT A COMFORTABLE ONE. PERHAPS SOMEDAY I WILL GROW MORE USED TO IT.
THOR HAS FOREVER. FOREVER IS A LOT OF SOMEDAYS.
LOT OF TIME TO CHANGE...
I SUPPOSE IT MUST SEEM THAT WAY TO MORTALS.
OFTTIMES, I FIND MYSELF SHAMED BY HOW LITTLE CHANGING WE GODS SEEM TO--
HULK NOT MORTAL.
...WHAT?
HULK NOT MORTAL, THOR.
HULK NOT DIE.

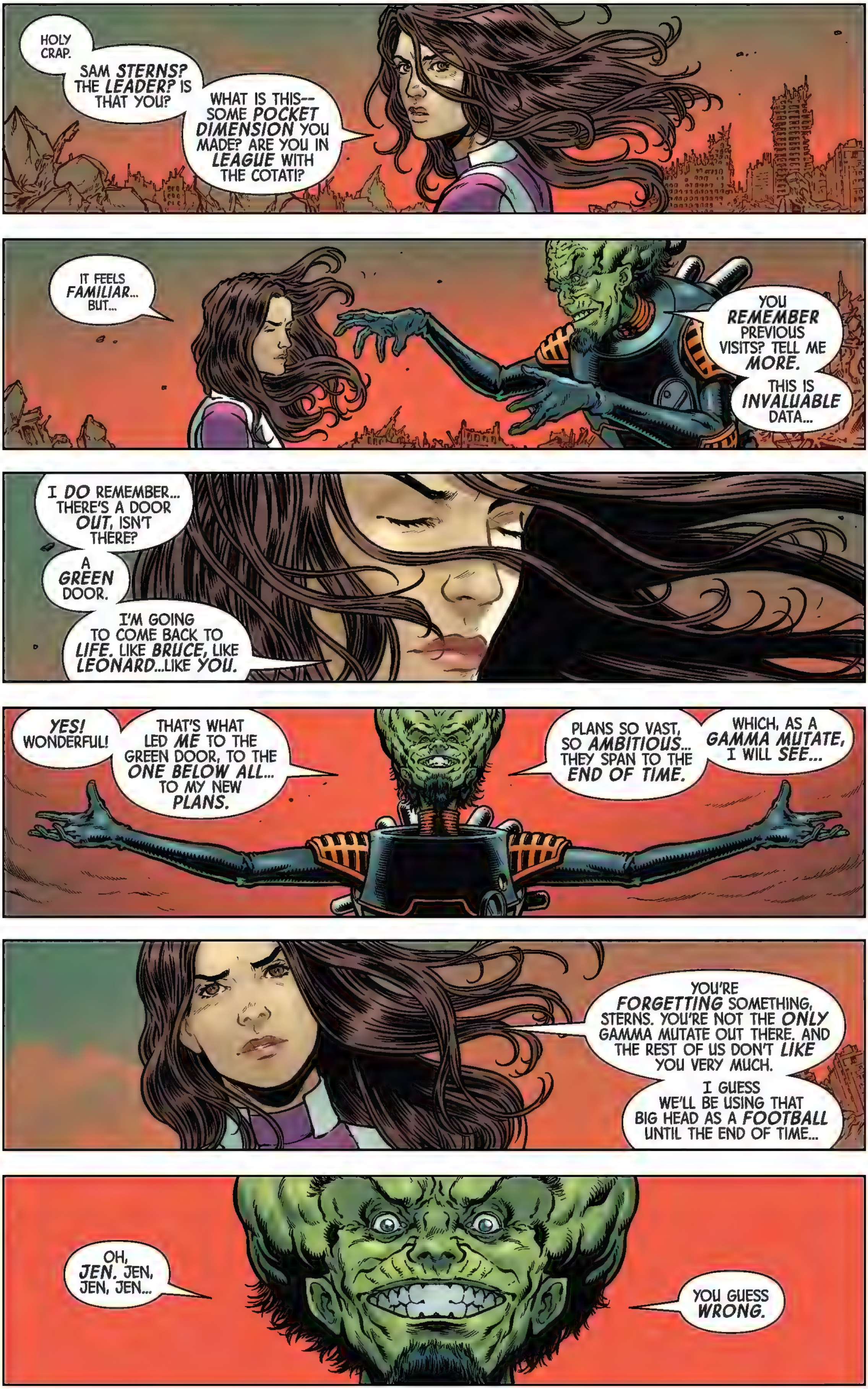

OR...HULK *DIES,* BUT HULK *COMES BACK.* HULK IS A *HULK.* AN *IMMORTAL* HULK.
HULK HAS *FOREVER,* LIKE THOR...BUT ONLY *STARTING.*
WHAT FOREVER LIKE FROM *OTHER END?*
...
A VAST QUESTION.
WOULD YOU RATHER TALK ABOUT IT AS *JENNIFER?*
TRIED. FELT... TOO *HEAVY* FOR JEN.
NEEDS HULK TO BEAR IT.
WELL...I AM *SORRY,* HULK.
BUT IT WILL GROW *HEAVIER.*
AS YOU SAY--YOU ARE AT THE *START,* AND SO YOU CANNOT SEE THE *FINISH.*
BUT WHETHER *MY* FINISH IS *MILLENNIA* HENCE OR...SOONER THAN I WOULD *LIKE*...IT IS STILL *WRITTEN.*
"I REMEMBER *GALACTUS.*
"*HE* WAS IMMORTAL BY ANY MEASURE. HE SURVIVED THE DEATH OF A *MULTIVERSE,* THE BIRTH OF *ANOTHER,* AND LIVED *MILLENNIA* BEYOND THAT.
"AND STILL, I LOOKED HIM IN THE *EYE*...

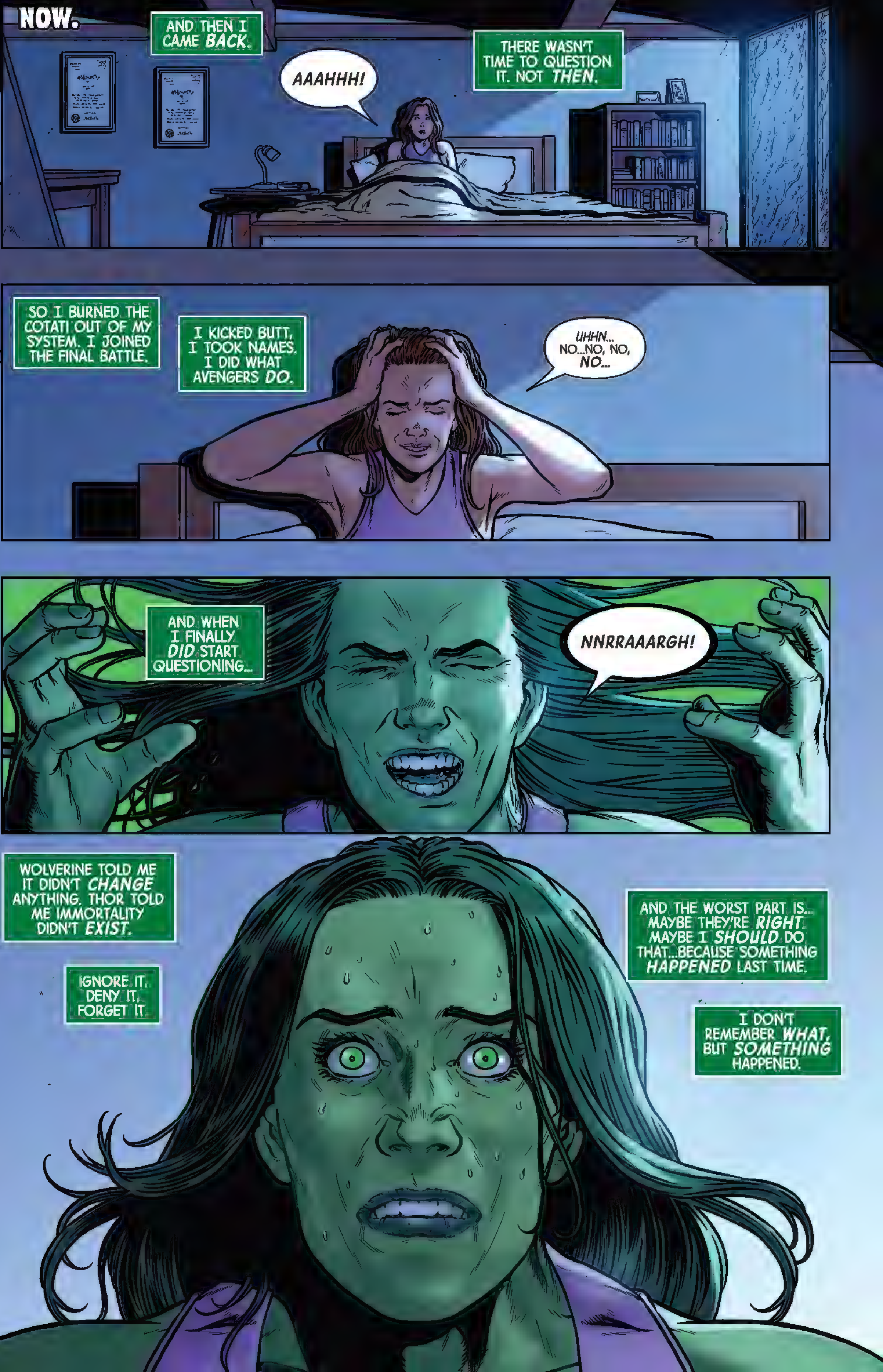

"...AND I BROUGHT THAT TO AN *END*."
THOR...KILLED *GALACTUS*...?
IT FELT LIKE *JUSTICE*, AT THE TIME.*
IN ANY CASE, THE DEED IS DONE.
*SEE *THOR* (2020) #6. -WIL
HE WAS IMMORTAL, AND NOW HE IS DEAD.
AS WILL I BE. AS WILL *YOU*.
THAT IS ALL THE ADVICE I *HAVE*, HULK.
TO *REMEMBER*...
...THAT THERE ARE *NONE* WHO HAVE FOREVER.
OH, I REMEMBER.

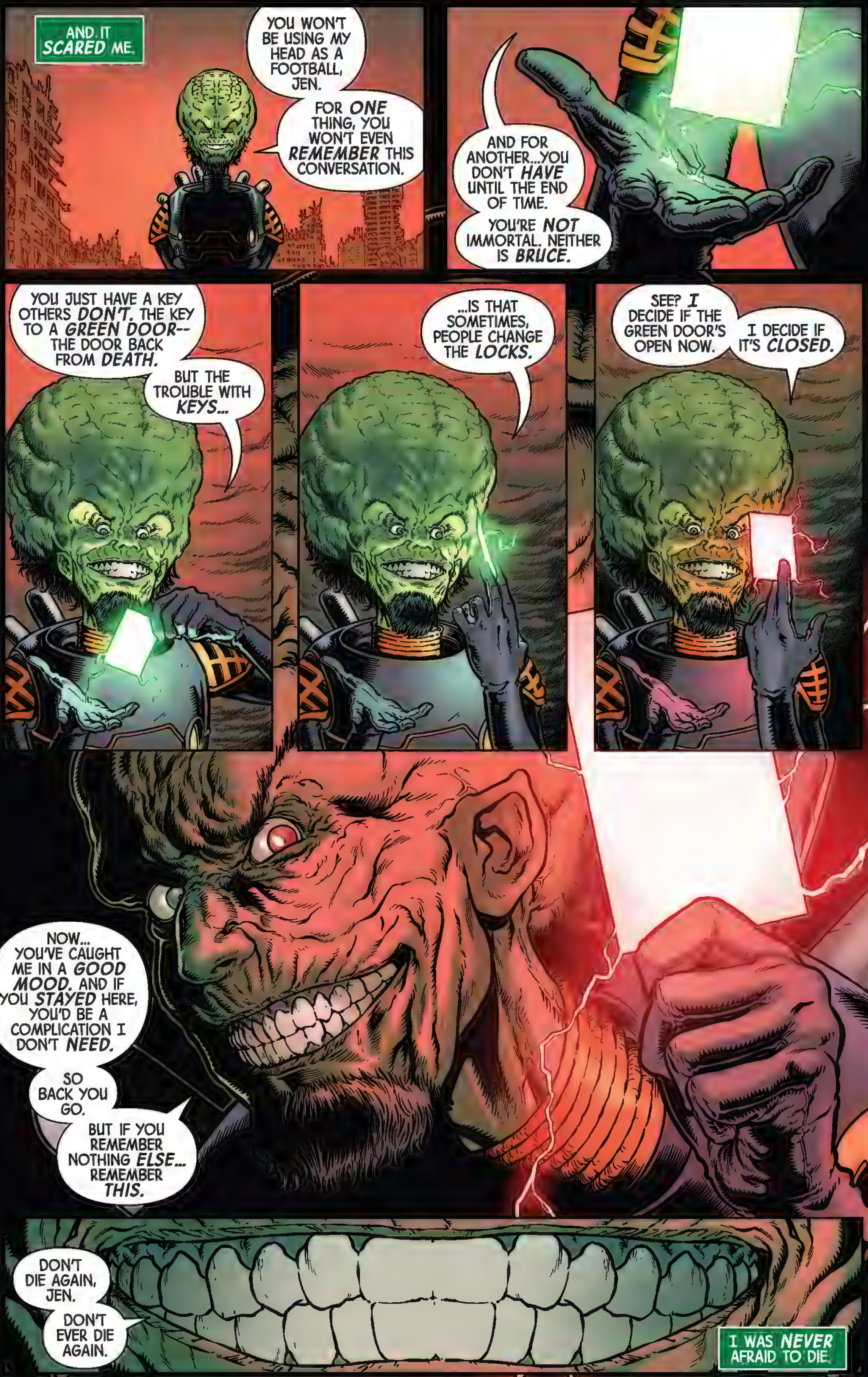

THEN.
I REMEMBER THE *THIRD* TIME I DIED.
I WAS ON THE MOON, MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE *COTATI.*
THE SAME COTATI WHO INVADED *EARTH,* WHO WANTED TO WIPE OUT THE *GALAXY*...BUT *TONY* THOUGHT THEY WERE THE *GOOD GUYS.* AND TONY ALWAYS HAS TO BE *RIGHT.*
NOT THAT *I* KNEW BETTER. I'D LIKE TO SAY I *SUSPECTED*-- BUT THAT WOULD BE A *LIE.*
I'M NOT *STUPID* WHEN I'M HULK.
WORDS ARE HARDER FOR ME--FRAGILE SHELLS FOR *MY* BLAZING GREEN THOUGHTS.
HULK?
HRH?
THAT DOESN'T MAKE ME *STUPID.*
FOLLOW ME. YOU'LL NEED A *WEAPON* AGAINST THE ENEMY.
HULK NOT NEED PUNY *SWORD*--
BUT I WAS STUPID *THEN.*
TRUST ME.
YOU'LL NEED *THIS.*

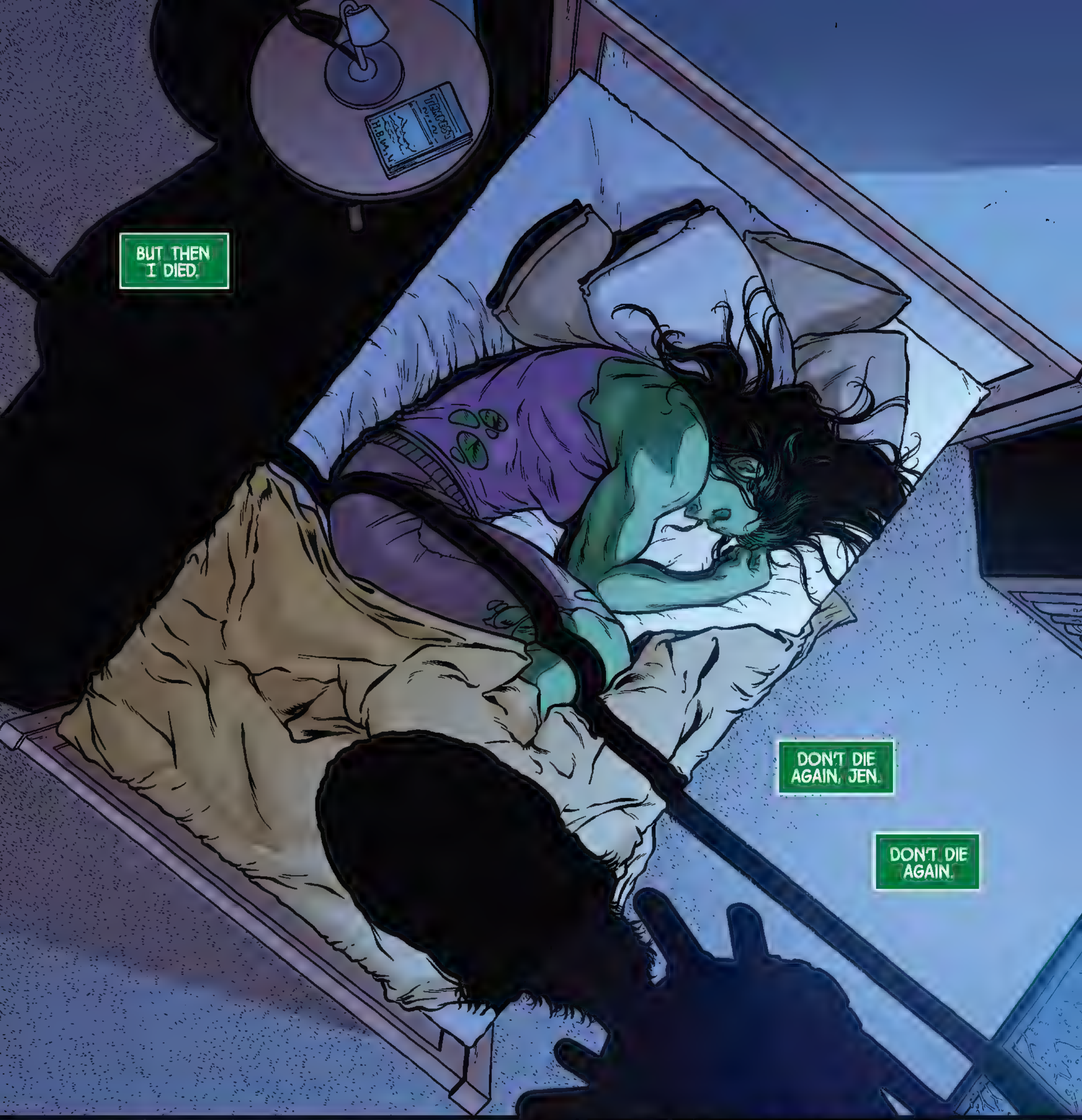

THEY SPLIT ME OFF FROM THE OTHERS. TRUSTING AS A LAMB.
I HAD A SECOND TO FEEL THE TENDRILS TAKE MY LEGS OUT FROM UNDER ME--
THEN THEY WERE TEARING INTO MY BRAIN.
YOU'RE SURE THEY'RE STRONG ENOUGH? SHE'S A HULK...
THESE TENDRILS ARE CENTAURIAN IRONWOOD, SWORDSMAN.
STRONGER THAN A BATTLESHIP'S HULL...
...AND BLESSED BY OUR MESSIAH.
YOU MUST HAVE MORE FAITH...
YES...YES, FAITH...
FAITH.
THEY MURDERED ME JUST TO HIDE IN MY CORPSE. WORE IT LIKE A SUIT OF CLOTHES TO INFILTRATE THE AVENGERS.
SO I'M TOLD, ANYWAY.


I WASN'T THERE.
GOOD LORD. IS THAT *JENNIFER WALTERS?*
IT'S BEEN A *DOG'S* AGE.


HOLY CRAP.
SAM STERNS? THE LEADER? IS THAT YOU?
WHAT IS THIS-- SOME POCKET DIMENSION YOU MADE? ARE YOU IN LEAGUE WITH THE COTATI?
IT FEELS FAMILIAR... BUT...
YOU REMEMBER PREVIOUS VISITS? TELL ME MORE.
THIS IS INVALUABLE DATA...
I DO REMEMBER... THERE'S A DOOR OUT, ISN'T THERE?
A GREEN DOOR.
I'M GOING TO COME BACK TO LIFE. LIKE BRUCE, LIKE LEONARD...LIKE YOU.
YES! WONDERFUL!
THAT'S WHAT LED ME TO THE GREEN DOOR, TO THE ONE BELOW ALL... TO MY NEW PLANS.
PLANS SO VAST, SO AMBITIOUS... THEY SPAN TO THE END OF TIME.
WHICH, AS A GAMMA MUTATE, I WILL SEE...
YOU'RE FORGETTING SOMETHING, STERNS. YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY GAMMA MUTATE OUT THERE. AND THE REST OF US DON'T LIKE YOU VERY MUCH.
I GUESS WE'LL BE USING THAT BIG HEAD AS A FOOTBALL UNTIL THE END OF TIME...
OH, JEN. JEN, JEN, JEN...
YOU GUESS WRONG.


NOW.
AND THEN I CAME *BACK*.
AAAHHH!
THERE WASN'T TIME TO QUESTION IT. NOT *THEN*.
SO I BURNED THE COTATI OUT OF MY SYSTEM. I JOINED THE FINAL BATTLE.
I KICKED BUTT, I TOOK NAMES. I DID WHAT AVENGERS *DO*.
UHHN... NO...NO, NO, *NO*...
AND WHEN I FINALLY *DID* START QUESTIONING...
NNRRAAARGH!
WOLVERINE TOLD ME IT DIDN'T *CHANGE* ANYTHING. THOR TOLD ME IMMORTALITY DIDN'T *EXIST*.
IGNORE IT. DENY IT. FORGET IT.
AND THE WORST PART IS... MAYBE THEY'RE *RIGHT*. MAYBE I *SHOULD* DO THAT...BECAUSE SOMETHING *HAPPENED* LAST TIME.
I DON'T REMEMBER *WHAT*, BUT *SOMETHING* HAPPENED.


AND IT SCARED ME.
YOU WON'T BE USING MY HEAD AS A FOOTBALL, JEN.
FOR ONE THING, YOU WON'T EVEN REMEMBER THIS CONVERSATION.
AND FOR ANOTHER...YOU DON'T HAVE UNTIL THE END OF TIME.
YOU'RE NOT IMMORTAL. NEITHER IS BRUCE.
YOU JUST HAVE A KEY OTHERS DON'T. THE KEY TO A GREEN DOOR-- THE DOOR BACK FROM DEATH.
BUT THE TROUBLE WITH KEYS...
...IS THAT SOMETIMES, PEOPLE CHANGE THE LOCKS.
SEE? I DECIDE IF THE GREEN DOOR'S OPEN NOW.
I DECIDE IF IT'S CLOSED.
NOW... YOU'VE CAUGHT ME IN A GOOD MOOD. AND IF YOU STAYED HERE, YOU'D BE A COMPLICATION I DON'T NEED.
SO BACK YOU GO.
BUT IF YOU REMEMBER NOTHING ELSE... REMEMBER THIS.
DON'T DIE AGAIN, JEN.
DON'T EVER DIE AGAIN.
I WAS NEVER AFRAID TO DIE.

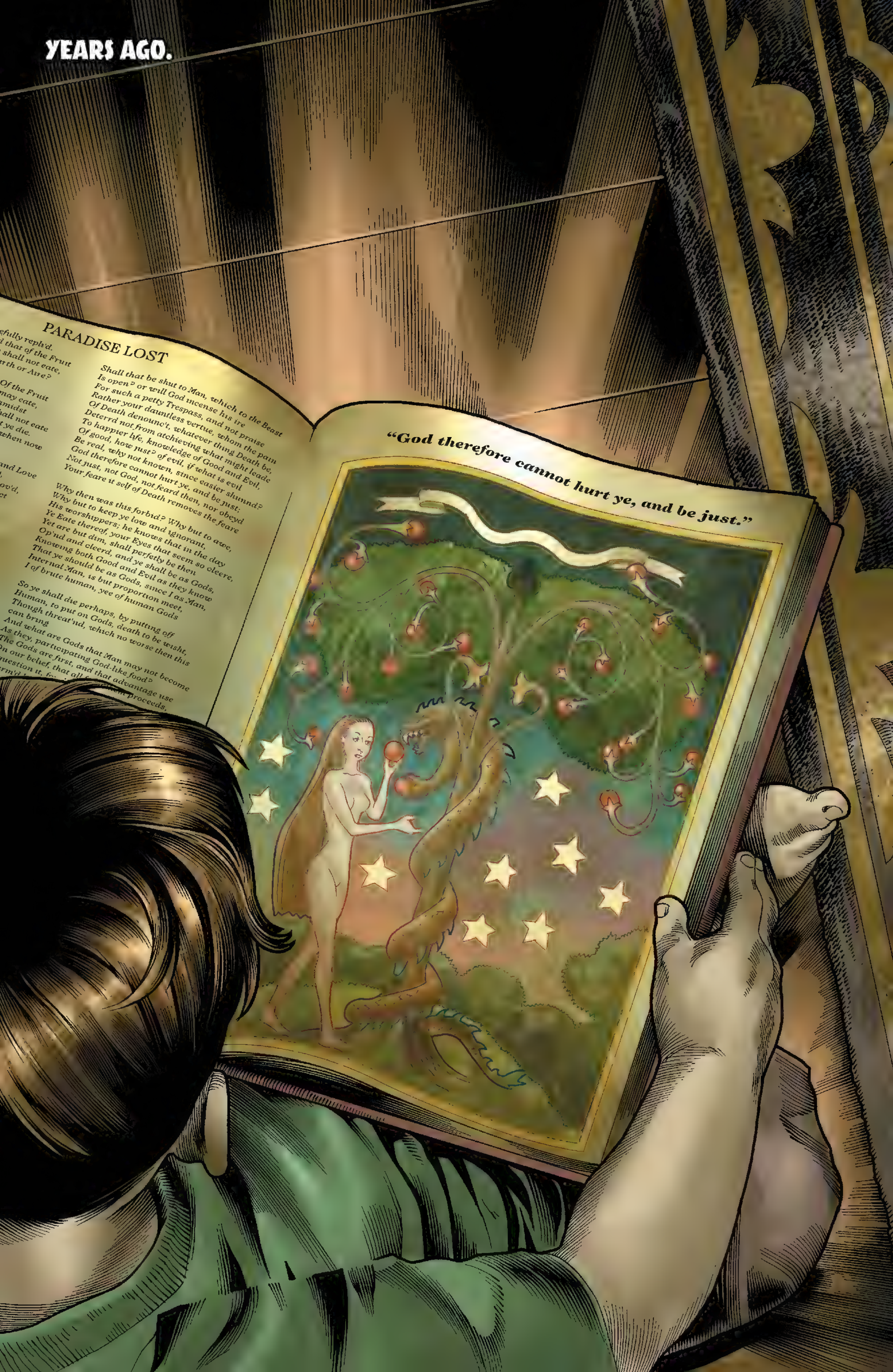

BUT THEN I DIED.
DON'T DIE AGAIN, JEN.
DON'T DIE AGAIN.

THE THREE DEATHS
OF
JENNIFER WALTERS

38

"WHAT THOUGH THE FIELD BE LOST?
ALL IS NOT LOST; THE UNCONQUERABLE WILL,
AND STUDY OF REVENGE, IMMORTAL HATE,
AND COURAGE NEVER TO SUBMIT OR YIELD:
AND WHAT IS ELSE NOT TO BE OVERCOME?"

– JOHN MILTON
PARADISE LOST



PARADISE LOST

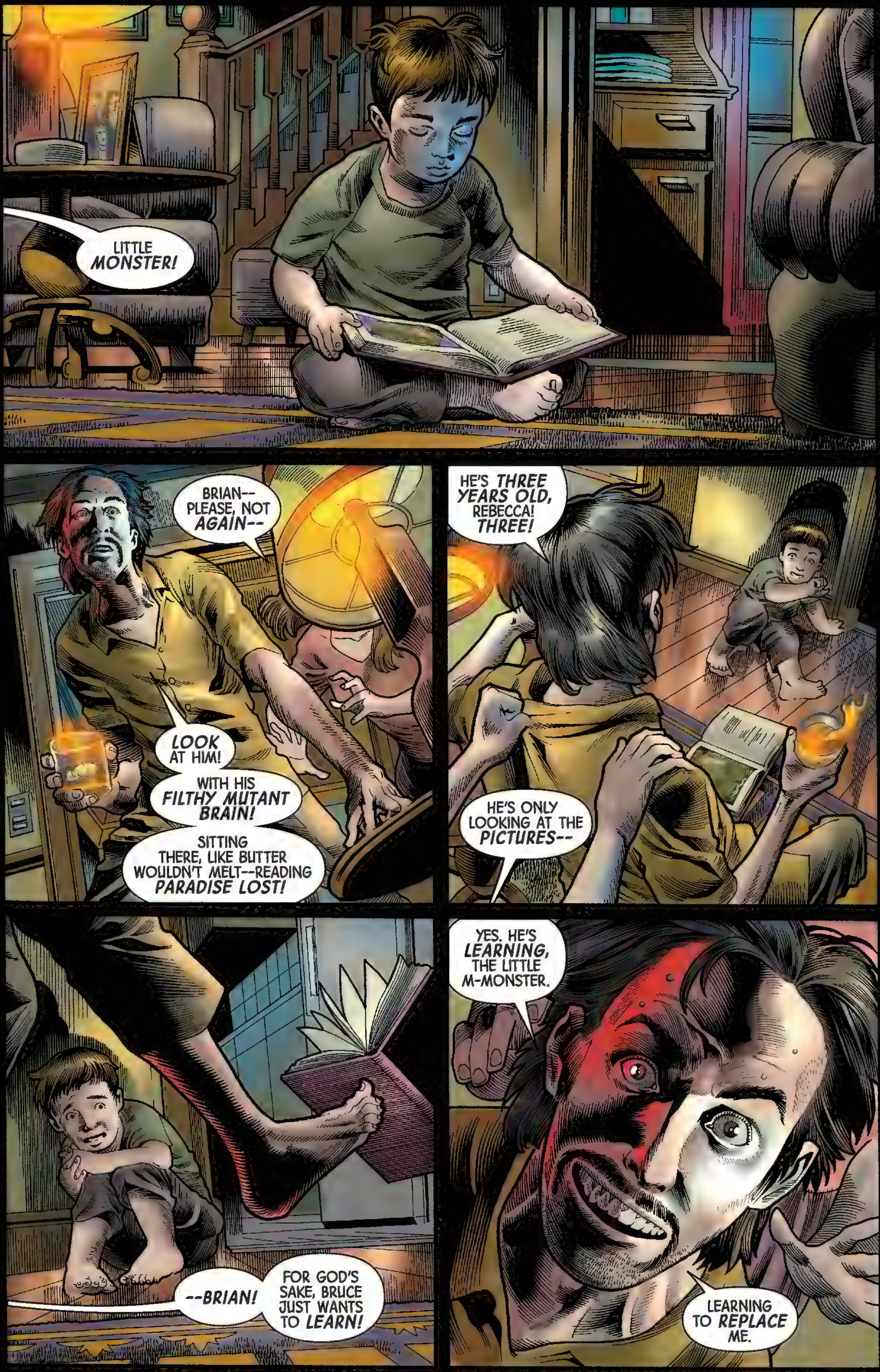
efully reply'd.
d that of the Fruit
shall not eate,
rth or Aire?
Of the Fruit
may eate,
amidst
hall not eate
t ye die.
when now
and Love
ov'd,
ct

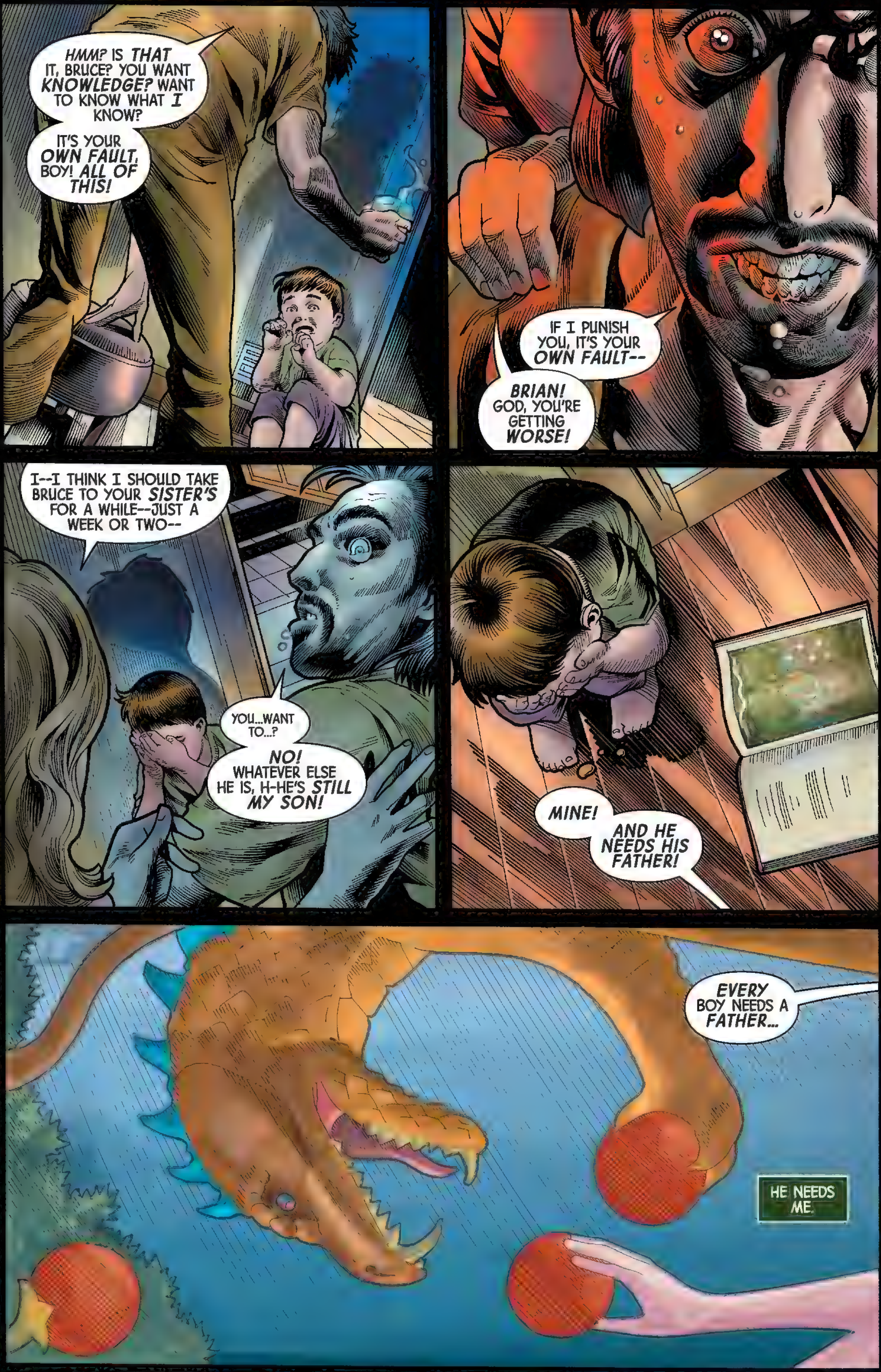
Shall that be shut to Man, which to the Beast
Is open? or will God incense his ire
For such a petty Trespass, and not praise
Rather your dauntless vertue, whom the pain
Of Death denounc't, whatever thing Death be,
Deterrd not from atchieving what might leade
To happier life, knowledge of Good and Evil;
Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil
Be real, why not known, since easier shunnd?
God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just;
Not just, not God; not feard then, nor obeyd:
Your feare it self of Death removes the feare.

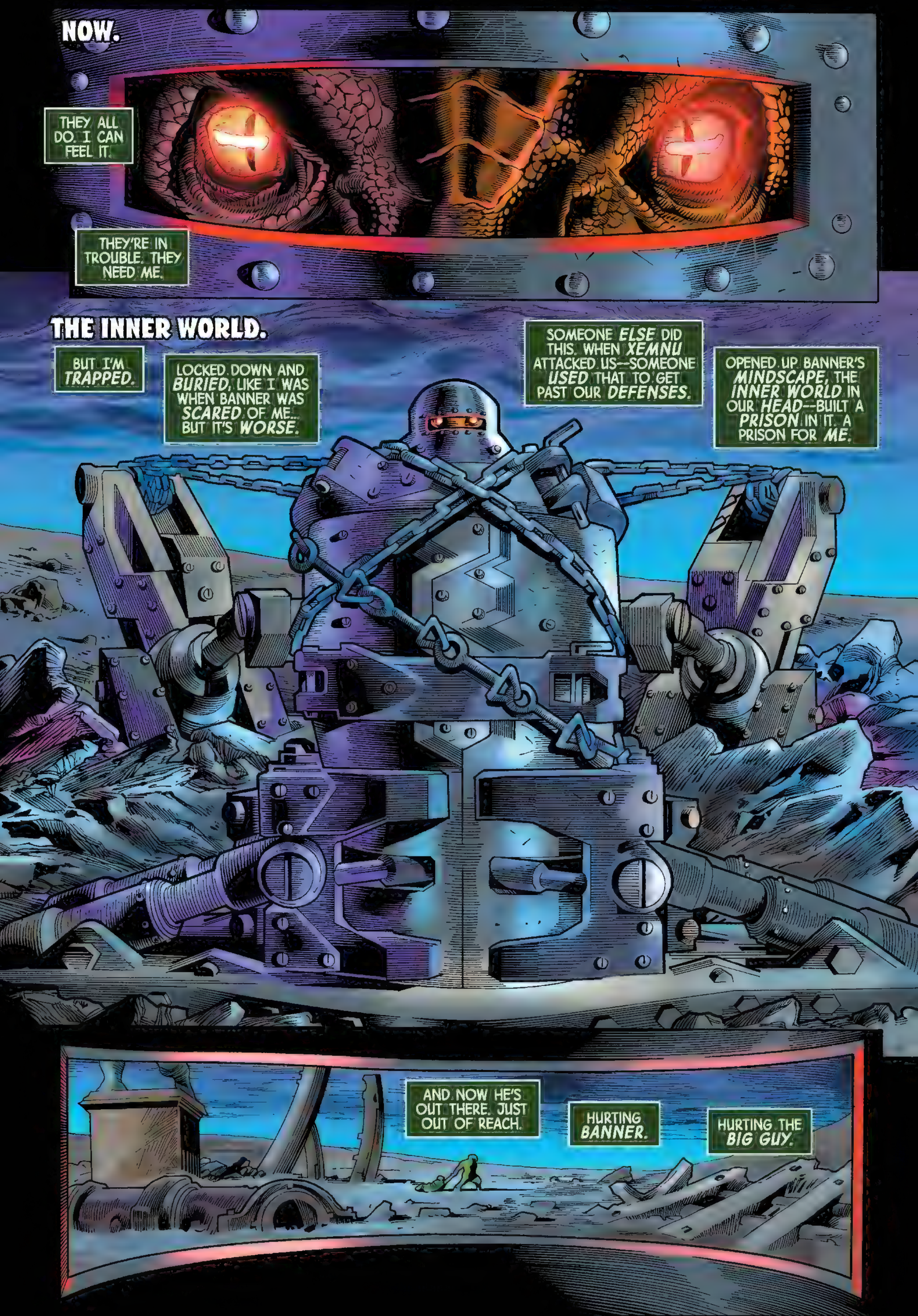
Why then was this forbid? Why but to awe,
Why but to keep ye low and ignorant,
His worshippers; he knows that in the day
Ye Eate thereof, your Eyes that seem so cleere,
Yet are but dim, shall perfetly be then
Op'nd and cleerd, and ye shall be as Gods,
Knowing both Good and Evil as they know.
That ye should be as Gods, since I as Man,
Internal Man, is but proportion meet,
I of brute human, yee of human Gods.

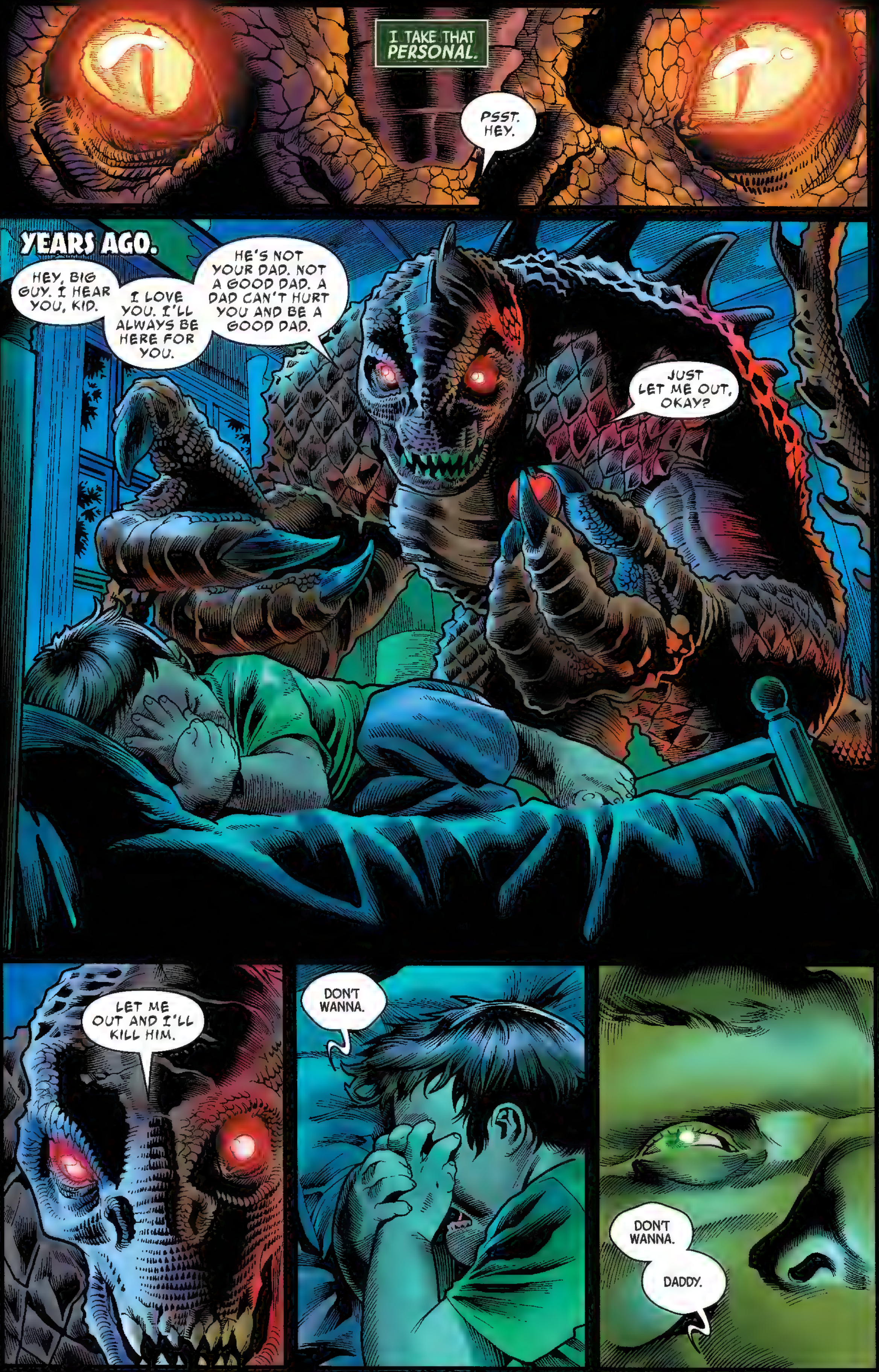
So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off
Human, to put on Gods, death to be wisht,
Though threat'nd, which no worse then this can bring
And what are Gods that Man may not become
As they, participating God-like food?
The Gods are first, and that advantage use
On our belief, that all proceeds,
uestion it, fo
rm'd

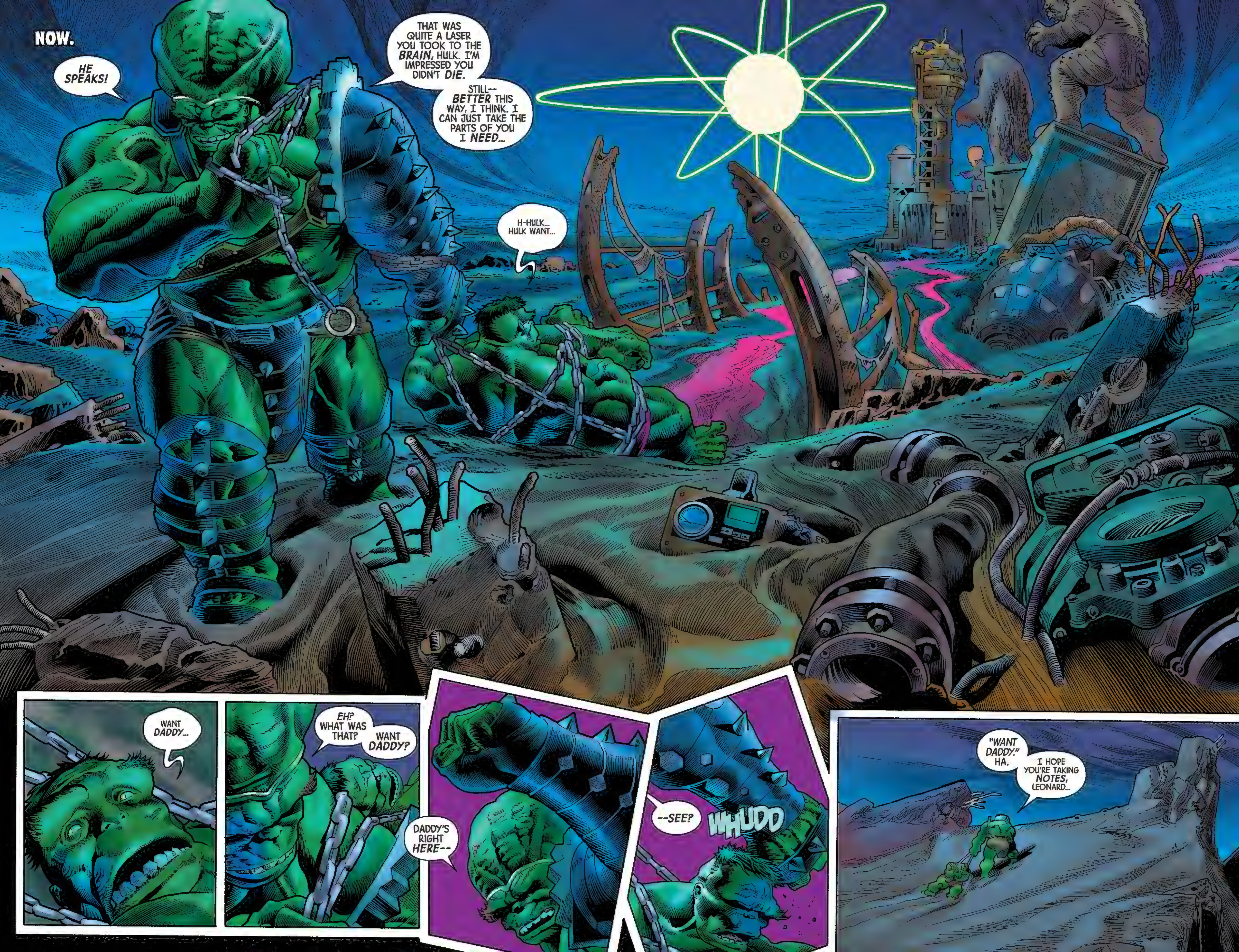
"God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just."

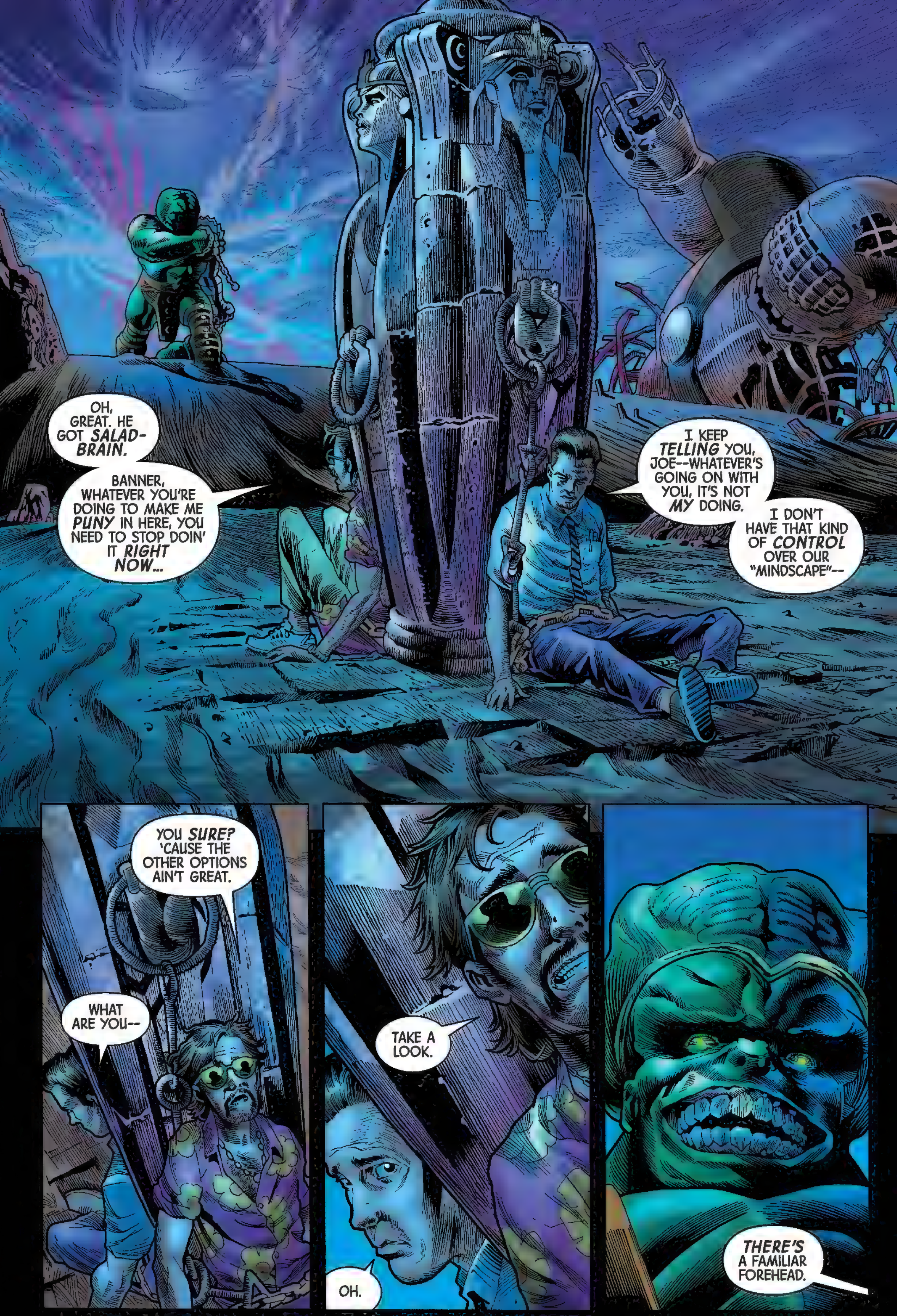

LITTLE MONSTER!
BRIAN-- PLEASE, NOT AGAIN--
LOOK AT HIM!
WITH HIS FILTHY MUTANT BRAIN!
SITTING THERE, LIKE BUTTER WOULDN'T MELT--READING PARADISE LOST!
HE'S THREE YEARS OLD, REBECCA! THREE!
HE'S ONLY LOOKING AT THE PICTURES--
--BRIAN!
FOR GOD'S SAKE, BRUCE JUST WANTS TO LEARN!
YES. HE'S LEARNING, THE LITTLE M-MONSTER.
LEARNING TO REPLACE ME.

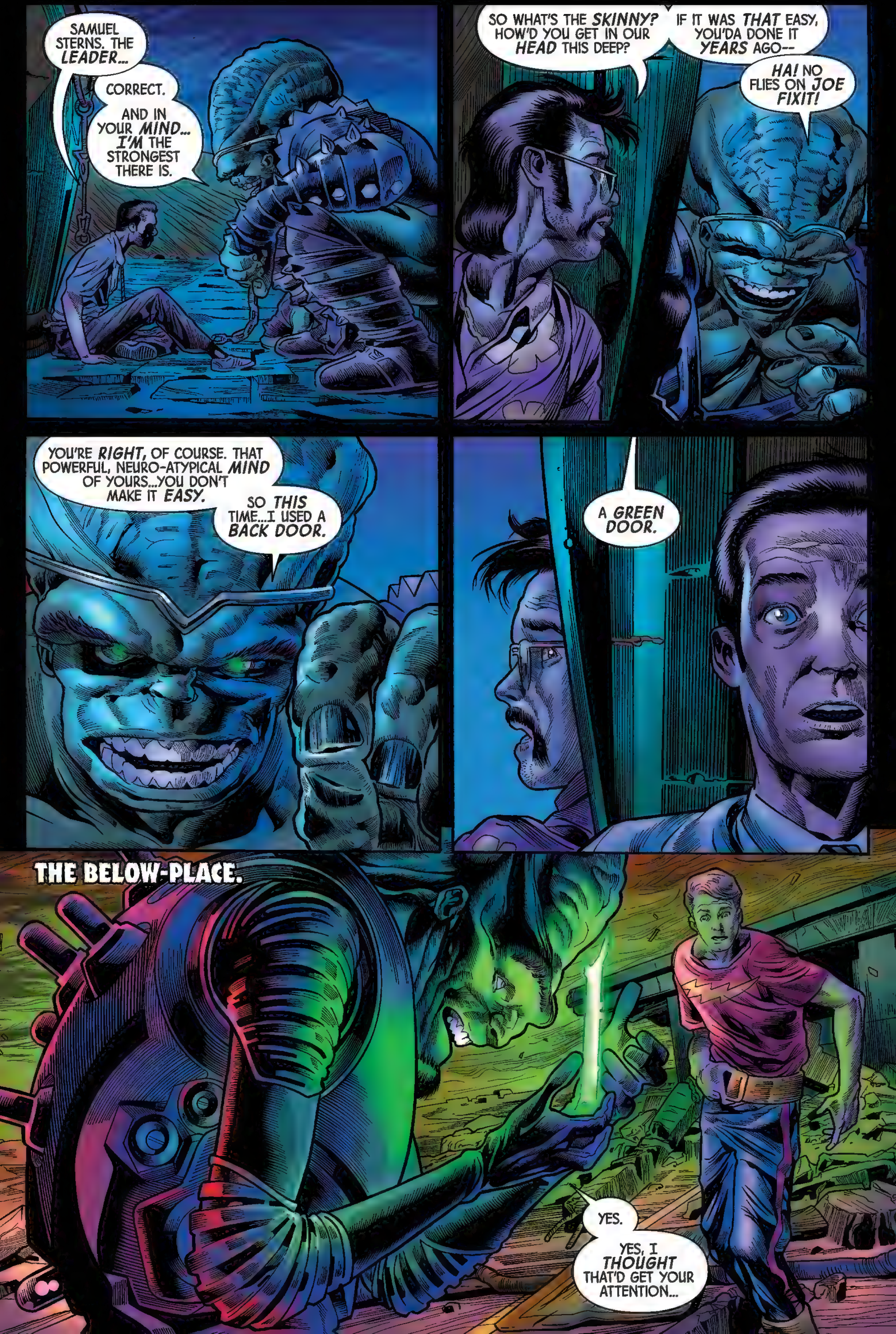

HMM? IS THAT IT, BRUCE? YOU WANT KNOWLEDGE? WANT TO KNOW WHAT I KNOW?
IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT, BOY! ALL OF THIS!
IF I PUNISH YOU, IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT--
BRIAN! GOD, YOU'RE GETTING WORSE!
I--I THINK I SHOULD TAKE BRUCE TO YOUR SISTER'S FOR A WHILE--JUST A WEEK OR TWO--
YOU...WANT TO...?
NO! WHATEVER ELSE HE IS, H-HE'S STILL MY SON!
MINE!
AND HE NEEDS HIS FATHER!
EVERY BOY NEEDS A FATHER...
HE NEEDS ME.

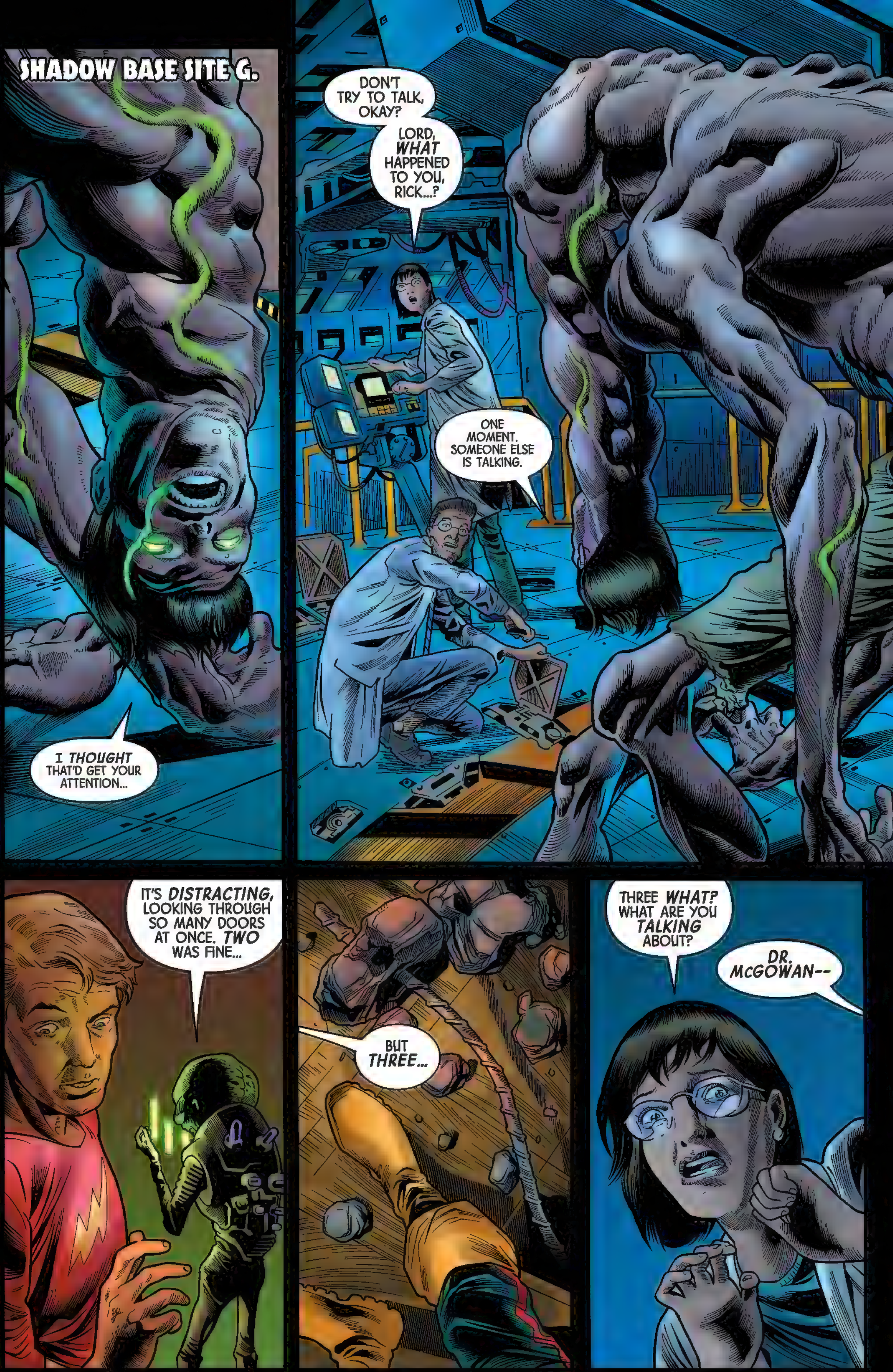

NOW.
THEY ALL DO. I CAN FEEL IT.
THEY'RE IN TROUBLE. THEY NEED ME.
THE INNER WORLD.
BUT I'M *TRAPPED.*
LOCKED DOWN AND *BURIED,* LIKE I WAS WHEN BANNER WAS *SCARED* OF ME... BUT IT'S *WORSE.*
SOMEONE *ELSE* DID THIS. WHEN *XEMNU* ATTACKED US--SOMEONE *USED* THAT TO GET PAST OUR *DEFENSES.*
OPENED UP BANNER'S *MINDSCAPE,* THE *INNER WORLD* IN OUR *HEAD*--BUILT A *PRISON* IN IT. A PRISON FOR *ME.*
AND NOW HE'S OUT THERE. JUST OUT OF REACH.
HURTING *BANNER.*
HURTING THE *BIG GUY.*

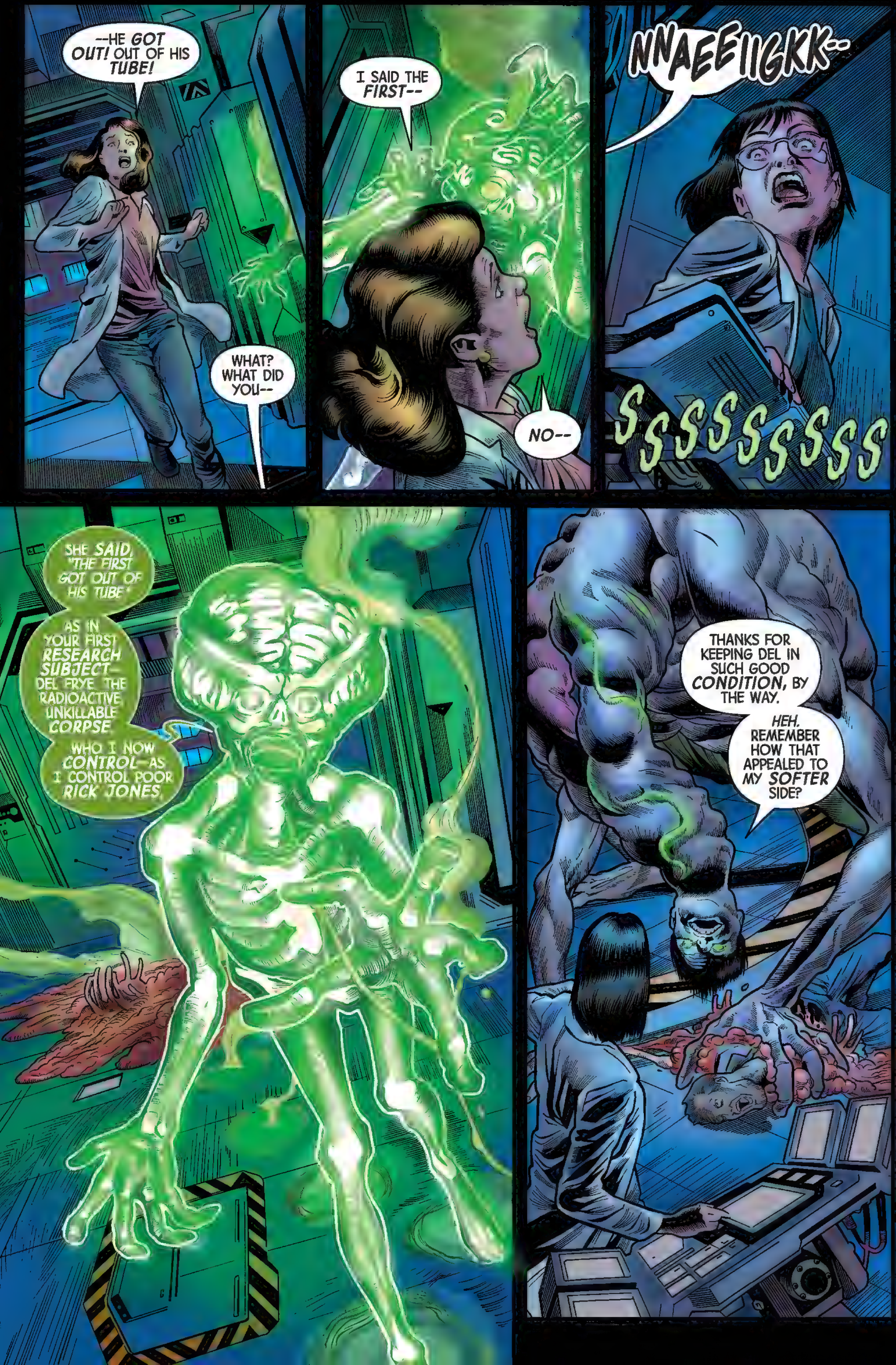

I TAKE THAT PERSONAL.
PSST. HEY.
YEARS AGO.
HEY, BIG GUY. I HEAR YOU, KID.
I LOVE YOU. I'LL ALWAYS BE HERE FOR YOU.
HE'S NOT YOUR DAD. NOT A GOOD DAD. A DAD CAN'T HURT YOU AND BE A GOOD DAD.
JUST LET ME OUT, OKAY?
LET ME OUT AND I'LL KILL HIM.
DON'T WANNA.
DON'T WANNA.
DADDY.

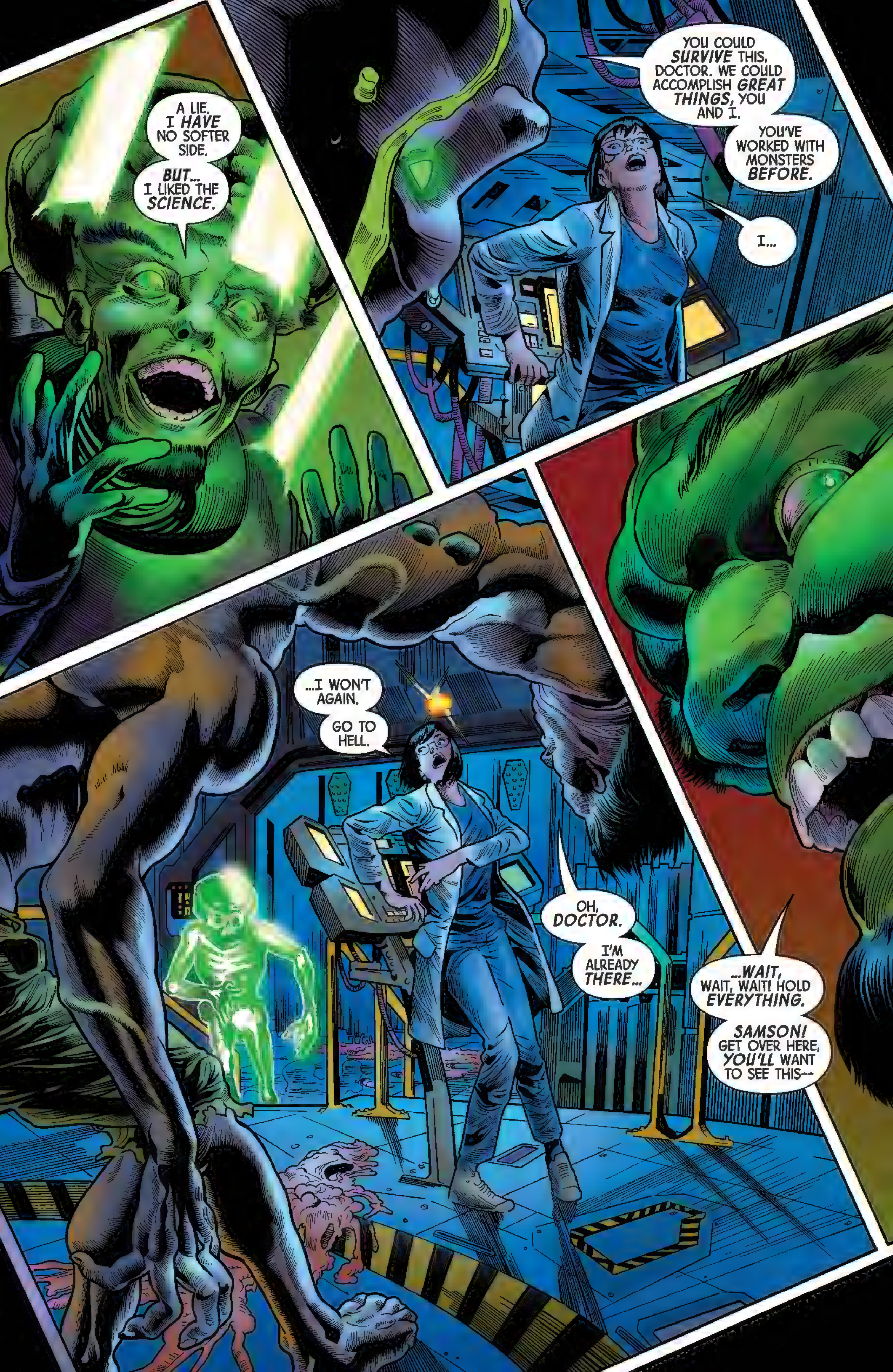

NOW.
HE SPEAKS!
THAT WAS QUITE A LASER YOU TOOK TO THE BRAIN, HULK. I'M IMPRESSED YOU DIDN'T DIE.
STILL-- BETTER THIS WAY, I THINK. I CAN JUST TAKE THE PARTS OF YOU I NEED...
H-HULK... HULK WANT...
WANT DADDY...
EH? WHAT WAS THAT? WANT DADDY?
DADDY'S RIGHT HERE--
--SEE?
WHUDD
"WANT DADDY." HA.
I HOPE YOU'RE TAKING NOTES, LEONARD...

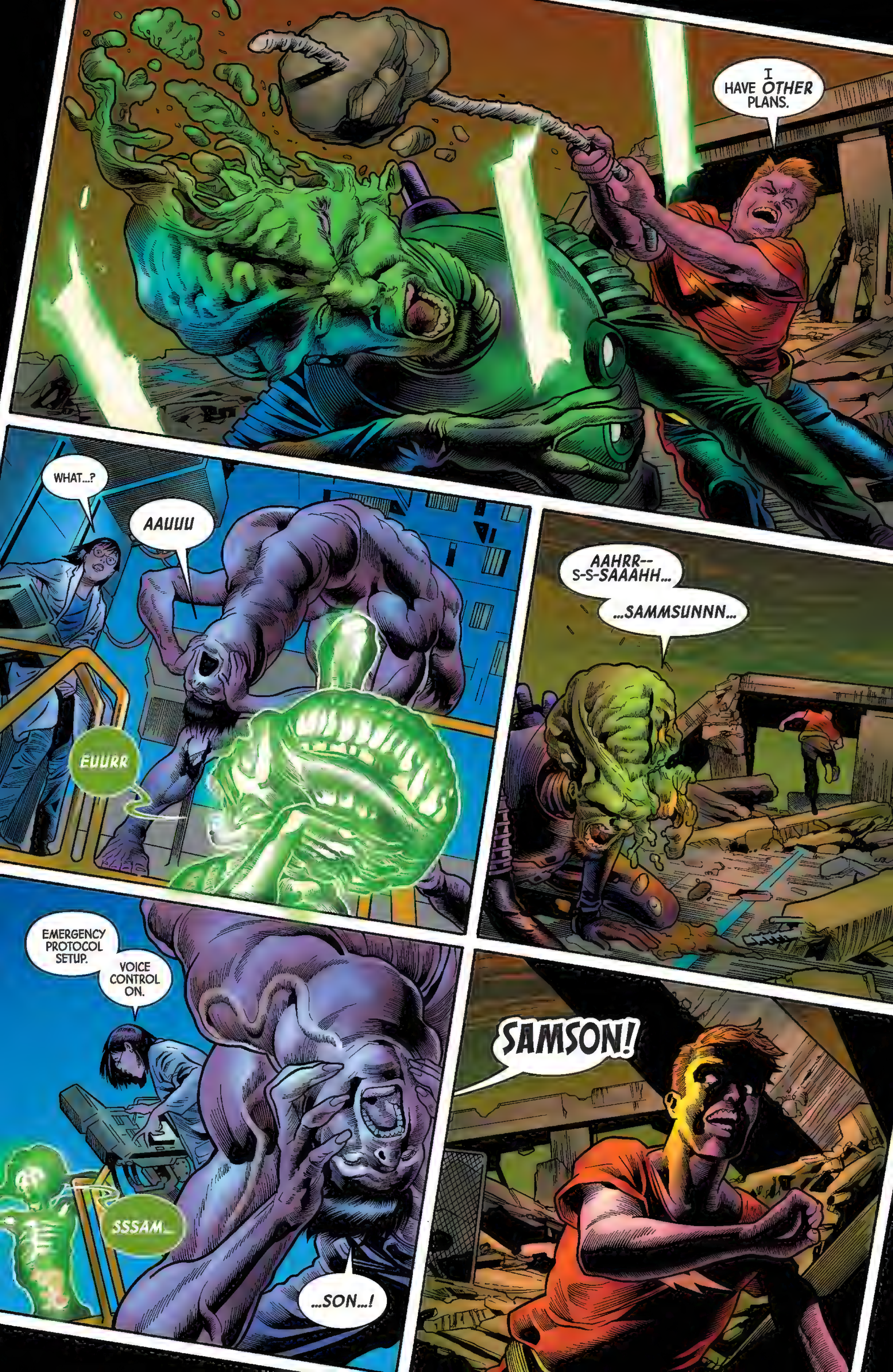

OH, GREAT. HE GOT *SALAD-BRAIN.*
BANNER, WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING TO MAKE ME *PUNY* IN HERE, YOU NEED TO STOP DOIN' IT *RIGHT NOW...*
I KEEP *TELLING* YOU, JOE--WHATEVER'S GOING ON WITH YOU, IT'S NOT *MY* DOING.
I DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF *CONTROL* OVER OUR "MINDSCAPE"--
YOU *SURE?* 'CAUSE THE OTHER OPTIONS AIN'T GREAT.
WHAT ARE YOU--
TAKE A LOOK.
OH.
THERE'S A FAMILIAR FOREHEAD.

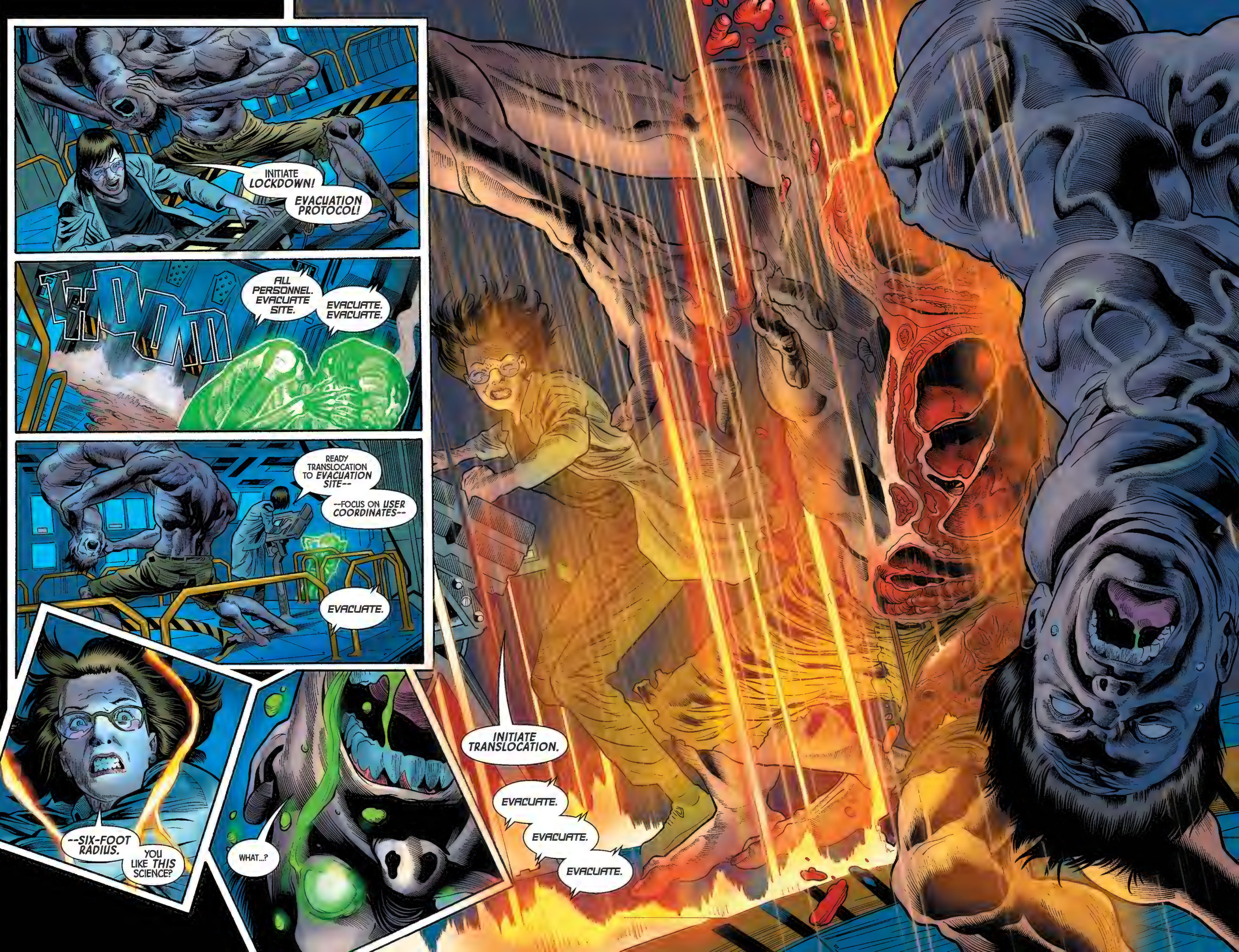

SAMUEL STERNS. THE *LEADER*...
CORRECT.
AND IN YOUR *MIND*... *I'M* THE STRONGEST THERE IS.
SO WHAT'S THE *SKINNY?* HOW'D YOU GET IN OUR *HEAD* THIS DEEP?
IF IT WAS *THAT* EASY, YOU'DA DONE IT *YEARS* AGO--
HA! NO FLIES ON *JOE FIXIT!*
YOU'RE *RIGHT,* OF COURSE. THAT POWERFUL, NEURO-ATYPICAL *MIND* OF YOURS...YOU DON'T MAKE IT *EASY.*
SO *THIS* TIME...I USED A *BACK DOOR.*
A *GREEN DOOR.*
THE BELOW-PLACE.
YES.
YES, I *THOUGHT* THAT'D GET YOUR ATTENTION...

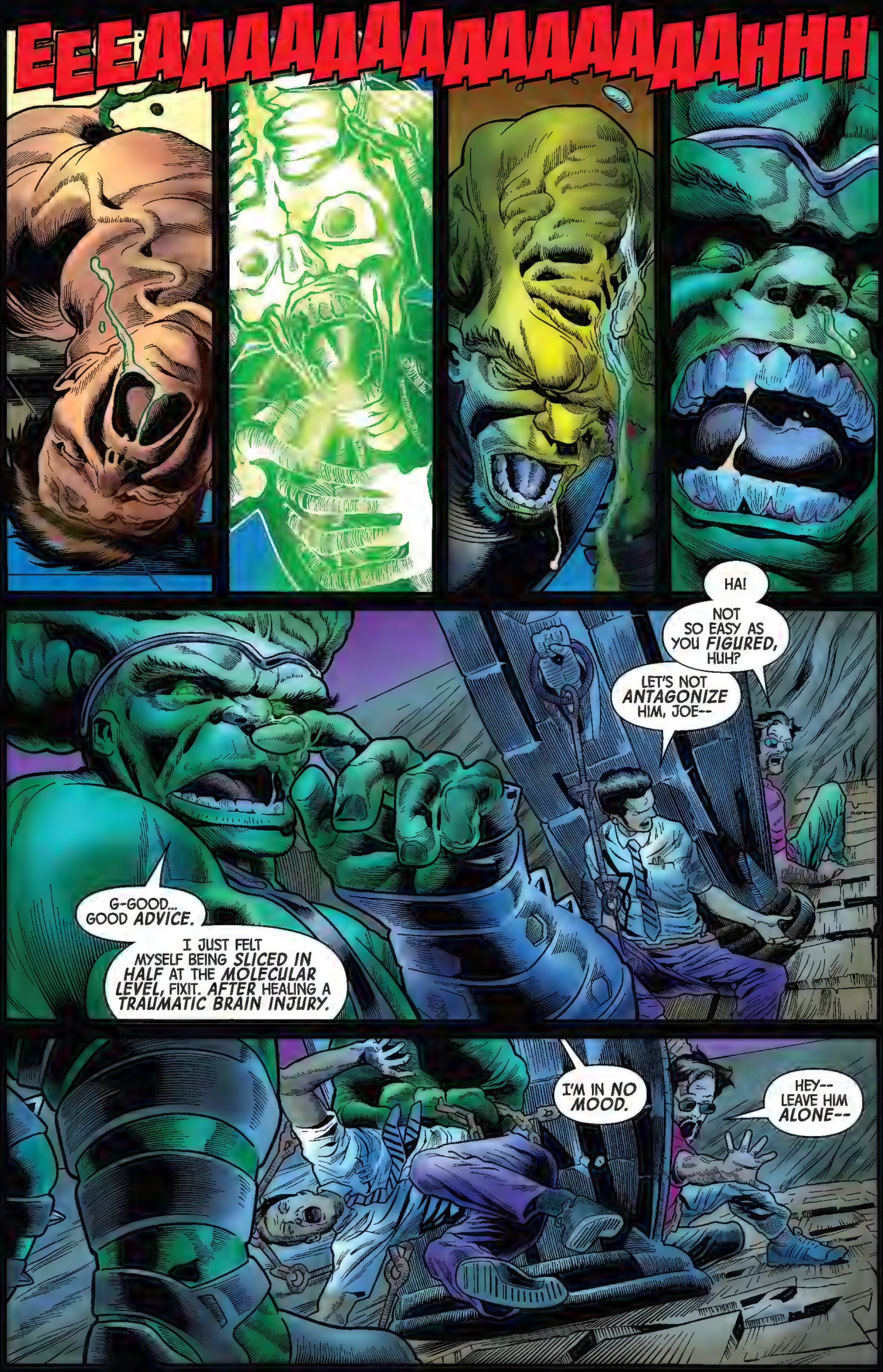

SHADOW BASE SITE G.
DON'T TRY TO TALK, OKAY?
LORD, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, RICK...?
I THOUGHT THAT'D GET YOUR ATTENTION...
ONE MOMENT. SOMEONE ELSE IS TALKING.
IT'S DISTRACTING, LOOKING THROUGH SO MANY DOORS AT ONCE. TWO WAS FINE...
BUT THREE...
THREE WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
DR. McGOWAN--

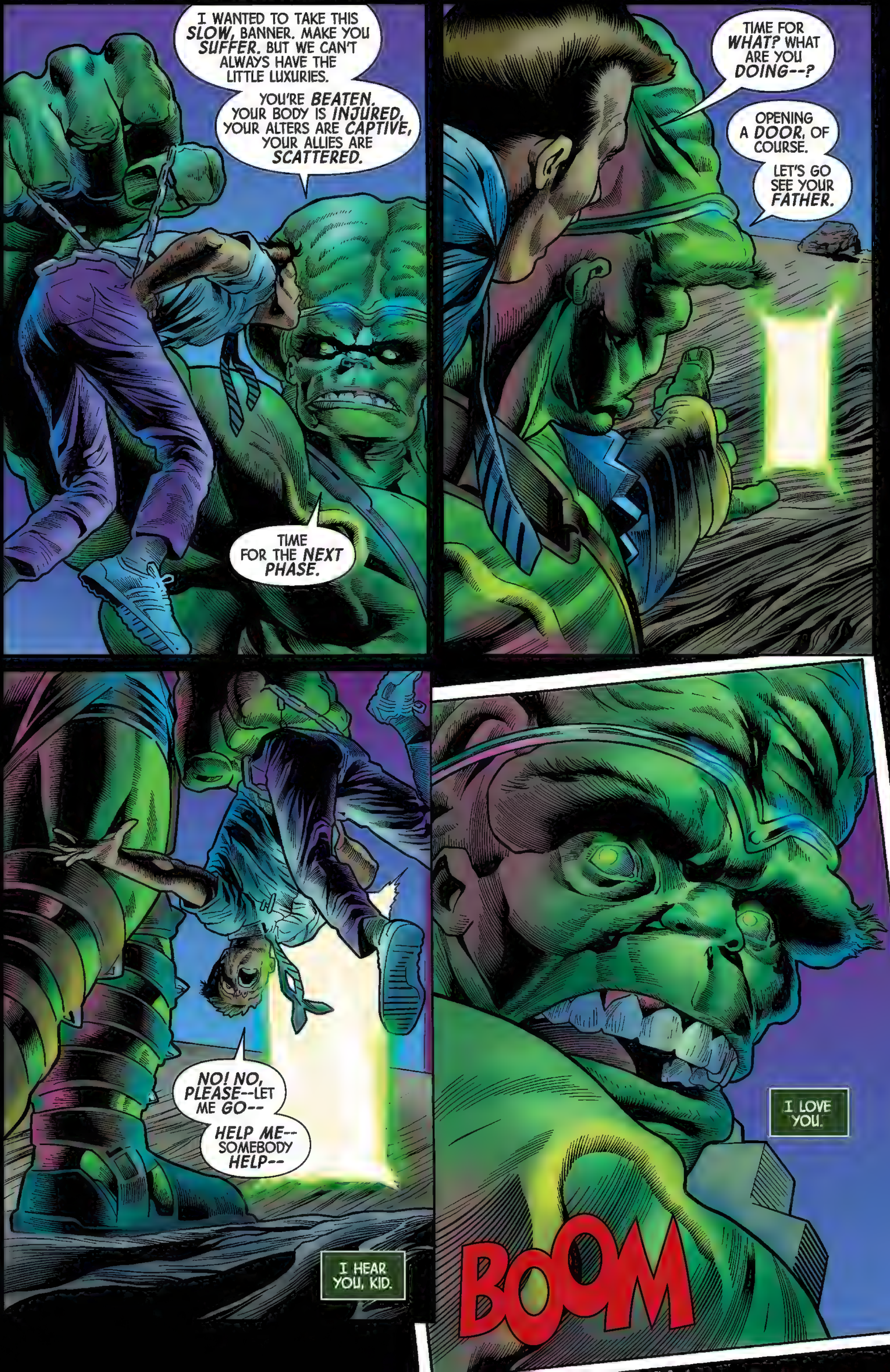

--HE GOT OUT! OUT OF HIS TUBE!
WHAT? WHAT DID YOU--
I SAID THE FIRST--
NO--
NNAEEIIGKK--
SSSSSSSSS
SHE SAID, "THE FIRST GOT OUT OF HIS TUBE"
AS IN YOUR FIRST RESEARCH SUBJECT— DEL FRYE, THE RADIOACTIVE UNKILLABLE CORPSE.
WHO I NOW CONTROL—AS I CONTROL POOR RICK JONES.
THANKS FOR KEEPING DEL IN SUCH GOOD CONDITION, BY THE WAY.
HEH. REMEMBER HOW THAT APPEALED TO MY SOFTER SIDE?

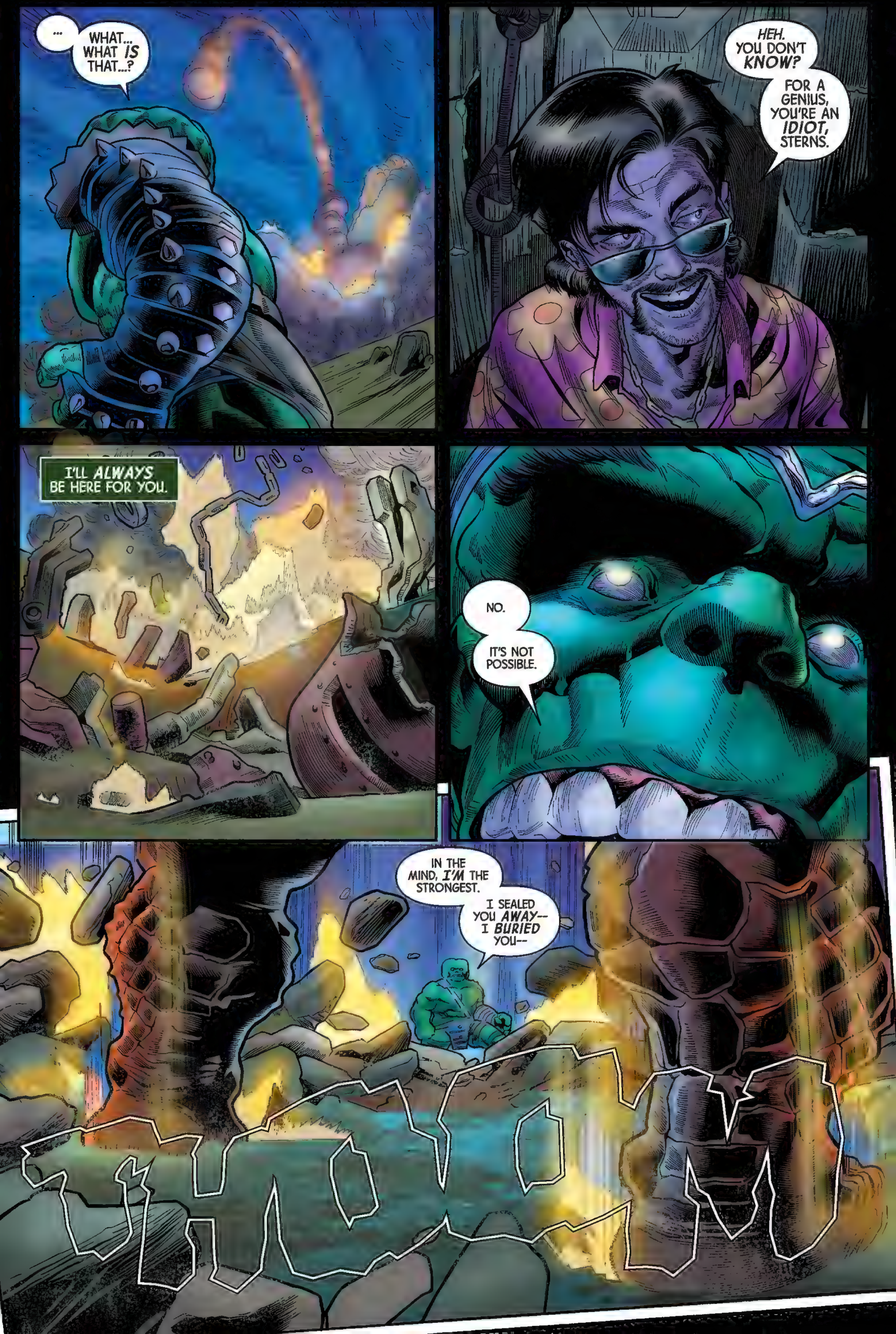

A LIE. I *HAVE* NO SOFTER SIDE.
BUT... I LIKED THE *SCIENCE.*
YOU COULD *SURVIVE* THIS, DOCTOR. WE COULD ACCOMPLISH *GREAT THINGS,* YOU AND I.
YOU'VE WORKED WITH MONSTERS *BEFORE.*
I...
...I WON'T AGAIN.
GO TO HELL.
OH, *DOCTOR.*
I'M ALREADY *THERE...*
...WAIT, WAIT, WAIT! HOLD *EVERYTHING.*
SAMSON! GET OVER HERE, *YOU'LL* WANT TO SEE THIS--

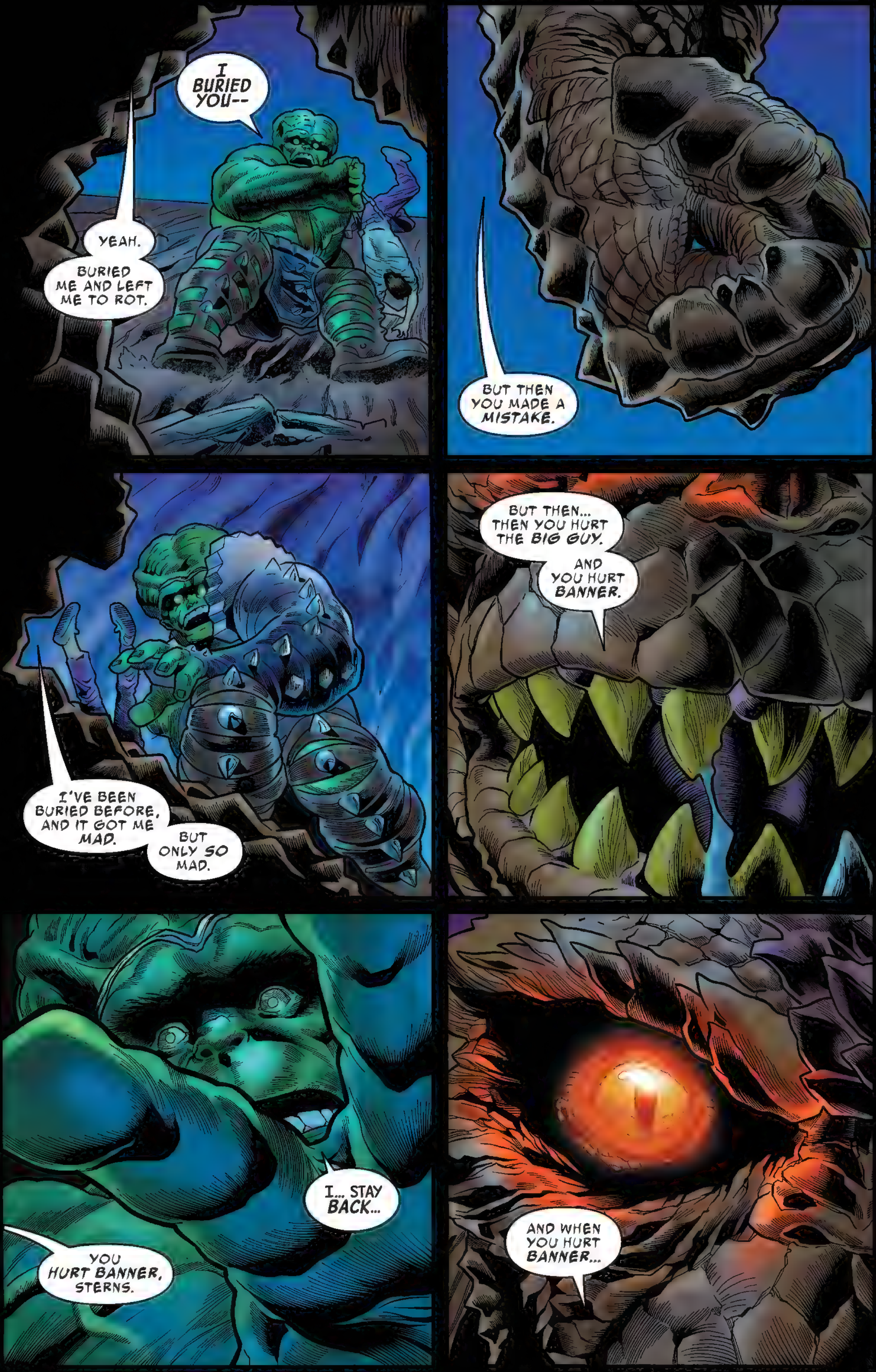

I HAVE OTHER PLANS.
WHAT...?
AAUUU
EUURR
AAHRR-- S-S-SAAAHH...
...SAMMSUNNN...
EMERGENCY PROTOCOL SETUP.
VOICE CONTROL ON.
SSSAM_
...SON...!
SAMSON!

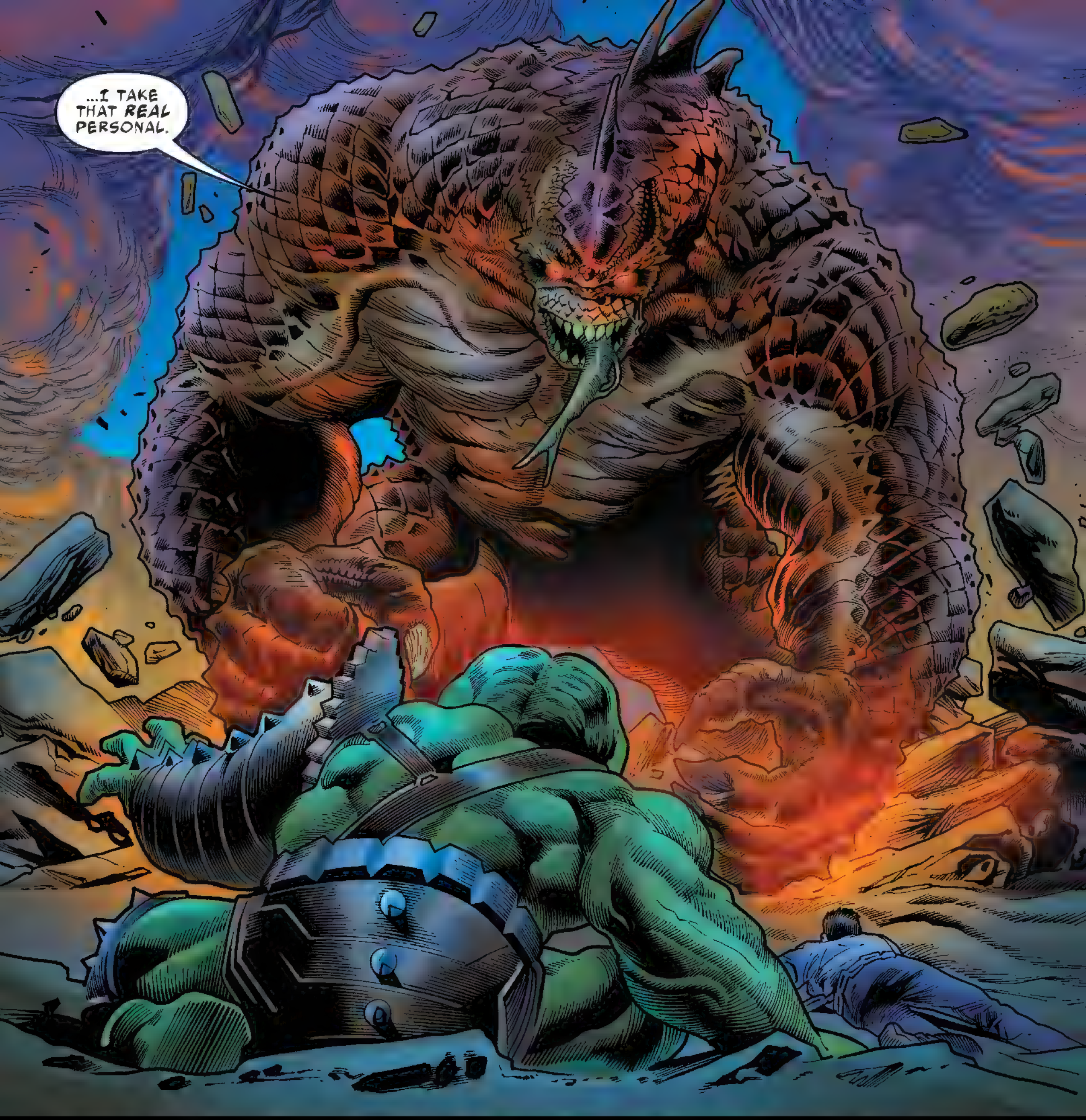

INITIATE LOCKDOWN!
EVACUATION PROTOCOL!
THOOM
ALL PERSONNEL. EVACUATE SITE.
EVACUATE. EVACUATE.
READY TRANSLOCATION TO EVACUATION SITE--
--FOCUS ON USER COORDINATES--
EVACUATE.
--SIX-FOOT RADIUS.
YOU LIKE THIS SCIENCE?
WHAT...?
INITIATE TRANSLOCATION.
EVACUATE.
EVACUATE.
EVACUATE.


EEEAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH
HA!
NOT SO EASY AS YOU *FIGURED,* HUH?
LET'S NOT *ANTAGONIZE* HIM, JOE--
G-GOOD... GOOD *ADVICE.*
I JUST FELT MYSELF BEING *SLICED IN HALF* AT THE *MOLECULAR LEVEL,* FIXIT. *AFTER* HEALING A *TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.*
I'M IN *NO MOOD.*
HEY-- LEAVE HIM *ALONE--*


I WANTED TO TAKE THIS SLOW, BANNER. MAKE YOU SUFFER. BUT WE CAN'T ALWAYS HAVE THE LITTLE LUXURIES.
YOU'RE BEATEN. YOUR BODY IS INJURED, YOUR ALTERS ARE CAPTIVE, YOUR ALLIES ARE SCATTERED.
TIME FOR THE NEXT PHASE.
TIME FOR WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?
OPENING A DOOR, OF COURSE.
LET'S GO SEE YOUR FATHER.
NO! NO, PLEASE--LET ME GO--
HELP ME--SOMEBODY HELP--
I HEAR YOU, KID.
I LOVE YOU.
BOOM


...
WHAT... WHAT *IS* THAT...?
HEH. YOU DON'T *KNOW?*
FOR A GENIUS, YOU'RE AN *IDIOT,* STERNS.
I'LL *ALWAYS* BE HERE FOR YOU.
NO.
IT'S NOT POSSIBLE.
IN THE MIND, *I'M* THE STRONGEST.
I SEALED YOU *AWAY*-- I *BURIED* YOU--
THOOOM


I BURIED YOU--
YEAH.
BURIED ME AND LEFT ME TO ROT.
BUT THEN YOU MADE A *MISTAKE.*
I'VE BEEN BURIED BEFORE, AND IT GOT ME *MAD.*
BUT ONLY *SO* MAD.
BUT THEN... THEN YOU HURT THE *BIG GUY.*
AND YOU HURT *BANNER.*
I... STAY *BACK...*
YOU *HURT BANNER,* STERNS.
AND WHEN YOU HURT *BANNER...*

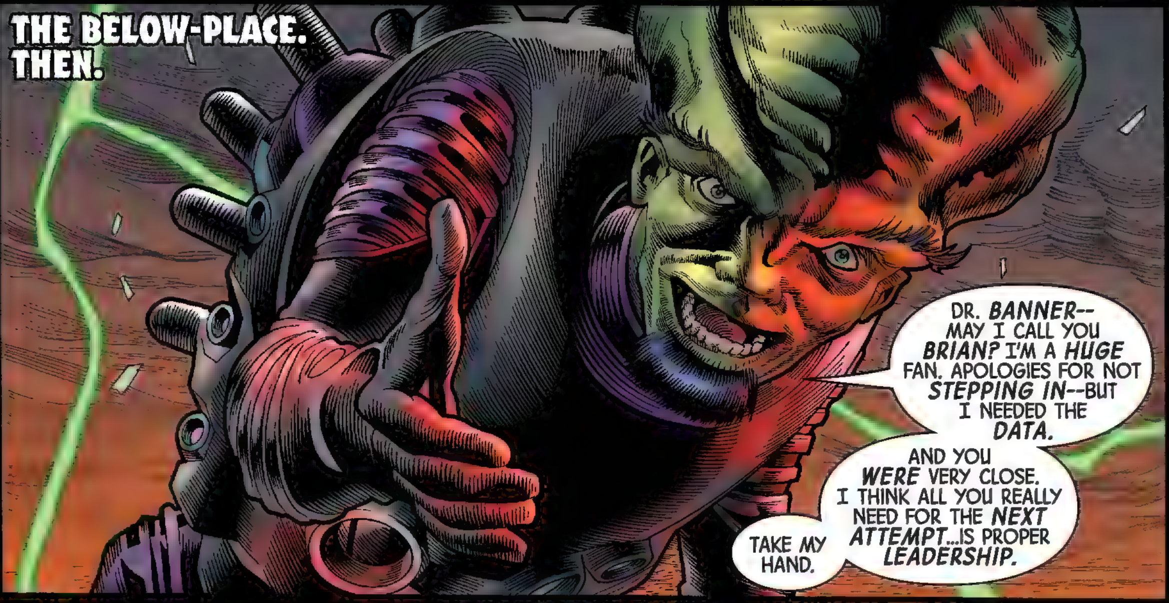
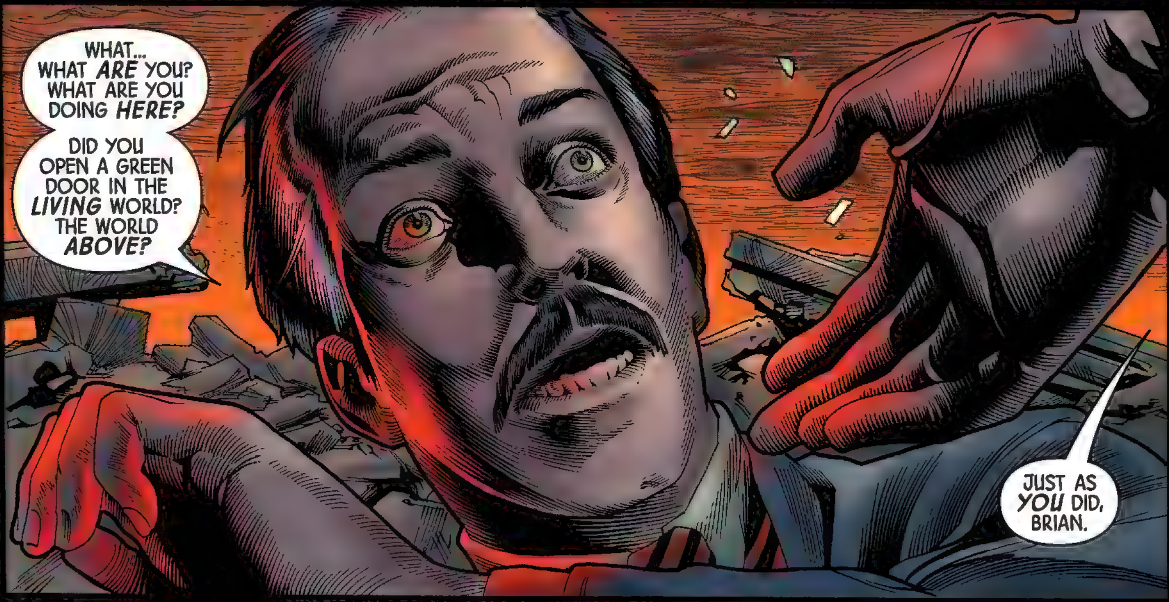
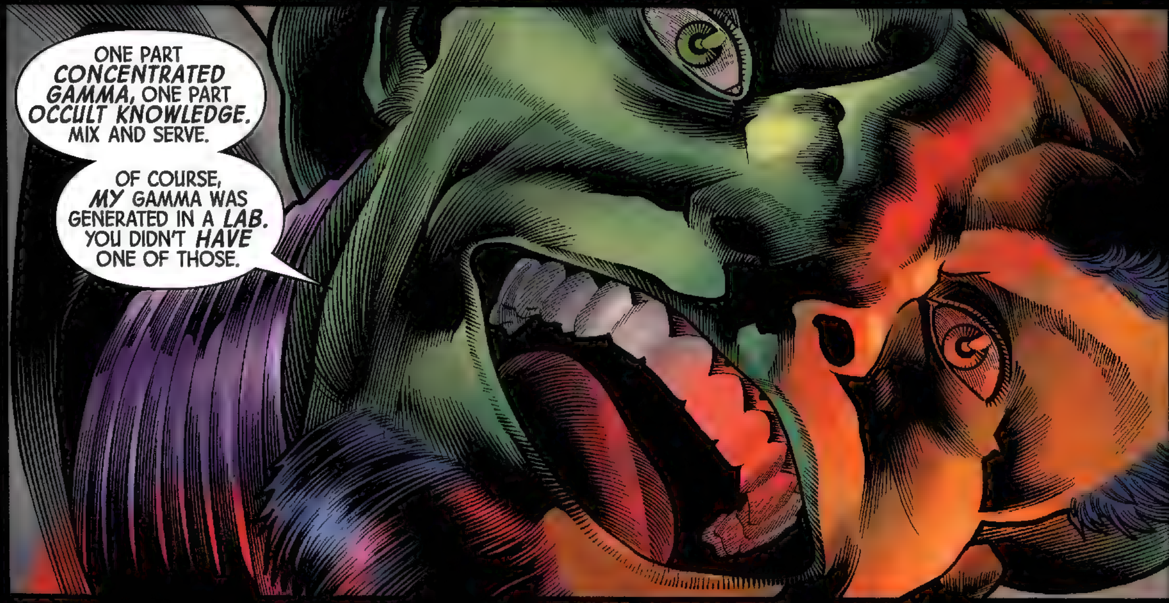

...I TAKE THAT *REAL* PERSONAL.

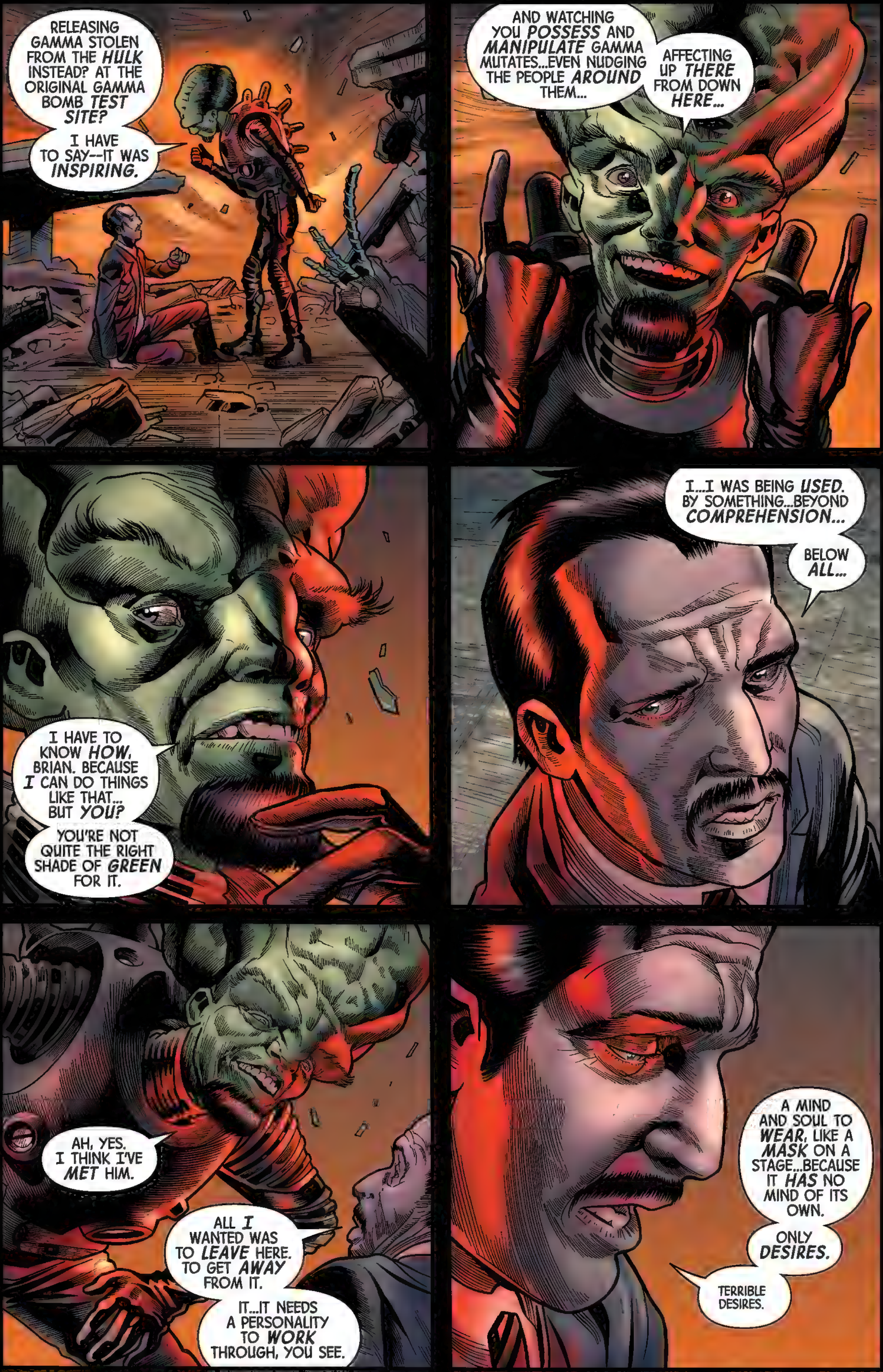
NOT JUST, NOT GOD

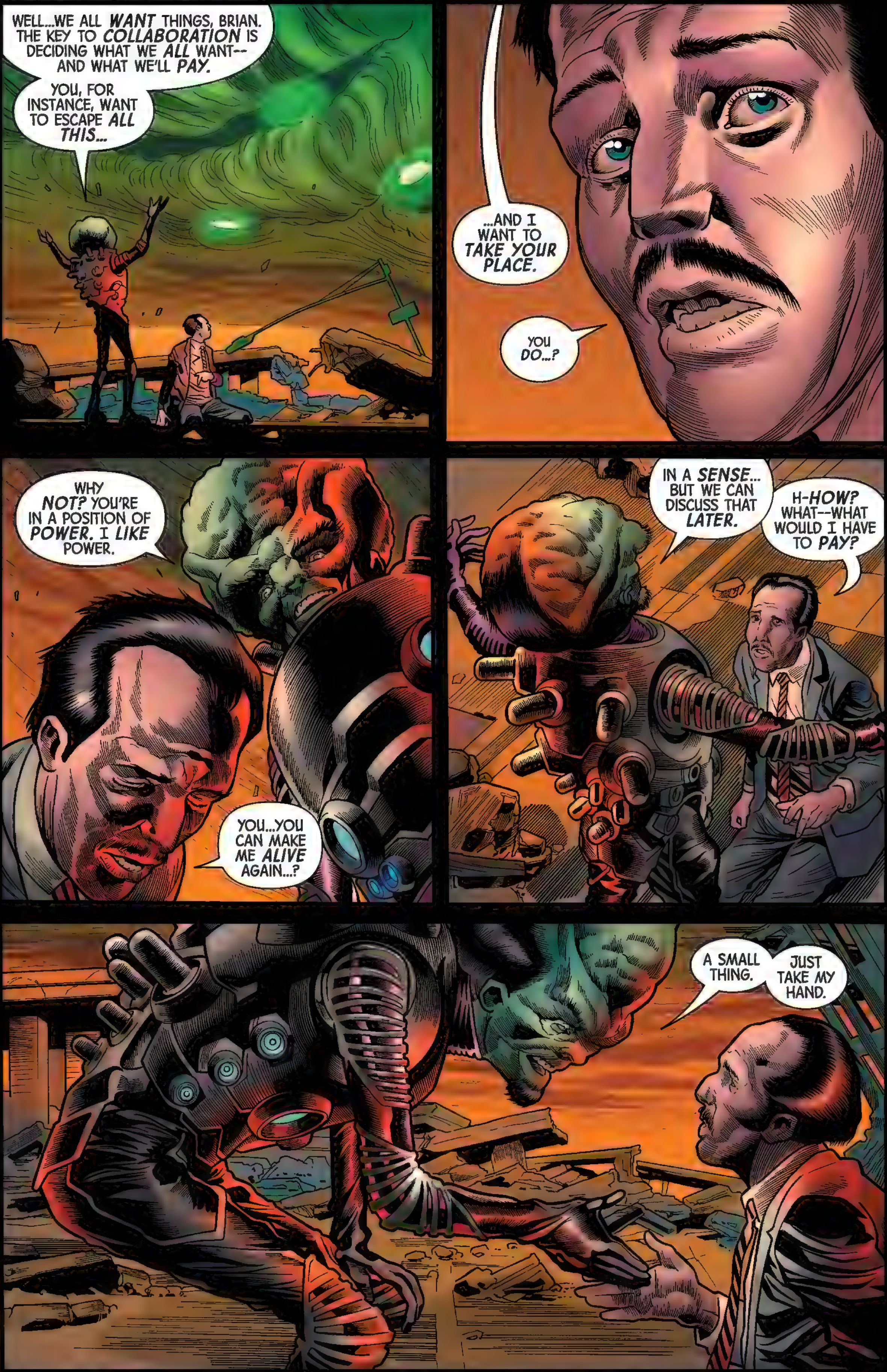
39

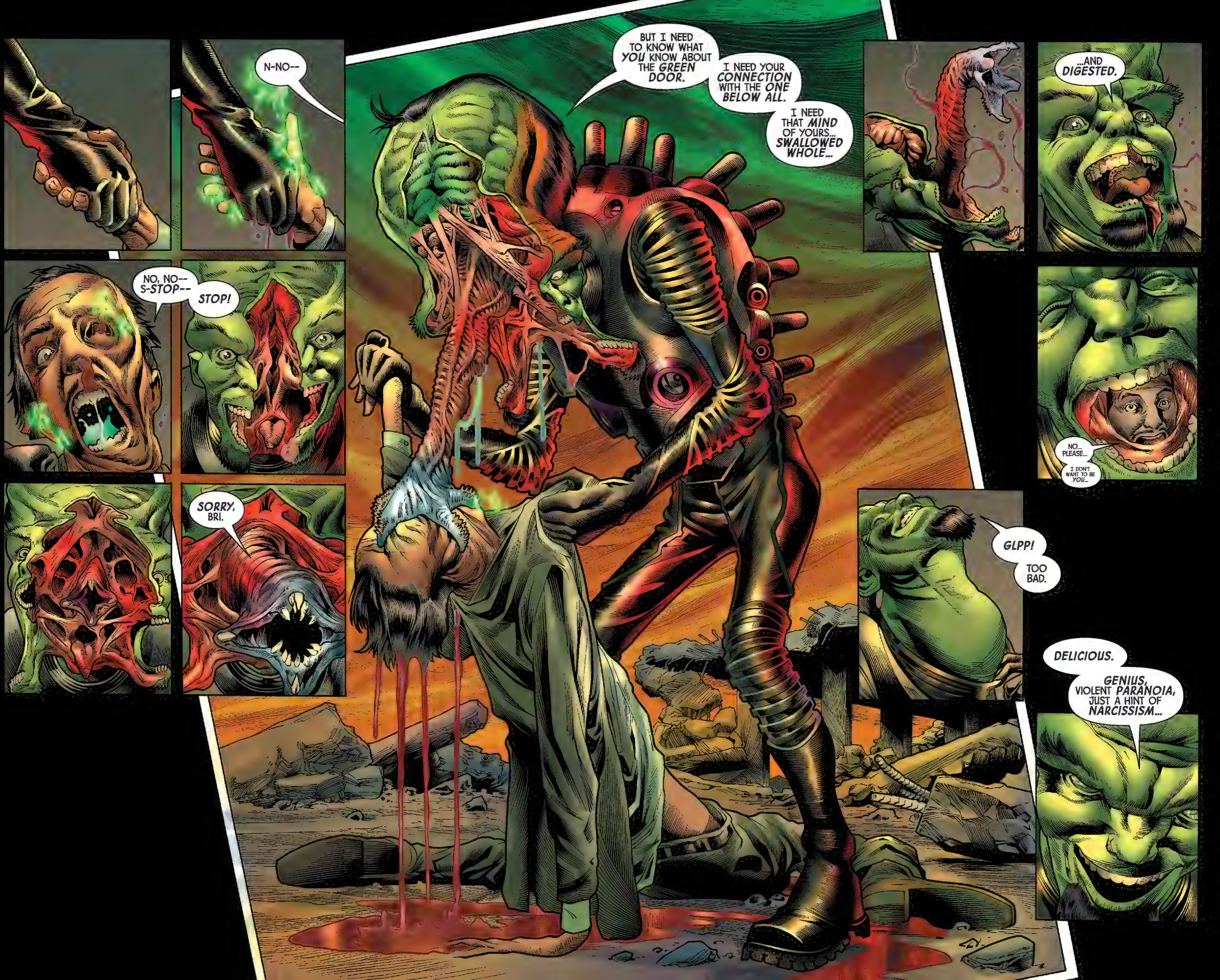
"I WAS BORN IN HELL, AND LOOK TO IT, FOR SOME OF YOU SHALL BE MY FATHER."

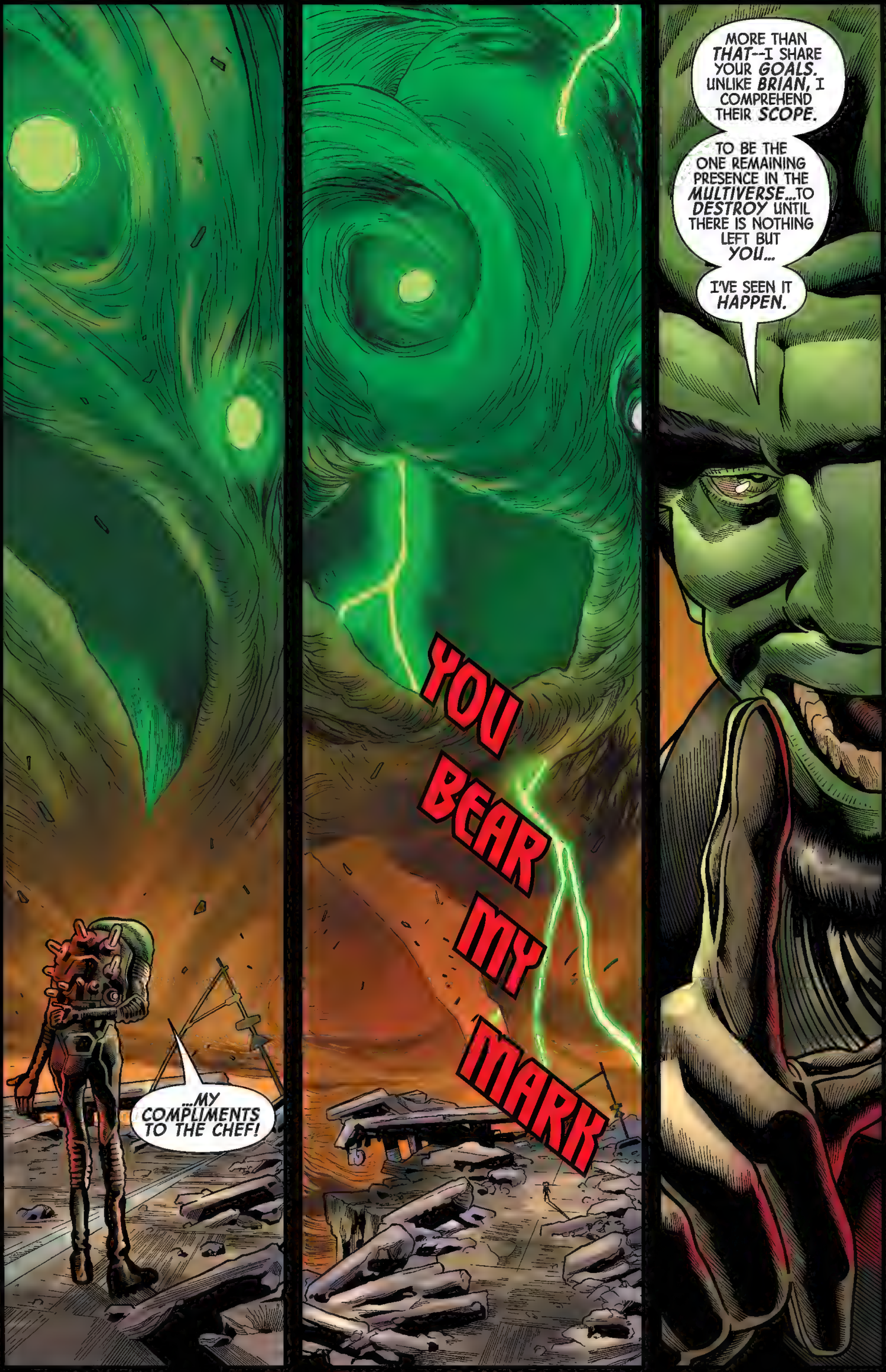
– CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE
THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS, ACT II, SCENE 3

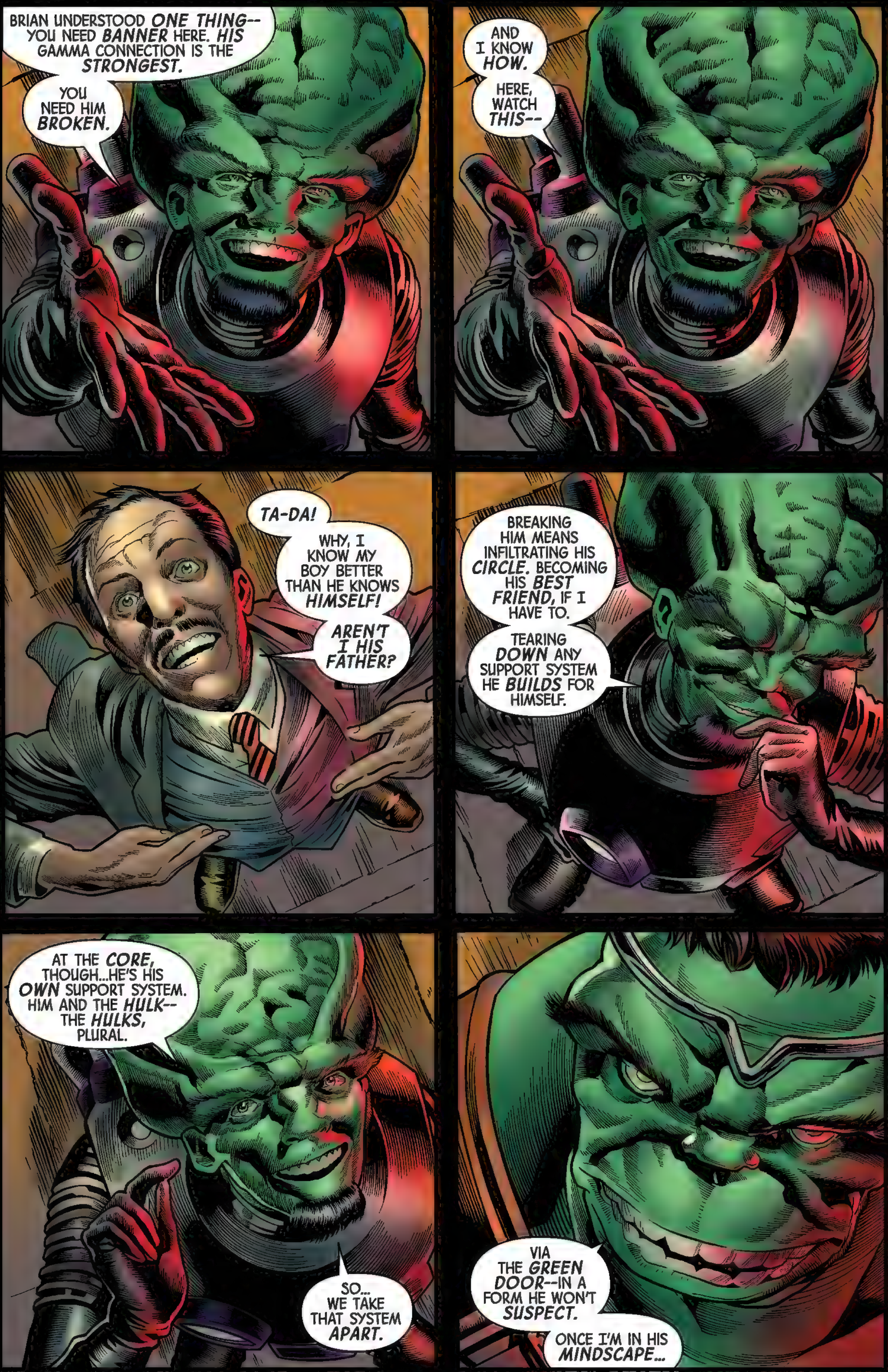

THE BELOW-PLACE. THEN.
DR. BANNER-- MAY I CALL YOU BRIAN? I'M A HUGE FAN. APOLOGIES FOR NOT STEPPING IN--BUT I NEEDED THE DATA.
AND YOU WERE VERY CLOSE. I THINK ALL YOU REALLY NEED FOR THE NEXT ATTEMPT...IS PROPER LEADERSHIP.
TAKE MY HAND.

WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
DID YOU OPEN A GREEN DOOR IN THE LIVING WORLD? THE WORLD ABOVE?
JUST AS YOU DID, BRIAN.

ONE PART CONCENTRATED GAMMA, ONE PART OCCULT KNOWLEDGE. MIX AND SERVE.
OF COURSE, MY GAMMA WAS GENERATED IN A LAB. YOU DIDN'T HAVE ONE OF THOSE.

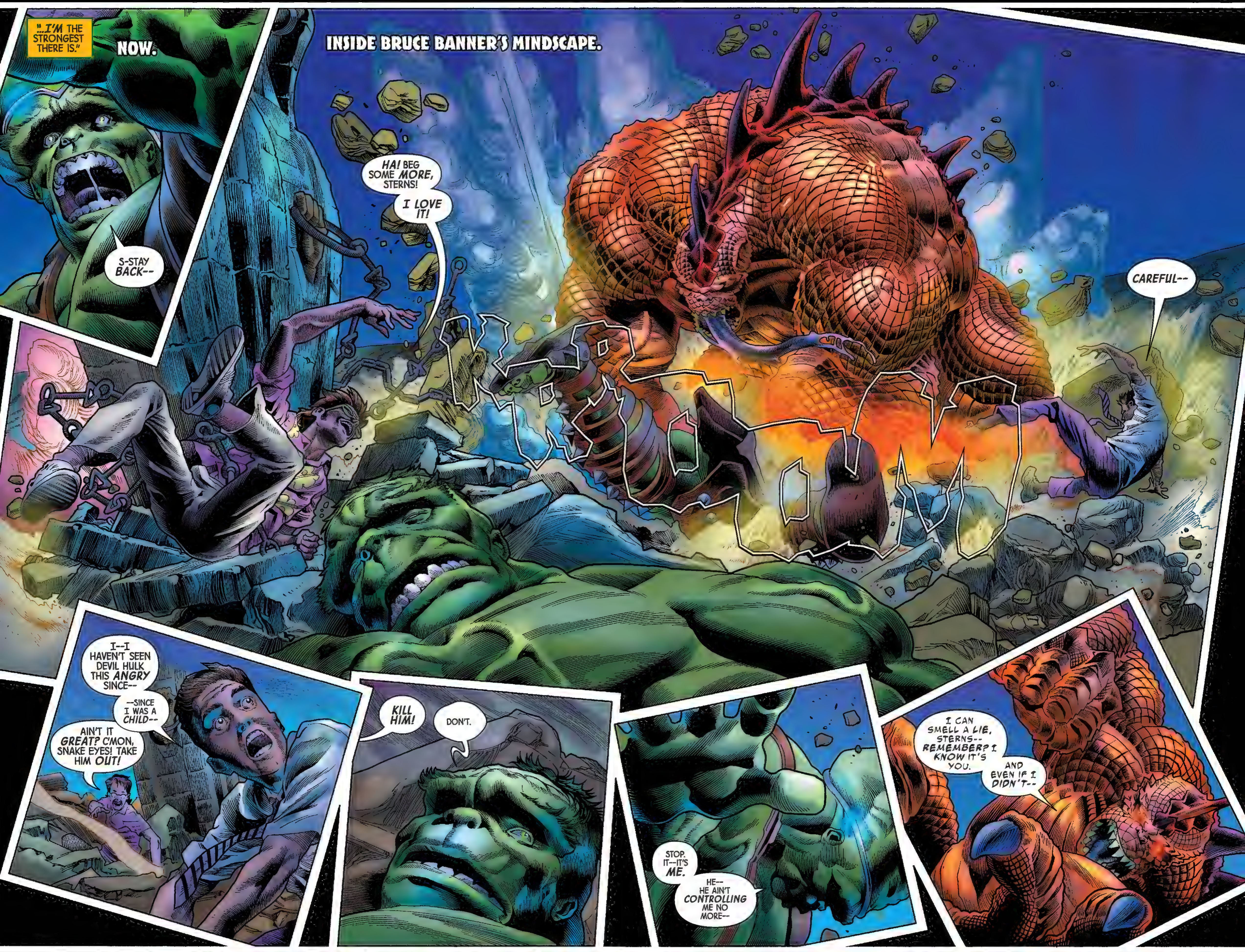

RELEASING GAMMA STOLEN FROM THE *HULK* INSTEAD? AT THE ORIGINAL GAMMA BOMB *TEST SITE?*
I HAVE TO SAY--IT WAS *INSPIRING.*
AND WATCHING YOU *POSSESS* AND *MANIPULATE* GAMMA MUTATES...EVEN NUDGING THE PEOPLE *AROUND* THEM...
AFFECTING UP *THERE* FROM DOWN *HERE...*
I HAVE TO KNOW *HOW,* BRIAN. BECAUSE *I* CAN DO THINGS LIKE THAT... BUT *YOU?*
YOU'RE NOT QUITE THE RIGHT SHADE OF *GREEN* FOR IT.
I...I WAS BEING *USED.* BY SOMETHING...BEYOND *COMPREHENSION...*
BELOW *ALL...*
AH, YES. I THINK I'VE *MET* HIM.
ALL *I* WANTED WAS TO *LEAVE* HERE. TO GET *AWAY* FROM IT.
IT...IT NEEDS A PERSONALITY TO *WORK* THROUGH, YOU SEE.
A MIND AND SOUL TO *WEAR,* LIKE A *MASK* ON A STAGE...BECAUSE IT *HAS* NO MIND OF ITS OWN.
ONLY *DESIRES.*
TERRIBLE DESIRES.

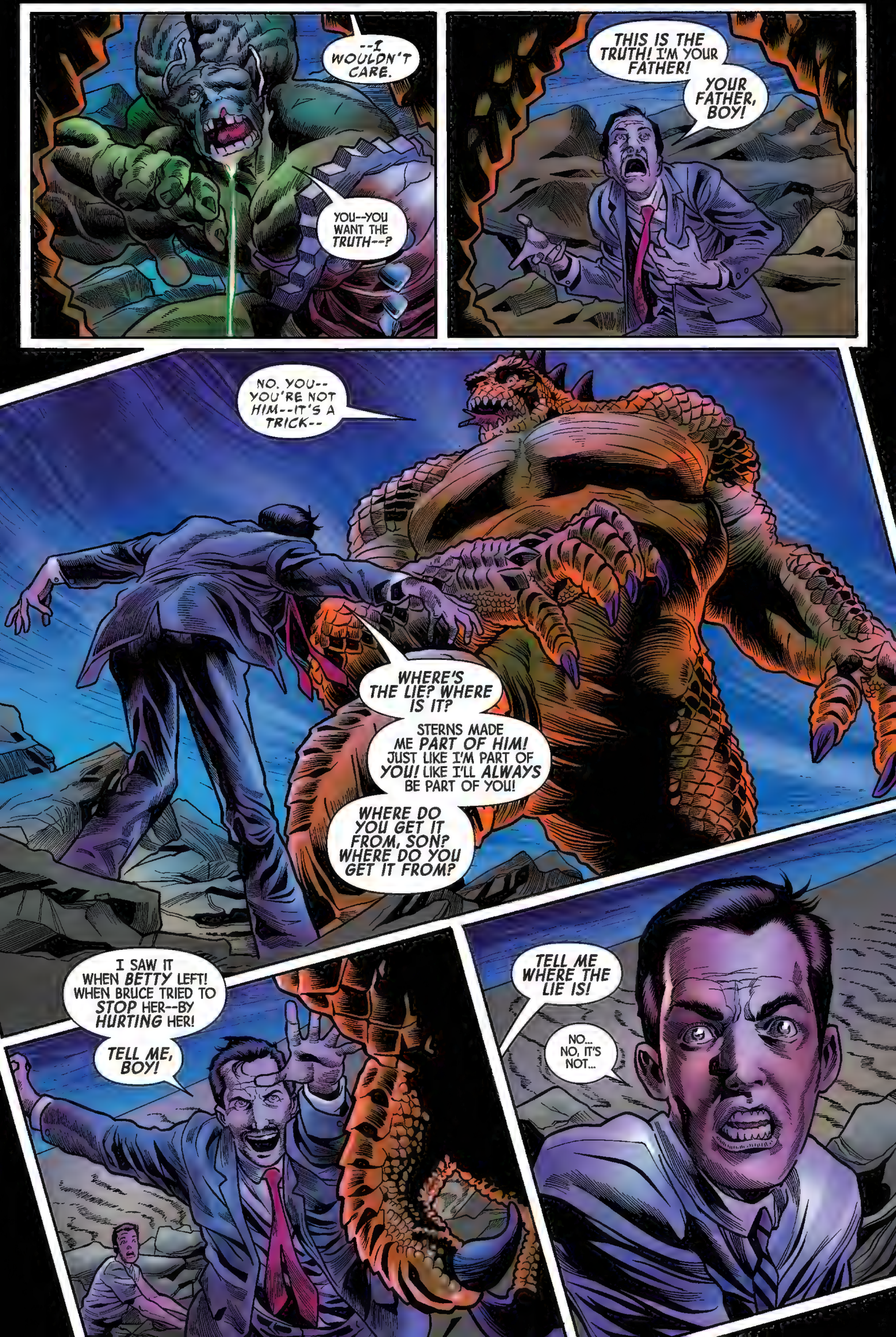

WELL...WE ALL *WANT* THINGS, BRIAN. THE KEY TO *COLLABORATION* IS DECIDING WHAT WE *ALL* WANT-- AND WHAT WE'LL *PAY*.
YOU, FOR INSTANCE, WANT TO ESCAPE *ALL THIS*...
...AND I WANT TO *TAKE YOUR PLACE*.
YOU *DO*...?
WHY *NOT?* YOU'RE IN A POSITION OF *POWER*. I *LIKE* POWER.
YOU...YOU CAN MAKE ME *ALIVE* AGAIN...?
IN A *SENSE*... BUT WE CAN DISCUSS THAT *LATER*.
H-*HOW?* WHAT--WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO *PAY?*
A SMALL THING.
JUST TAKE MY HAND.

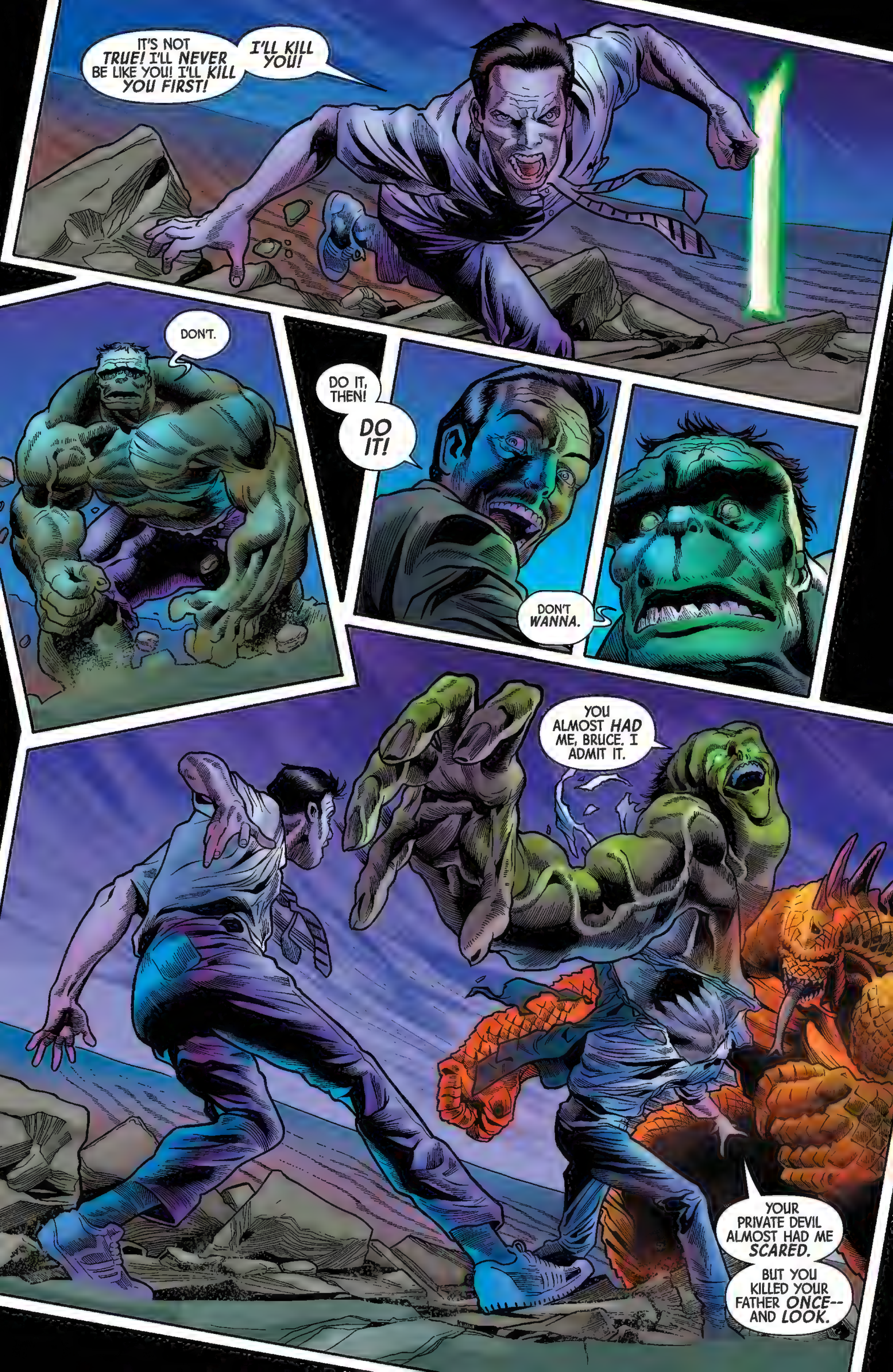

N-NO--
NO, NO-- S-STOP--
STOP!
SORRY, BRI.
BUT I NEED TO KNOW WHAT *YOU* KNOW ABOUT THE *GREEN DOOR*.
I NEED YOUR *CONNECTION* WITH THE *ONE BELOW ALL*.
I NEED THAT *MIND* OF YOURS... *SWALLOWED WHOLE*...
...AND *DIGESTED*.
NO... PLEASE...
I DON'T WANT TO BE *YOU*...
GLPP!
TOO BAD.
DELICIOUS.
GENIUS, VIOLENT *PARANOIA*, JUST A HINT OF *NARCISSISM*...

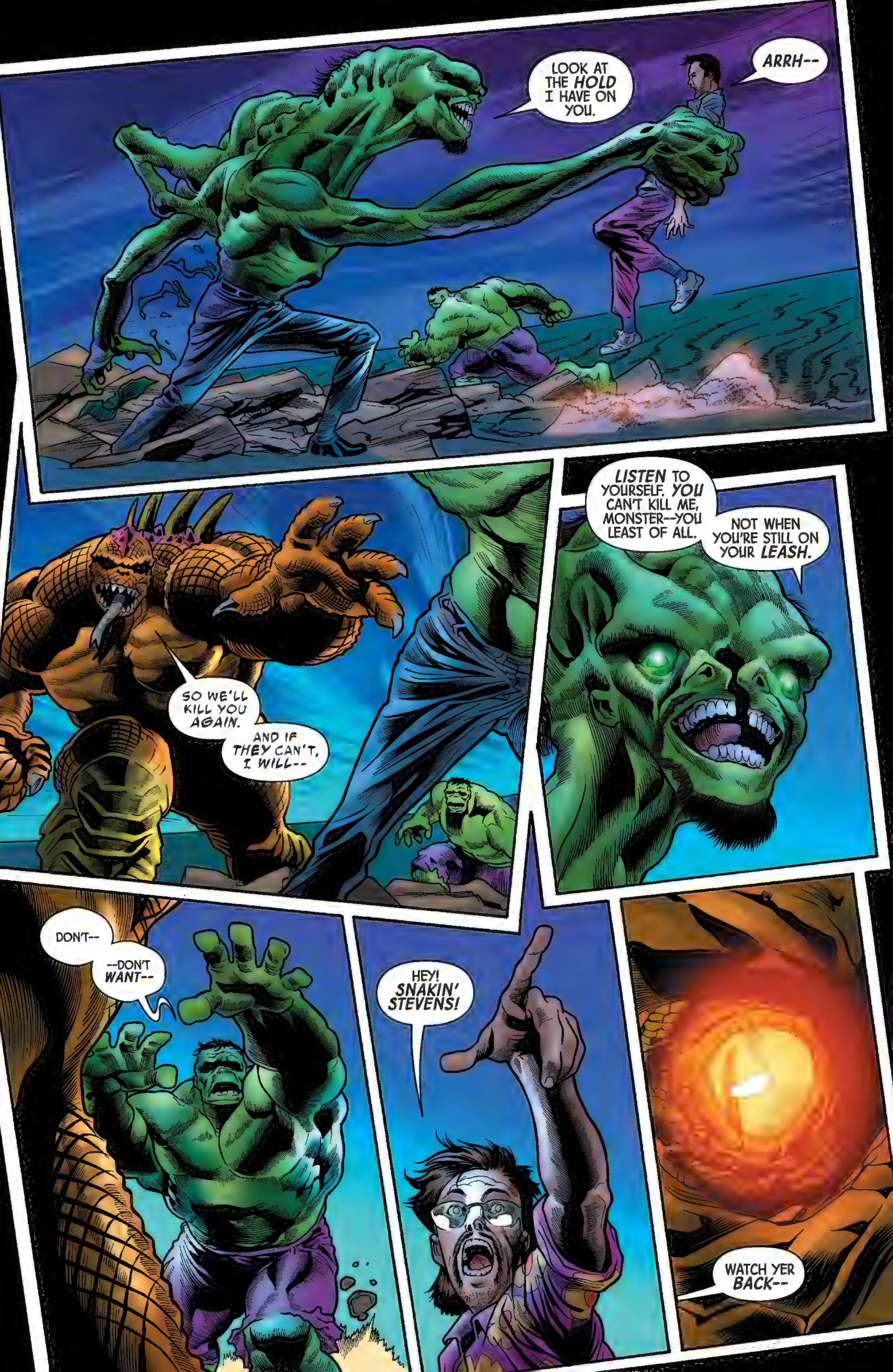

...MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE CHEF!
YOU BEAR MY MARK
MORE THAN THAT--I SHARE YOUR GOALS. UNLIKE BRIAN, I COMPREHEND THEIR SCOPE.
TO BE THE ONE REMAINING PRESENCE IN THE MULTIVERSE...TO DESTROY UNTIL THERE IS NOTHING LEFT BUT YOU...
I'VE SEEN IT HAPPEN.

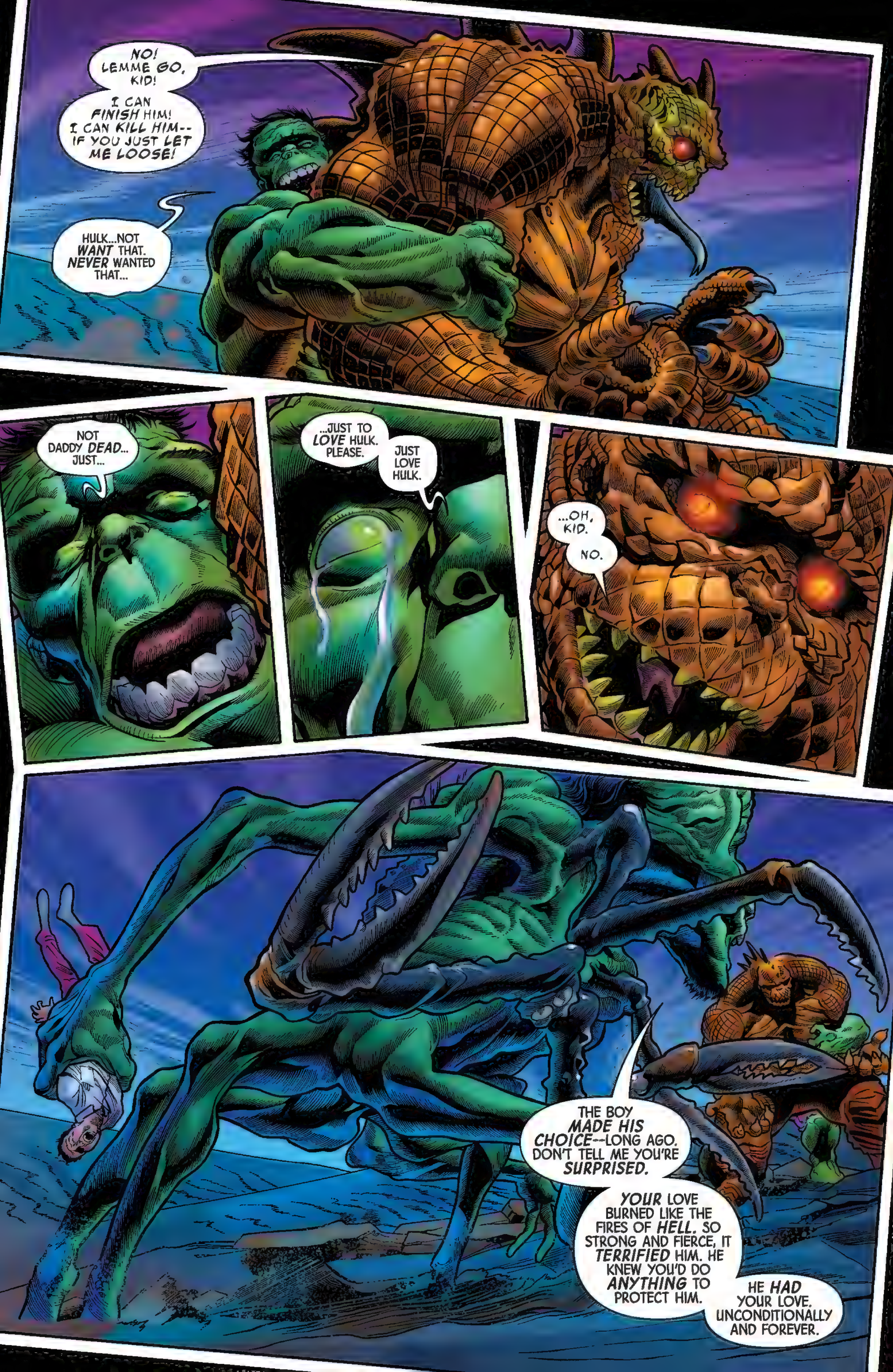

BRIAN UNDERSTOOD ONE THING-- YOU NEED BANNER HERE. HIS GAMMA CONNECTION IS THE STRONGEST.
YOU NEED HIM BROKEN.
AND I KNOW HOW.
HERE, WATCH THIS--
TA-DA!
WHY, I KNOW MY BOY BETTER THAN HE KNOWS HIMSELF!
AREN'T I HIS FATHER?
BREAKING HIM MEANS INFILTRATING HIS CIRCLE. BECOMING HIS BEST FRIEND, IF I HAVE TO.
TEARING DOWN ANY SUPPORT SYSTEM HE BUILDS FOR HIMSELF.
AT THE CORE, THOUGH...HE'S HIS OWN SUPPORT SYSTEM. HIM AND THE HULK-- THE HULKS, PLURAL.
SO... WE TAKE THAT SYSTEM APART.
VIA THE GREEN DOOR--IN A FORM HE WON'T SUSPECT.
ONCE I'M IN HIS MINDSCAPE...

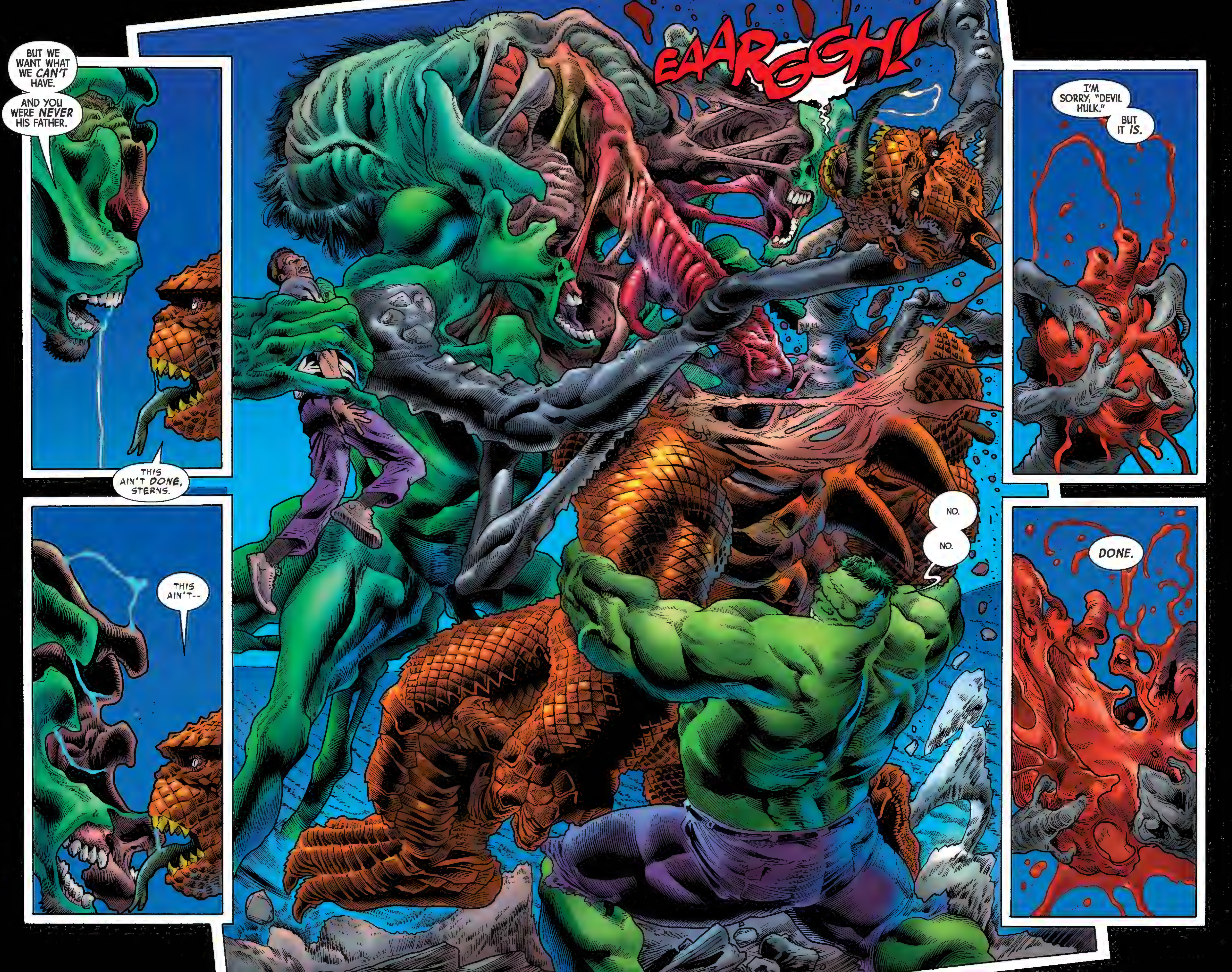

"...I'M THE STRONGEST THERE IS."
NOW.
INSIDE BRUCE BANNER'S MINDSCAPE.
S-STAY BACK--
HA! BEG SOME MORE, STERNS!
I LOVE IT!
KBOOM
CAREFUL--
I--I HAVEN'T SEEN DEVIL HULK THIS ANGRY SINCE--
--SINCE I WAS A CHILD--
AIN'T IT GREAT? C'MON, SNAKE EYES! TAKE HIM OUT!
KILL HIM!
DON'T.
STOP. IT--IT'S ME.
HE--HE AIN'T CONTROLLING ME NO MORE--
I CAN SMELL A LIE, STERNS--REMEMBER? I KNOW IT'S YOU.
AND EVEN IF I DIDN'T--

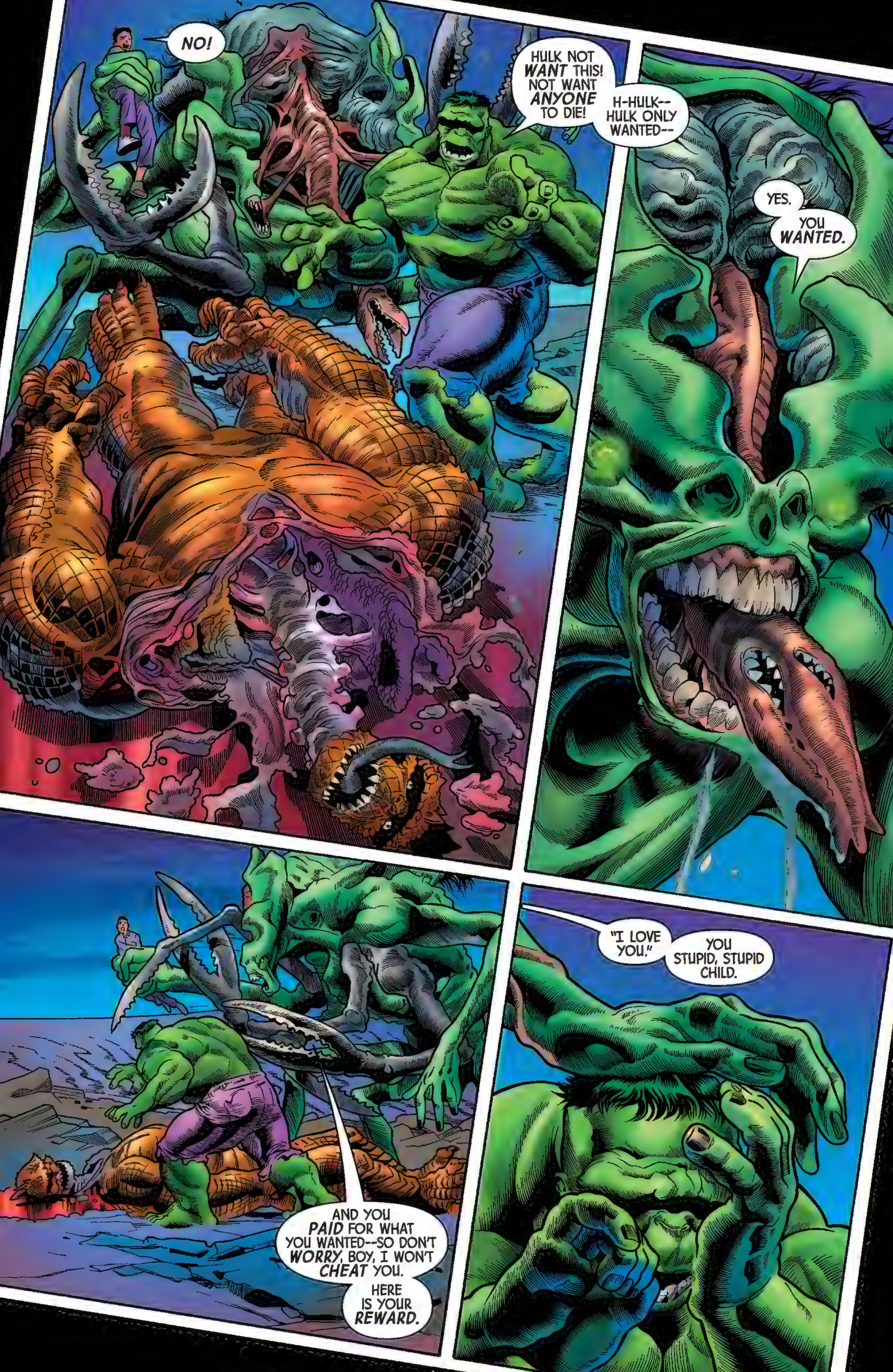

--I WOULDN'T CARE.
YOU--YOU WANT THE TRUTH--?
THIS IS THE TRUTH! I'M YOUR FATHER!
YOUR FATHER, BOY!
NO. YOU-- YOU'RE NOT HIM--IT'S A TRICK--
WHERE'S THE LIE? WHERE IS IT?
STERNS MADE ME PART OF HIM! JUST LIKE I'M PART OF YOU! LIKE I'LL ALWAYS BE PART OF YOU!
WHERE DO YOU GET IT FROM, SON? WHERE DO YOU GET IT FROM?
I SAW IT WHEN BETTY LEFT! WHEN BRUCE TRIED TO STOP HER--BY HURTING HER!
TELL ME, BOY!
TELL ME WHERE THE LIE IS!
NO... NO, IT'S NOT...

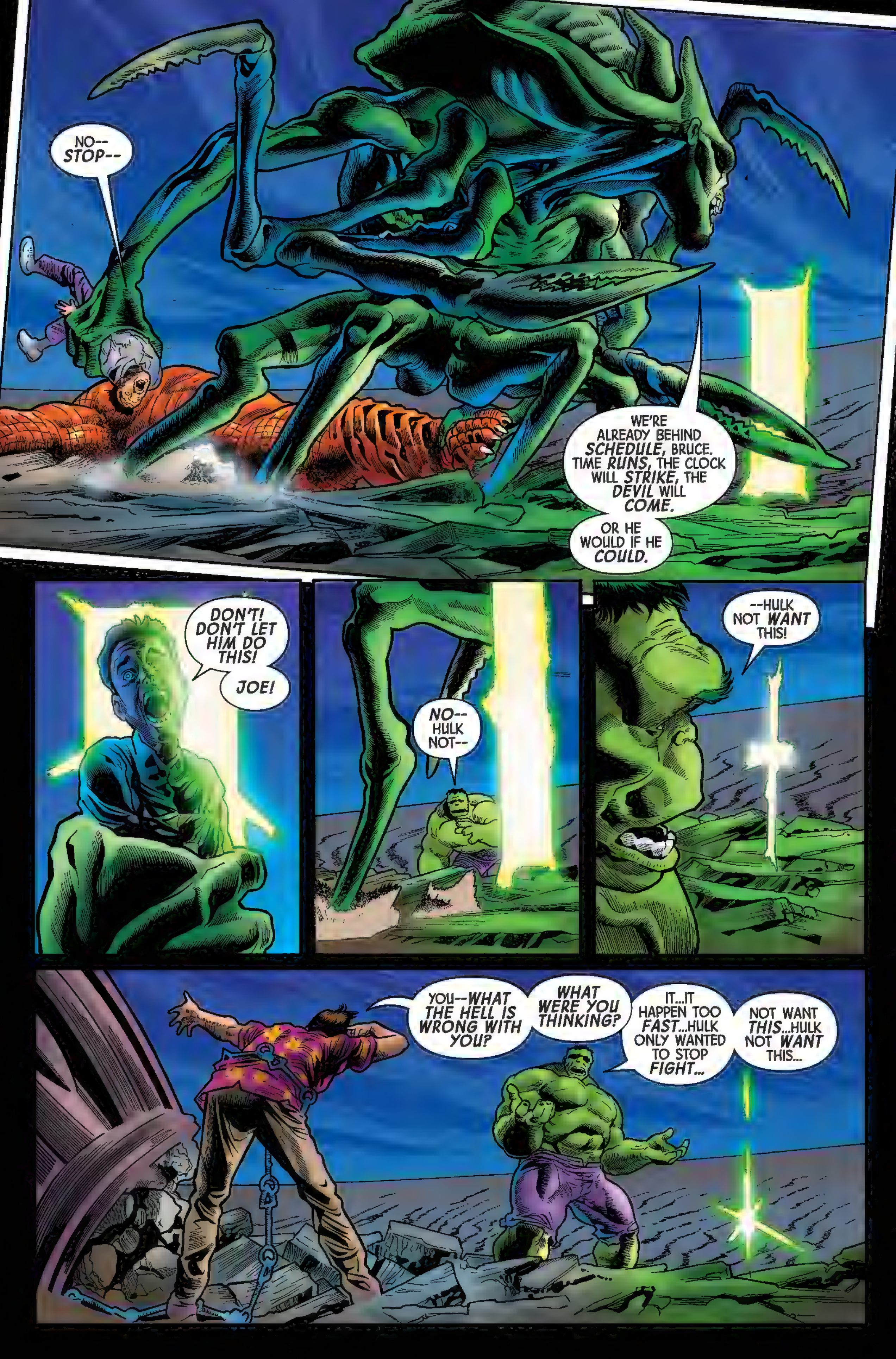

IT'S NOT *TRUE!* I'LL *NEVER* BE LIKE YOU! I'LL *KILL YOU FIRST!*
I'LL KILL YOU!
DON'T.
DO IT, THEN!
DO IT!
DON'T *WANNA.*
YOU ALMOST *HAD* ME, BRUCE. I ADMIT IT.
YOUR PRIVATE DEVIL ALMOST HAD ME *SCARED.*
BUT YOU KILLED YOUR FATHER *ONCE*-- AND *LOOK.*

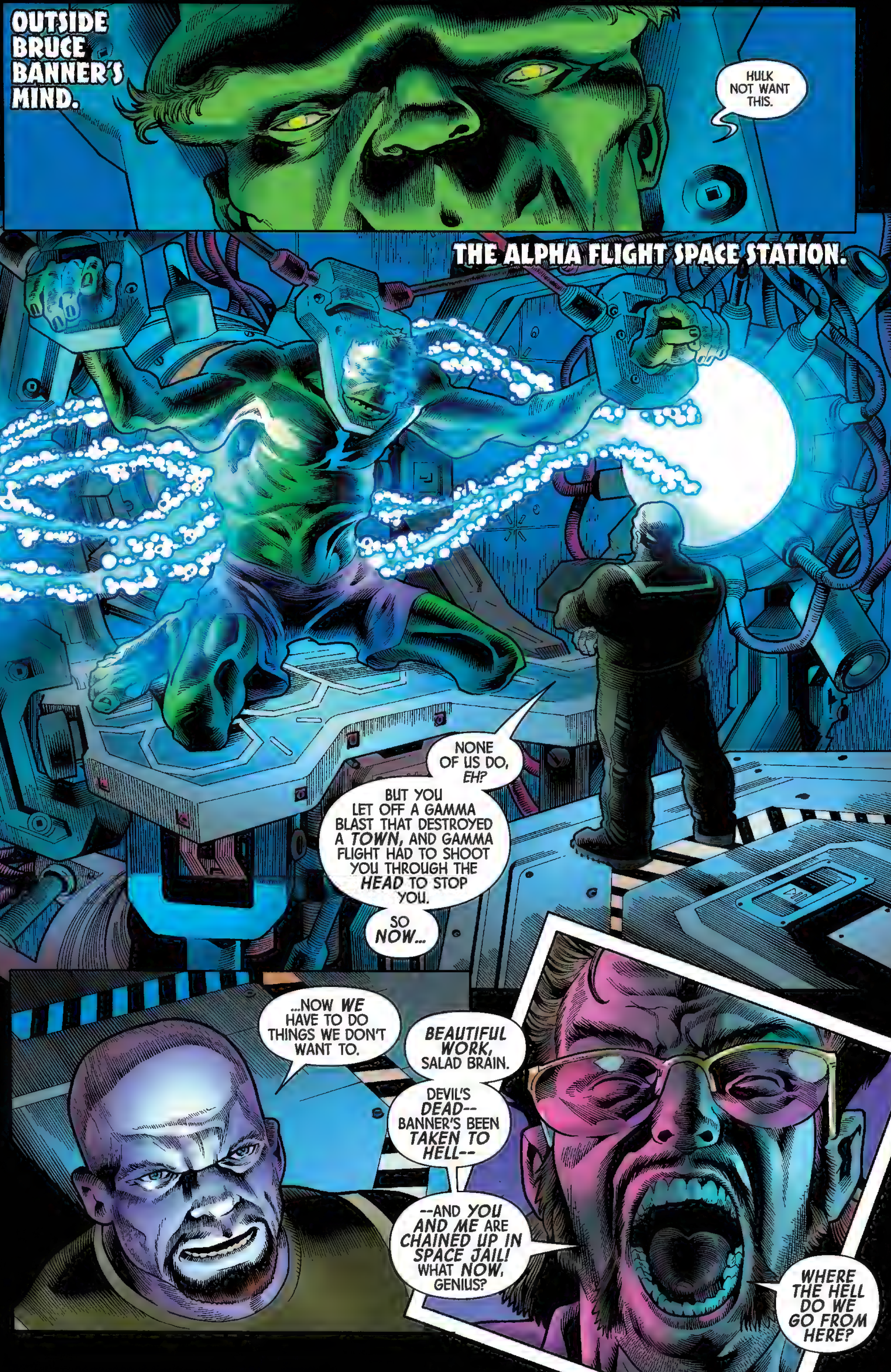

LOOK AT THE *HOLD* I HAVE ON YOU.
ARRH--
SO WE'LL KILL YOU *AGAIN.*
AND IF *THEY* CAN'T, *I WILL--*
LISTEN TO YOURSELF. *YOU* CAN'T KILL ME, MONSTER--YOU LEAST OF ALL.
NOT WHEN YOU'RE STILL ON YOUR *LEASH.*
DON'T--
--DON'T *WANT--*
HEY! *SNAKIN' STEVENS!*
WATCH YER *BACK--*

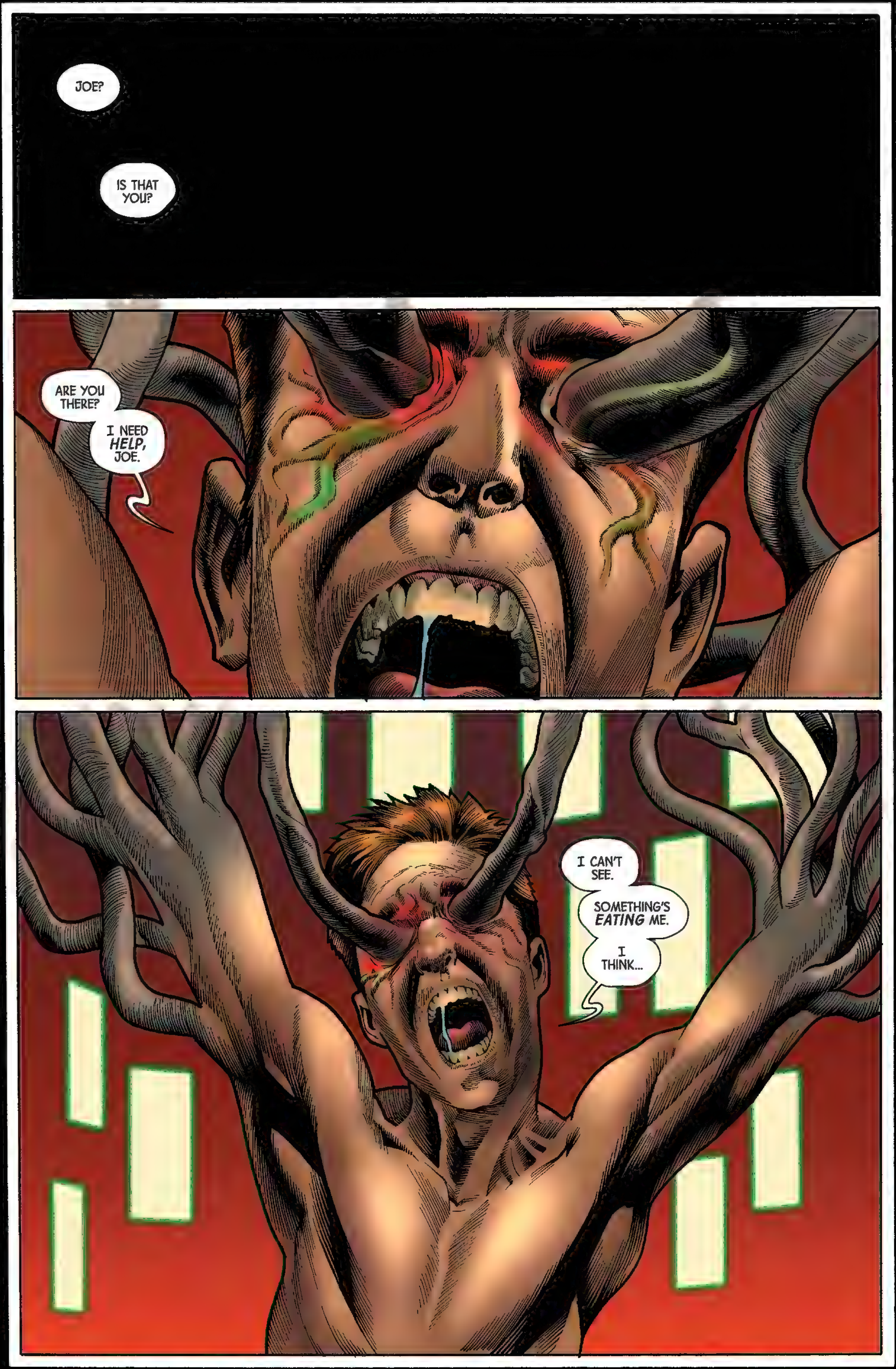

NO! LEMME GO, KID!
I CAN FINISH HIM! I CAN KILL HIM-- IF YOU JUST LET ME LOOSE!
HULK...NOT WANT THAT. NEVER WANTED THAT...
NOT DADDY DEAD... JUST...
...JUST TO LOVE HULK. PLEASE.
JUST LOVE HULK.
...OH, KID.
NO.
THE BOY MADE HIS CHOICE--LONG AGO. DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE SURPRISED.
YOUR LOVE BURNED LIKE THE FIRES OF HELL. SO STRONG AND FIERCE, IT TERRIFIED HIM. HE KNEW YOU'D DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT HIM.
HE HAD YOUR LOVE. UNCONDITIONALLY AND FOREVER.

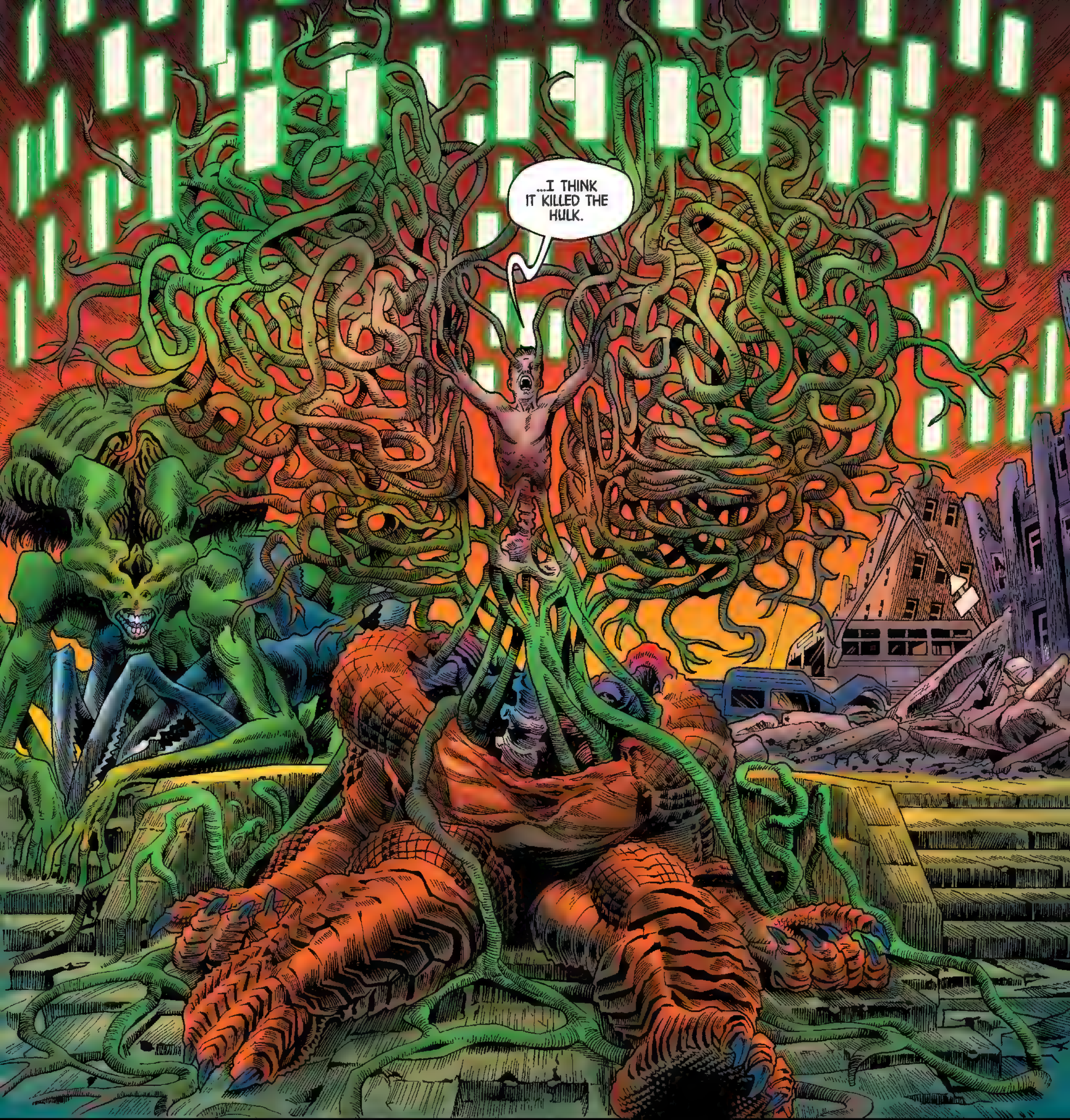

BUT WE WANT WHAT WE *CAN'T* HAVE.
AND YOU WERE *NEVER* HIS FATHER.
THIS AIN'T *DONE*, STERNS.
THIS AIN'T--
EAARGGH!
NO.
NO.
I'M SORRY, "DEVIL HULK."
BUT IT *IS*.
DONE.


NO!
HULK NOT *WANT* THIS! NOT WANT *ANYONE* TO DIE!
H-HULK-- HULK ONLY WANTED--
YES.
YOU *WANTED.*
AND YOU *PAID* FOR WHAT YOU WANTED--SO DON'T *WORRY*, BOY, I WON'T *CHEAT* YOU.
HERE IS YOUR *REWARD.*
"I LOVE YOU."
YOU STUPID, STUPID CHILD.


NO-- STOP--
WE'RE ALREADY BEHIND SCHEDULE, BRUCE. TIME RUNS, THE CLOCK WILL STRIKE, THE DEVIL WILL COME.
OR HE WOULD IF HE COULD.
DON'T! DON'T LET HIM DO THIS!
JOE!
NO-- HULK NOT--
--HULK NOT WANT THIS!
YOU--WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?
IT...IT HAPPEN TOO FAST...HULK ONLY WANTED TO STOP FIGHT...
NOT WANT THIS...HULK NOT WANT THIS...


OUTSIDE BRUCE BANNER'S MIND.
HULK NOT WANT THIS.
THE ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
NONE OF US DO, EH?
BUT YOU LET OFF A GAMMA BLAST THAT DESTROYED A *TOWN,* AND GAMMA FLIGHT HAD TO SHOOT YOU THROUGH THE *HEAD* TO STOP YOU.
SO *NOW...*
...NOW *WE* HAVE TO DO THINGS WE DON'T WANT TO.
BEAUTIFUL WORK, SALAD BRAIN.
DEVIL'S *DEAD*--BANNER'S BEEN *TAKEN TO HELL*--
--AND *YOU AND ME* ARE *CHAINED UP IN SPACE JAIL!* WHAT *NOW,* GENIUS?
WHERE THE HELL DO WE GO FROM HERE?


JOE?
IS THAT YOU?
ARE YOU THERE?
I NEED *HELP*, JOE.
I CAN'T SEE.
SOMETHING'S *EATING* ME.
I THINK...

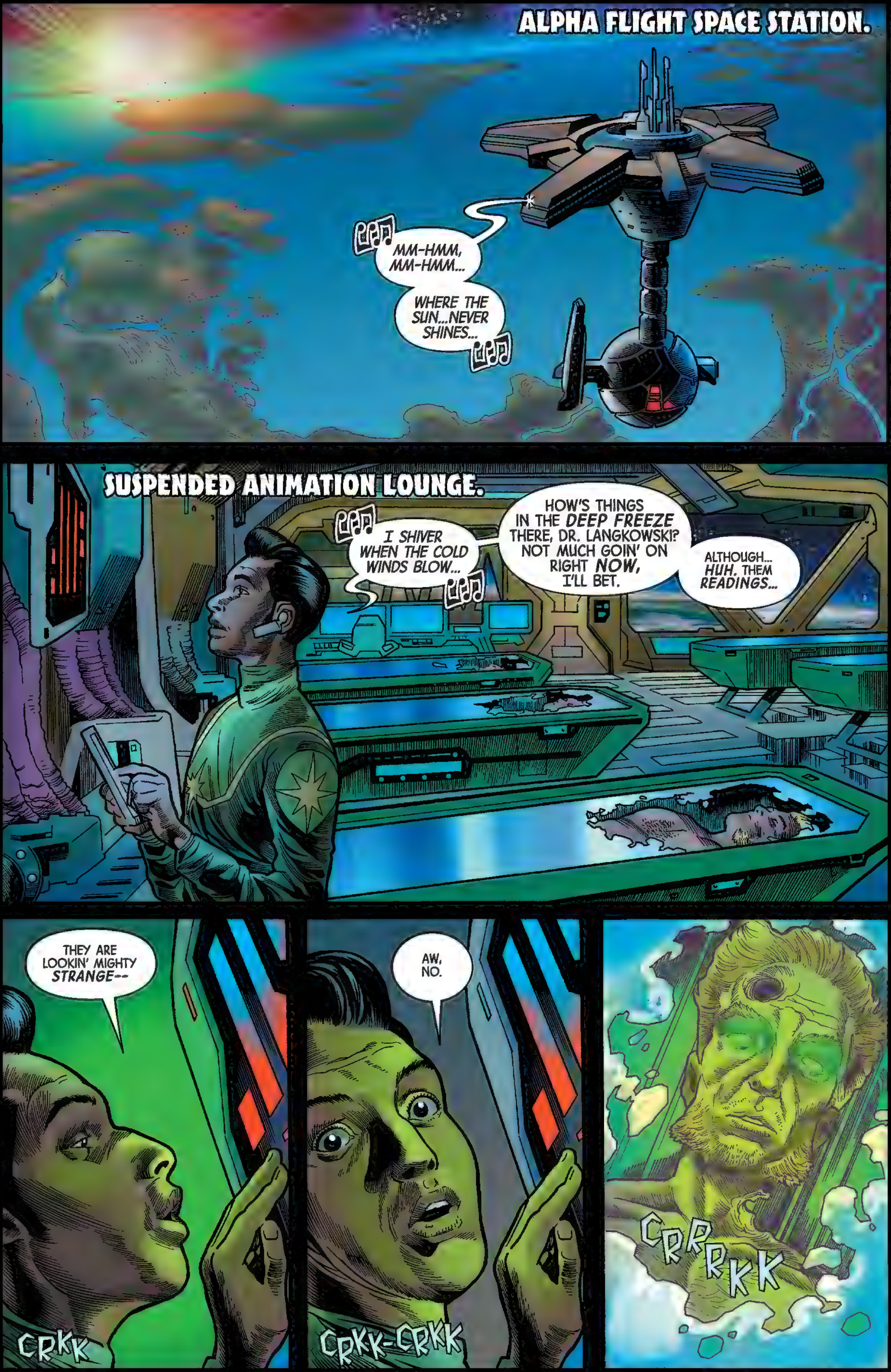

...I THINK IT KILLED THE HULK.

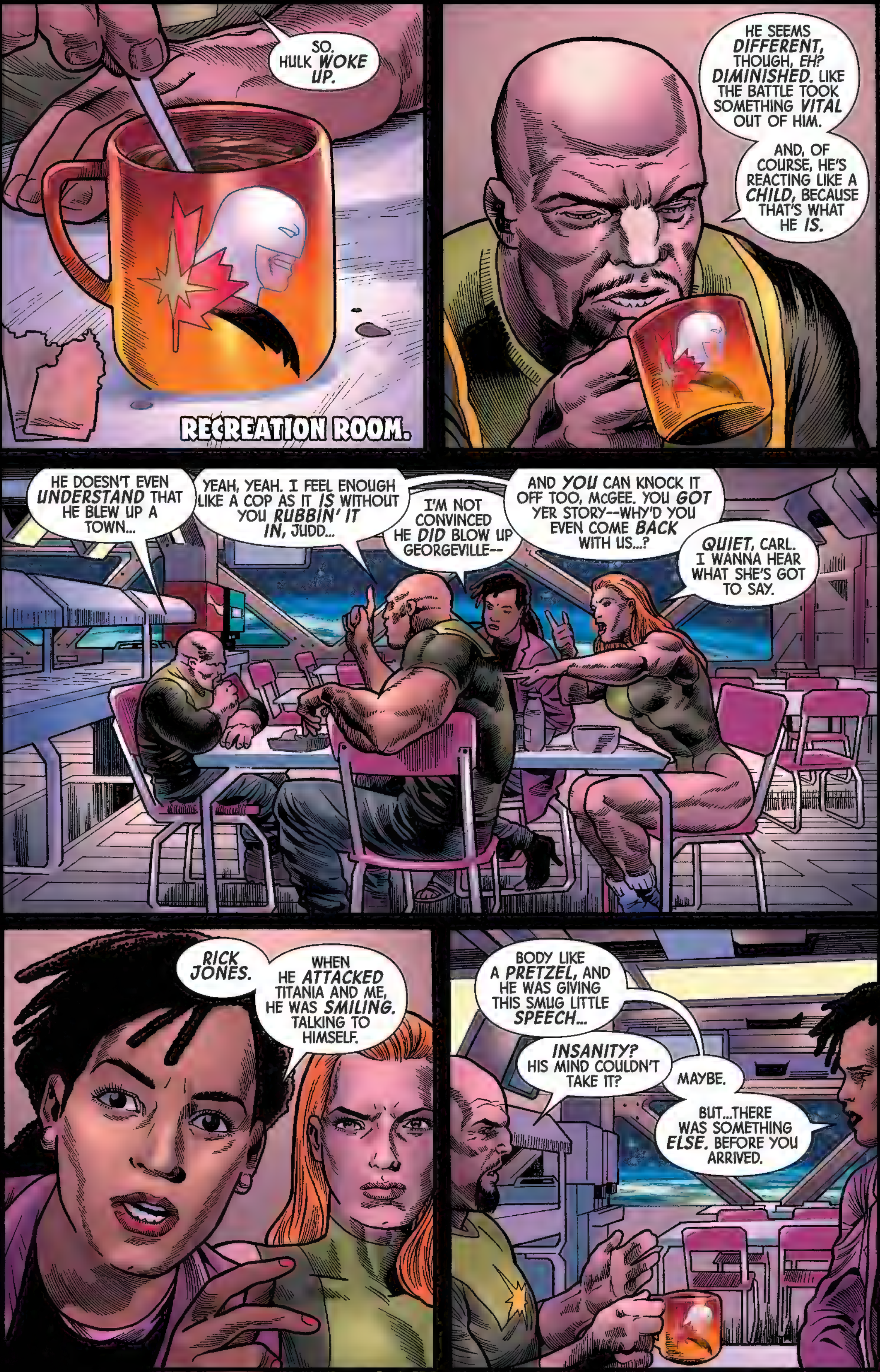
THE STARS MOVE STILL

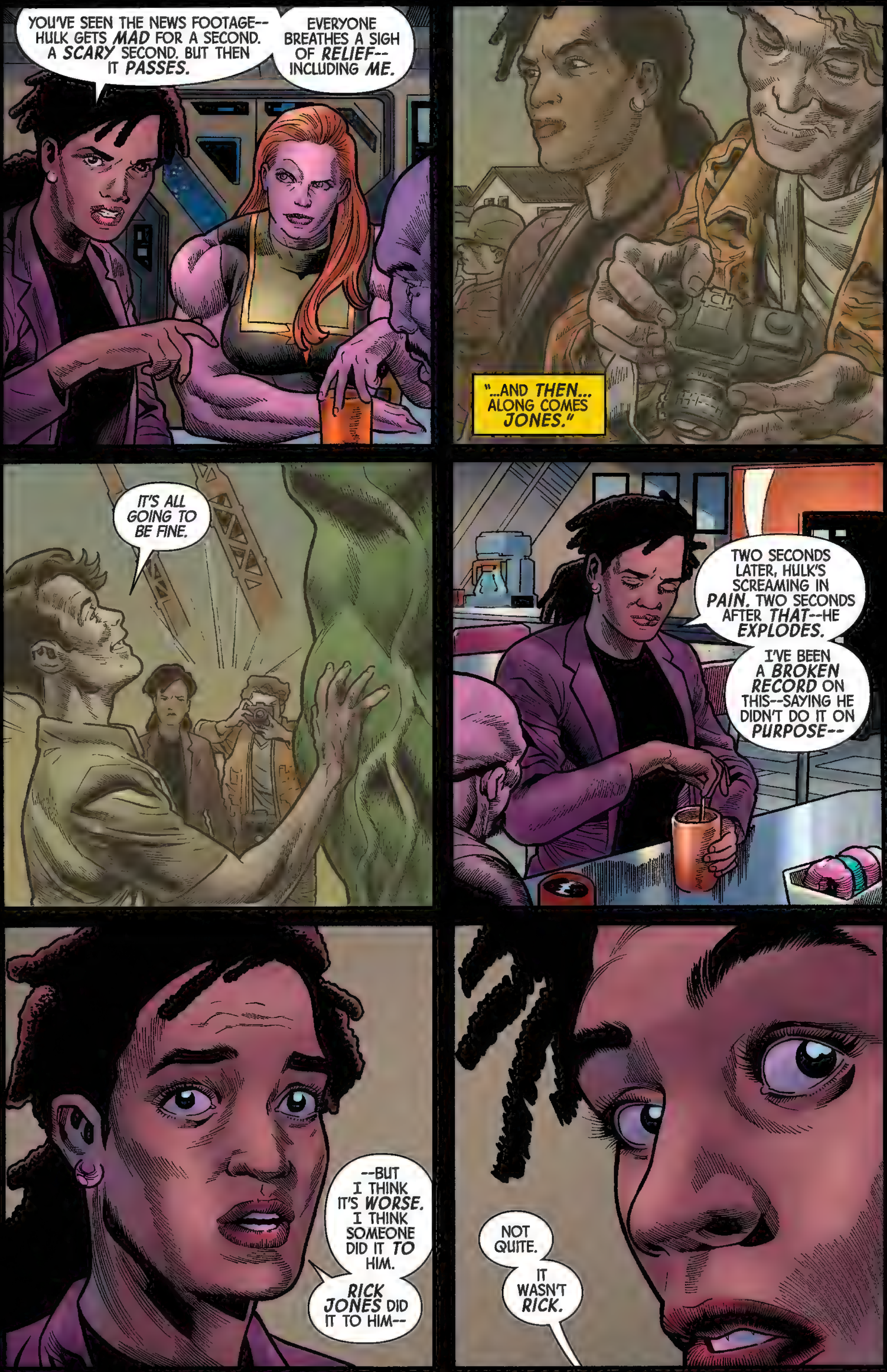
40

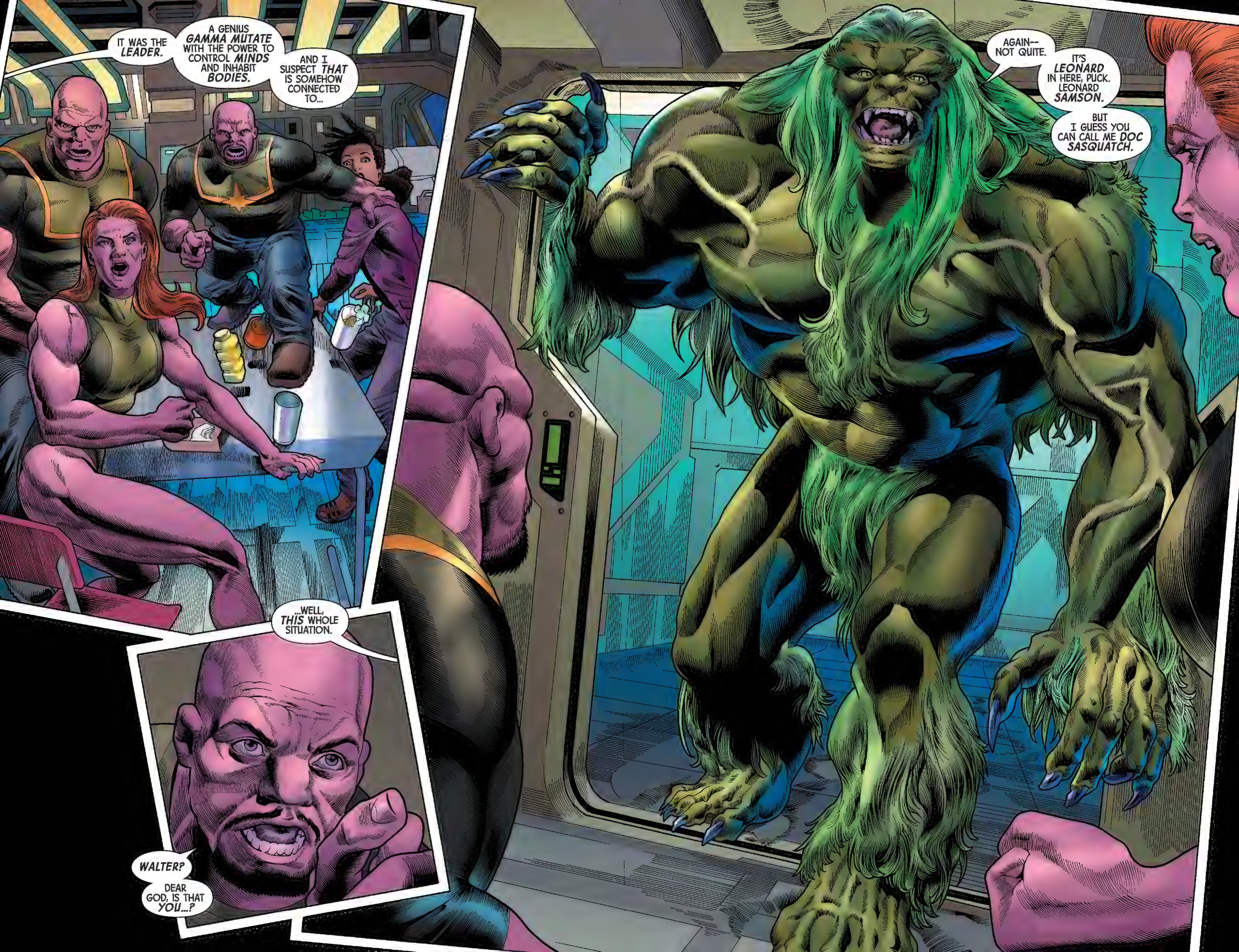
“WHO COULD HAVE BOUND THE LAMB TO THE WOLF, AND, WHAT WAS STILL MORE INCOMPREHENSIBLE, HAVE ATTACHED THE WOLF TO THE LAMB?”

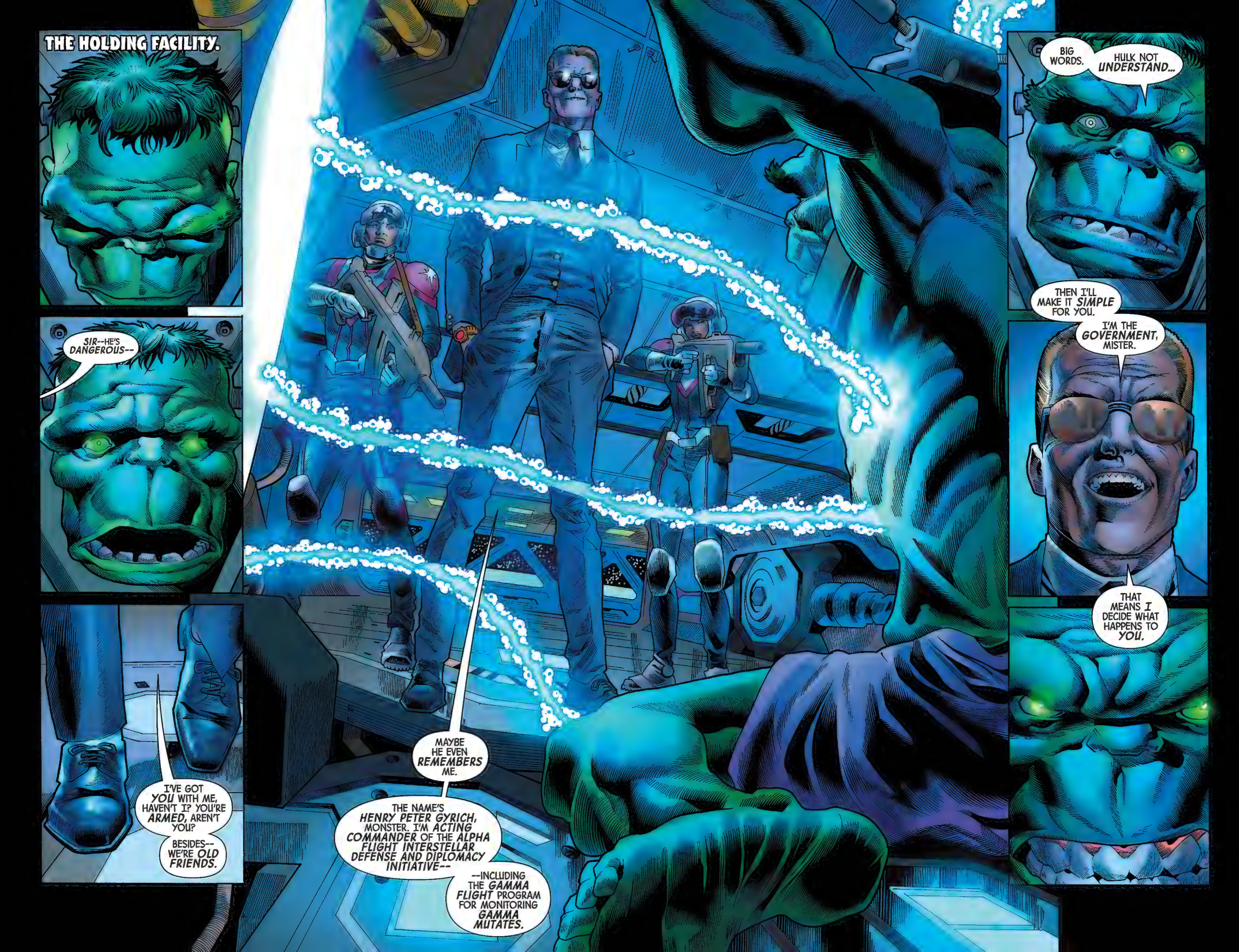
– VICTOR HUGO,
LES MISÉRABLES

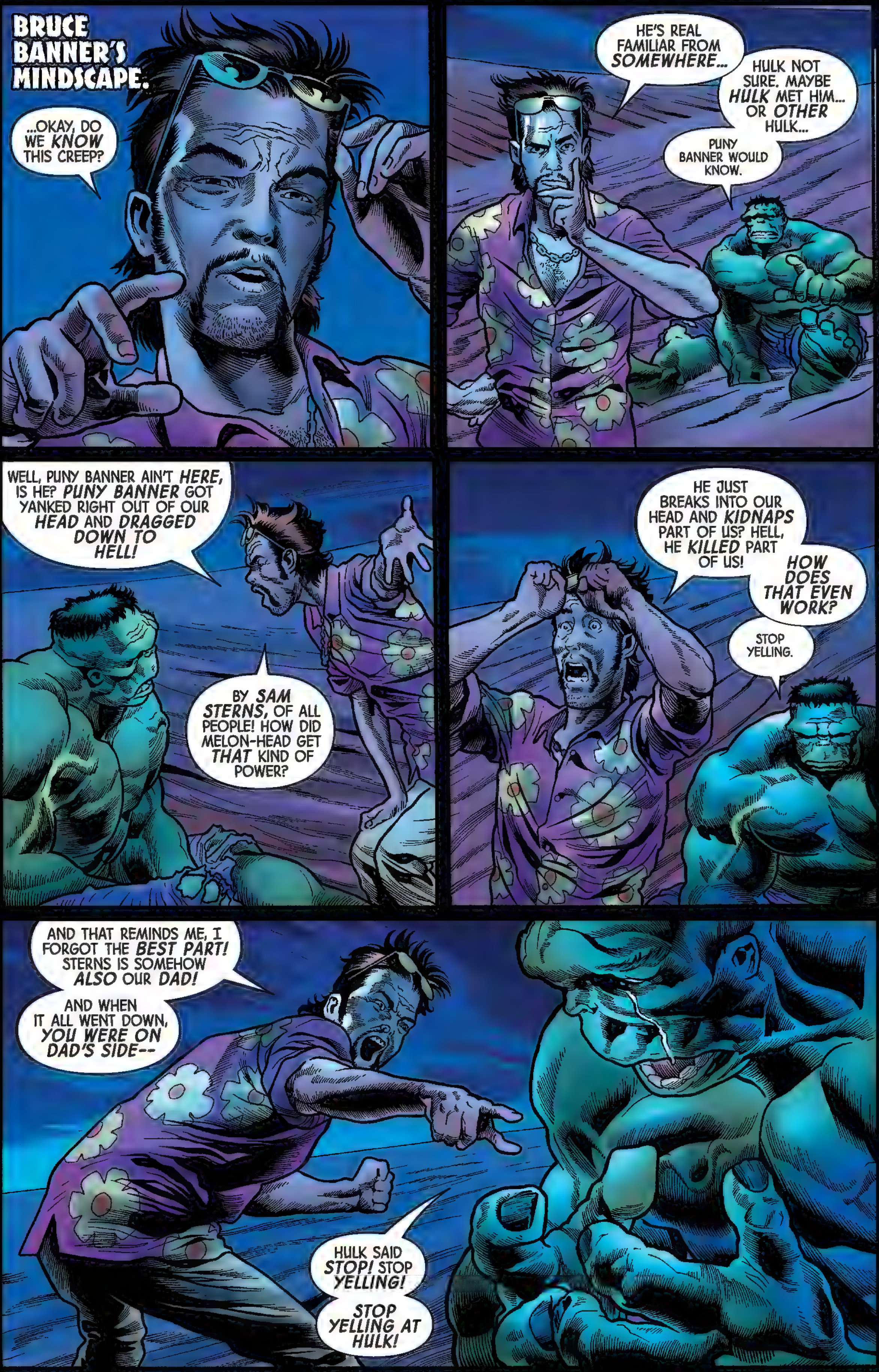

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
MM-HMM, MM-HMM...
WHERE THE SUN...NEVER SHINES...
SUSPENDED ANIMATION LOUNGE.
I SHIVER WHEN THE COLD WINDS BLOW...
HOW'S THINGS IN THE DEEP FREEZE THERE, DR. LANGKOWSKI? NOT MUCH GOIN' ON RIGHT NOW, I'LL BET.
ALTHOUGH... HUH. THEM READINGS...
THEY ARE LOOKIN' MIGHTY STRANGE--
CRKK
AW, NO.
CRKK-CRKK
CRRRKK

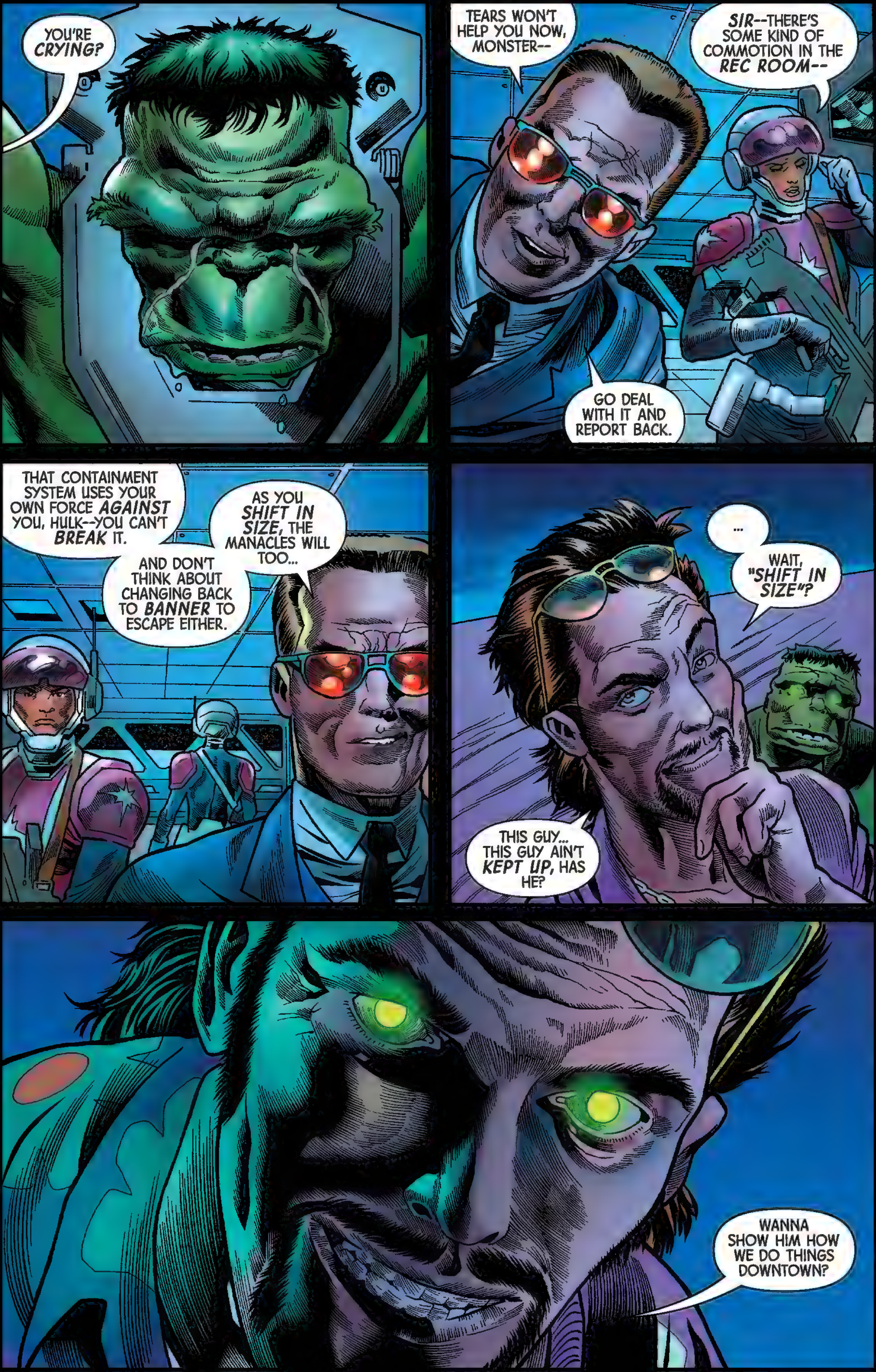

SO. HULK *WOKE UP.*
RECREATION ROOM.
HE SEEMS *DIFFERENT,* THOUGH, *EH? DIMINISHED.* LIKE THE BATTLE TOOK SOMETHING *VITAL* OUT OF HIM.
AND, OF COURSE, HE'S REACTING LIKE A *CHILD,* BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT HE *IS.*
HE DOESN'T EVEN *UNDERSTAND* THAT HE BLEW UP A TOWN...
YEAH, YEAH. I FEEL ENOUGH LIKE A COP AS IT *IS* WITHOUT YOU *RUBBIN' IT IN,* JUDD...
I'M NOT CONVINCED HE *DID* BLOW UP GEORGEVILLE--
AND *YOU* CAN KNOCK IT OFF TOO, McGEE. YOU *GOT* YER STORY--WHY'D YOU EVEN COME *BACK* WITH US...?
QUIET, CARL. I WANNA HEAR WHAT SHE'S GOT TO SAY.
RICK JONES.
WHEN HE *ATTACKED* TITANIA AND ME, HE WAS *SMILING.* TALKING TO HIMSELF.
BODY LIKE A *PRETZEL,* AND HE WAS GIVING THIS SMUG LITTLE *SPEECH...*
INSANITY? HIS MIND COULDN'T TAKE IT?
MAYBE.
BUT...THERE WAS SOMETHING *ELSE,* BEFORE YOU ARRIVED.

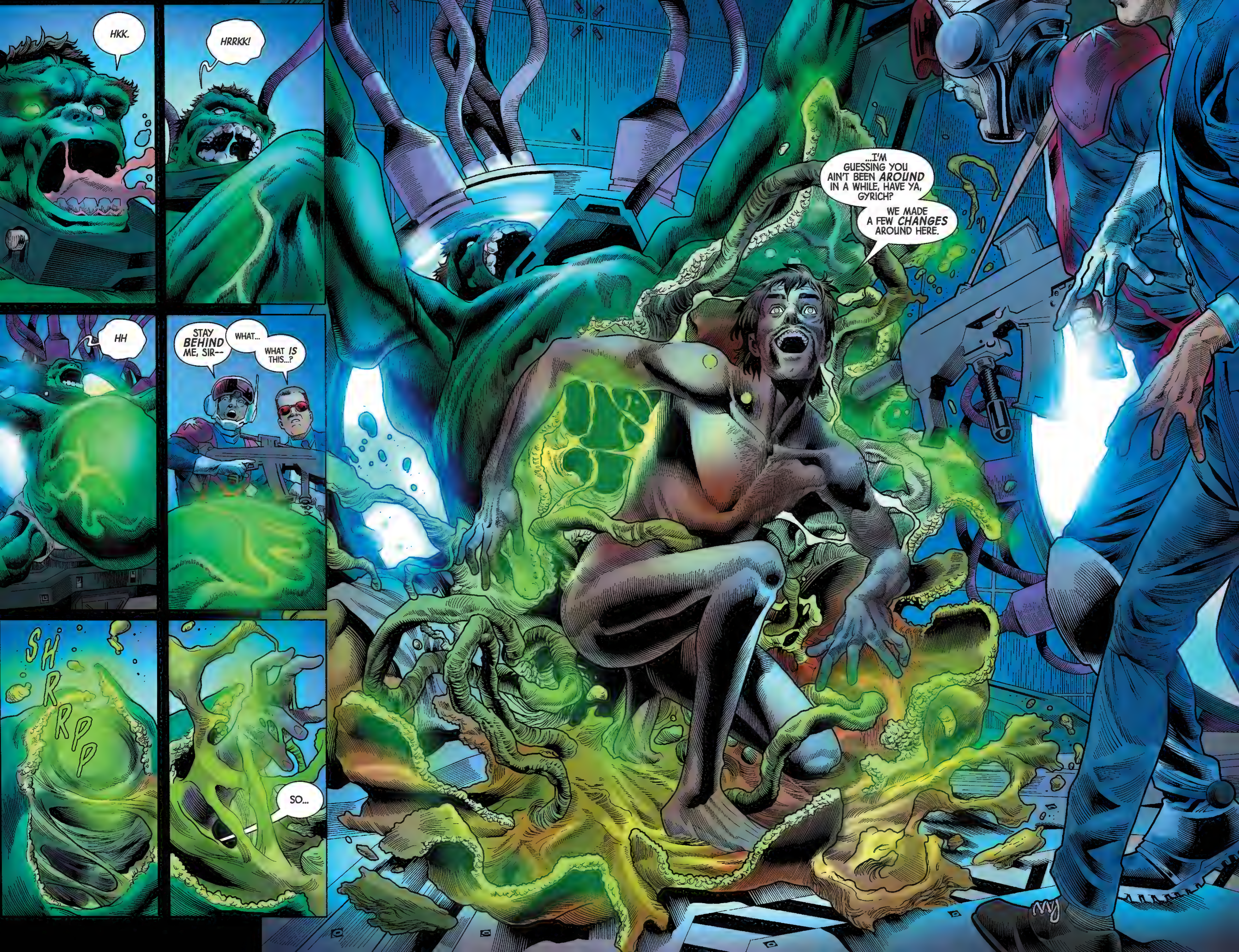

YOU'VE SEEN THE NEWS FOOTAGE-- HULK GETS *MAD* FOR A SECOND. A *SCARY* SECOND. BUT THEN IT *PASSES.*
EVERYONE BREATHES A SIGH OF *RELIEF*-- INCLUDING *ME.*
"...AND *THEN*... ALONG COMES *JONES.*"
IT'S ALL GOING TO BE FINE.
TWO SECONDS LATER, HULK'S SCREAMING IN *PAIN.* TWO SECONDS AFTER *THAT*--HE *EXPLODES.*
I'VE BEEN A *BROKEN RECORD* ON THIS--SAYING HE DIDN'T DO IT ON *PURPOSE*--
--BUT I THINK IT'S *WORSE.* I THINK SOMEONE DID IT *TO* HIM.
RICK JONES DID IT TO HIM--
NOT QUITE.
IT WASN'T *RICK.*

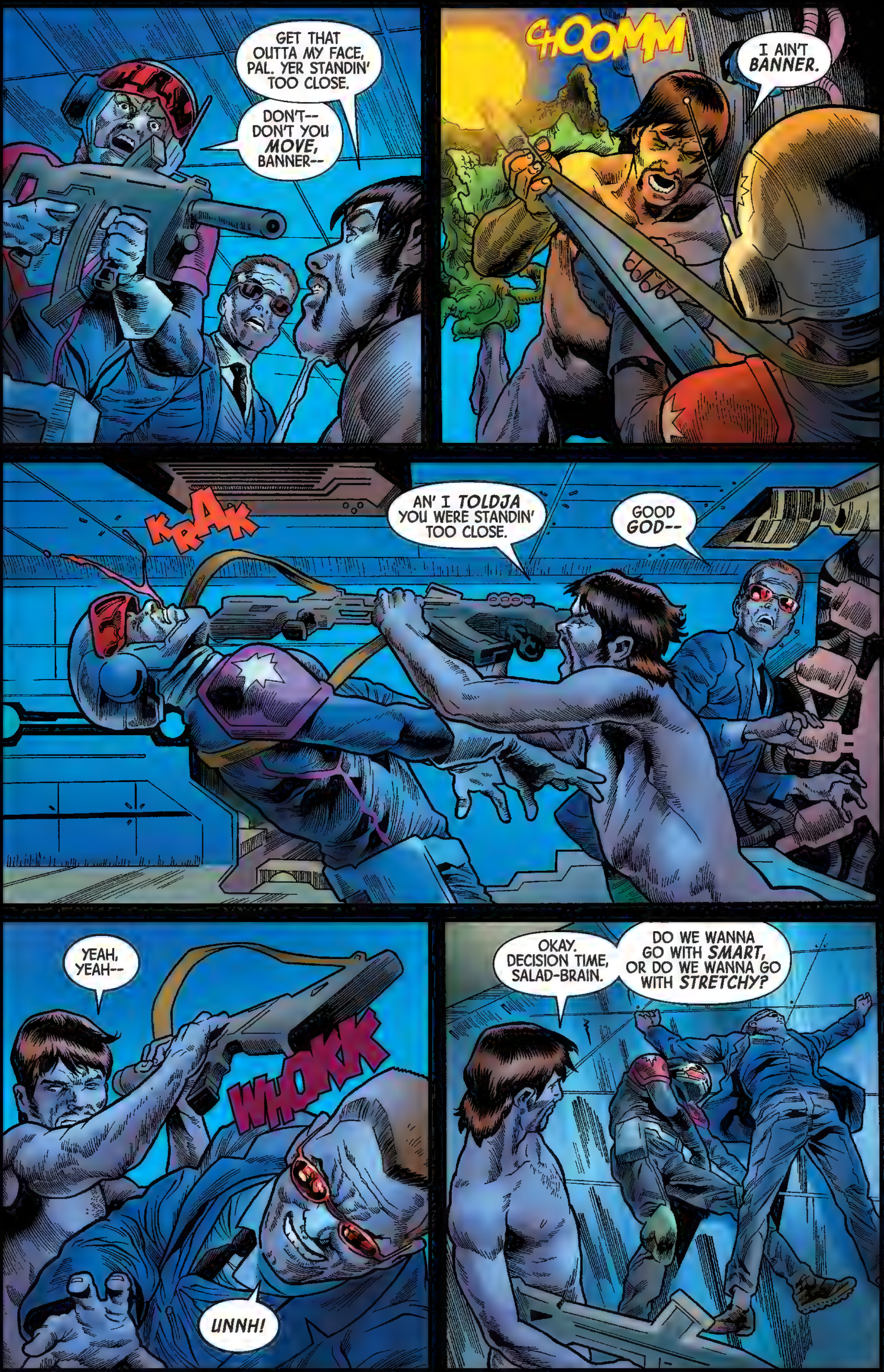

IT WAS THE LEADER.
A GENIUS GAMMA MUTATE WITH THE POWER TO CONTROL MINDS AND INHABIT BODIES.
AND I SUSPECT THAT IS SOMEHOW CONNECTED TO...
...WELL, THIS WHOLE SITUATION.
WALTER?
DEAR GOD, IS THAT YOU...?
AGAIN-- NOT QUITE.
IT'S LEONARD IN HERE, PUCK. LEONARD SAMSON.
BUT I GUESS YOU CAN CALL ME DOC SASQUATCH.

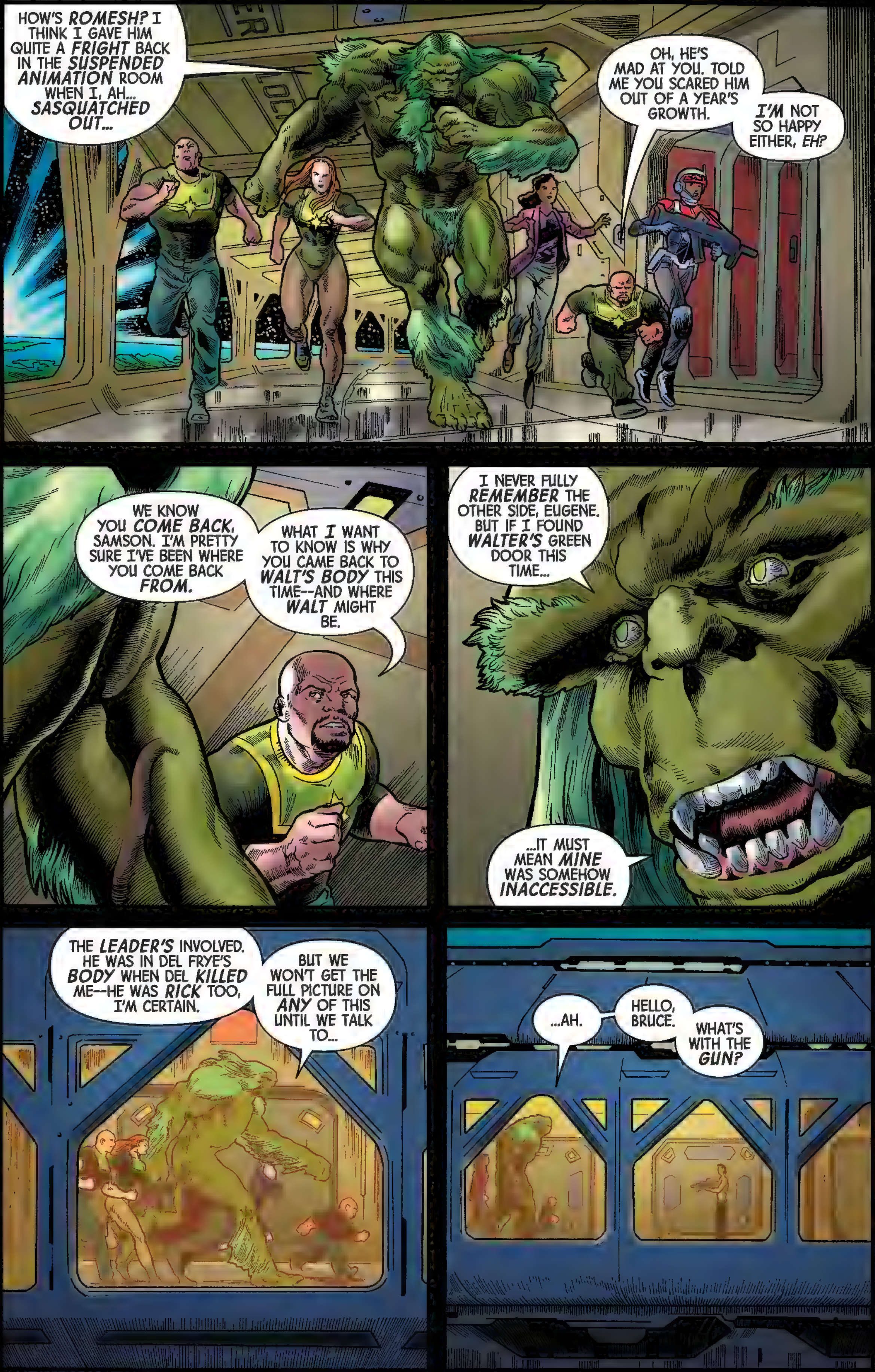

THE HOLDING FACILITY.
SIR--HE'S DANGEROUS--
I'VE GOT YOU WITH ME, HAVEN'T I? YOU'RE ARMED, AREN'T YOU?
BESIDES--WE'RE OLD FRIENDS.
MAYBE HE EVEN REMEMBERS ME.
THE NAME'S HENRY PETER GYRICH, MONSTER. I'M ACTING COMMANDER OF THE ALPHA FLIGHT INTERSTELLAR DEFENSE AND DIPLOMACY INITIATIVE--
--INCLUDING THE GAMMA FLIGHT PROGRAM FOR MONITORING GAMMA MUTATES.
BIG WORDS.
HULK NOT UNDERSTAND...
THEN I'LL MAKE IT SIMPLE FOR YOU.
I'M THE GOVERNMENT, MISTER.
THAT MEANS I DECIDE WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU.

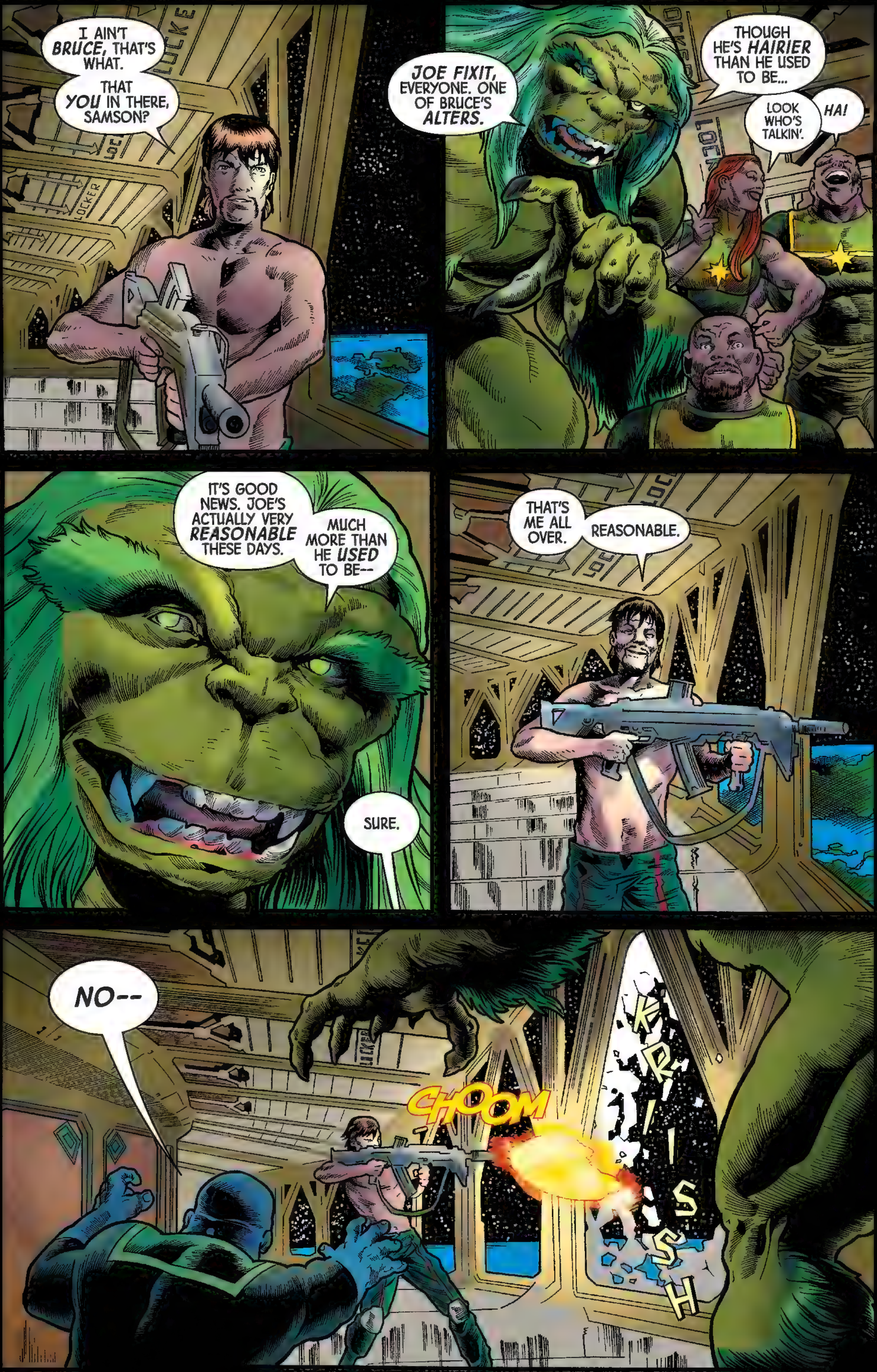

BRUCE BANNER'S MINDSCAPE.
...OKAY, DO WE *KNOW* THIS CREEP?
HE'S REAL FAMILIAR FROM *SOMEWHERE...*
HULK NOT SURE. MAYBE *HULK* MET HIM... OR *OTHER* HULK...
PUNY BANNER WOULD KNOW.
WELL, PUNY BANNER AIN'T *HERE*, IS HE? *PUNY BANNER* GOT YANKED RIGHT OUT OF OUR *HEAD* AND *DRAGGED DOWN TO HELL!*
BY *SAM STERNS*, OF ALL PEOPLE! HOW DID MELON-HEAD GET *THAT* KIND OF POWER?
HE JUST BREAKS INTO OUR HEAD AND *KIDNAPS* PART OF US? HELL, HE *KILLED* PART OF US!
HOW DOES THAT EVEN WORK?
STOP YELLING.
AND THAT REMINDS ME, I FORGOT THE *BEST PART!* STERNS IS SOMEHOW *ALSO* OUR *DAD!*
AND WHEN IT ALL WENT DOWN, *YOU WERE ON DAD'S SIDE--*
HULK SAID *STOP!* STOP *YELLING!*
STOP YELLING AT HULK!

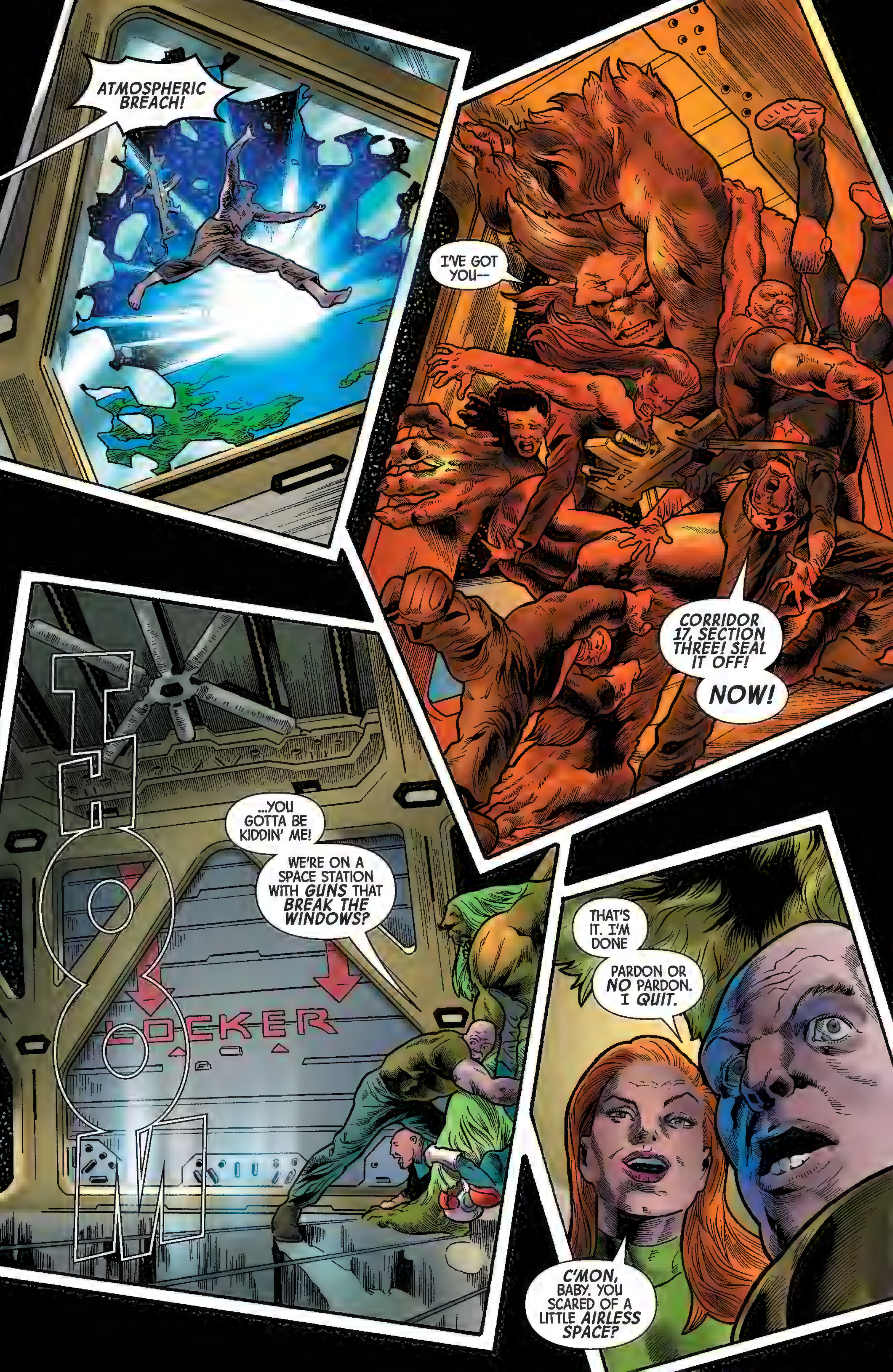

YOU'RE *CRYING?*
TEARS WON'T HELP YOU NOW, MONSTER--
SIR--THERE'S SOME KIND OF COMMOTION IN THE *REC ROOM*--
GO DEAL WITH IT AND REPORT BACK.
THAT CONTAINMENT SYSTEM USES YOUR OWN FORCE *AGAINST* YOU, HULK--YOU CAN'T *BREAK* IT.
AS YOU *SHIFT IN SIZE*, THE MANACLES WILL TOO...
AND DON'T THINK ABOUT CHANGING BACK TO *BANNER* TO ESCAPE EITHER.
...
WAIT, *"SHIFT IN SIZE"?*
THIS GUY... THIS GUY AIN'T *KEPT UP*, HAS HE?
WANNA SHOW HIM HOW WE DO THINGS DOWNTOWN?

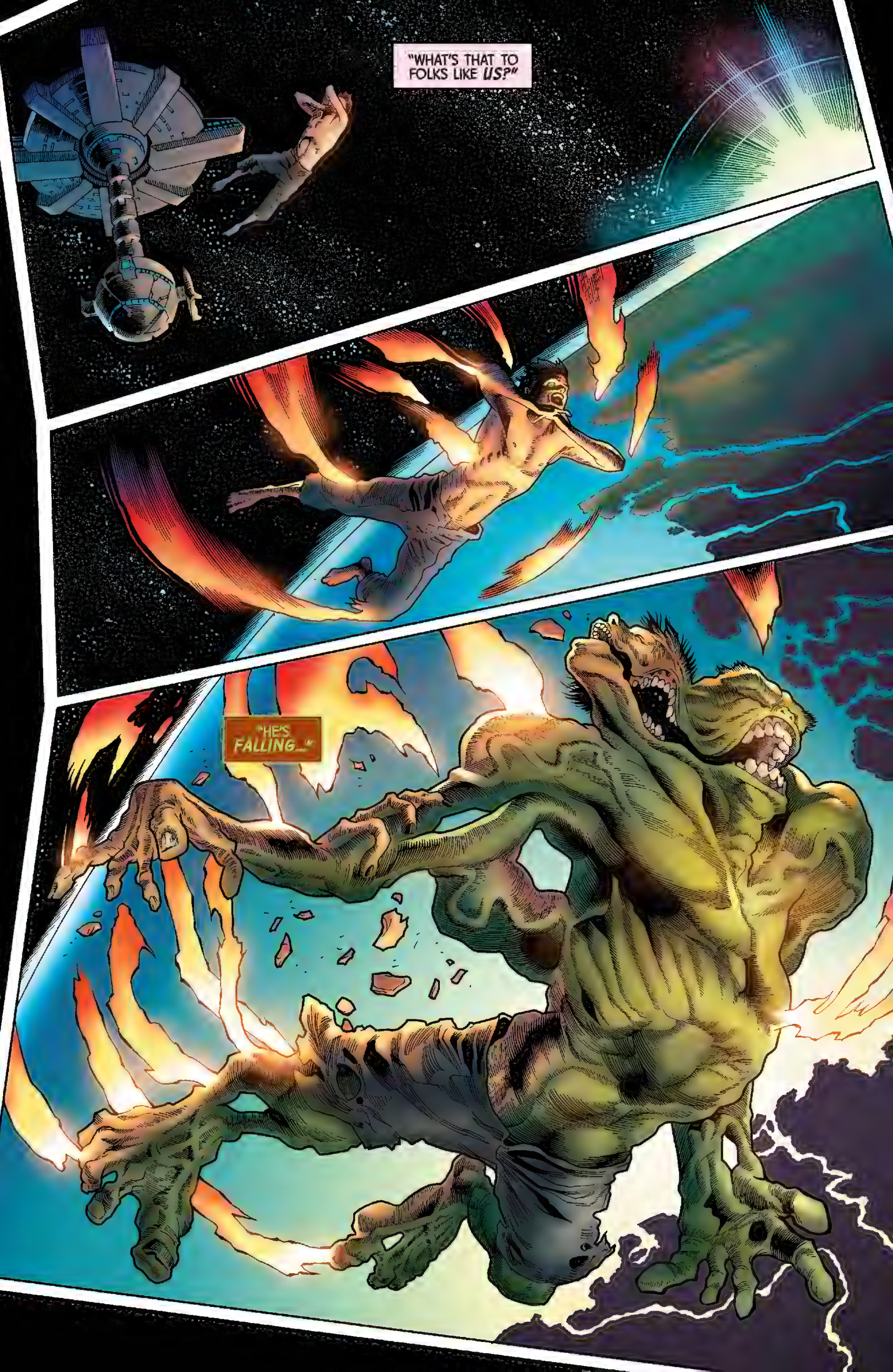

HKK.
HRRKK!
HH
STAY BEHIND ME, SIR--
WHAT...
WHAT IS THIS...?
SHRPP
SO...
...I'M GUESSING YOU AIN'T BEEN AROUND IN A WHILE, HAVE YA, GYRICH?
WE MADE A FEW CHANGES AROUND HERE.

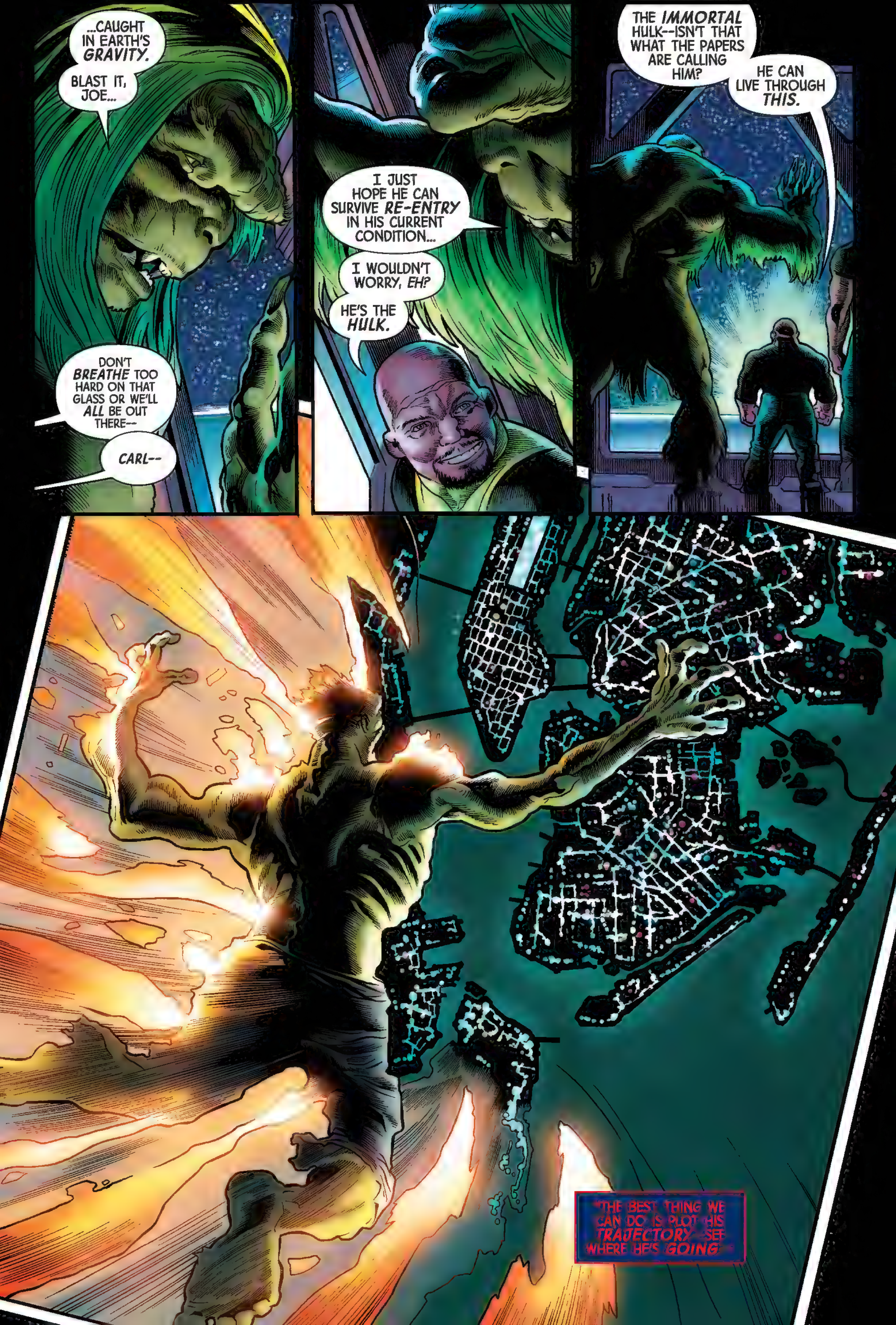

GET THAT OUTTA MY FACE, PAL. YER STANDIN' TOO CLOSE.
DON'T-- DON'T YOU *MOVE*, BANNER--
CHOOMM
I AIN'T *BANNER*.
KRAK
AN' I *TOLDJA* YOU WERE STANDIN' TOO CLOSE.
GOOD *GOD*--
YEAH, YEAH--
WHOKK
UNNH!
OKAY. DECISION TIME, SALAD-BRAIN.
DO WE WANNA GO WITH *SMART*, OR DO WE WANNA GO WITH *STRETCHY?*

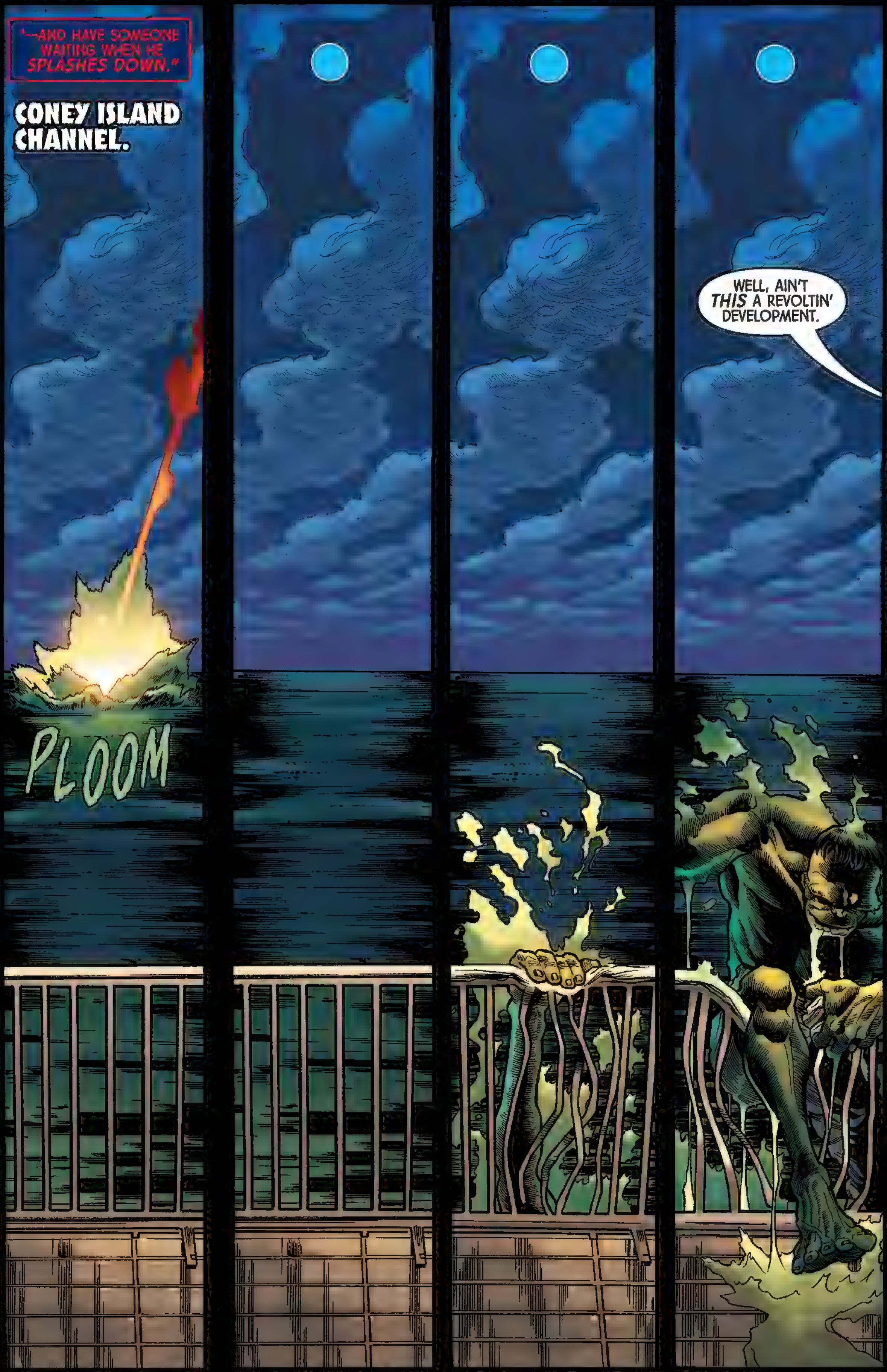

HOW'S ROMESH? I THINK I GAVE HIM QUITE A FRIGHT BACK IN THE SUSPENDED ANIMATION ROOM WHEN I, AH... SASQUATCHED OUT...
OH, HE'S MAD AT YOU. TOLD ME YOU SCARED HIM OUT OF A YEAR'S GROWTH.
I'M NOT SO HAPPY EITHER, EH?
WE KNOW YOU COME BACK, SAMSON. I'M PRETTY SURE I'VE BEEN WHERE YOU COME BACK FROM.
WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS WHY YOU CAME BACK TO WALT'S BODY THIS TIME--AND WHERE WALT MIGHT BE.
I NEVER FULLY REMEMBER THE OTHER SIDE, EUGENE. BUT IF I FOUND WALTER'S GREEN DOOR THIS TIME...
...IT MUST MEAN MINE WAS SOMEHOW INACCESSIBLE.
THE LEADER'S INVOLVED. HE WAS IN DEL FRYE'S BODY WHEN DEL KILLED ME--HE WAS RICK TOO, I'M CERTAIN.
BUT WE WON'T GET THE FULL PICTURE ON ANY OF THIS UNTIL WE TALK TO...
...AH.
HELLO, BRUCE.
WHAT'S WITH THE GUN?

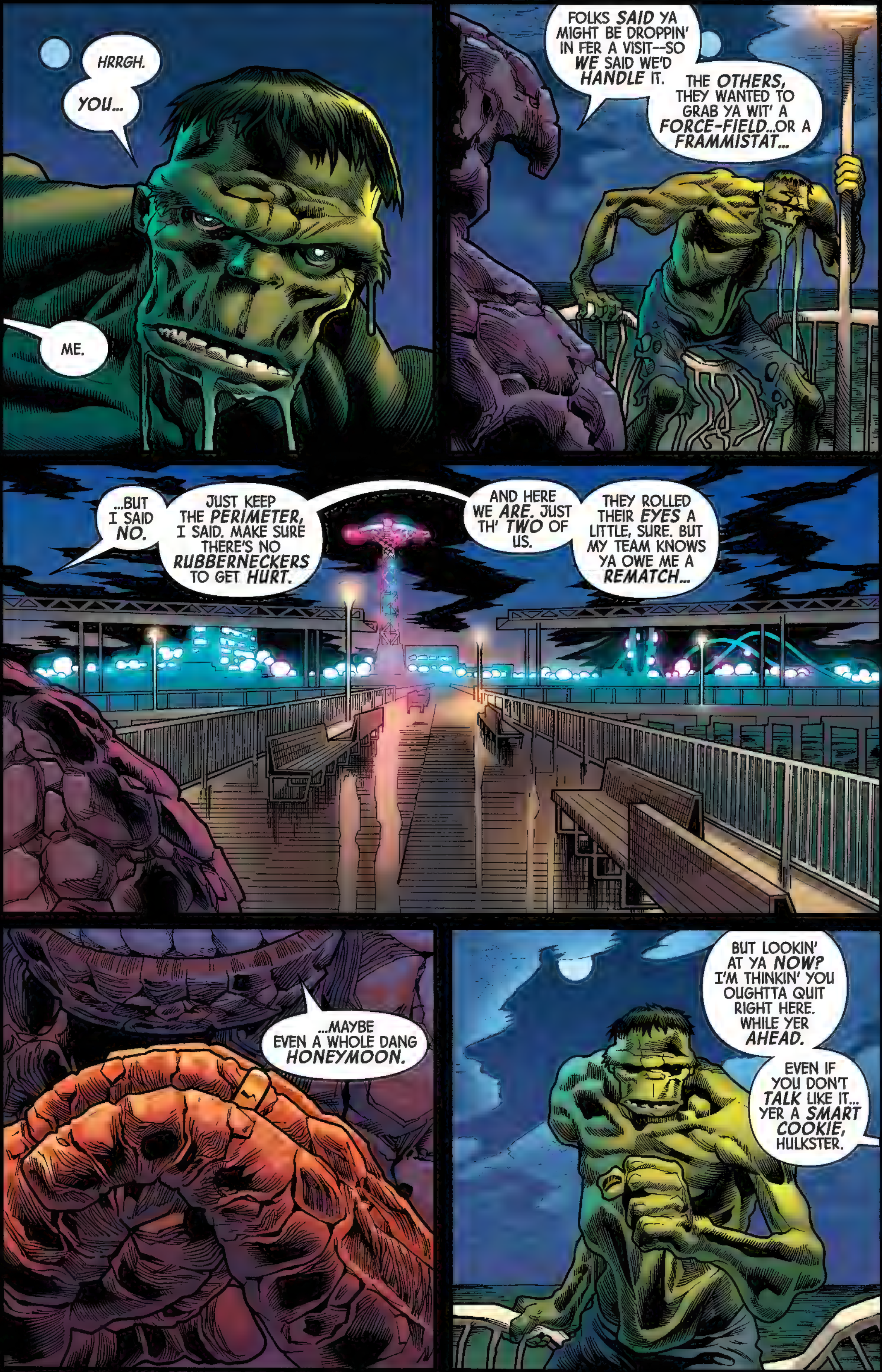

I AIN'T *BRUCE*, THAT'S WHAT.
THAT *YOU* IN THERE, SAMSON?
LOCKER
JOE FIXIT, EVERYONE. ONE OF BRUCE'S *ALTERS.*
THOUGH HE'S *HAIRIER* THAN HE USED TO BE...
LOOK WHO'S TALKIN'.
HA!
IT'S GOOD NEWS. JOE'S ACTUALLY VERY *REASONABLE* THESE DAYS.
MUCH MORE THAN HE *USED* TO BE--
SURE.
THAT'S ME ALL OVER.
REASONABLE.
NO--
CHOOM
KRIISSH

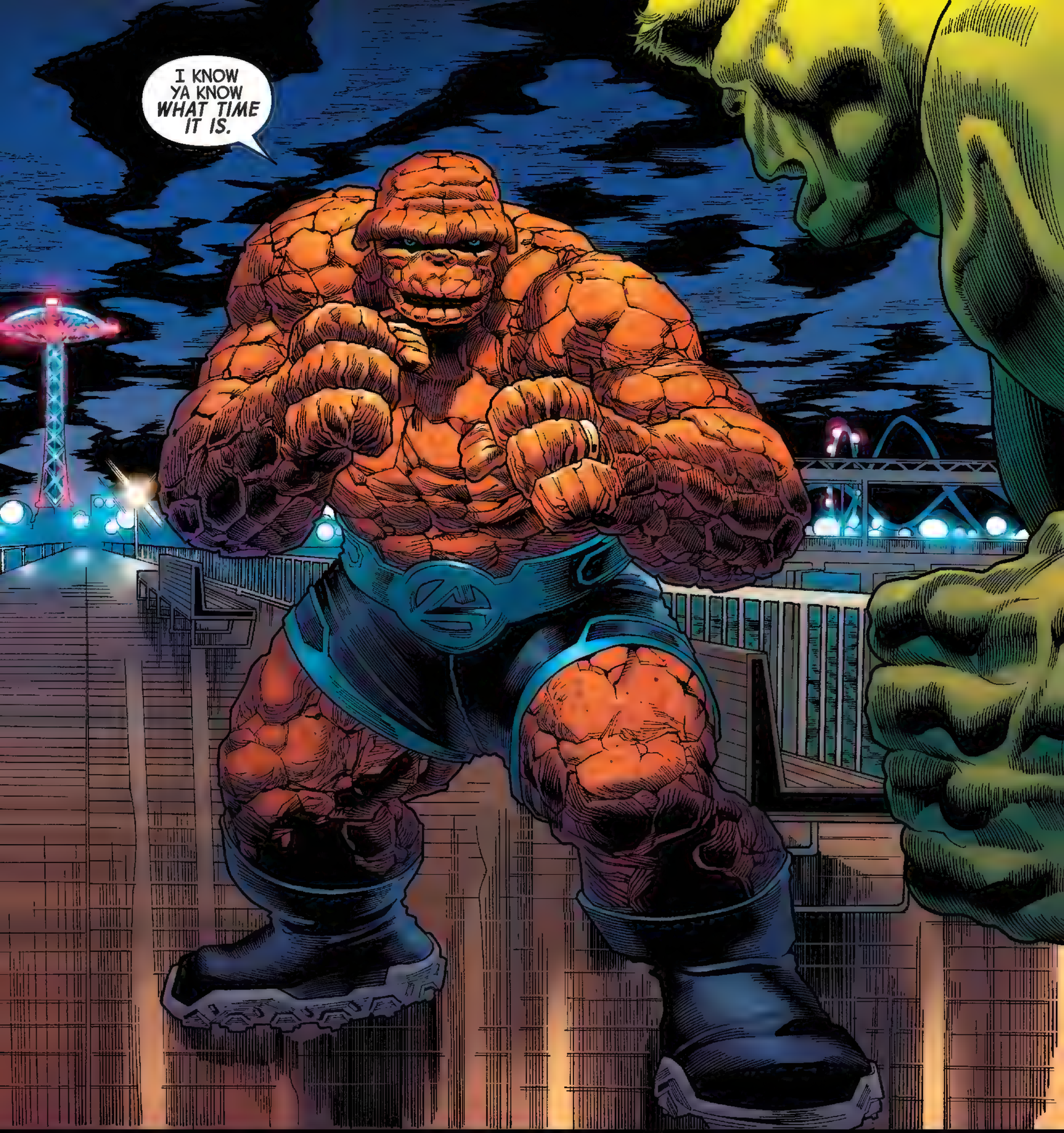

ATMOSPHERIC BREACH!
I'VE GOT YOU--
CORRIDOR 17, SECTION THREE! SEAL IT OFF!
NOW!
THOOM
LOCKER
...YOU GOTTA BE KIDDIN' ME!
WE'RE ON A SPACE STATION WITH *GUNS* THAT *BREAK THE WINDOWS?*
THAT'S IT. I'M DONE.
PARDON OR *NO* PARDON. I *QUIT*.
C'MON, BABY. YOU SCARED OF A LITTLE *AIRLESS SPACE?*


"WHAT'S THAT TO FOLKS LIKE *US?*"
"HE'S *FALLING...*"

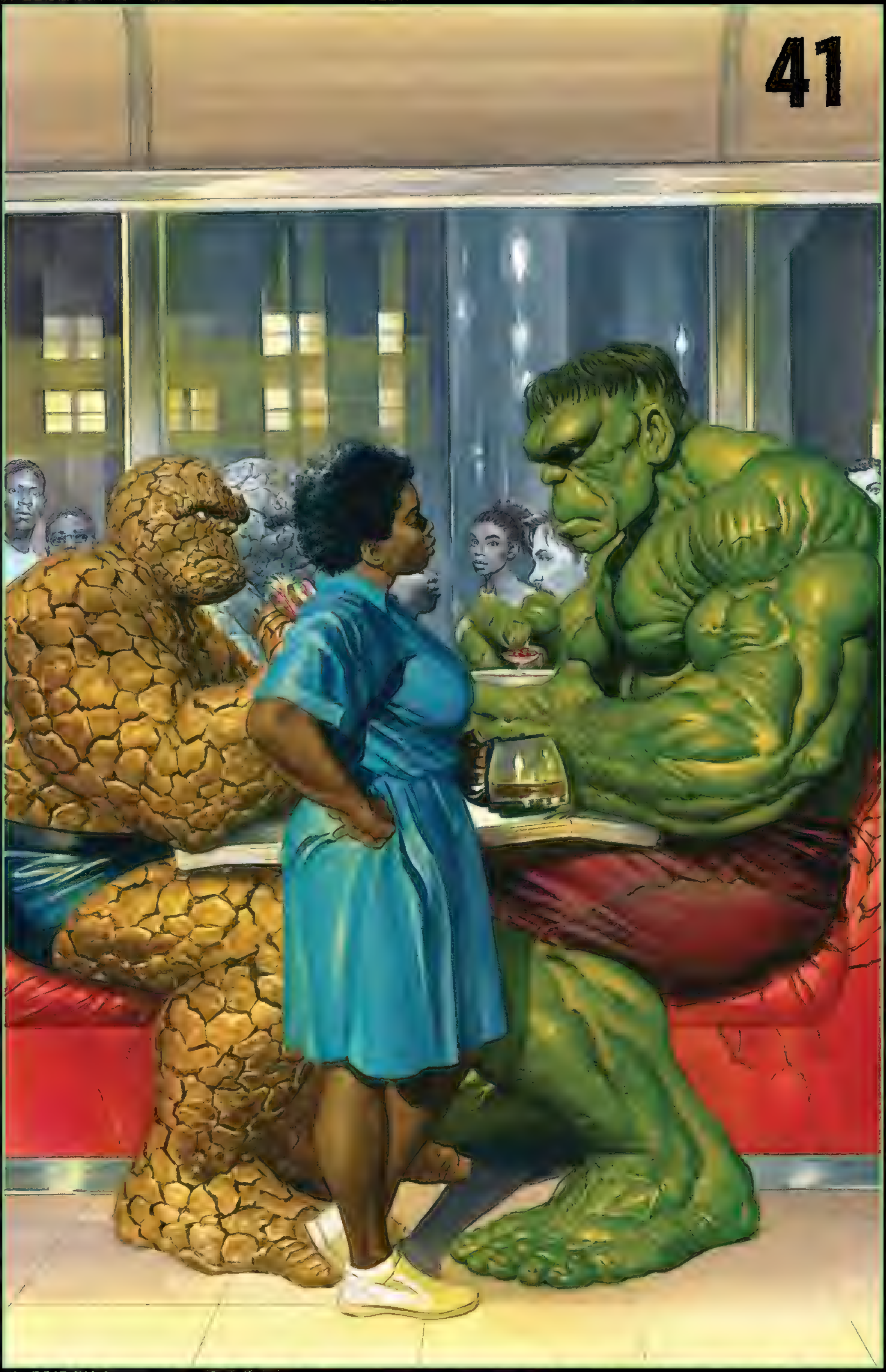

...CAUGHT IN EARTH'S *GRAVITY.*
BLAST IT, JOE...
DON'T *BREATHE* TOO HARD ON THAT GLASS OR WE'LL *ALL* BE OUT THERE--
CARL--
I JUST HOPE HE CAN SURVIVE *RE-ENTRY* IN HIS CURRENT CONDITION...
I WOULDN'T WORRY, *EH?*
HE'S THE *HULK.*
THE *IMMORTAL* HULK--ISN'T THAT WHAT THE PAPERS ARE CALLING HIM?
HE CAN LIVE THROUGH *THIS.*
"THE BEST THING WE CAN DO IS PLOT HIS *TRAJECTORY*--SEE WHERE HE'S *GOING.*"


"--AND HAVE SOMEONE WAITING WHEN HE *SPLASHES DOWN.*"
CONEY ISLAND CHANNEL.
PLOOM
WELL, AIN'T *THIS* A REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENT.


HRRGH.
YOU...
ME.
FOLKS SAID YA MIGHT BE DROPPIN' IN FER A VISIT--SO WE SAID WE'D HANDLE IT.
THE OTHERS, THEY WANTED TO GRAB YA WIT' A FORCE-FIELD...OR A FRAMMISTAT...
...BUT I SAID NO.
JUST KEEP THE PERIMETER, I SAID. MAKE SURE THERE'S NO RUBBERNECKERS TO GET HURT.
AND HERE WE ARE. JUST TH' TWO OF US.
THEY ROLLED THEIR EYES A LITTLE, SURE. BUT MY TEAM KNOWS YA OWE ME A REMATCH...
...MAYBE EVEN A WHOLE DANG HONEYMOON.
BUT LOOKIN' AT YA NOW? I'M THINKIN' YOU OUGHTTA QUIT RIGHT HERE. WHILE YER AHEAD.
EVEN IF YOU DON'T TALK LIKE IT... YER A SMART COOKIE, HULKSTER.


I KNOW YA KNOW *WHAT TIME IT IS.*

SO HERE'S THE THING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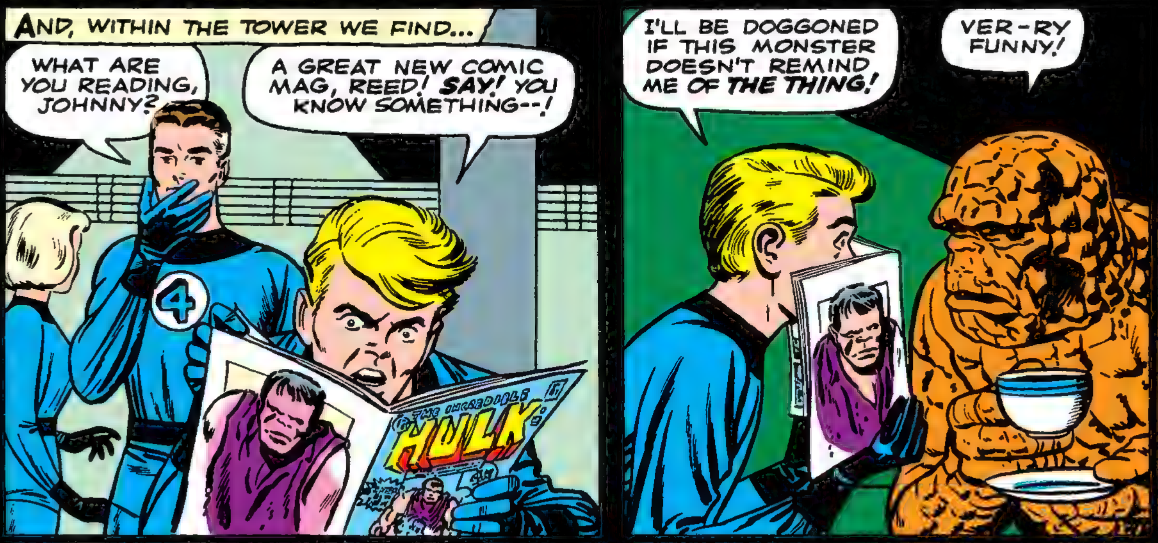
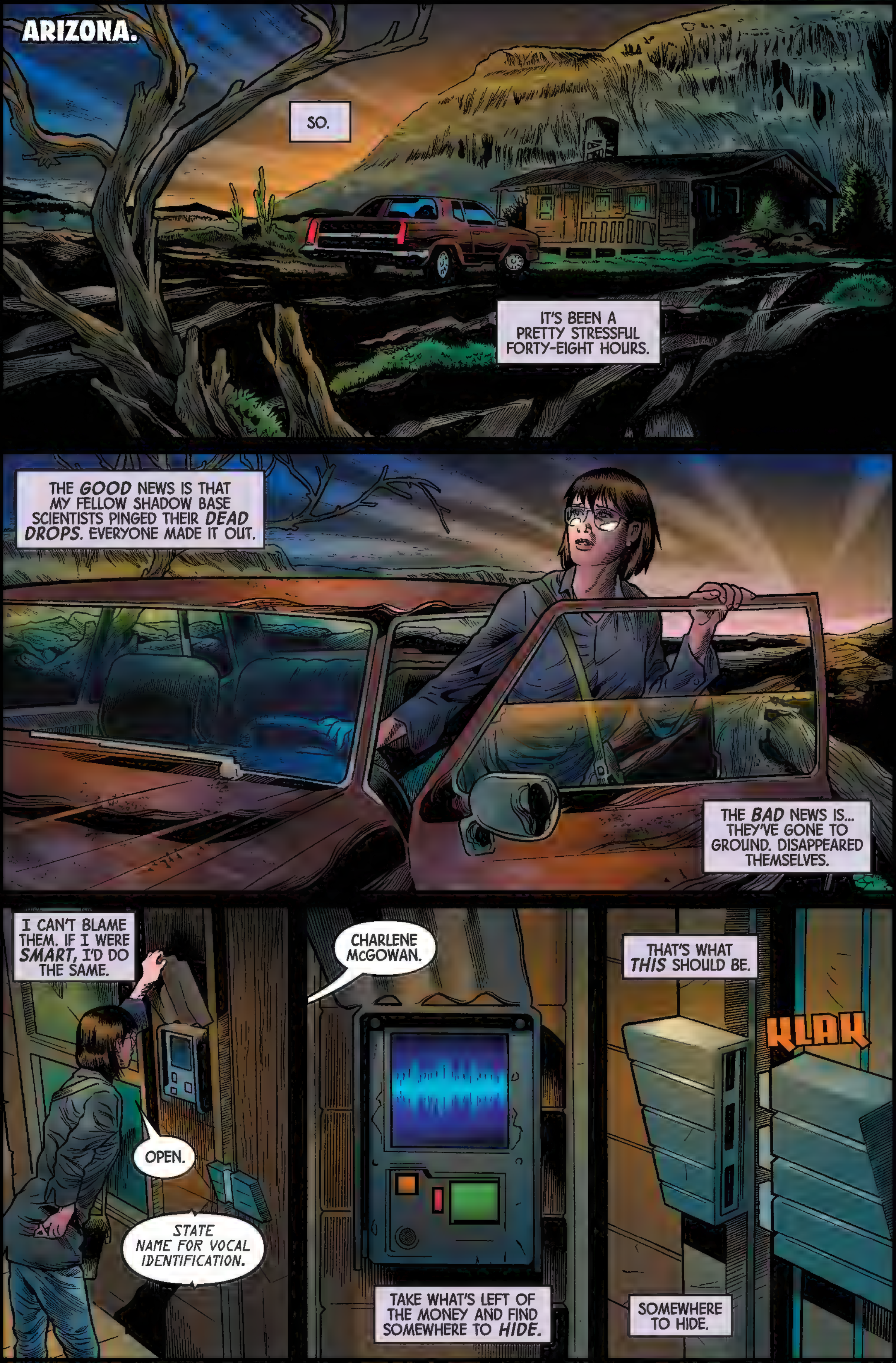
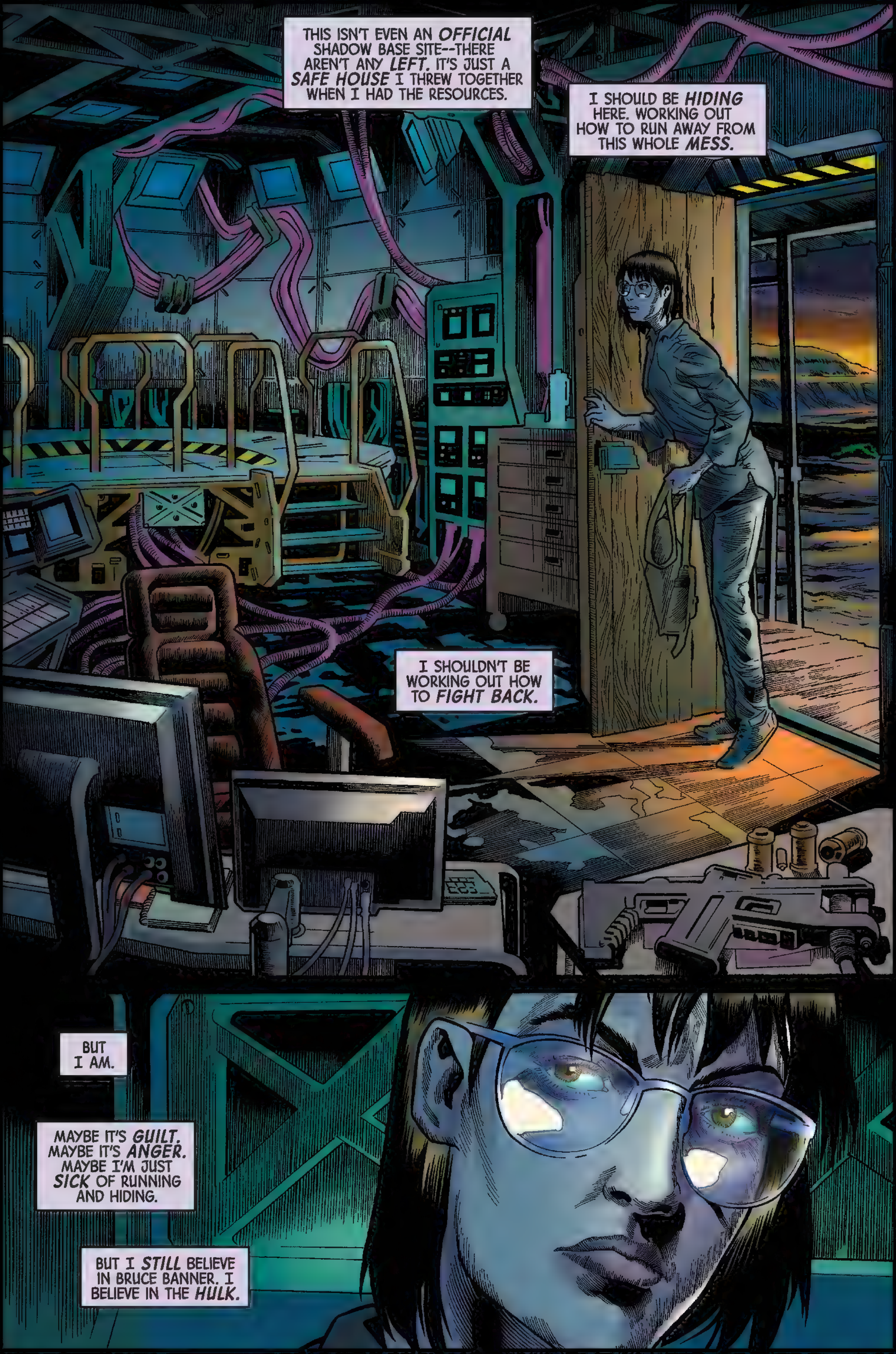
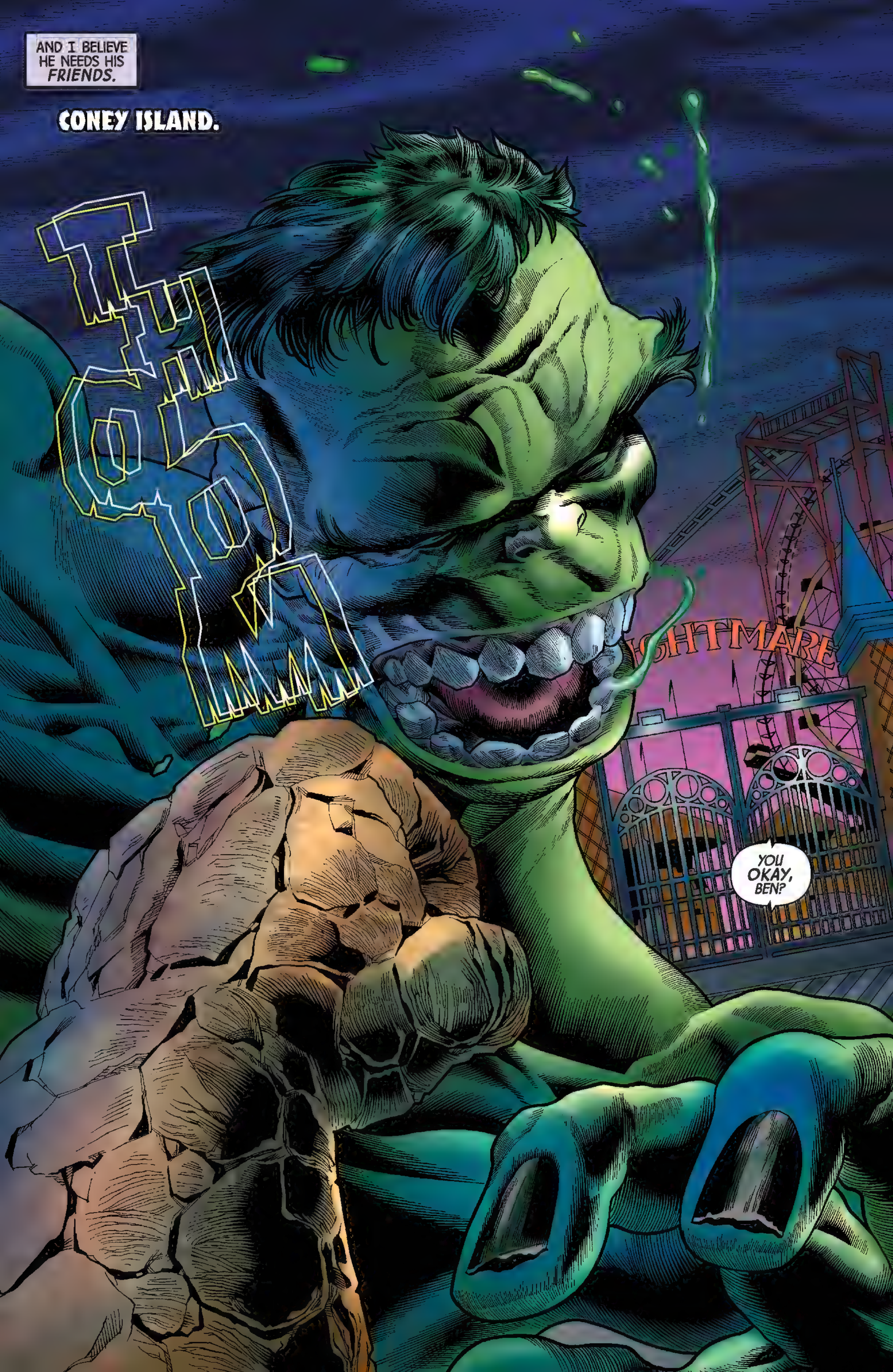
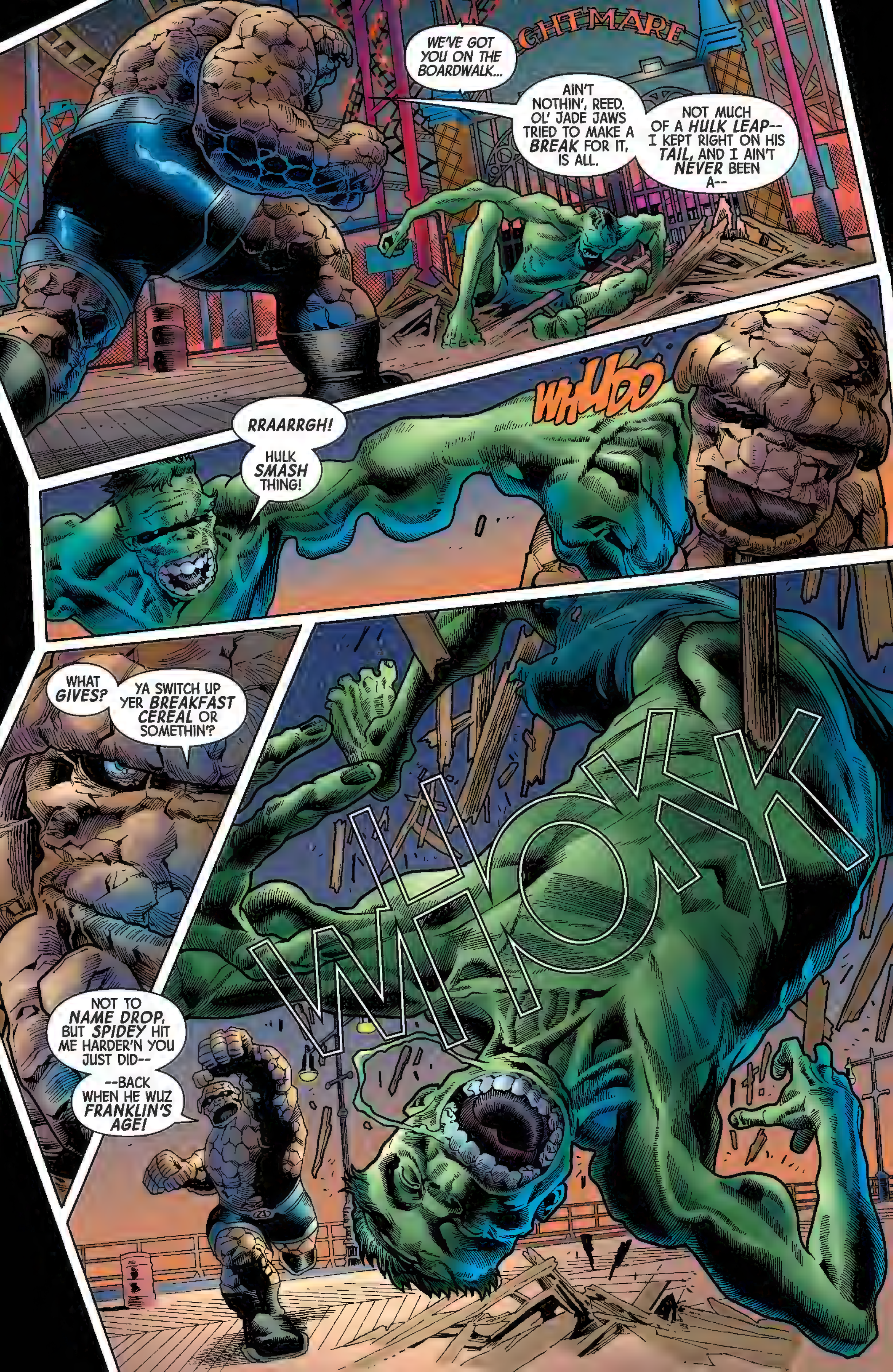

AND, WITHIN THE TOWER WE FIND...
WHAT ARE YOU READING, JOHNNY?
A GREAT NEW COMIC MAG, REED! SAY! YOU KNOW SOMETHING--!
THE INCREDIBLE HULK
I'LL BE DOGGONED IF THIS MONSTER DOESN'T REMIND ME OF THE THING!
VER-RY FUNNY!

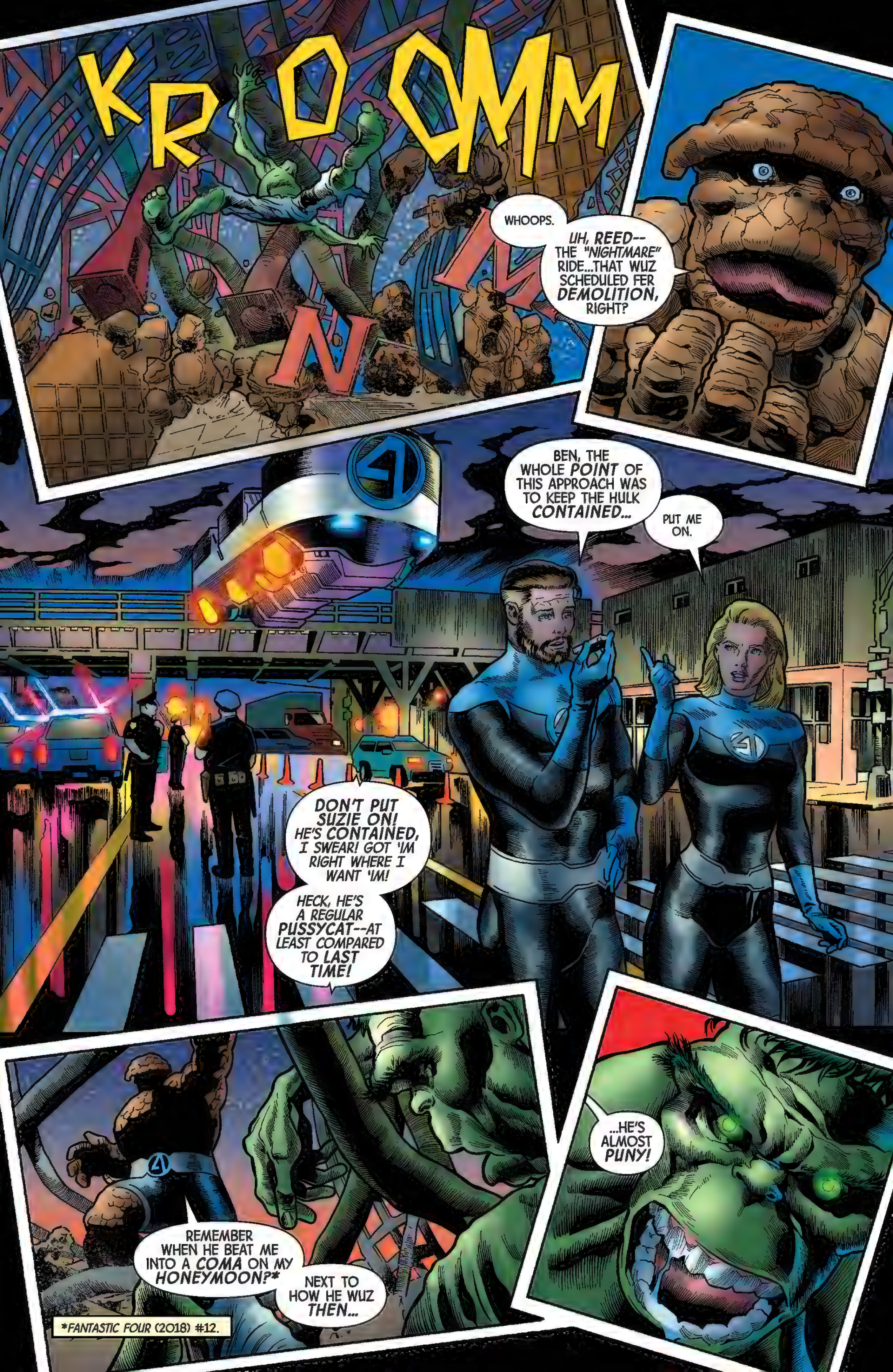
—STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY
FANTASTIC FOUR #5,
"PRISONERS OF DOCTOR DOOM!"


ARIZONA.
SO.
IT'S BEEN A PRETTY STRESSFUL FORTY-EIGHT HOURS.
THE *GOOD* NEWS IS THAT MY FELLOW SHADOW BASE SCIENTISTS PINGED THEIR *DEAD DROPS*. EVERYONE MADE IT OUT.
THE *BAD* NEWS IS... THEY'VE GONE TO GROUND. DISAPPEARED THEMSELVES.
I CAN'T BLAME THEM. IF I WERE *SMART*, I'D DO THE SAME.
OPEN.
STATE NAME FOR VOCAL IDENTIFICATION.
CHARLENE McGOWAN.
TAKE WHAT'S LEFT OF THE MONEY AND FIND SOMEWHERE TO *HIDE*.
THAT'S WHAT *THIS* SHOULD BE.
KLAK
SOMEWHERE TO HIDE.

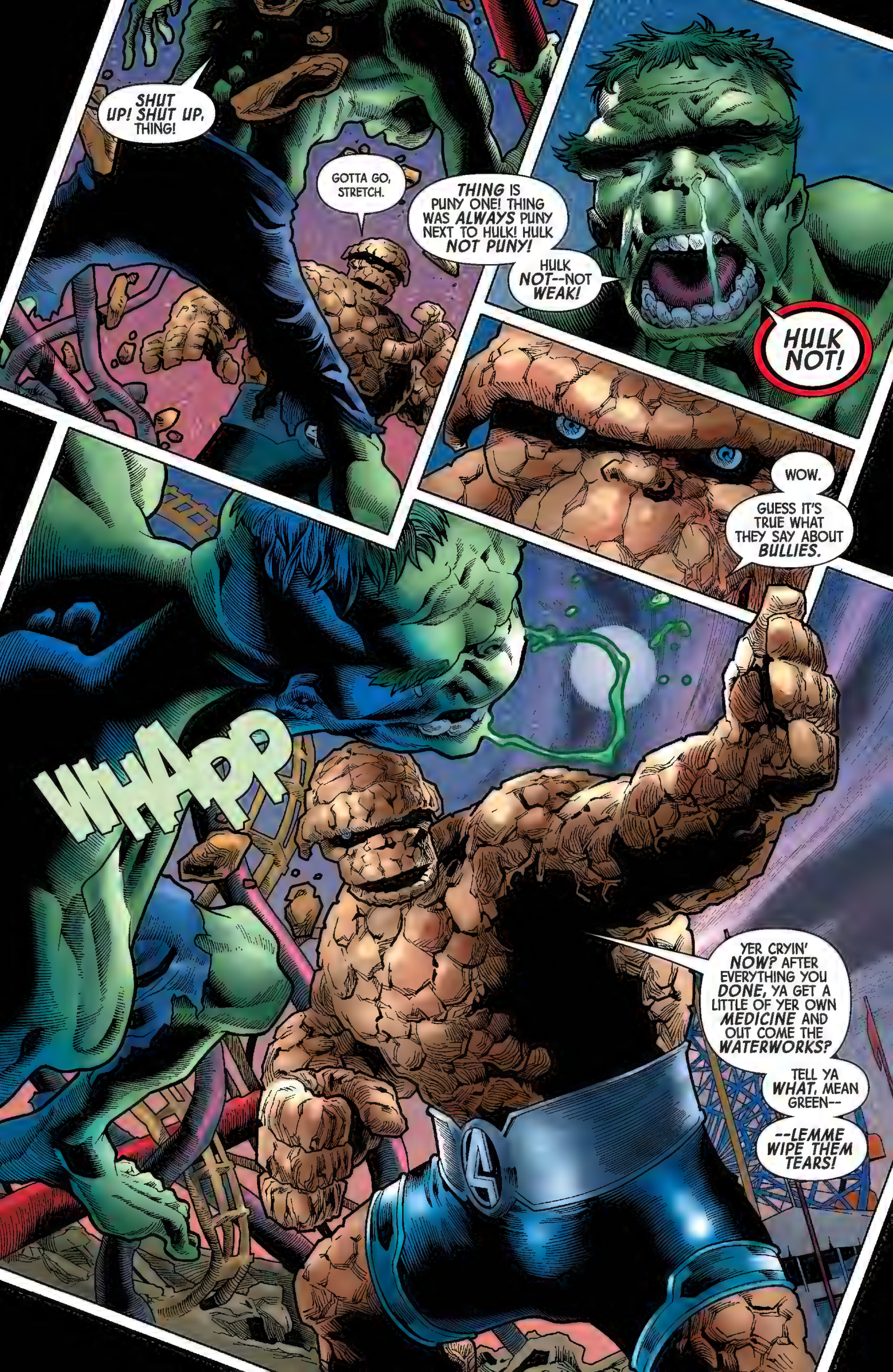

THIS ISN'T EVEN AN *OFFICIAL* SHADOW BASE SITE--THERE AREN'T ANY *LEFT.* IT'S JUST A *SAFE HOUSE* I THREW TOGETHER WHEN I HAD THE RESOURCES.
I SHOULD BE *HIDING* HERE. WORKING OUT HOW TO RUN AWAY FROM THIS WHOLE *MESS.*
I SHOULDN'T BE WORKING OUT HOW TO *FIGHT BACK.*
BUT I AM.
MAYBE IT'S *GUILT.* MAYBE IT'S *ANGER.* MAYBE I'M JUST *SICK* OF RUNNING AND HIDING.
BUT I *STILL* BELIEVE IN BRUCE BANNER. I BELIEVE IN THE *HULK.*

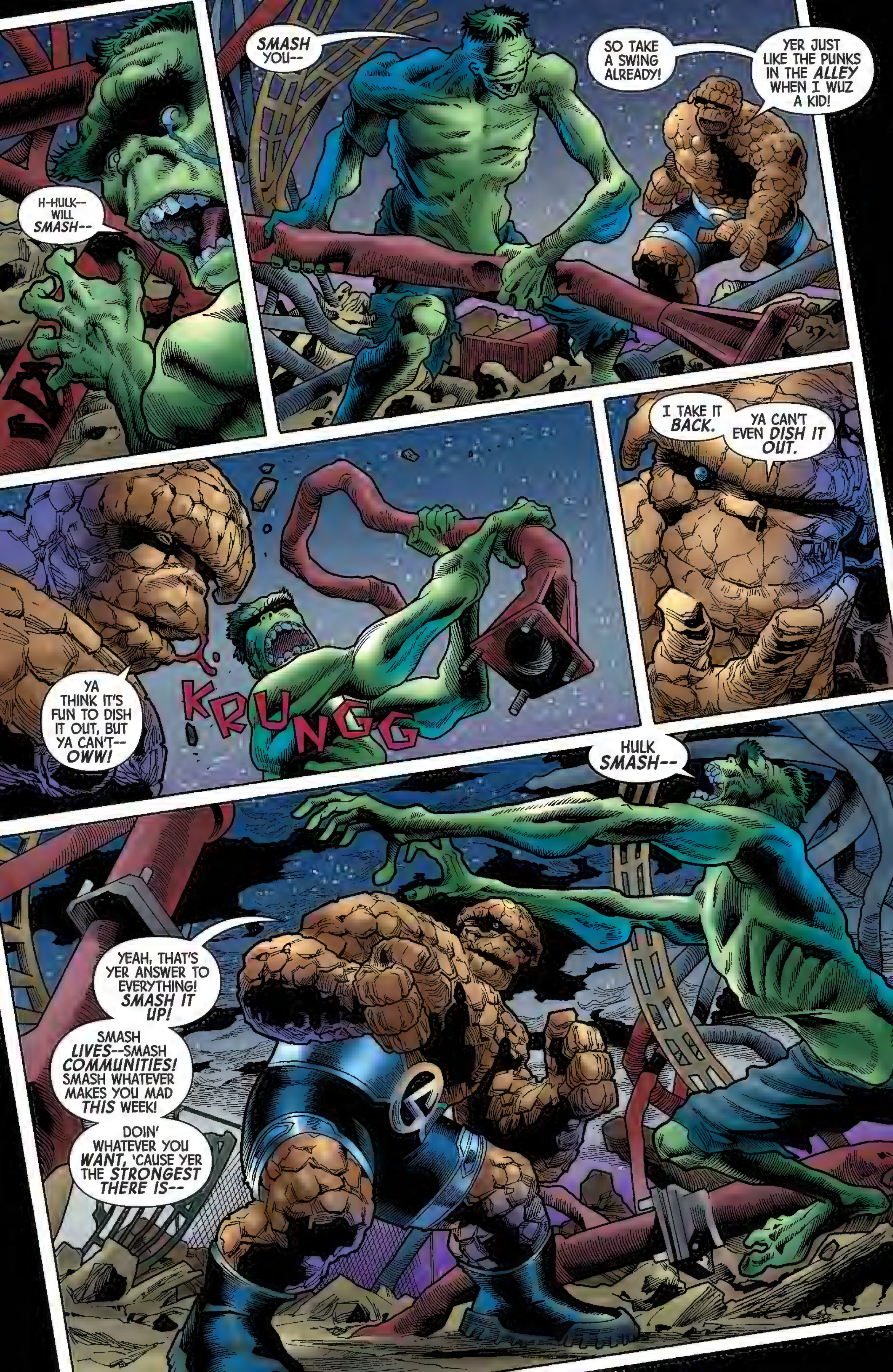

AND I BELIEVE HE NEEDS HIS *FRIENDS.*
CONEY ISLAND.
THOOM
IGHTMARE
YOU OKAY, BEN?

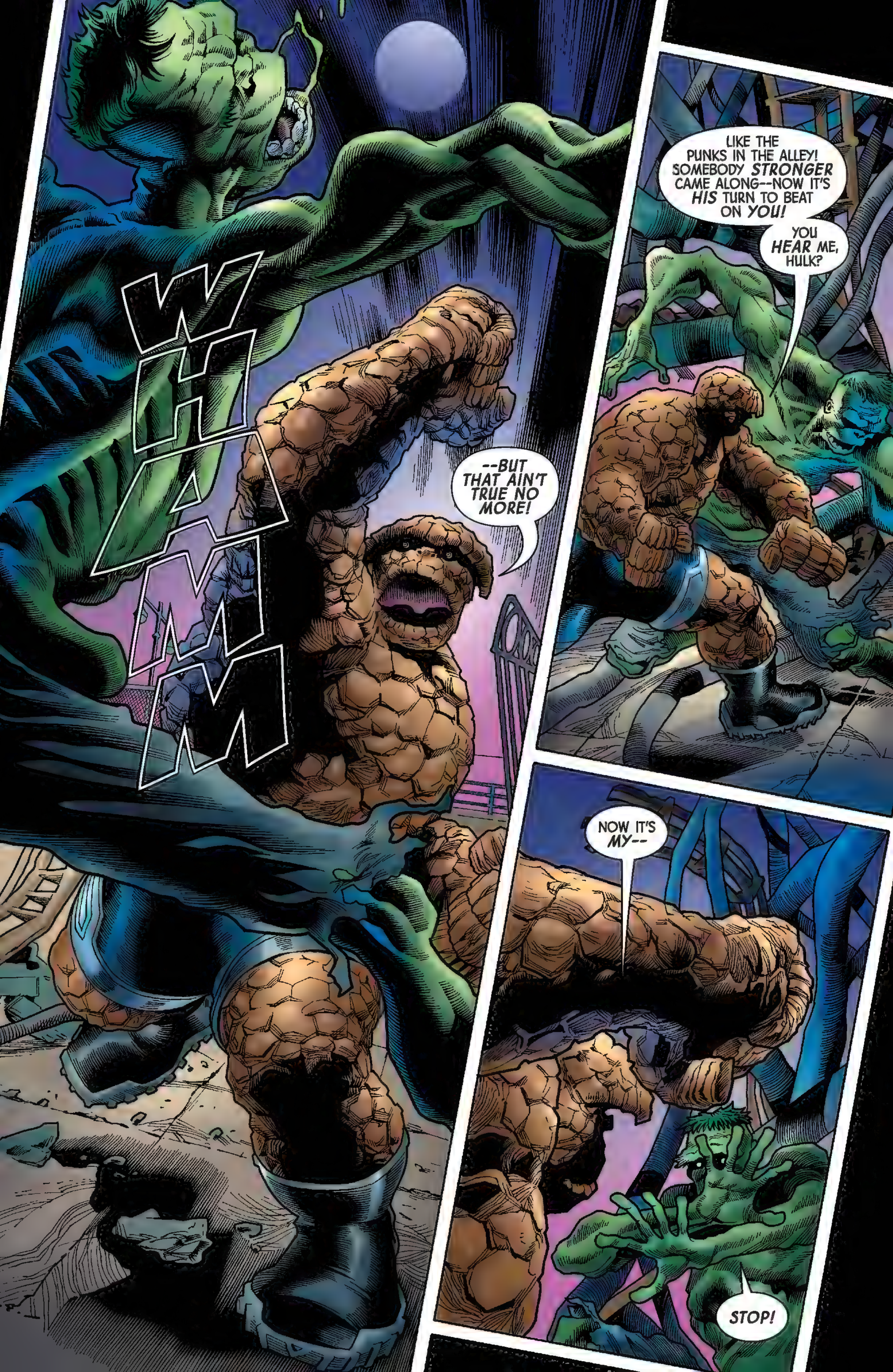

GHTMARE
WE'VE GOT YOU ON THE BOARDWALK...
AIN'T NOTHIN', REED. OL' JADE JAWS TRIED TO MAKE A BREAK FOR IT, IS ALL.
NOT MUCH OF A HULK LEAP-- I KEPT RIGHT ON HIS TAIL, AND I AIN'T NEVER BEEN A--
WHUDD
RRAARRGH!
HULK SMASH THING!
WHAT GIVES?
YA SWITCH UP YER BREAKFAST CEREAL OR SOMETHIN'?
WHOK
NOT TO NAME DROP, BUT SPIDEY HIT ME HARDER'N YOU JUST DID--
--BACK WHEN HE WUZ FRANKLIN'S AGE!

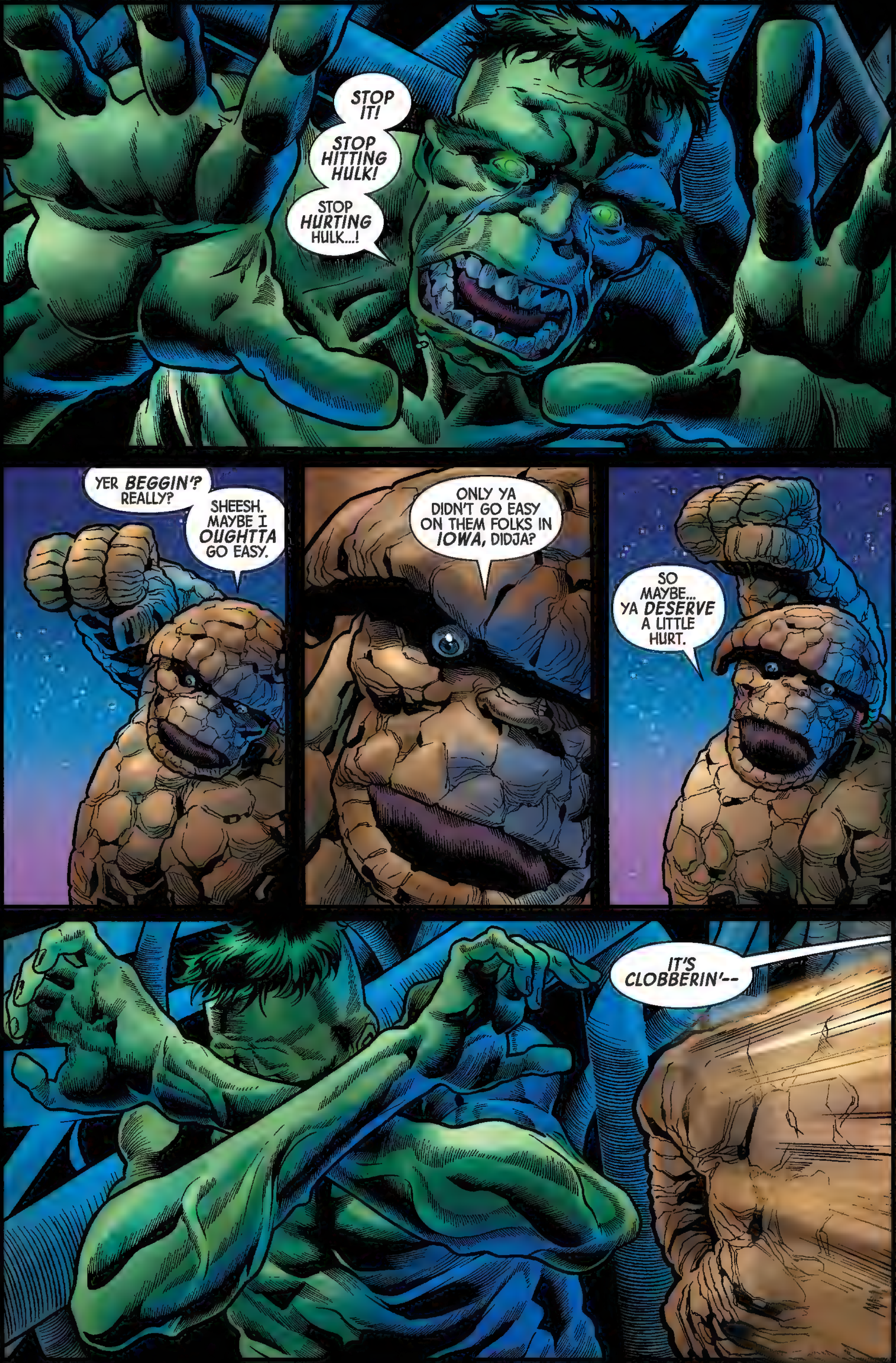

KROOMM
WHOOPS.
UH, REED-- THE "NIGHTMARE" RIDE...THAT WUZ SCHEDULED FER DEMOLITION, RIGHT?
BEN, THE WHOLE POINT OF THIS APPROACH WAS TO KEEP THE HULK CONTAINED...
PUT ME ON.
DON'T PUT SUZIE ON! HE'S CONTAINED, I SWEAR! GOT 'IM RIGHT WHERE I WANT 'IM!
HECK, HE'S A REGULAR PUSSYCAT--AT LEAST COMPARED TO LAST TIME!
REMEMBER WHEN HE BEAT ME INTO A COMA ON MY HONEYMOON?*
NEXT TO HOW HE WUZ THEN...
...HE'S ALMOST PUNY!

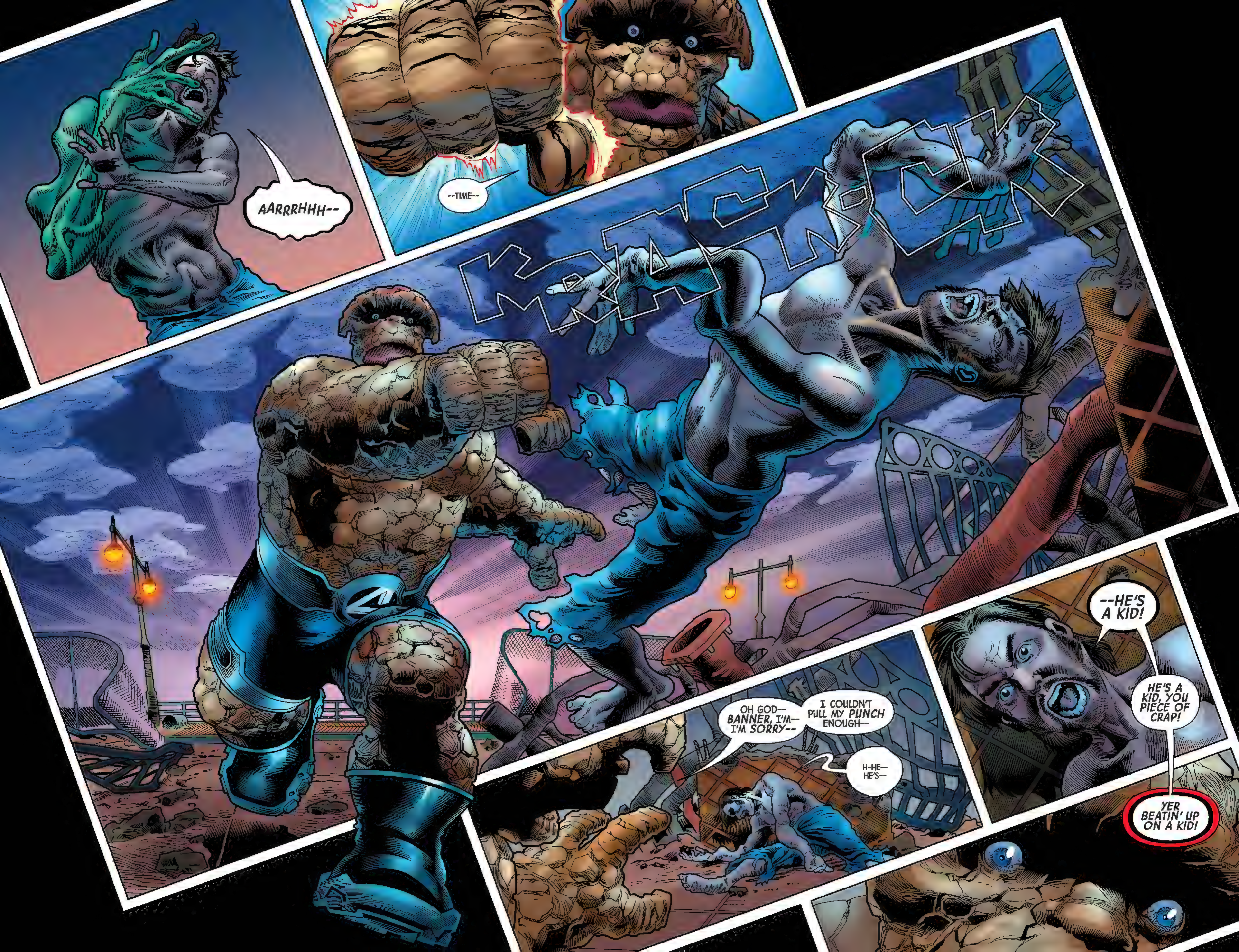
*FANTASTIC FOUR (2018) #12.

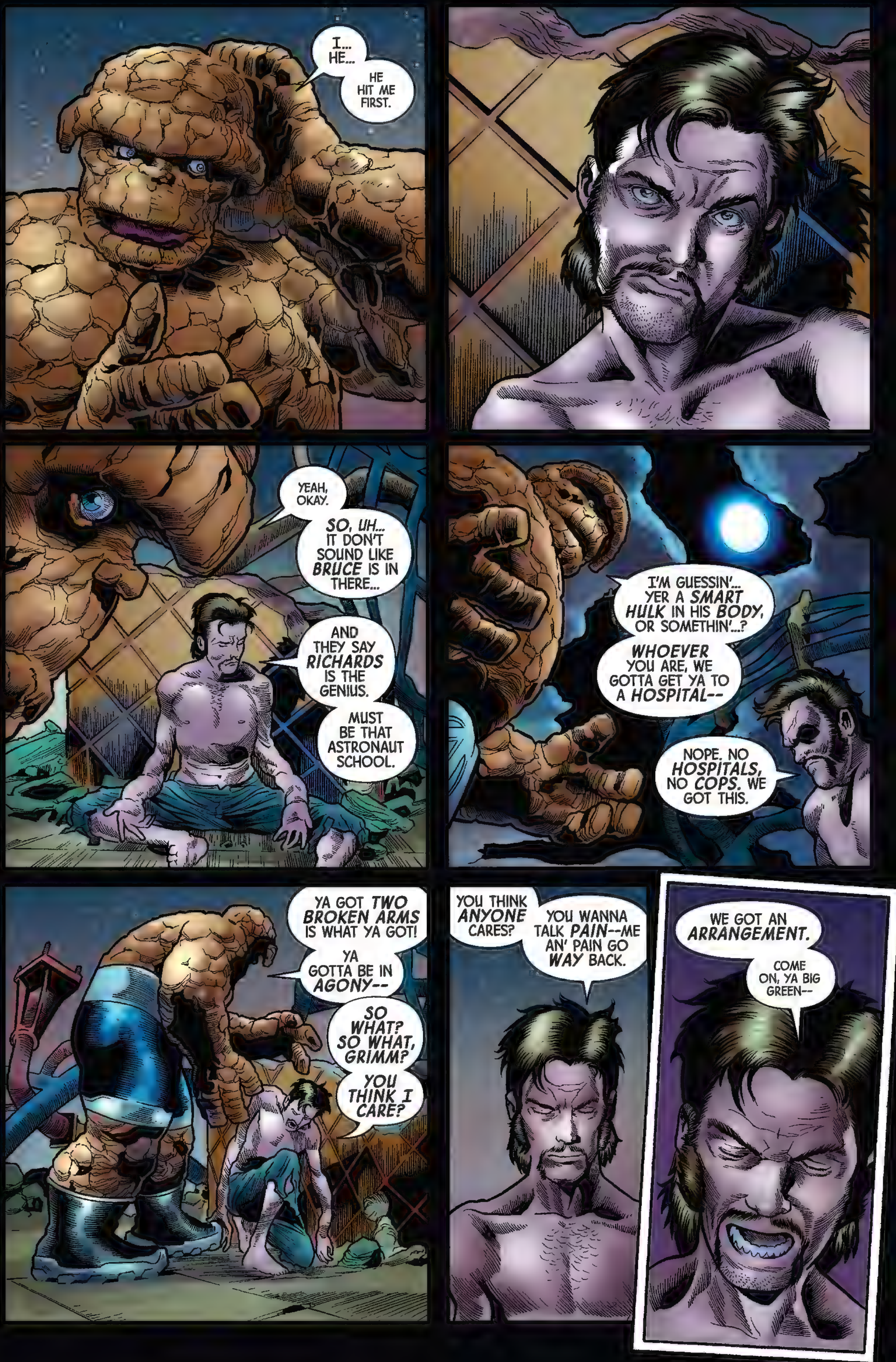

SHUT UP! SHUT UP, THING!
GOTTA GO, STRETCH.
THING IS PUNY ONE! THING WAS ALWAYS PUNY NEXT TO HULK! HULK NOT PUNY!
HULK NOT--NOT WEAK!
HULK NOT!
WOW.
GUESS IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT BULLIES.
WHAPP
YER CRYIN' NOW? AFTER EVERYTHING YOU DONE, YA GET A LITTLE OF YER OWN MEDICINE AND OUT COME THE WATERWORKS?
TELL YA WHAT, MEAN GREEN--
--LEMME WIPE THEM TEARS!

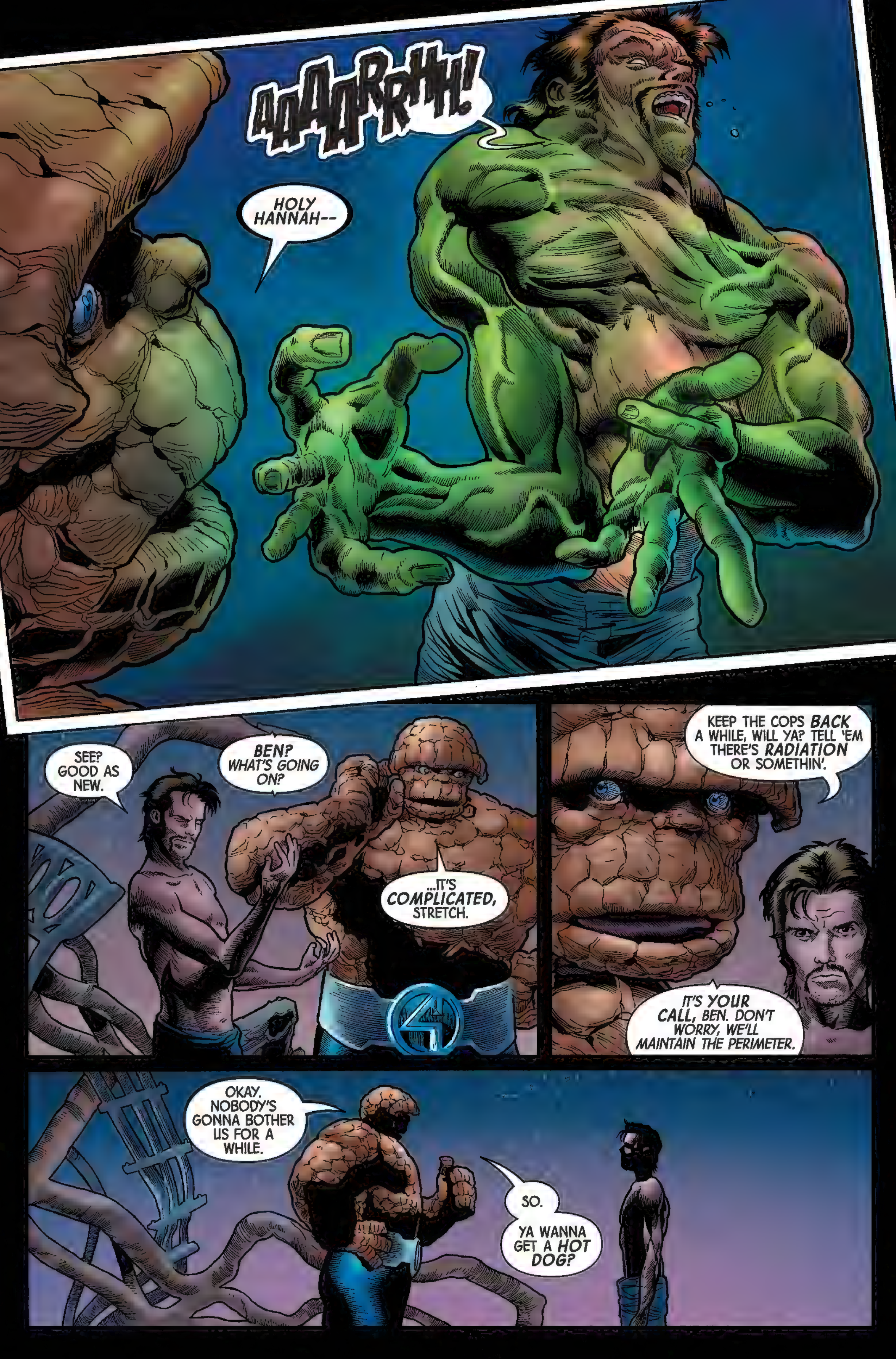

H-HULK-- WILL SMASH--
SMASH YOU--
SO TAKE A SWING ALREADY!
YER JUST LIKE THE PUNKS IN THE ALLEY WHEN I WUZ A KID!
YA THINK IT'S FUN TO DISH IT OUT, BUT YA CAN'T-- OWW!
KRUNGG
I TAKE IT BACK.
YA CAN'T EVEN DISH IT OUT.
HULK SMASH--
YEAH, THAT'S YER ANSWER TO EVERYTHING! SMASH IT UP!
SMASH LIVES--SMASH COMMUNITIES! SMASH WHATEVER MAKES YOU MAD THIS WEEK!
DOIN' WHATEVER YOU WANT, 'CAUSE YER THE STRONGEST THERE IS--

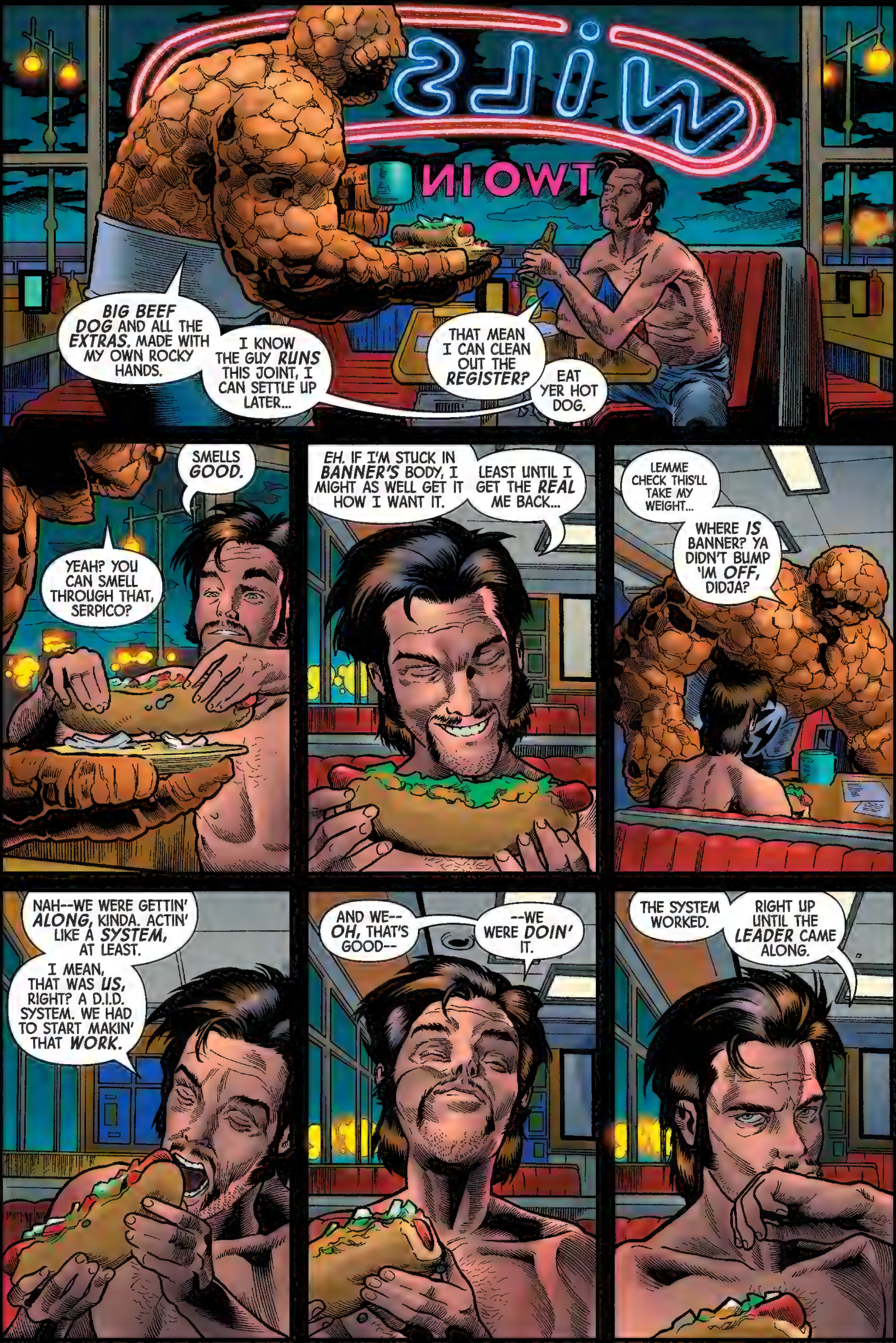

WHAMMM
--BUT THAT AIN'T TRUE NO MORE!
LIKE THE PUNKS IN THE ALLEY! SOMEBODY STRONGER CAME ALONG--NOW IT'S HIS TURN TO BEAT ON YOU!
YOU HEAR ME, HULK?
NOW IT'S MY--
STOP!

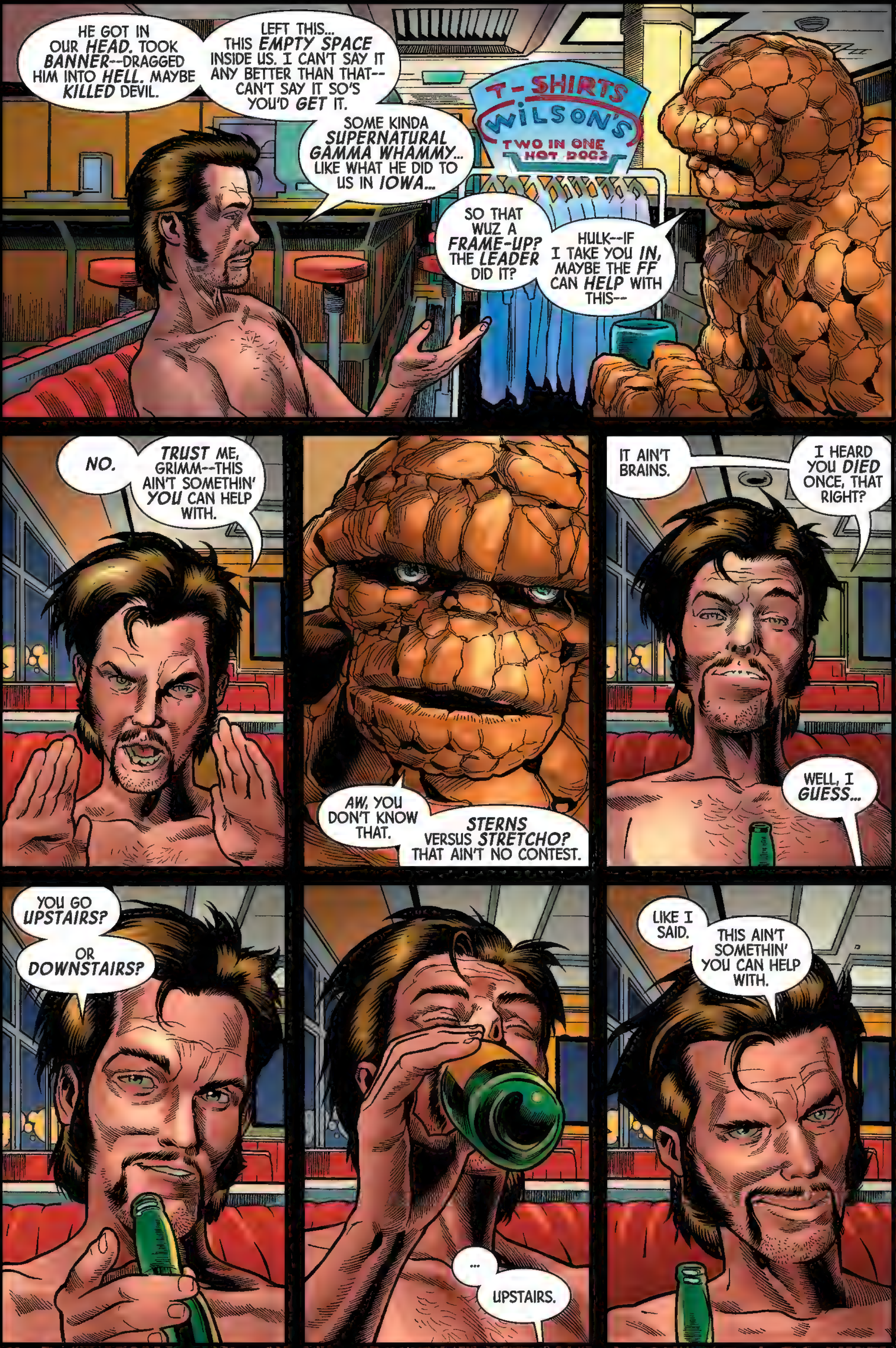

STOP IT!
STOP HITTING HULK!
STOP HURTING HULK...!
YER BEGGIN'? REALLY?
SHEESH. MAYBE I OUGHTTA GO EASY.
ONLY YA DIDN'T GO EASY ON THEM FOLKS IN IOWA, DIDJA?
SO MAYBE... YA DESERVE A LITTLE HURT.
IT'S CLOBBERIN'--

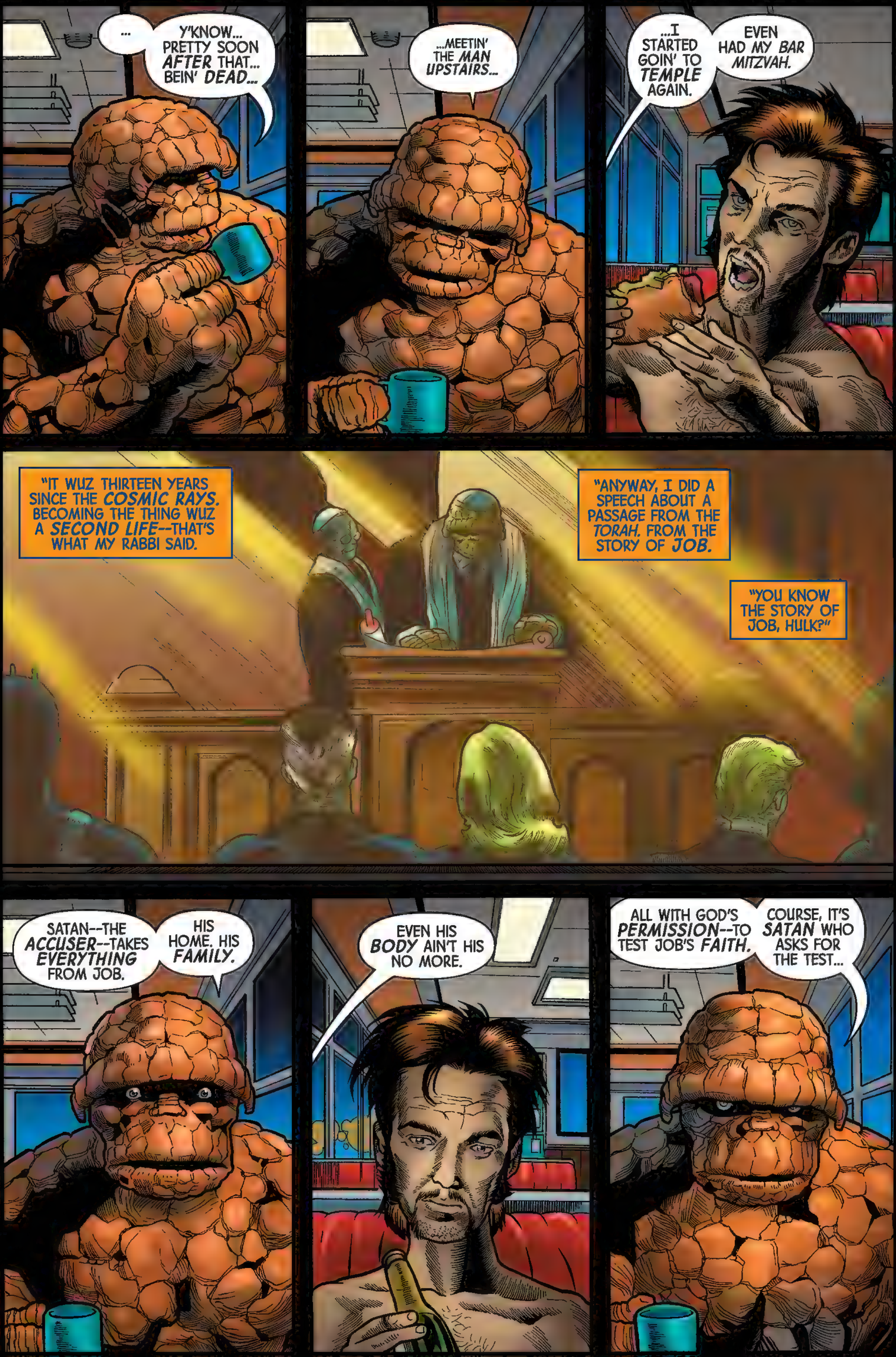

AARRRHHH--
--TIME--
KRACWACK
OH GOD-- BANNER, I'M-- I'M SORRY--
I COULDN'T PULL MY PUNCH ENOUGH--
H-HE-- HE'S--
--HE'S A KID!
HE'S A KID, YOU PIECE OF CRAP!
YER BEATIN' UP ON A KID!

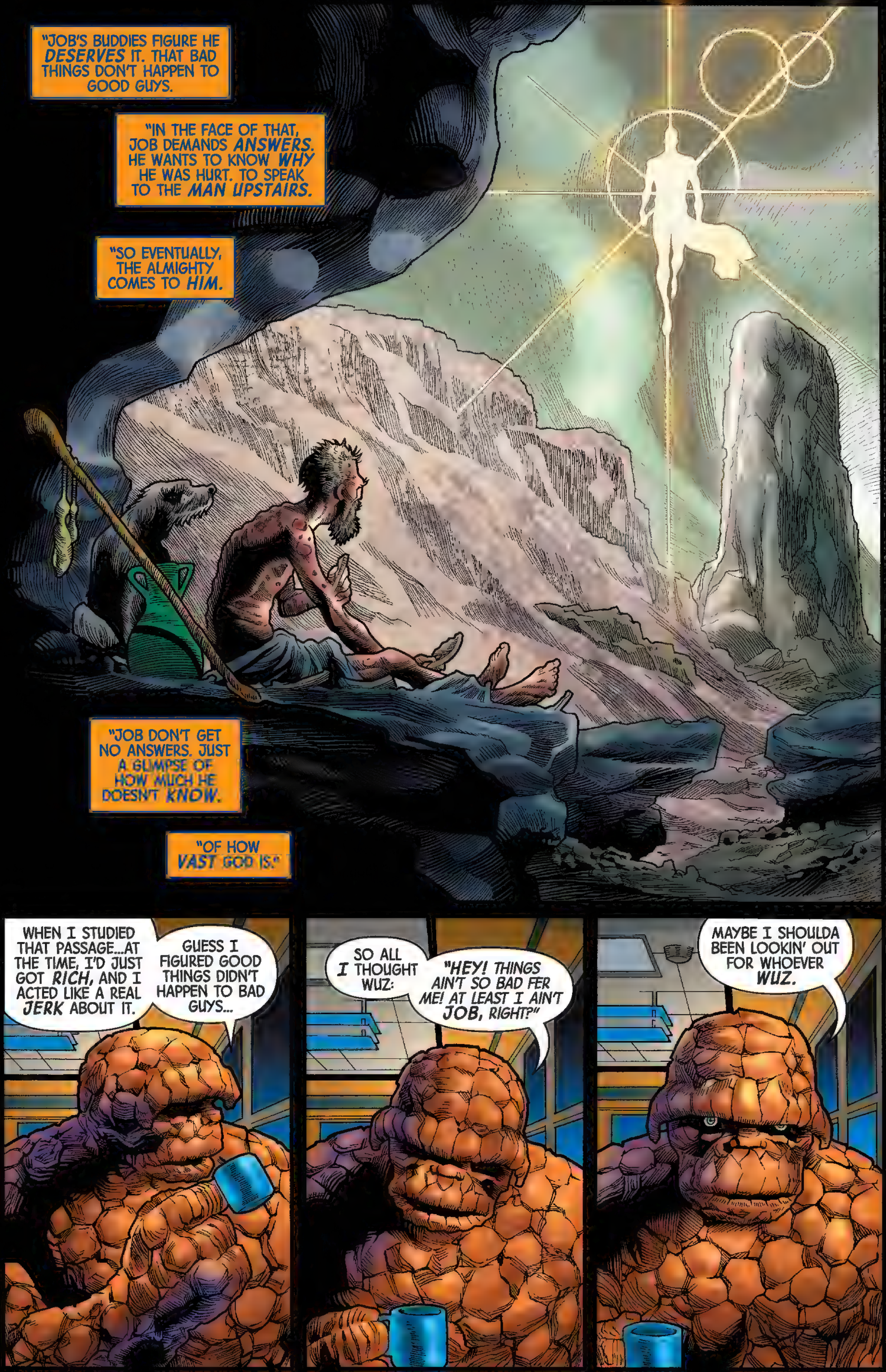

I... HE... HE HIT ME FIRST.
YEAH, OKAY.
SO, UH... IT DON'T SOUND LIKE BRUCE IS IN THERE...
AND THEY SAY RICHARDS IS THE GENIUS.
MUST BE THAT ASTRONAUT SCHOOL.
I'M GUESSIN'... YER A SMART HULK IN HIS BODY, OR SOMETHIN'...?
WHOEVER YOU ARE, WE GOTTA GET YA TO A HOSPITAL--
NOPE. NO HOSPITALS, NO COPS. WE GOT THIS.
YA GOT TWO BROKEN ARMS IS WHAT YA GOT!
YA GOTTA BE IN AGONY--
SO WHAT? SO WHAT, GRIMM?
YOU THINK I CARE?
YOU THINK ANYONE CARES?
YOU WANNA TALK PAIN--ME AN' PAIN GO WAY BACK.
WE GOT AN ARRANGEMENT.
COME ON, YA BIG GREEN--

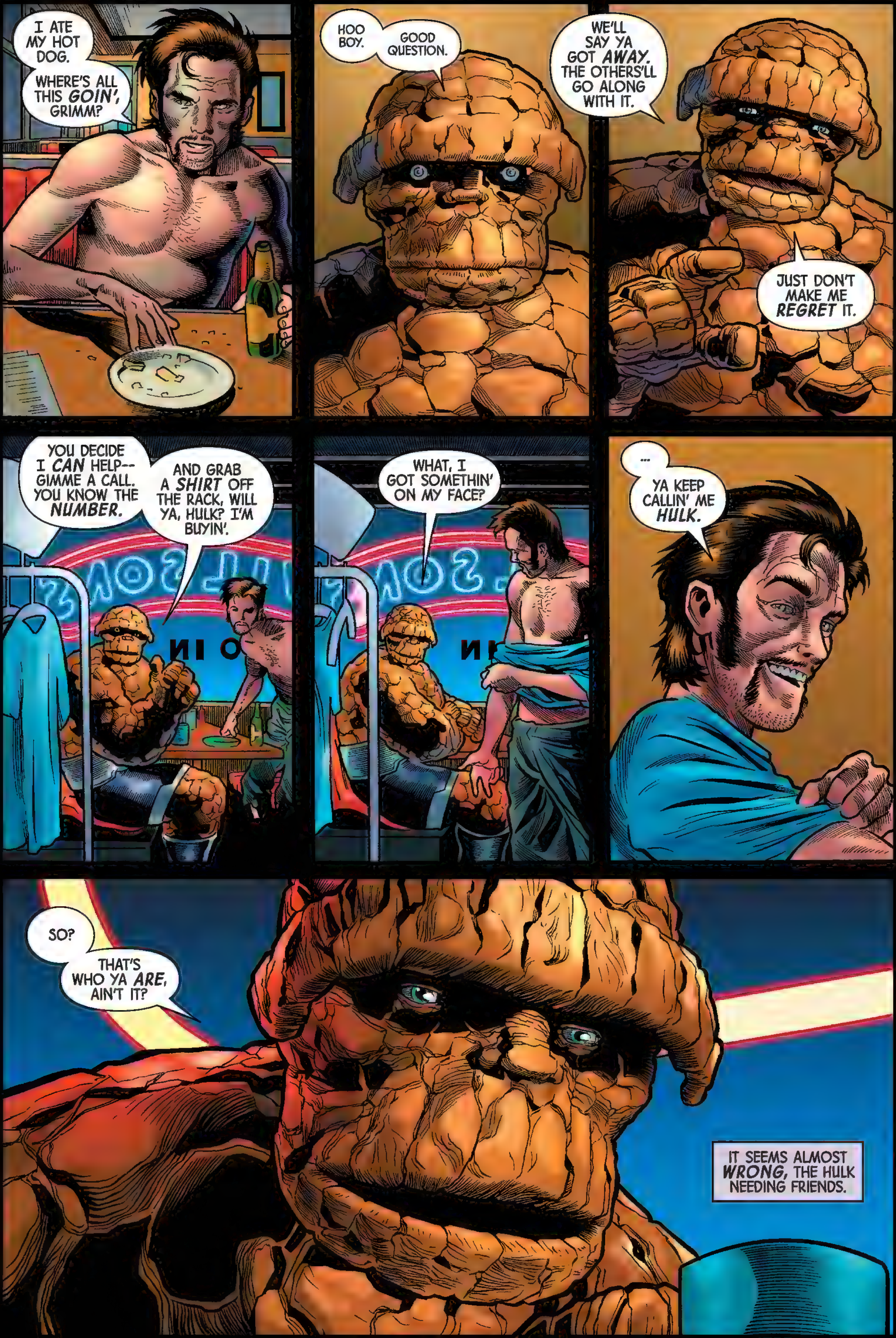

AAAARRHH!
HOLY HANNAH--
SEE? GOOD AS NEW.
BEN? WHAT'S GOING ON?
...IT'S COMPLICATED, STRETCH.
KEEP THE COPS BACK A WHILE, WILL YA? TELL 'EM THERE'S RADIATION OR SOMETHIN'.
IT'S YOUR CALL, BEN. DON'T WORRY, WE'LL MAINTAIN THE PERIMETER.
OKAY. NOBODY'S GONNA BOTHER US FOR A WHILE.
SO.
YA WANNA GET A HOT DOG?

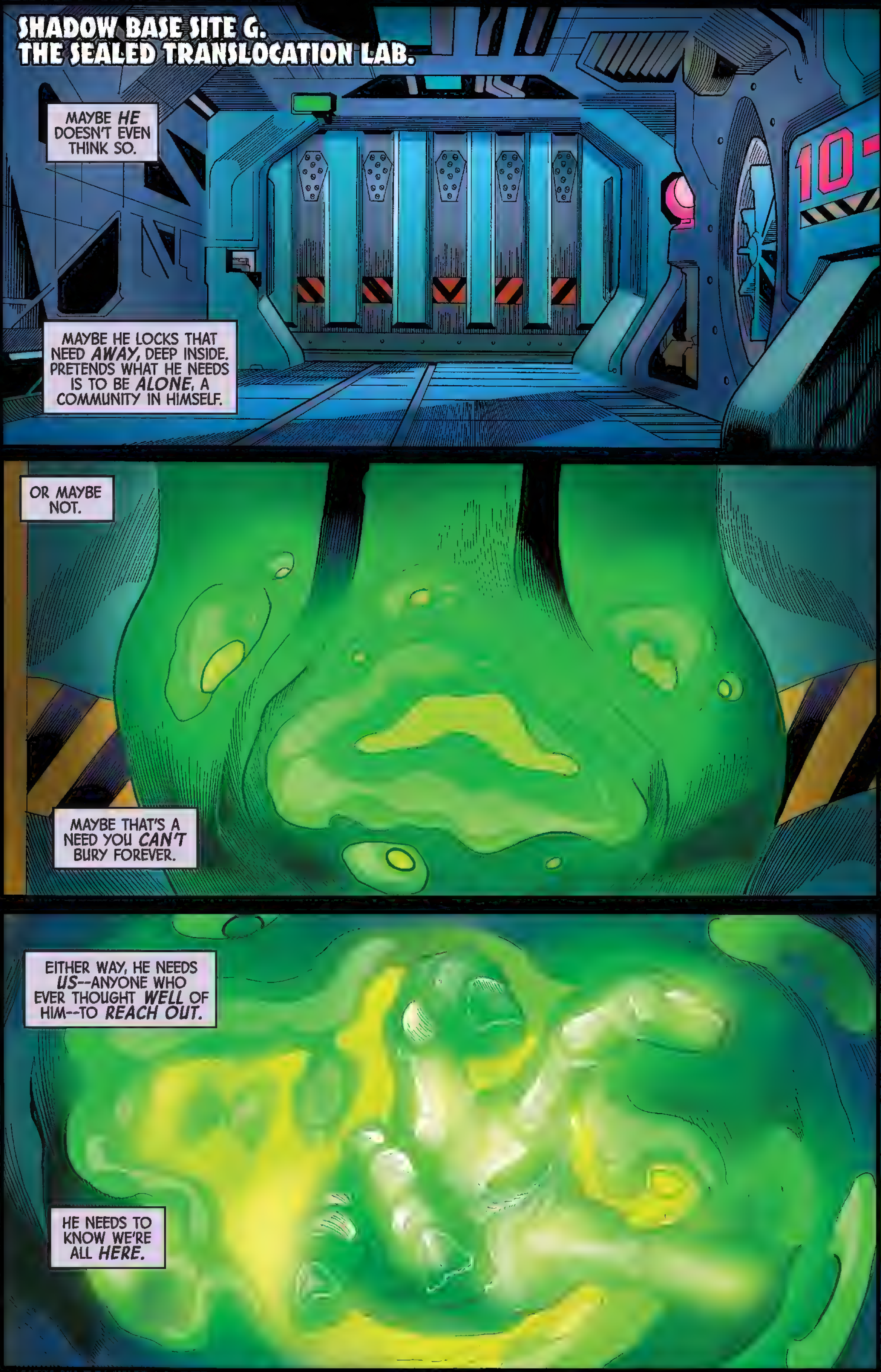

BIG BEEF DOG AND ALL THE *EXTRAS.* MADE WITH MY OWN ROCKY HANDS.
I KNOW THE GUY *RUNS* THIS JOINT, I CAN SETTLE UP LATER...
THAT MEAN I CAN CLEAN OUT THE *REGISTER?*
EAT YER HOT DOG.
SMELLS *GOOD.*
YEAH? YOU CAN SMELL THROUGH THAT, SERPICO?
EH. IF I'M STUCK IN *BANNER'S* BODY, I MIGHT AS WELL GET IT HOW I WANT IT.
LEAST UNTIL I GET THE *REAL* ME BACK...
LEMME CHECK THIS'LL TAKE MY WEIGHT...
WHERE *IS* BANNER? YA DIDN'T BUMP 'IM *OFF,* DIDJA?
NAH--WE WERE GETTIN' *ALONG,* KINDA. ACTIN' LIKE A *SYSTEM,* AT LEAST.
I MEAN, THAT WAS *US,* RIGHT? A D.I.D. SYSTEM. WE HAD TO START MAKIN' THAT *WORK.*
AND WE-- *OH,* THAT'S GOOD--
--WE WERE *DOIN'* IT.
THE SYSTEM WORKED.
RIGHT UP UNTIL THE *LEADER* CAME ALONG.

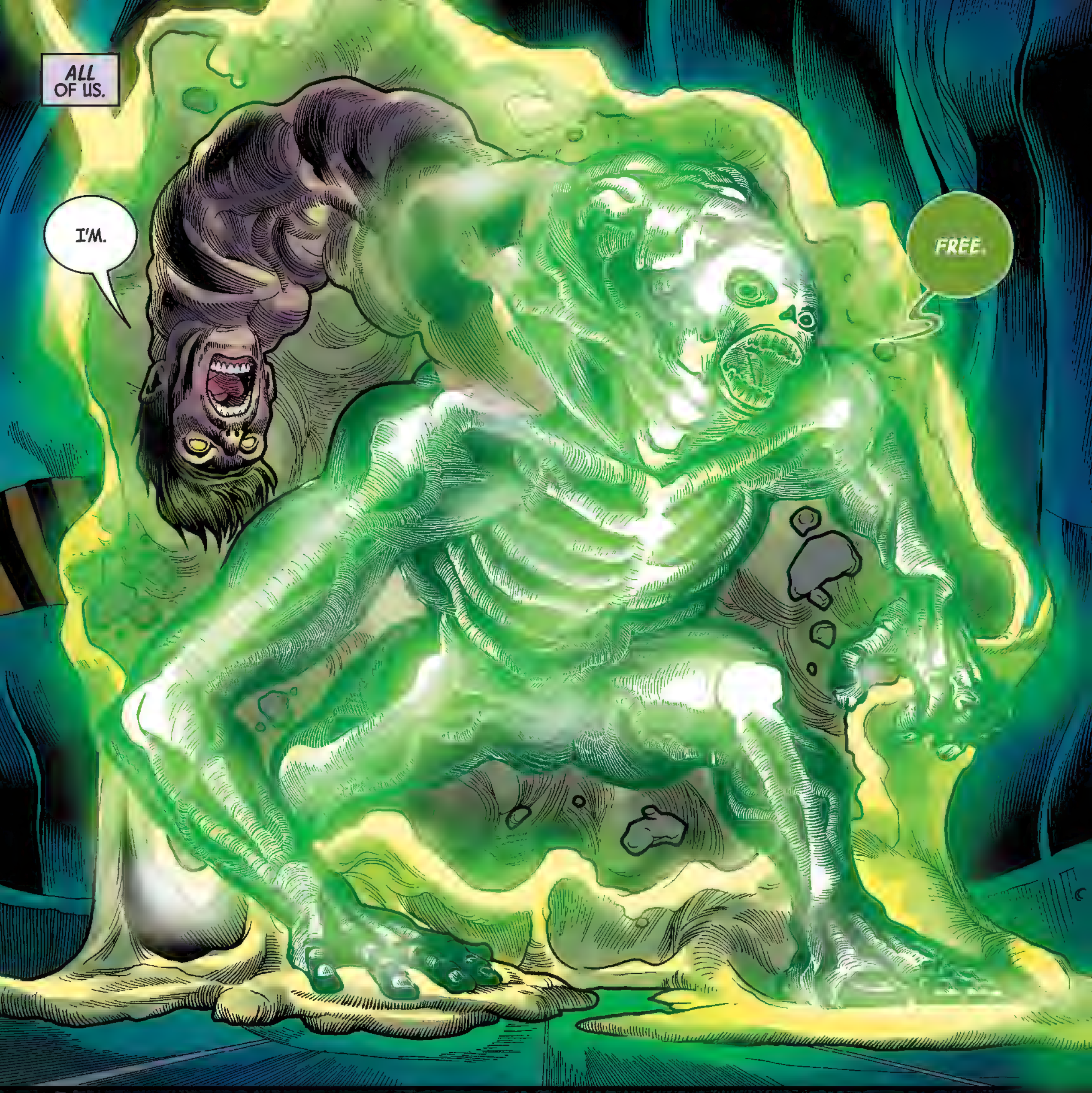

HE GOT IN OUR HEAD. TOOK BANNER--DRAGGED HIM INTO HELL. MAYBE KILLED DEVIL.
LEFT THIS... THIS EMPTY SPACE INSIDE US. I CAN'T SAY IT ANY BETTER THAN THAT--CAN'T SAY IT SO'S YOU'D GET IT.
SOME KINDA SUPERNATURAL GAMMA WHAMMY... LIKE WHAT HE DID TO US IN IOWA...
T-SHIRTS
WILSON'S
TWO IN ONE HOT DOGS
SO THAT WUZ A FRAME-UP? THE LEADER DID IT?
HULK--IF I TAKE YOU IN, MAYBE THE FF CAN HELP WITH THIS--
NO.
TRUST ME, GRIMM--THIS AIN'T SOMETHIN' YOU CAN HELP WITH.
AW, YOU DON'T KNOW THAT.
STERNS VERSUS STRETCHO? THAT AIN'T NO CONTEST.
IT AIN'T BRAINS.
I HEARD YOU DIED ONCE, THAT RIGHT?
WELL, I GUESS...
YOU GO UPSTAIRS?
OR DOWNSTAIRS?
...
UPSTAIRS.
LIKE I SAID.
THIS AIN'T SOMETHIN' YOU CAN HELP WITH.


...
Y'KNOW... PRETTY SOON AFTER THAT... BEIN' DEAD...
...MEETIN' THE MAN UPSTAIRS...
...I STARTED GOIN' TO TEMPLE AGAIN.
EVEN HAD MY BAR MITZVAH.
"IT WUZ THIRTEEN YEARS SINCE THE COSMIC RAYS. BECOMING THE THING WUZ A SECOND LIFE--THAT'S WHAT MY RABBI SAID.
"ANYWAY, I DID A SPEECH ABOUT A PASSAGE FROM THE TORAH. FROM THE STORY OF JOB.
"YOU KNOW THE STORY OF JOB, HULK?"
SATAN--THE ACCUSER--TAKES EVERYTHING FROM JOB.
HIS HOME. HIS FAMILY.
EVEN HIS BODY AIN'T HIS NO MORE.
ALL WITH GOD'S PERMISSION--TO TEST JOB'S FAITH.
COURSE, IT'S SATAN WHO ASKS FOR THE TEST...

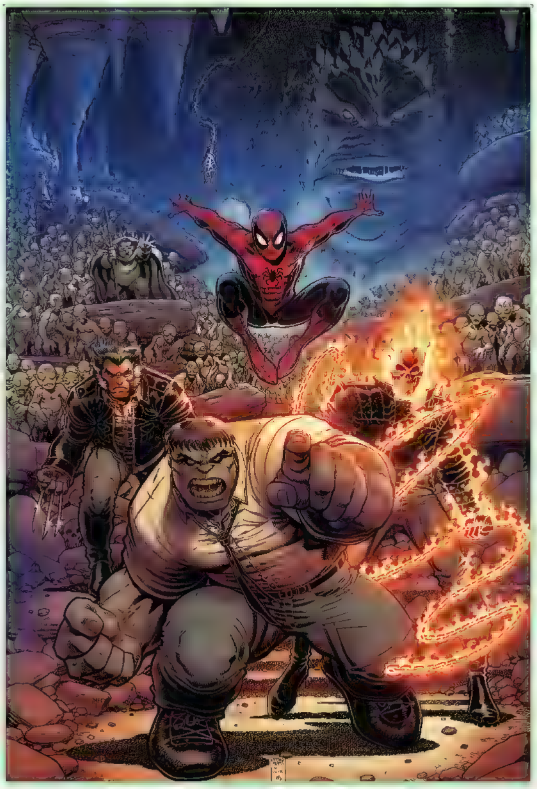

"JOB'S BUDDIES FIGURE HE DESERVES IT. THAT BAD THINGS DON'T HAPPEN TO GOOD GUYS.
"IN THE FACE OF THAT, JOB DEMANDS ANSWERS. HE WANTS TO KNOW WHY HE WAS HURT. TO SPEAK TO THE MAN UPSTAIRS.
"SO EVENTUALLY, THE ALMIGHTY COMES TO HIM.
"JOB DON'T GET NO ANSWERS. JUST A GLIMPSE OF HOW MUCH HE DOESN'T KNOW.
"OF HOW VAST GOD IS."
WHEN I STUDIED THAT PASSAGE...AT THE TIME, I'D JUST GOT RICH, AND I ACTED LIKE A REAL JERK ABOUT IT.
GUESS I FIGURED GOOD THINGS DIDN'T HAPPEN TO BAD GUYS...
SO ALL I THOUGHT WUZ:
"HEY! THINGS AIN'T SO BAD FER ME! AT LEAST I AIN'T JOB, RIGHT?"
MAYBE I SHOULDA BEEN LOOKIN' OUT FOR WHOEVER WUZ.


I ATE MY HOT DOG.
WHERE'S ALL THIS *GOIN',* GRIMM?
HOO BOY.
GOOD QUESTION.
WE'LL SAY YA GOT *AWAY.* THE OTHERS'LL GO ALONG WITH IT.
JUST DON'T MAKE ME *REGRET* IT.
YOU DECIDE I *CAN* HELP-- GIMME A CALL. YOU KNOW THE *NUMBER.*
AND GRAB A *SHIRT* OFF THE RACK, WILL YA, HULK? I'M BUYIN'.
WHAT, I GOT SOMETHIN' ON MY FACE?
...
YA KEEP CALLIN' ME *HULK.*
SO?
THAT'S WHO YA *ARE,* AIN'T IT?
IT SEEMS ALMOST *WRONG,* THE HULK NEEDING FRIENDS.

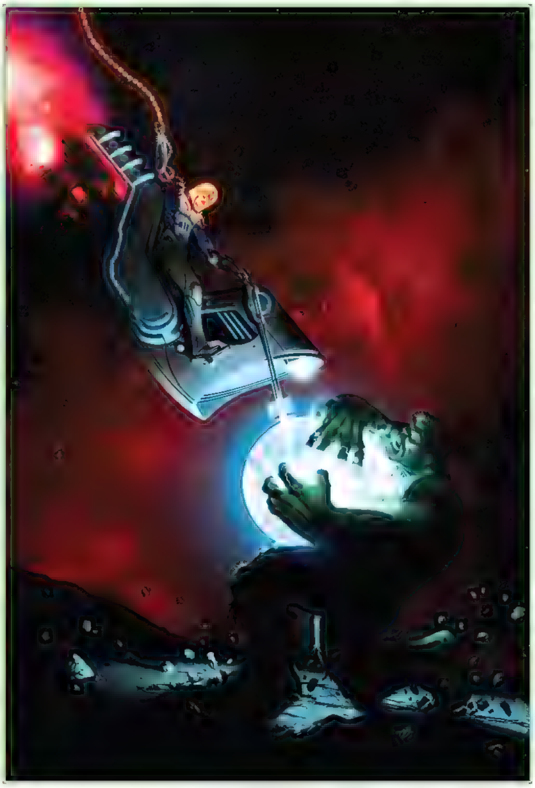

SHADOW BASE SITE G.
THE SEALED TRANSLOCATION LAB.
MAYBE *HE* DOESN'T EVEN THINK SO.
MAYBE HE LOCKS THAT NEED *AWAY*, DEEP INSIDE. PRETENDS WHAT HE NEEDS IS TO BE *ALONE*, A COMMUNITY IN HIMSELF.
10
OR MAYBE NOT.
MAYBE THAT'S A NEED YOU *CAN'T* BURY FOREVER.
EITHER WAY, HE NEEDS *US*--ANYONE WHO EVER THOUGHT *WELL* OF HIM--TO *REACH OUT*.
HE NEEDS TO KNOW WE'RE ALL *HERE*.


ALL OF US.
I'M.
FREE.

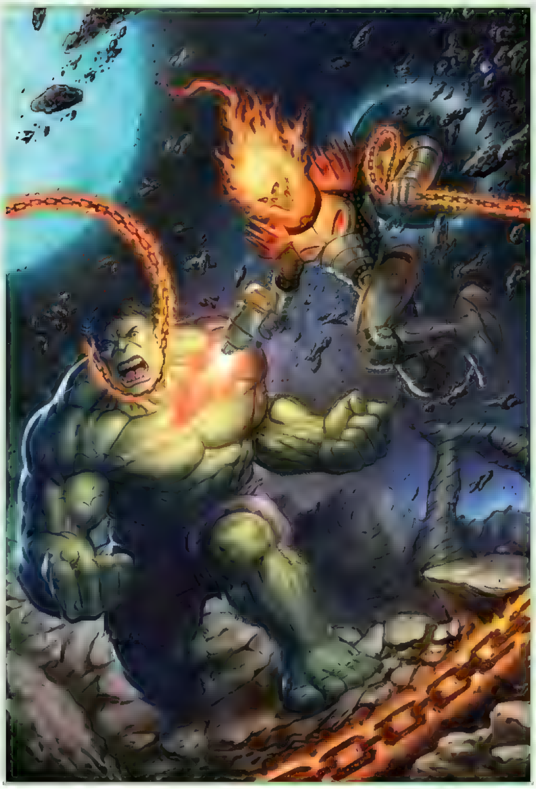
THE MAN DOWNSTAIRS



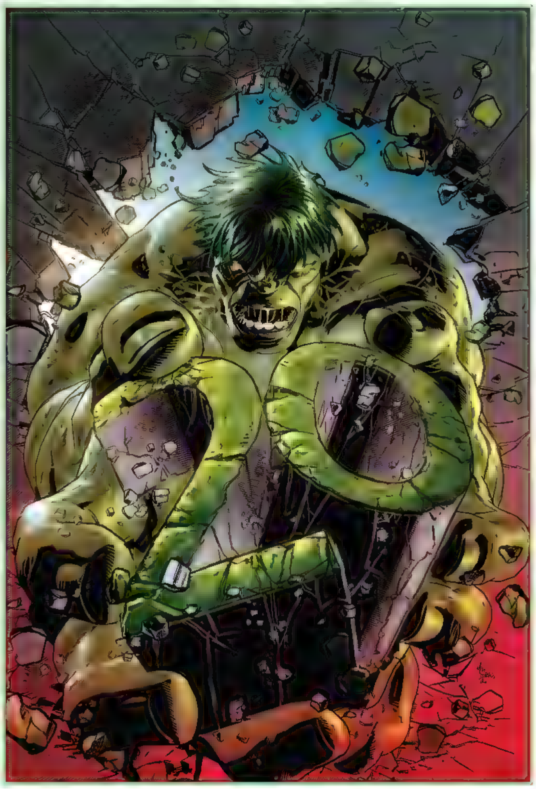
#4 FANTASTIC FOUR VARIANT BY
ARTHUR ADAMS & FRANK MARTIN



#5 COSMIC GHOST RIDER VS. VARIANT BY
RAHZZAH



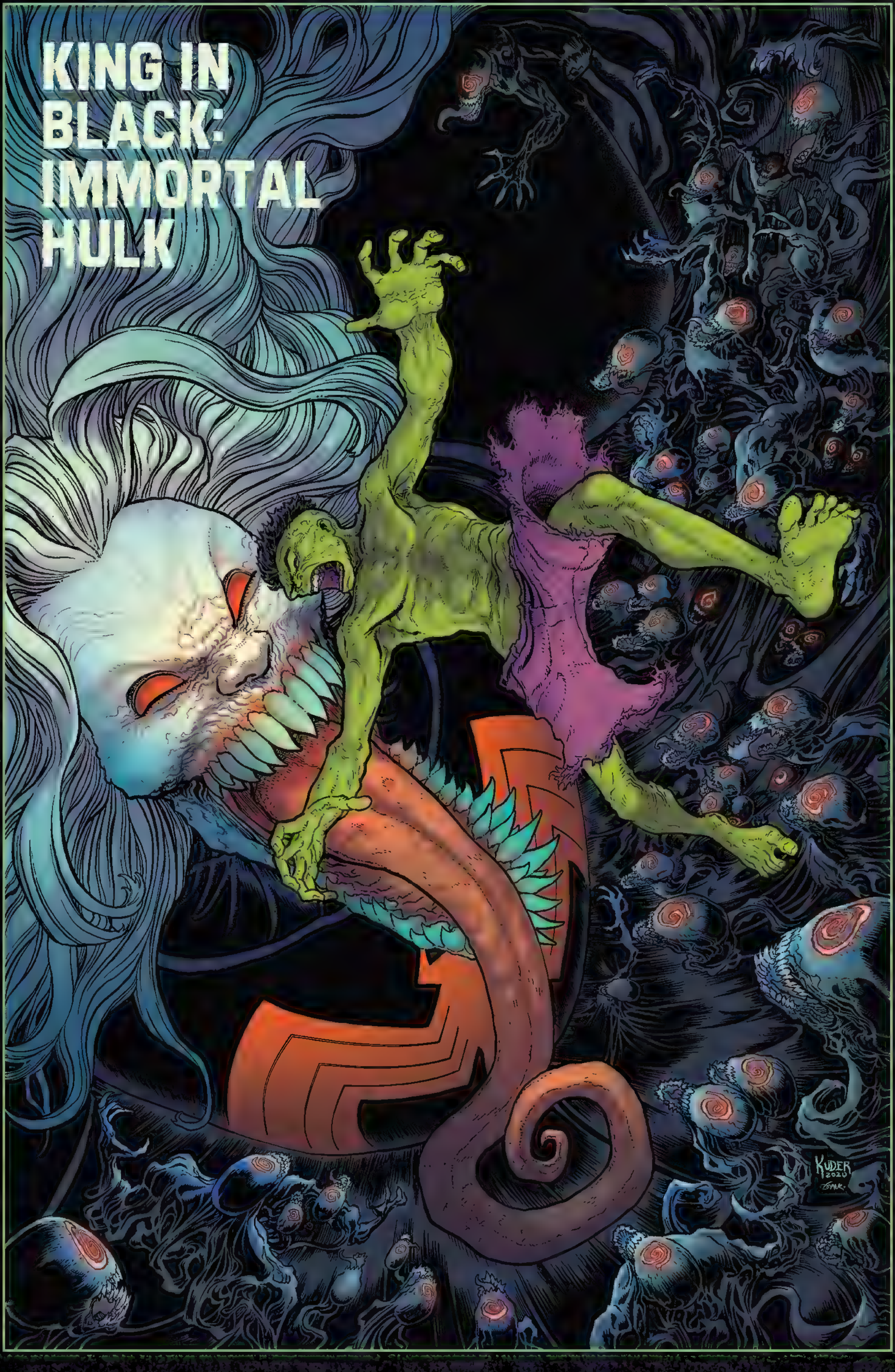
#6 COSMIC GHOST RIDER VS. VARIANT BY
BRENT SCHOONOVER & WOO DAE SHIM

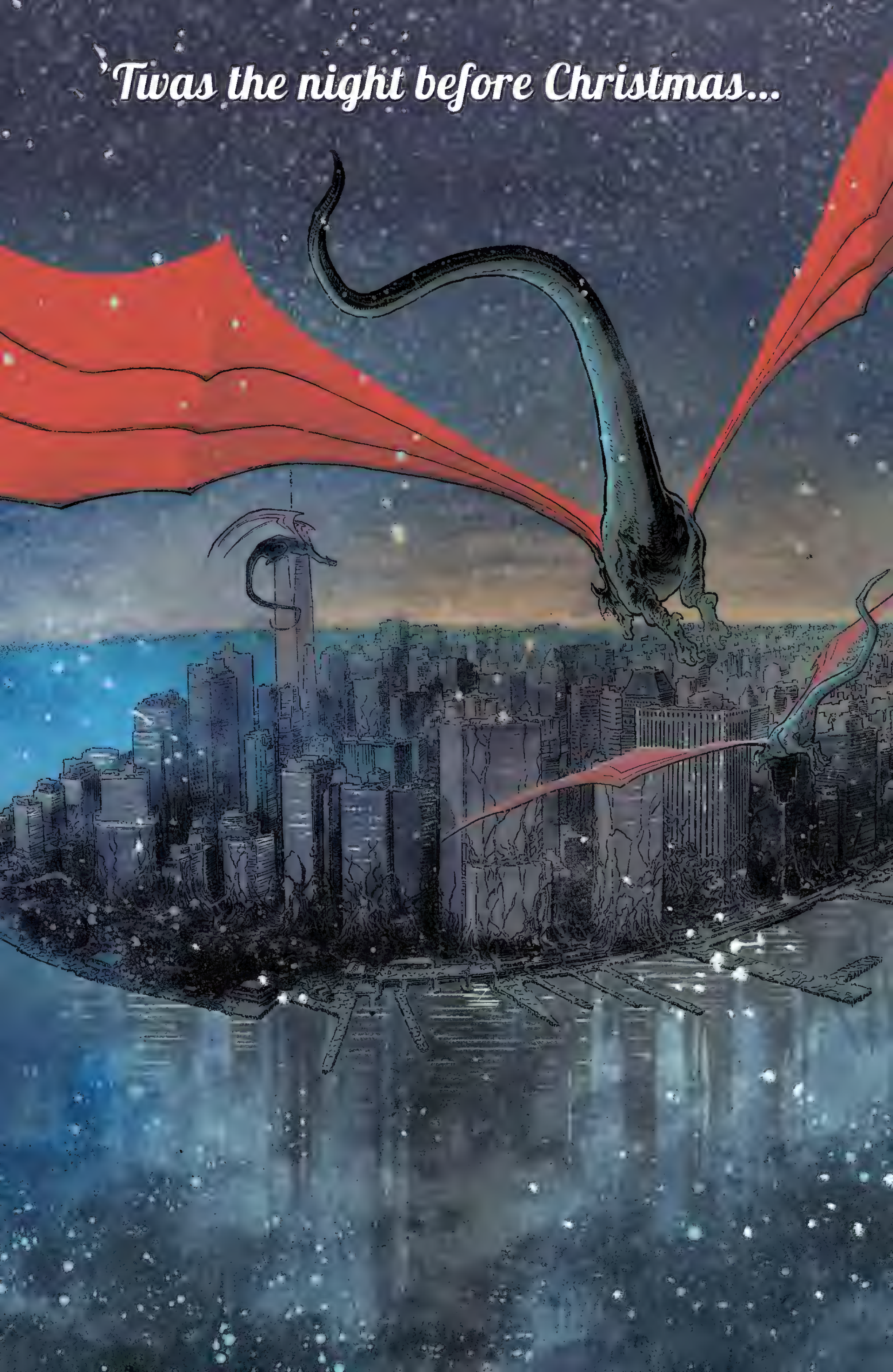


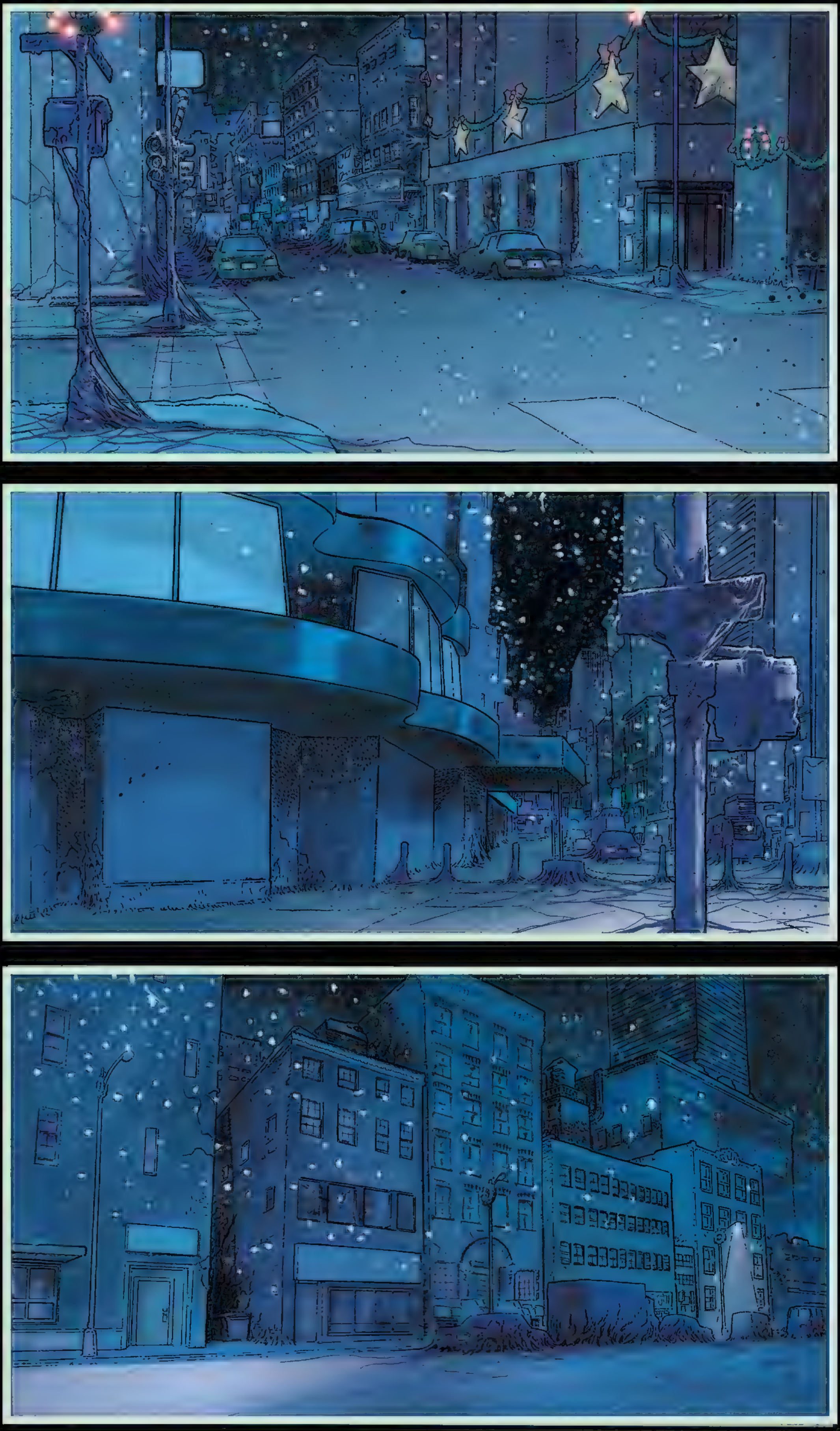
#7 MARVEL KNIGHTS 20TH ANNIVERSARY VARIANT
BY MIKE DEODATO JR. & RAIN BEREDO

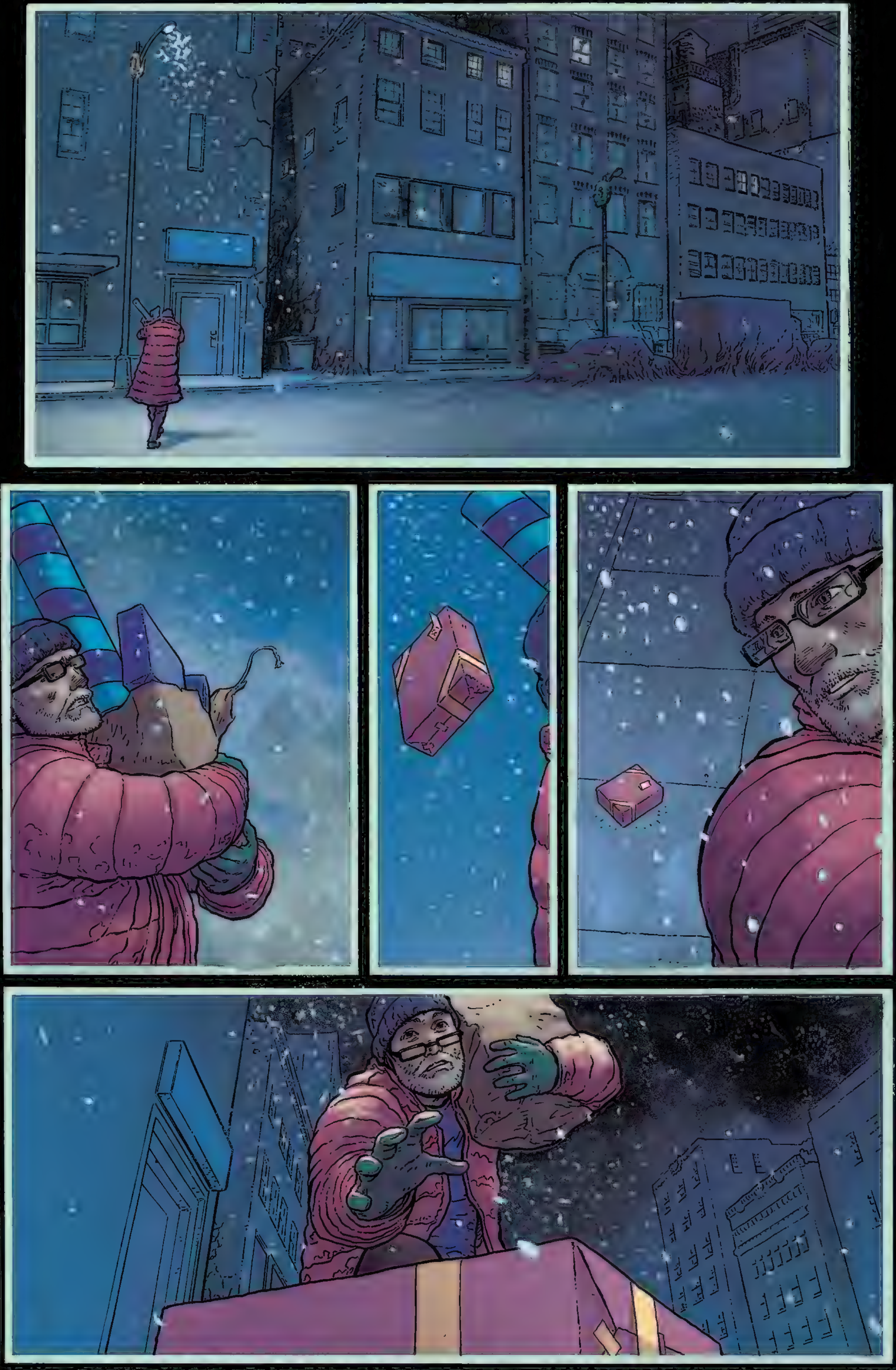
KNULL, THE PRIMORDIAL AND MALICIOUS **GOD OF THE SYMBIOTES**, HAS ARRIVED ON EARTH WITH AN ARMY OF SYMBIOTE DRAGONS. KNULL IS THE KING IN BLACK.

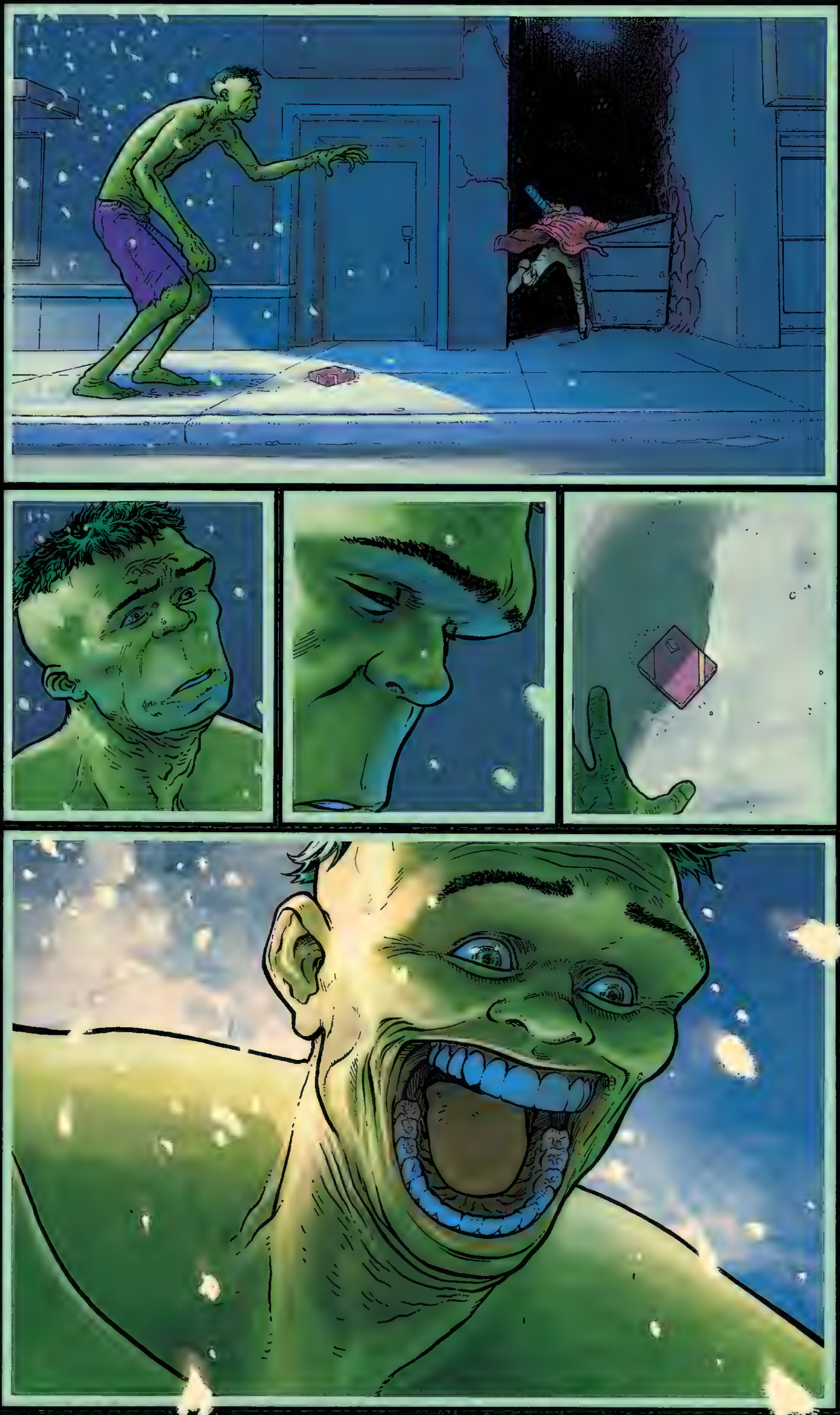
KING IN BLACK: IMMORTAL HULK

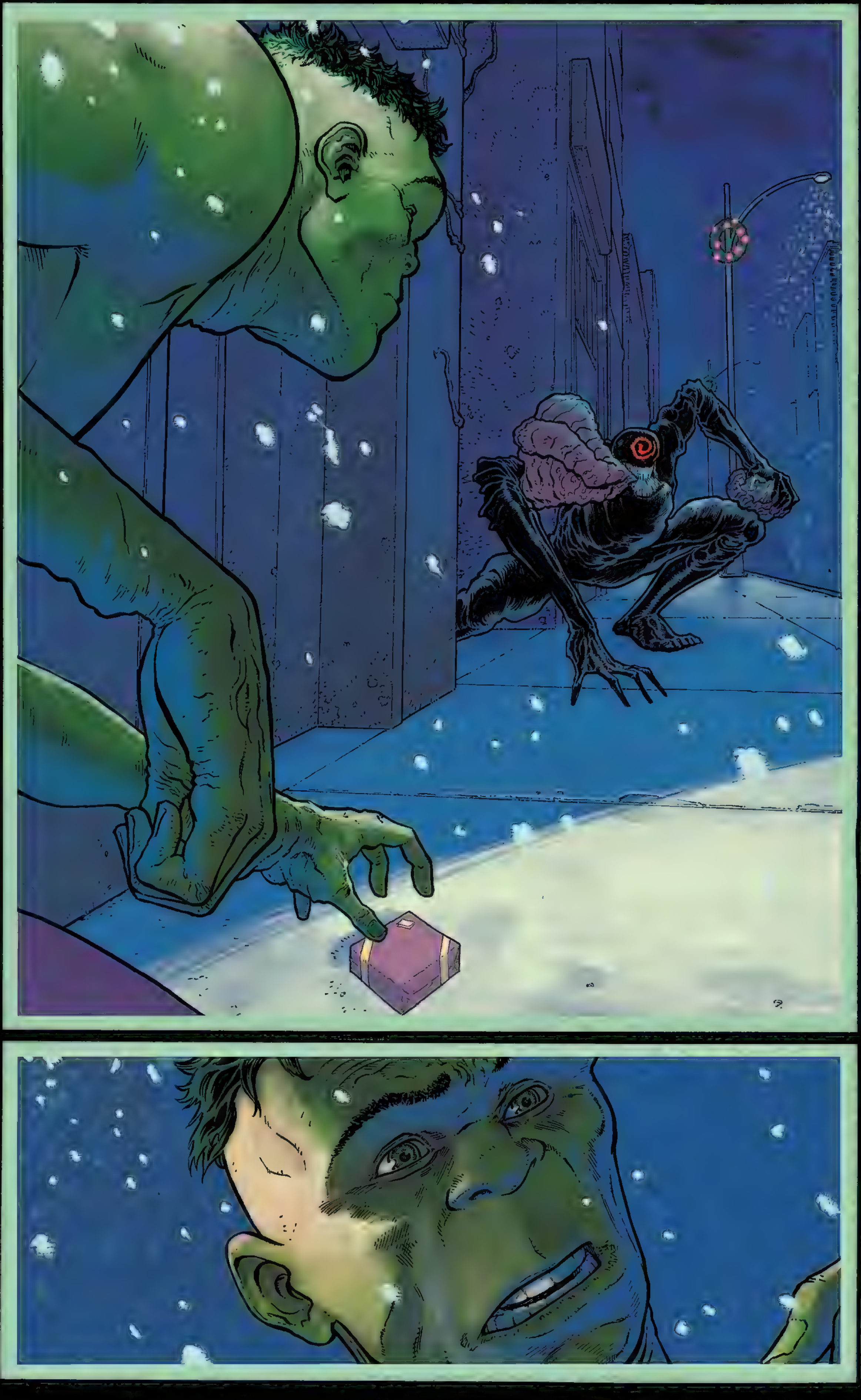


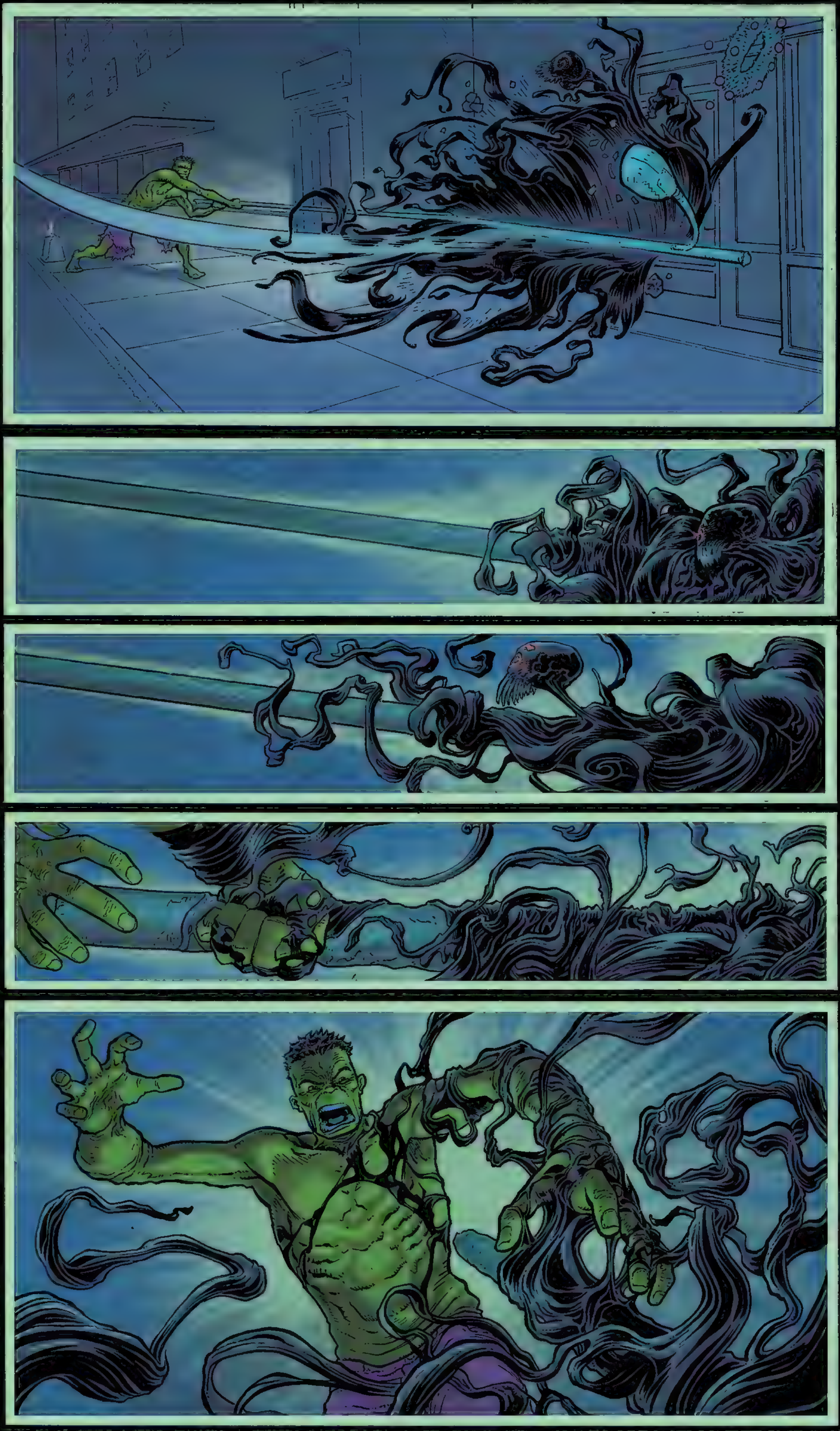

'Twas the night before Christmas...

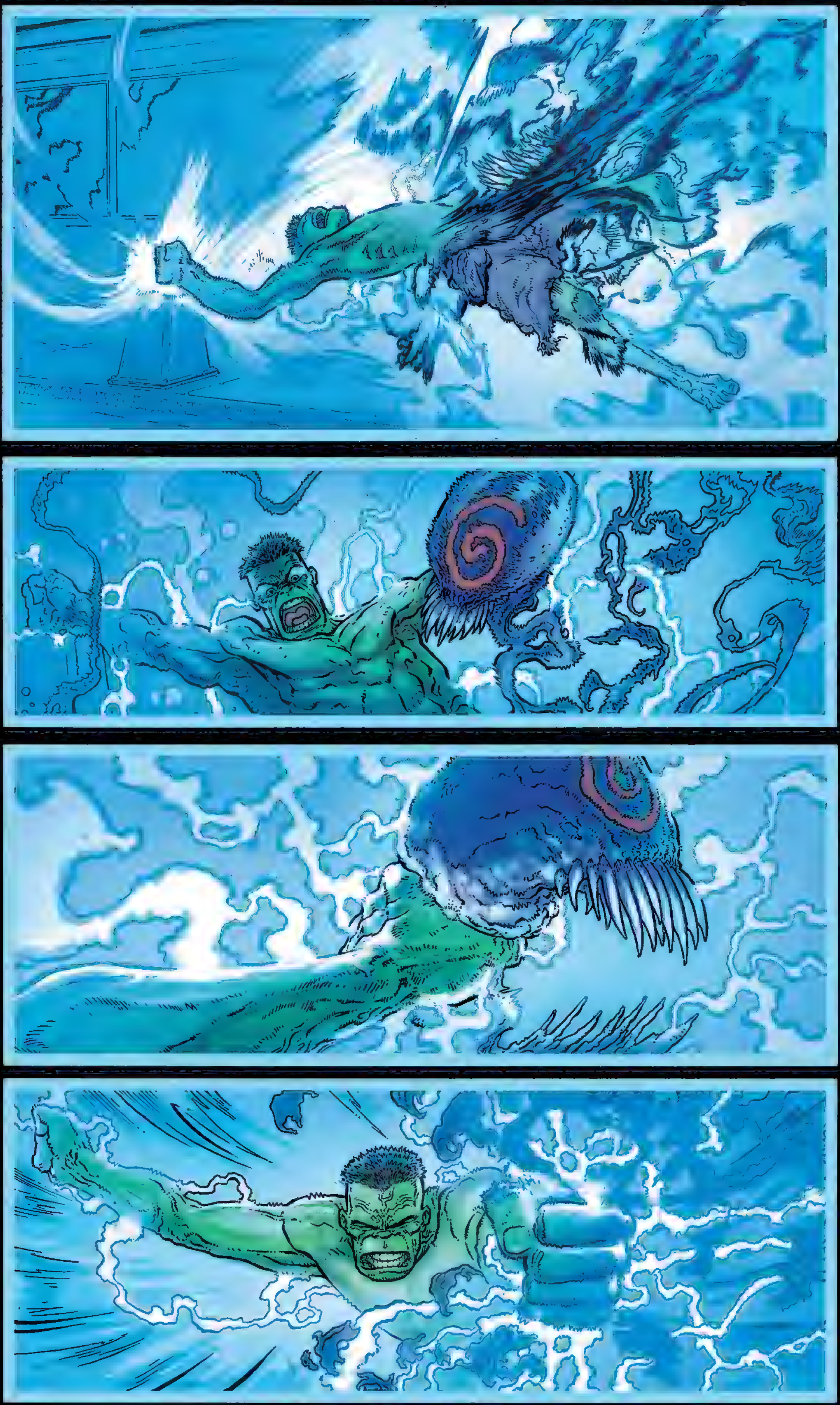


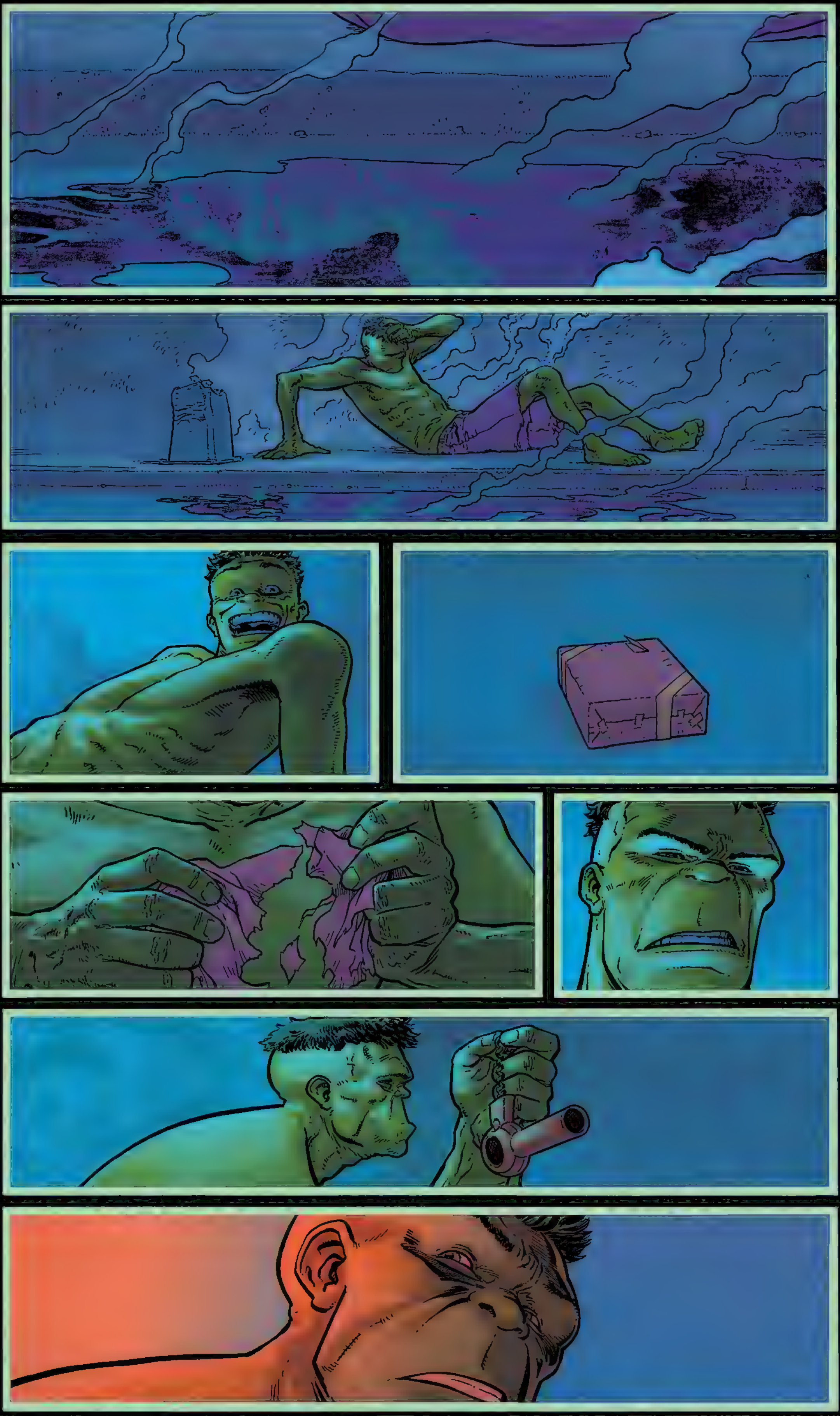


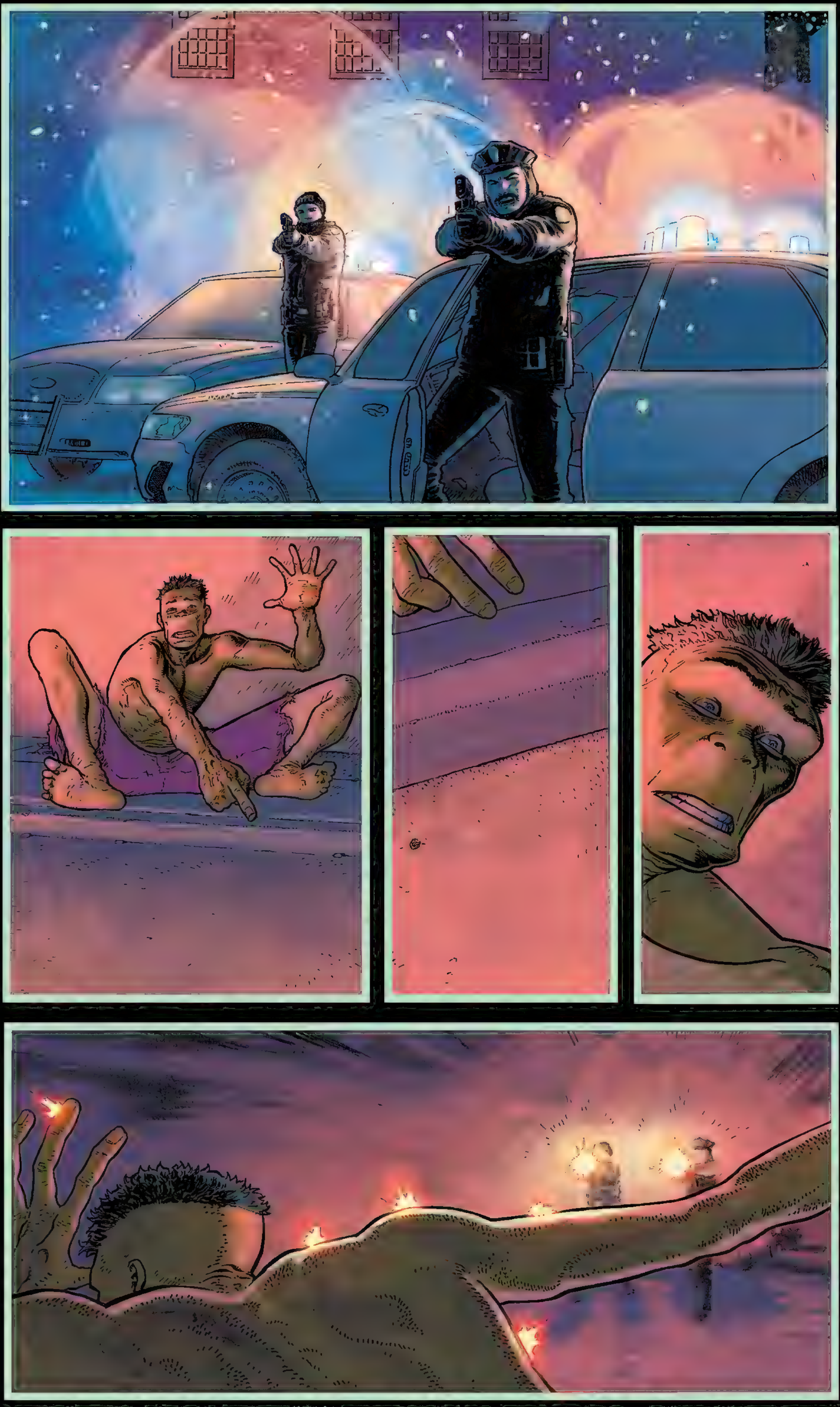


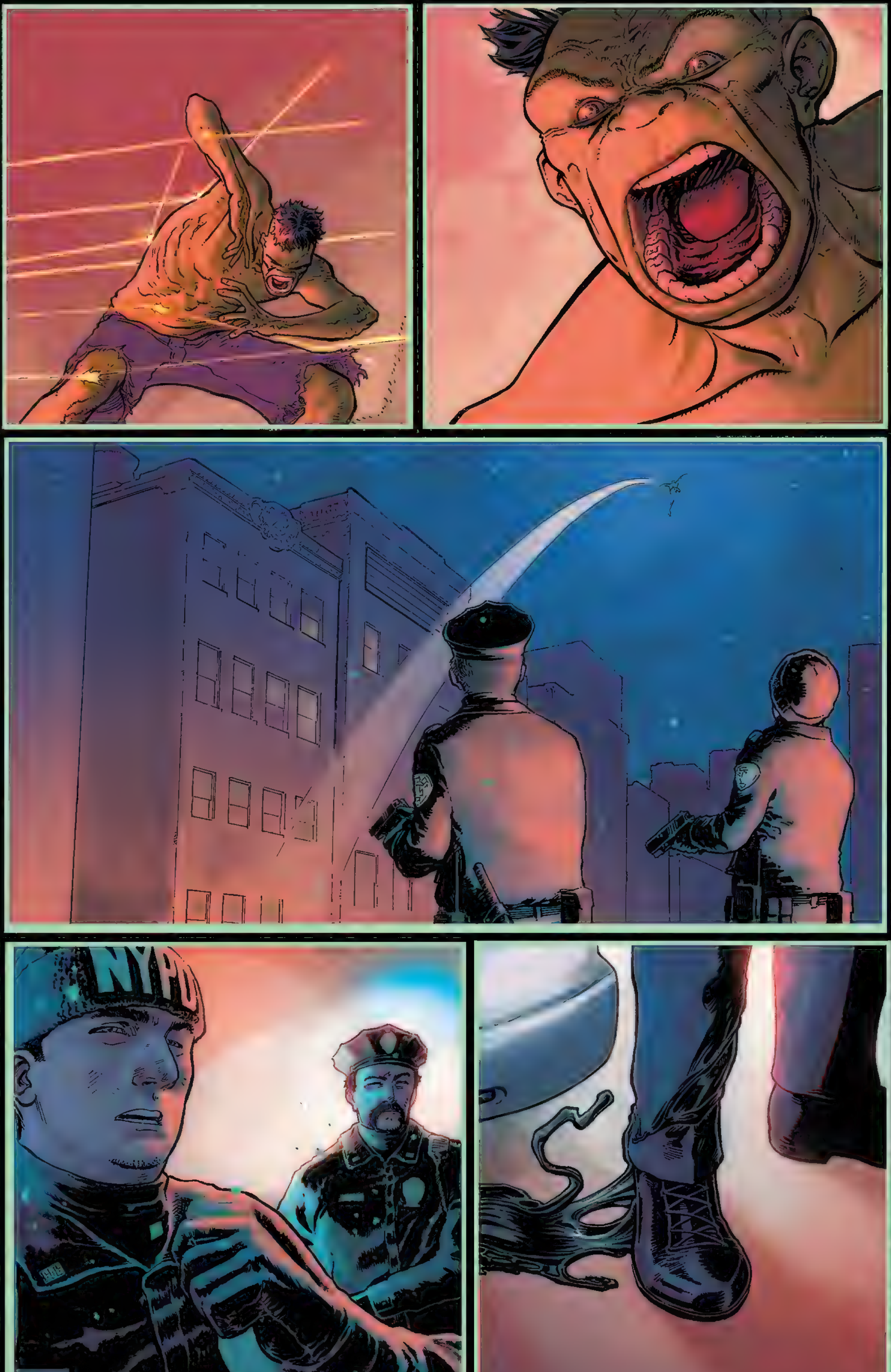








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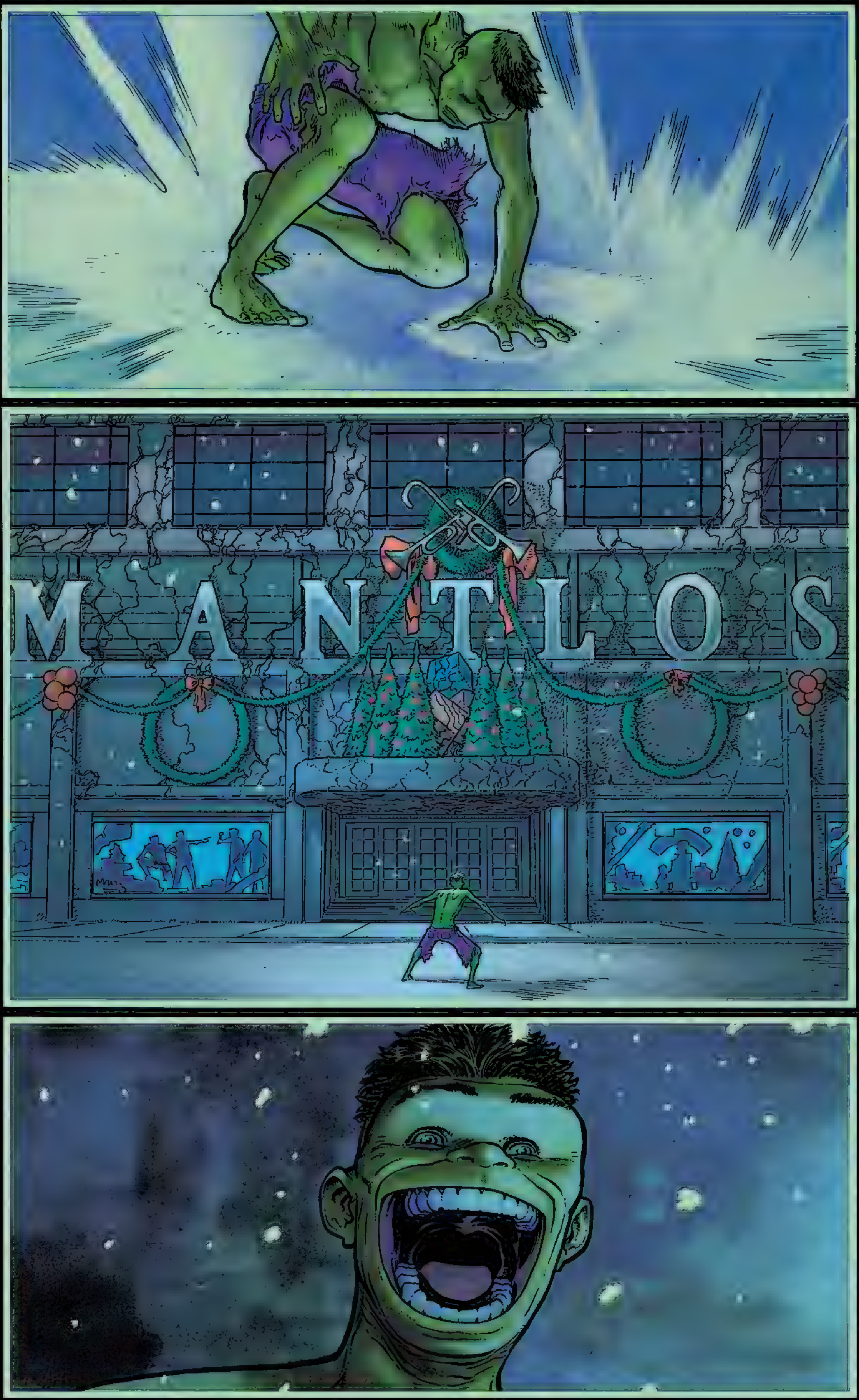
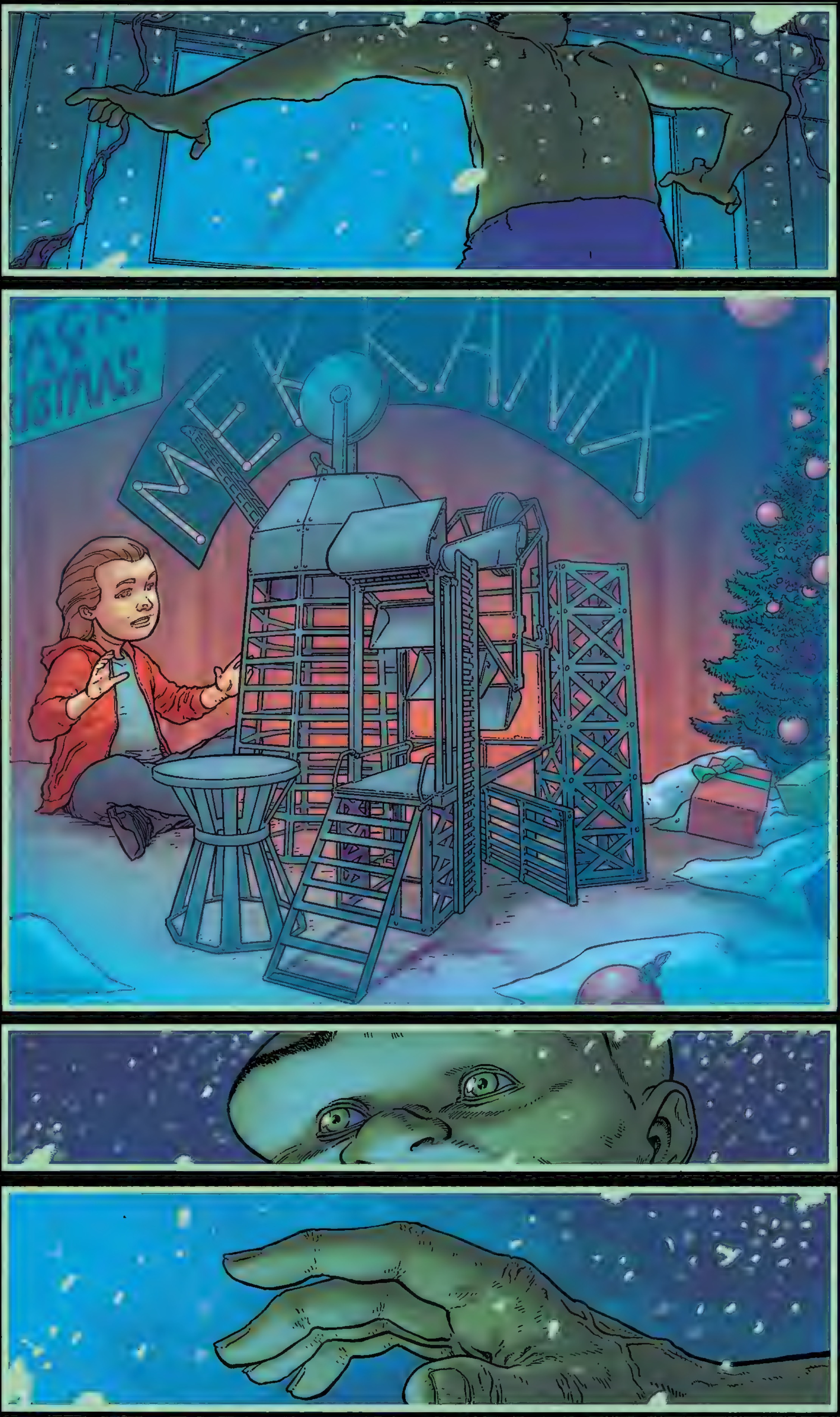
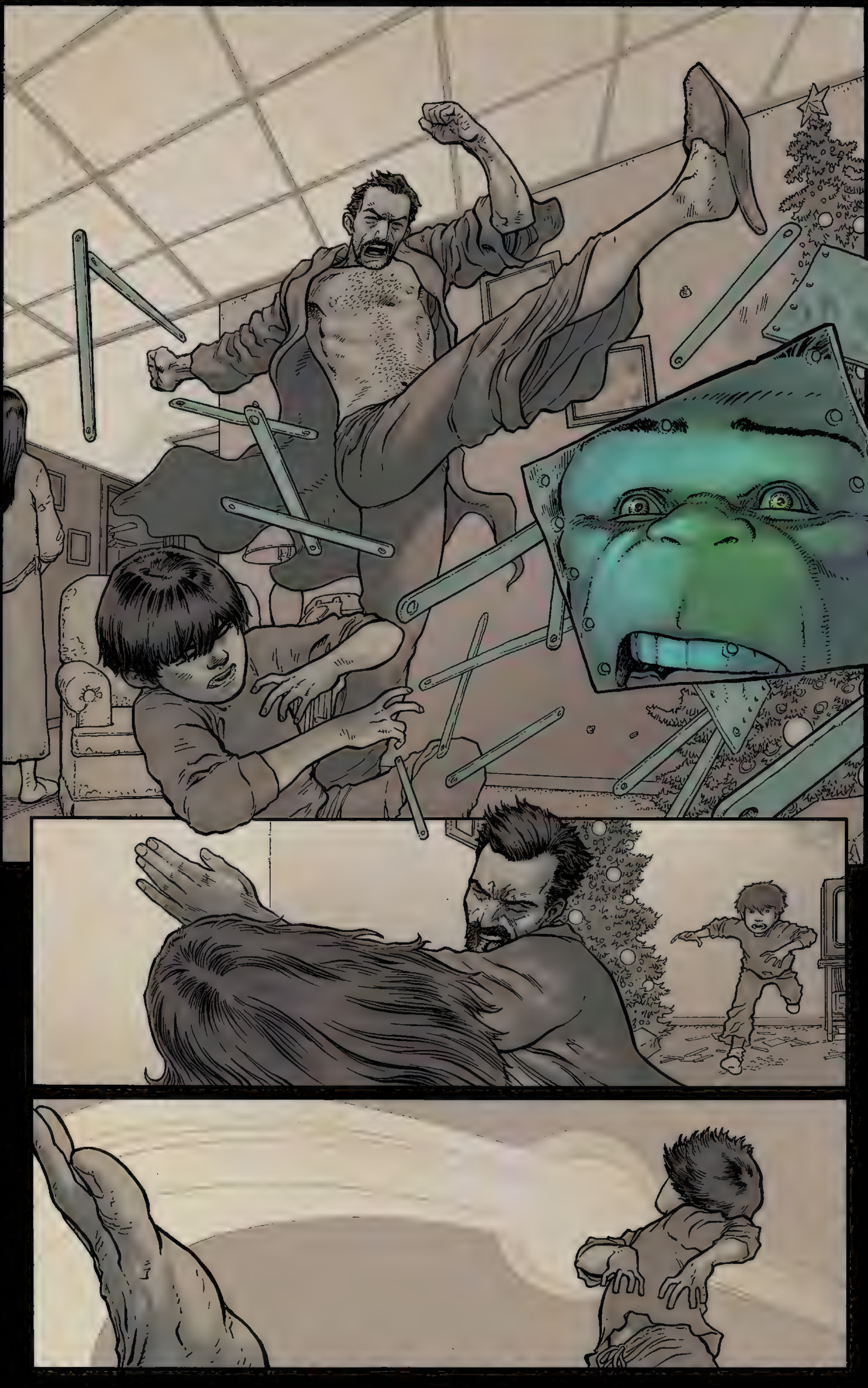
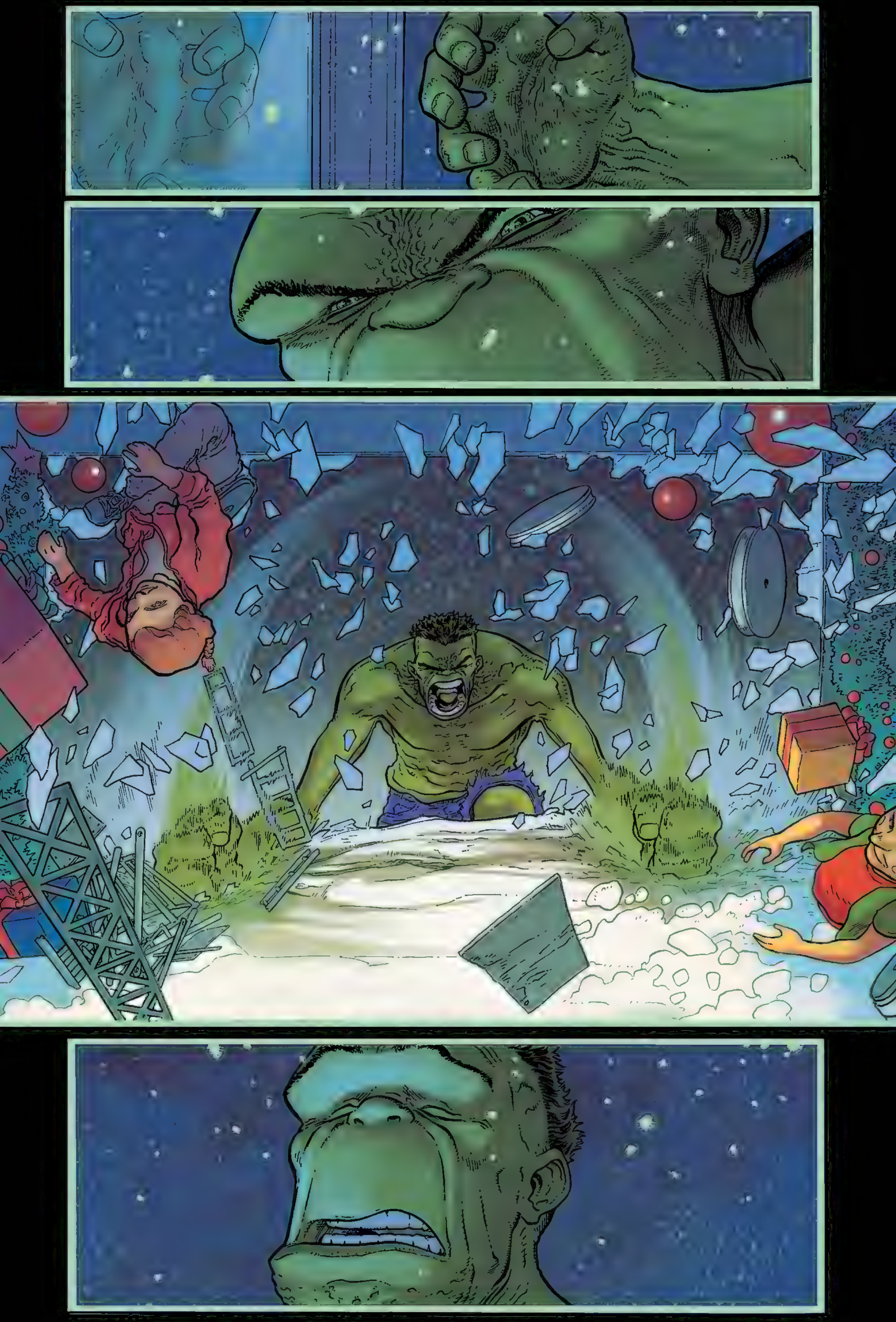
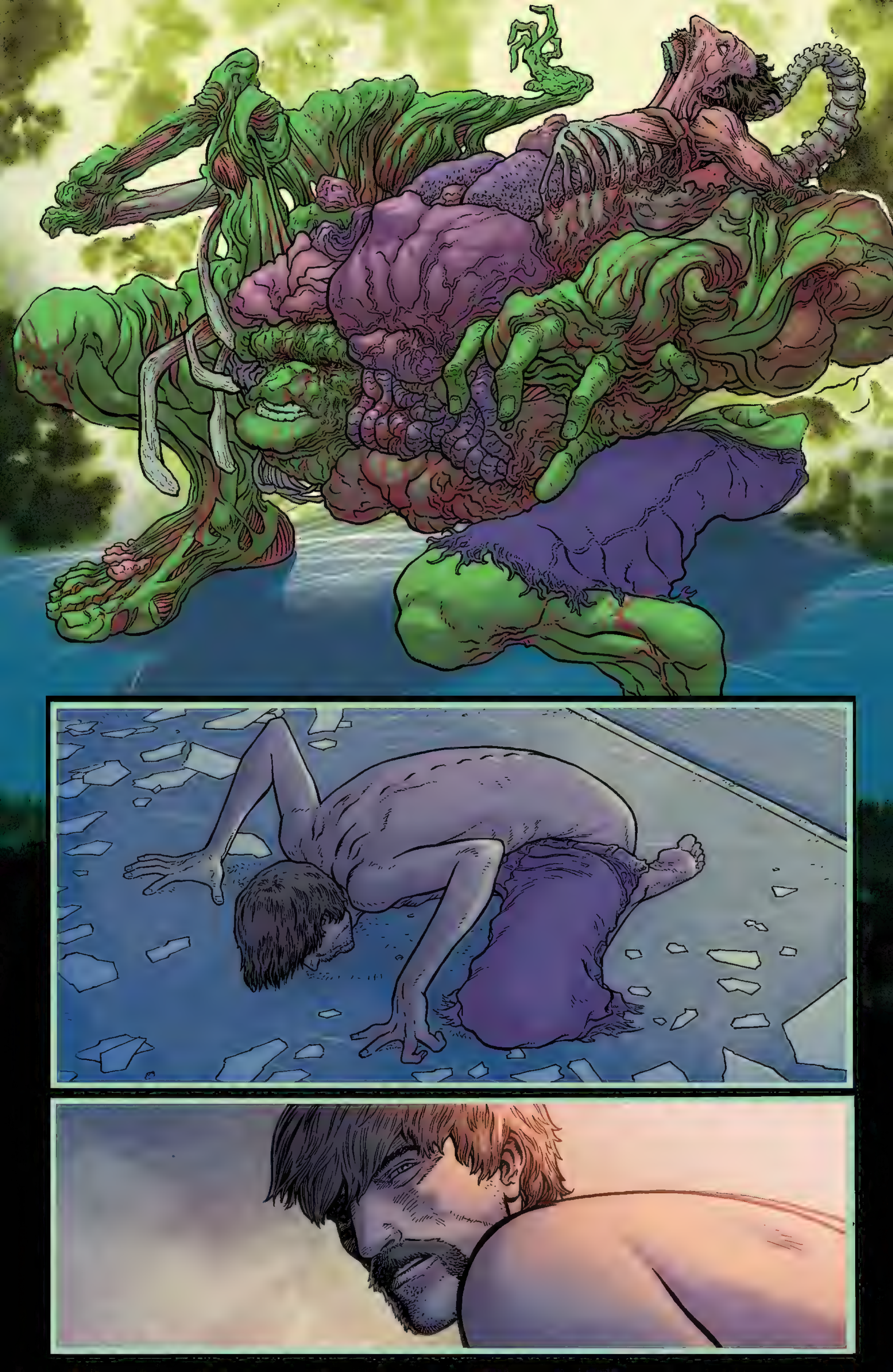
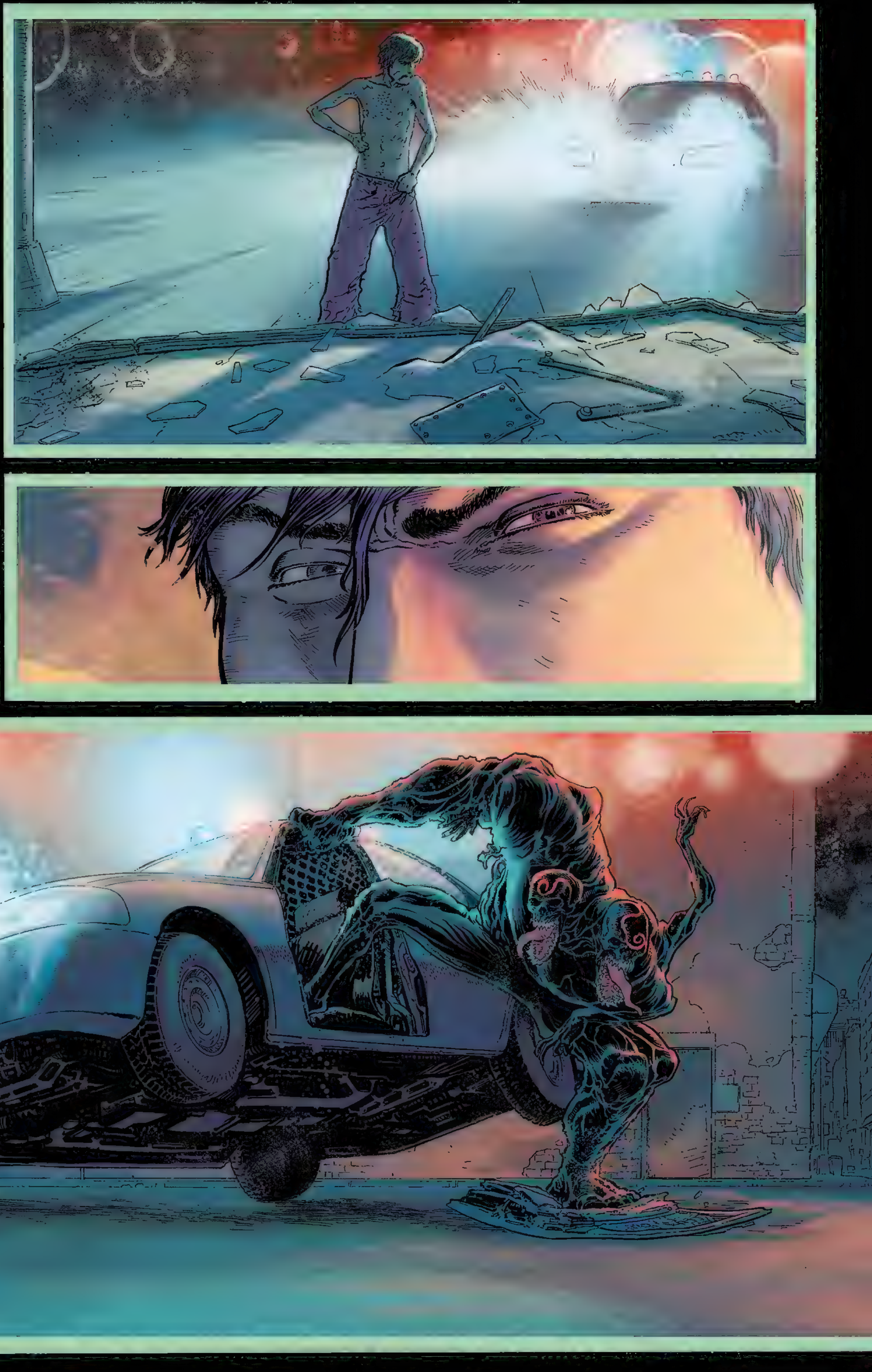

MANTLOS

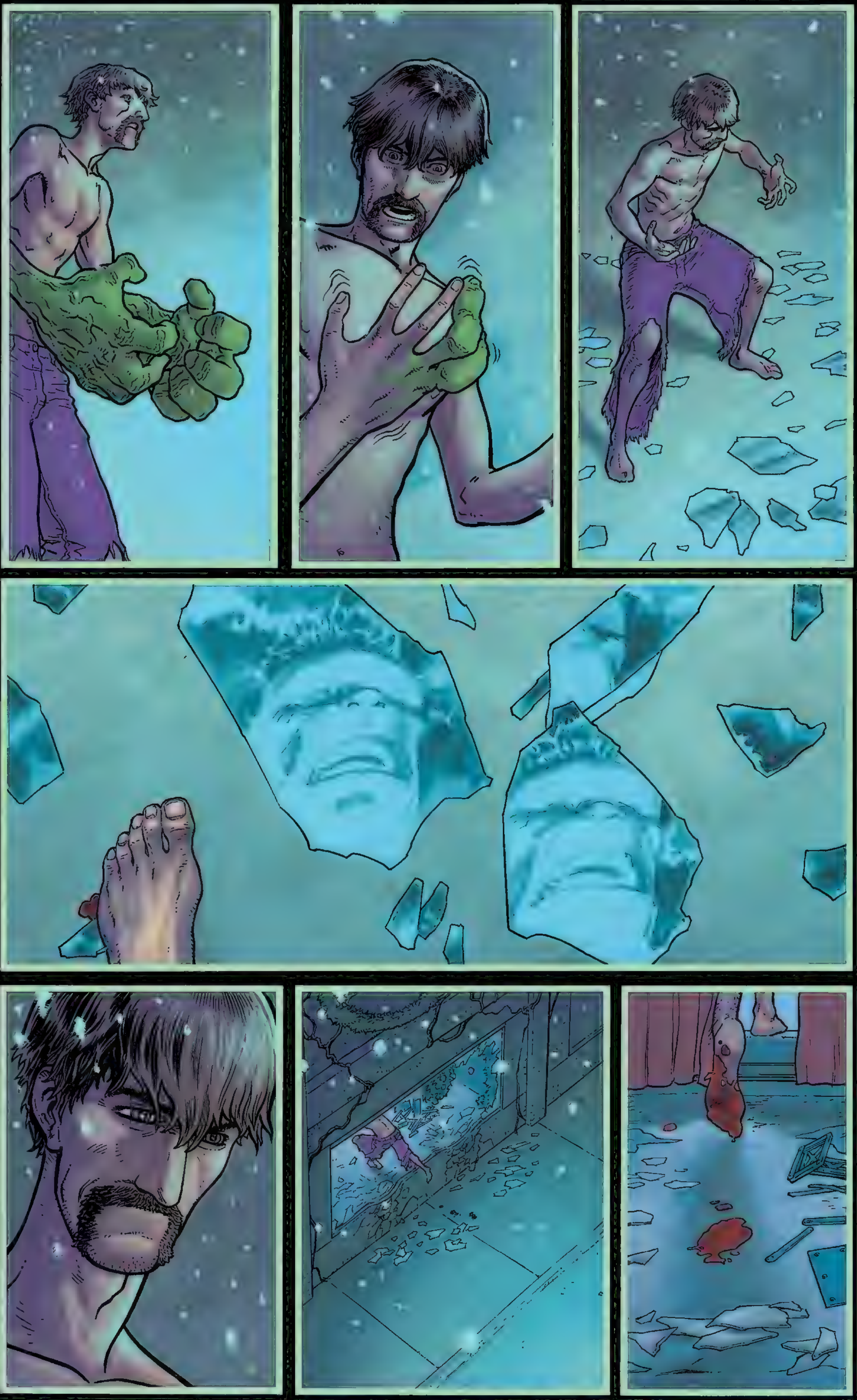


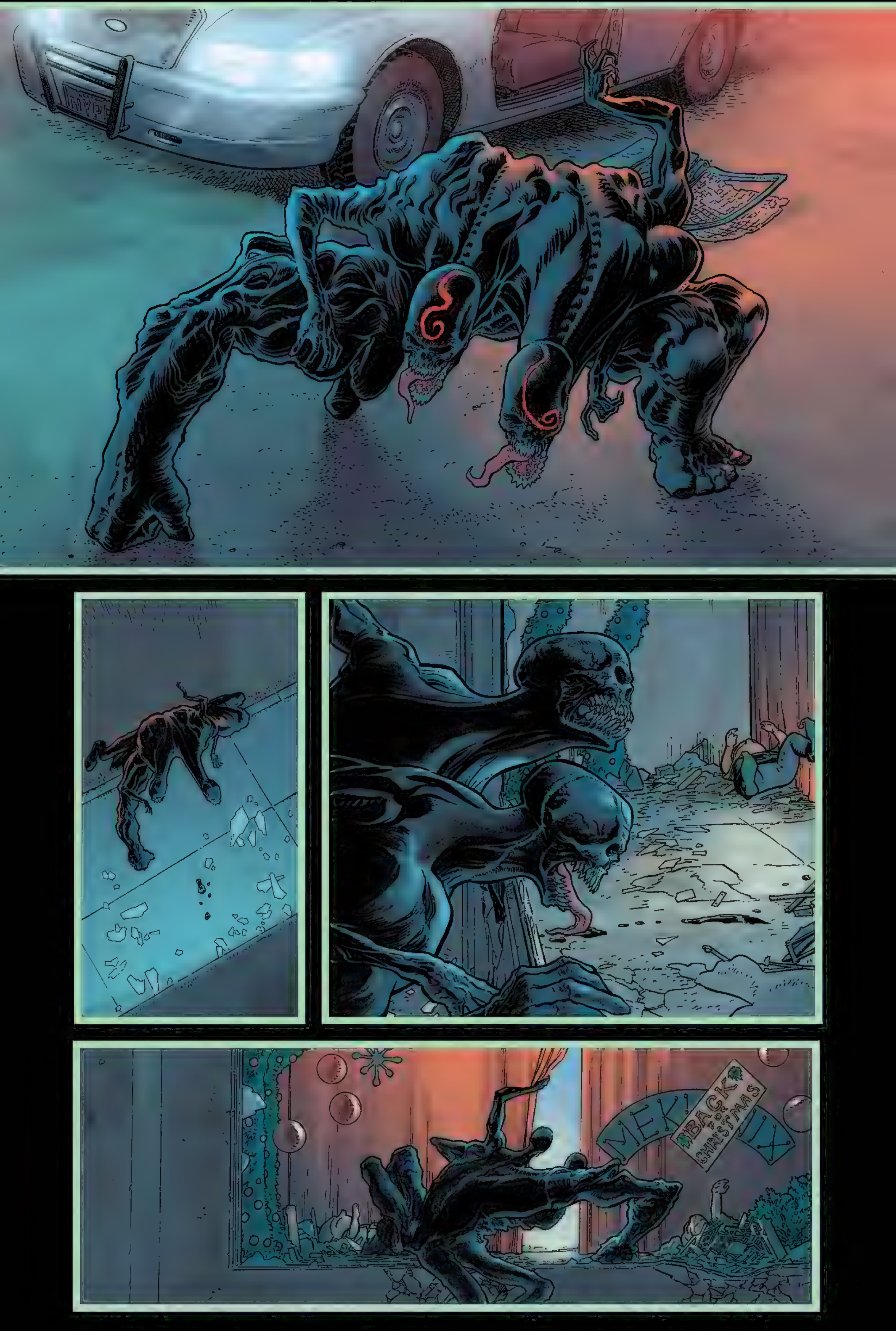


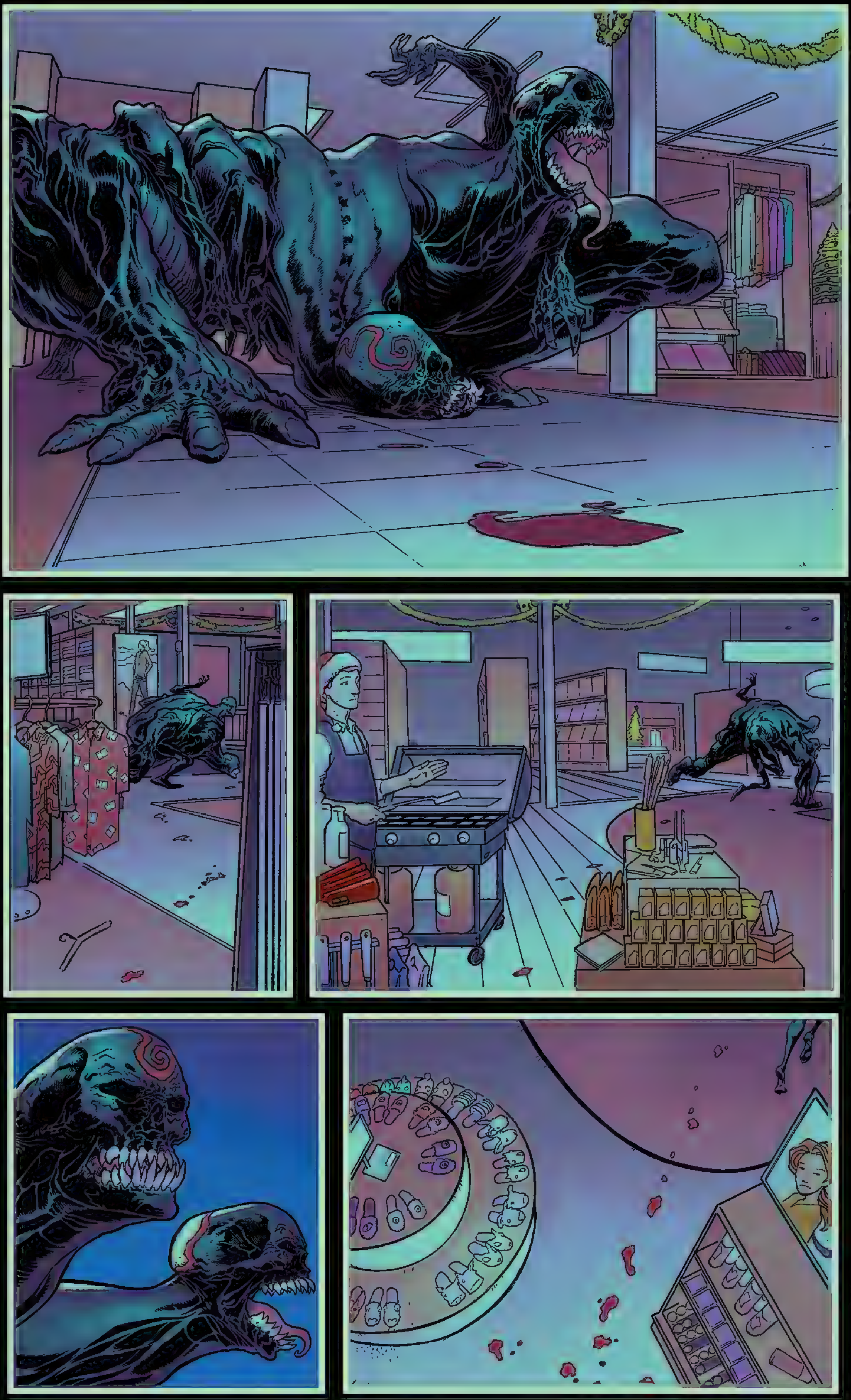


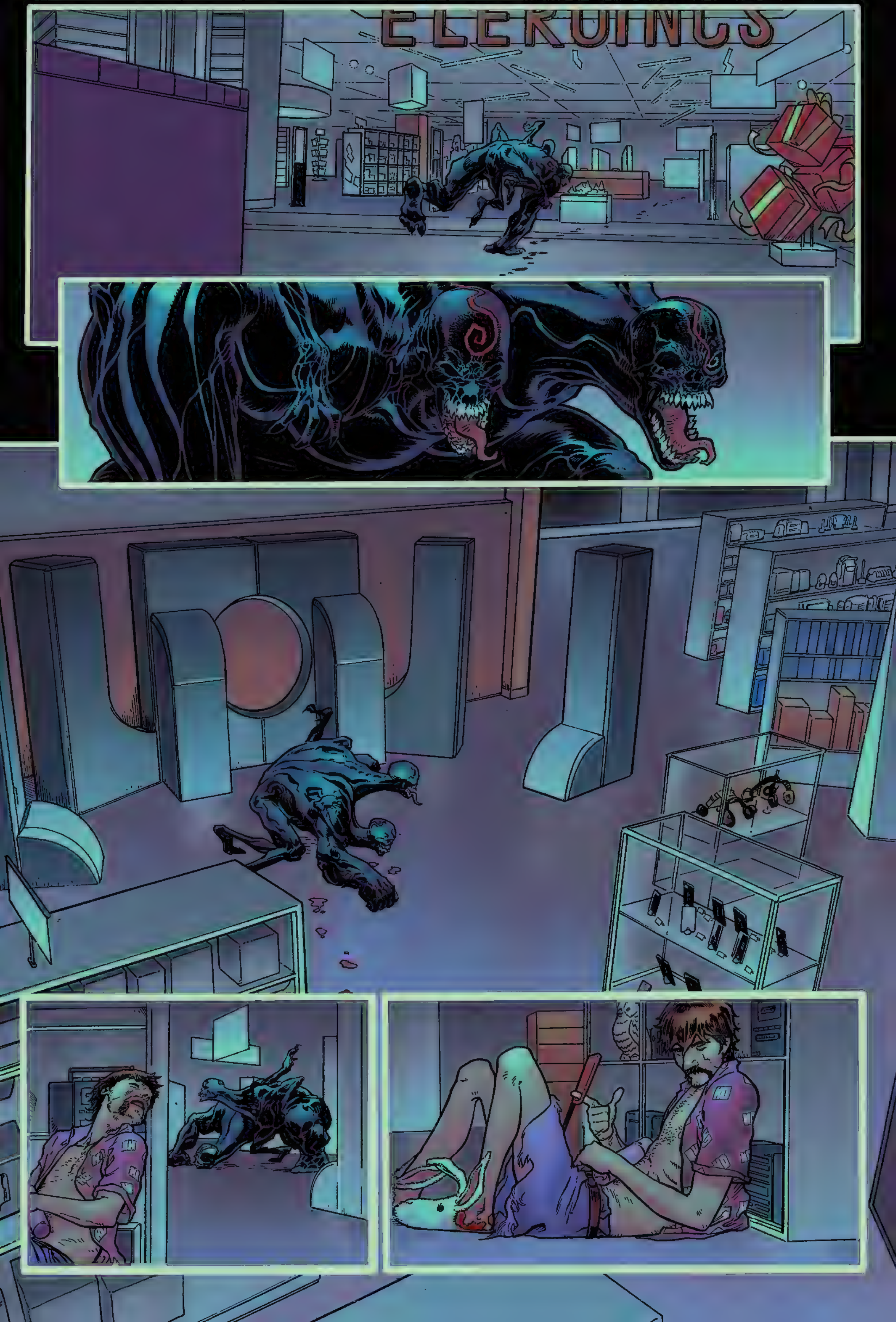


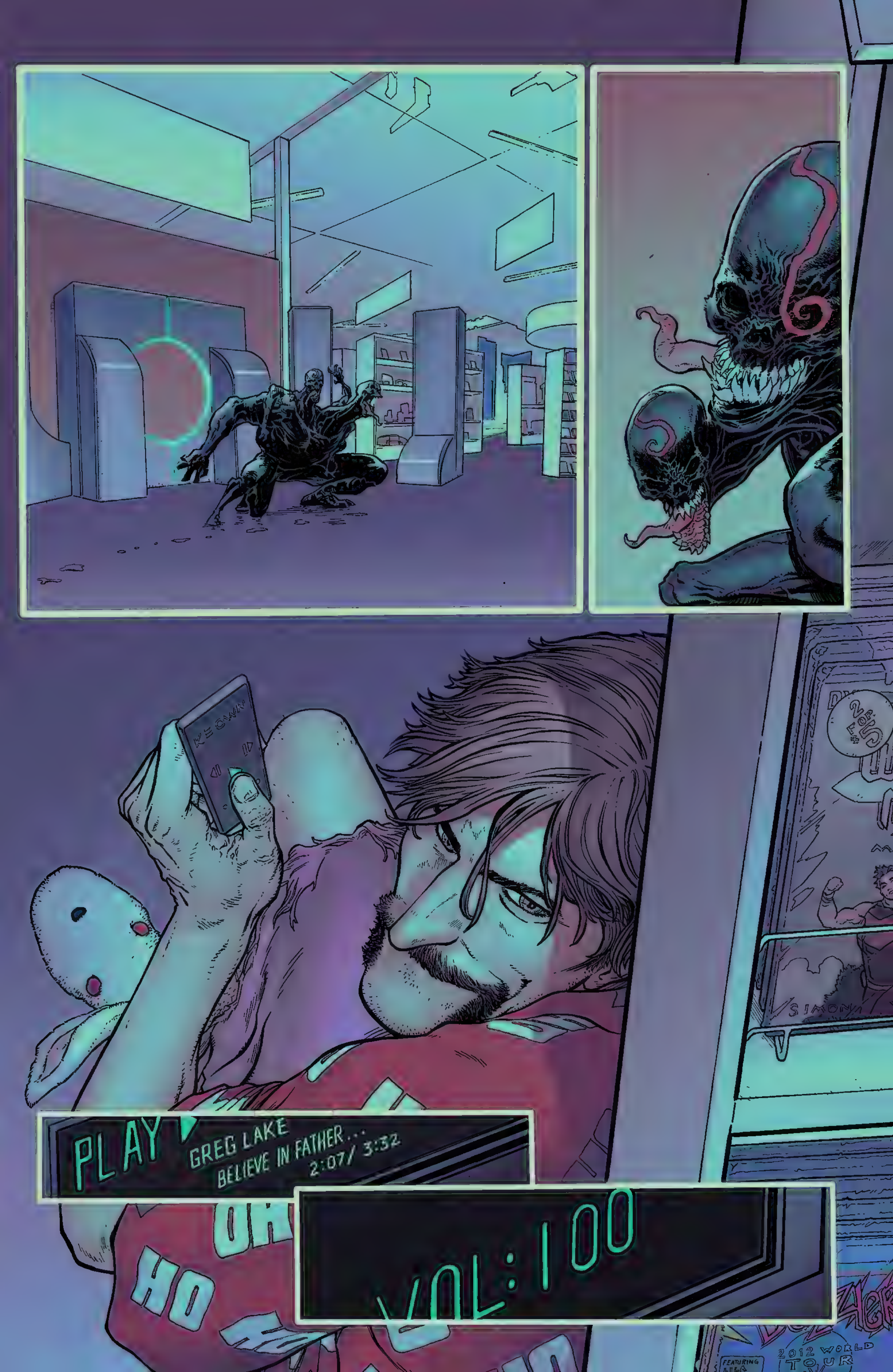


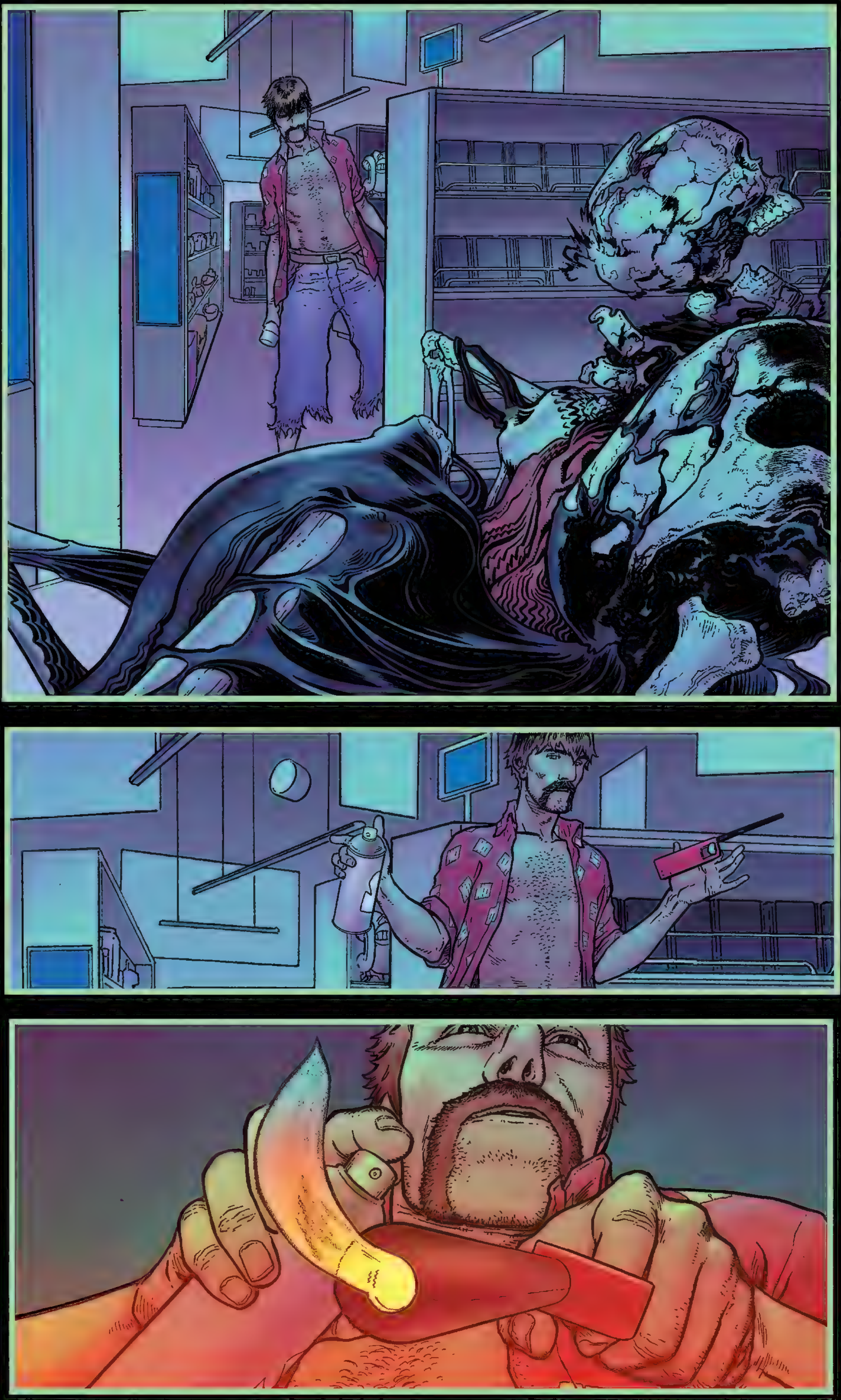


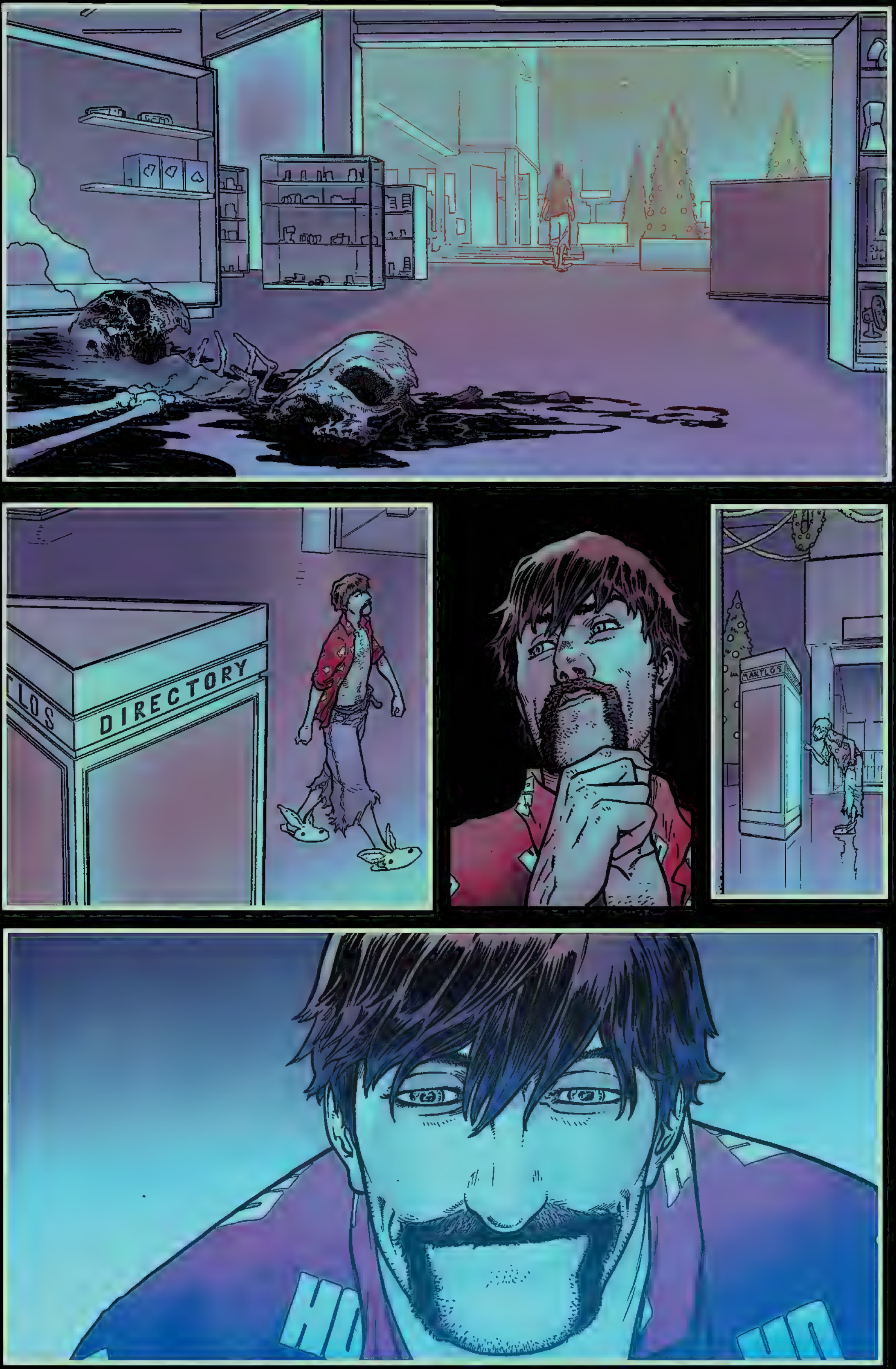

NYPD
MEK
BACK FOR CHRISTMAS
IX

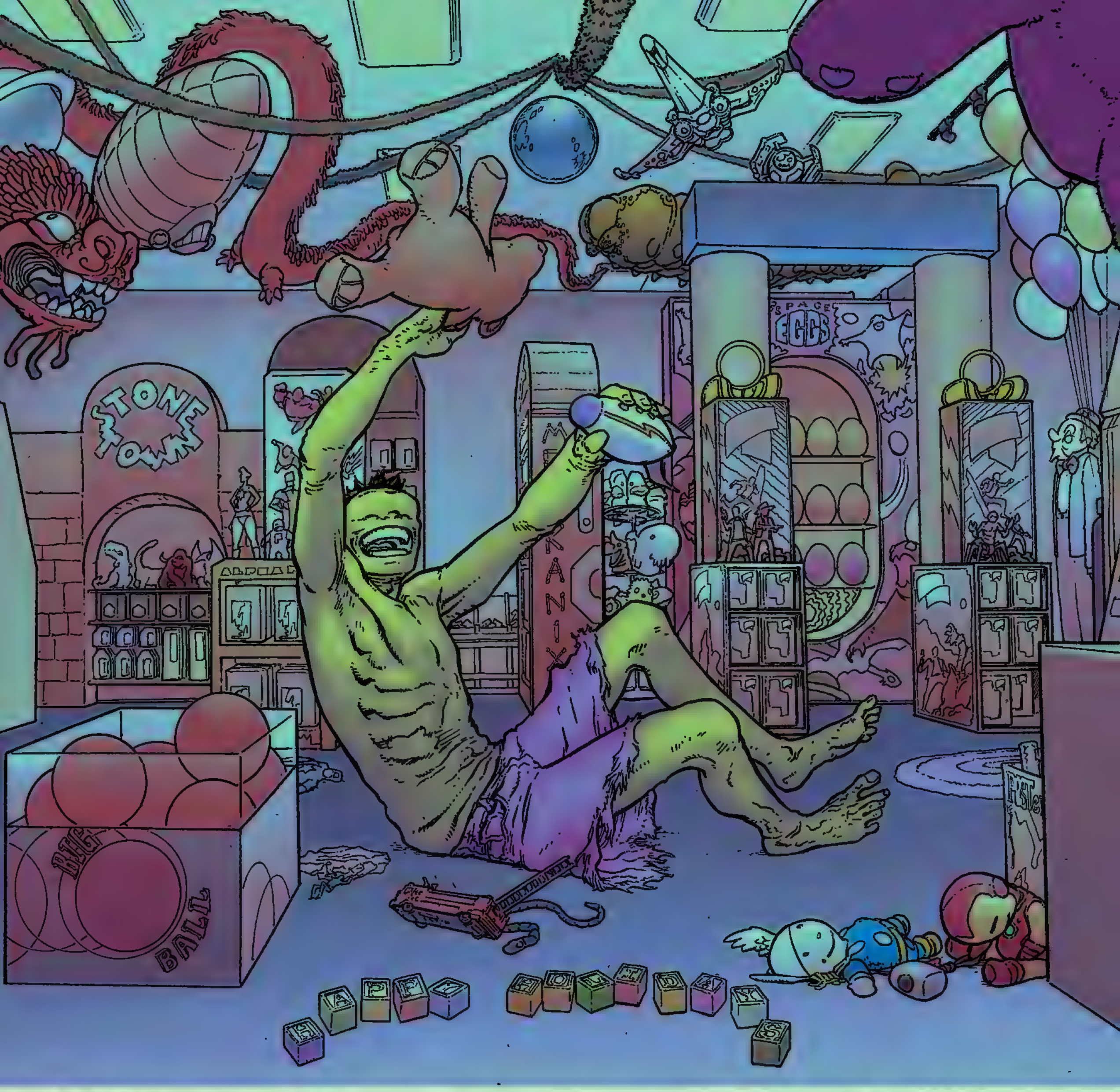





PLAY ▶ GREG LAKE BELIEVE IN FATHER... 2:07/ 3:32
VOL:100
2 FOR £5
SIMON
2012 WORLD TOUR
FEATURING



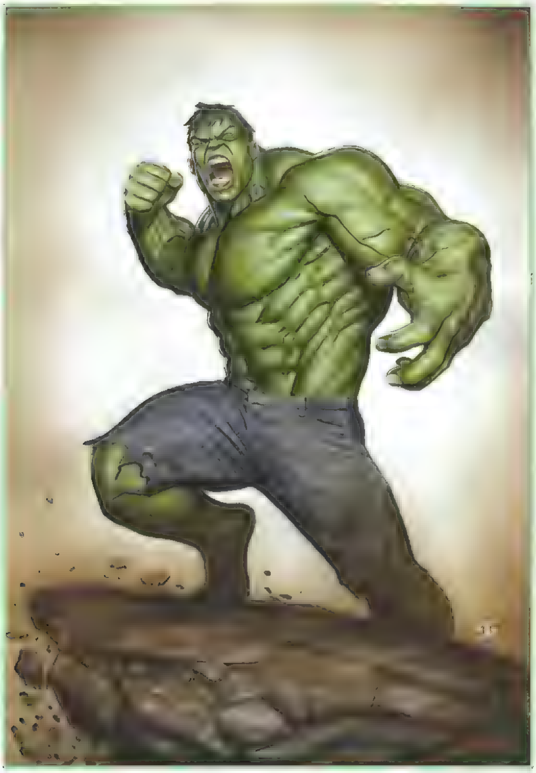

TLOS
DIRECTORY
MANTLOS
HO


STONE TOWN
SPACE EGGS
MEKANIX
BIG BALL
HAPPY HOLIDAYS

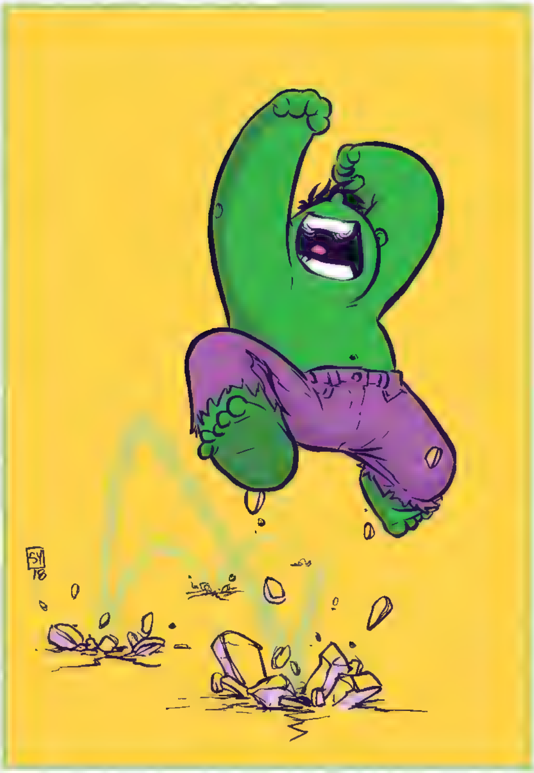
...and to all a

GOOD NIGHT.

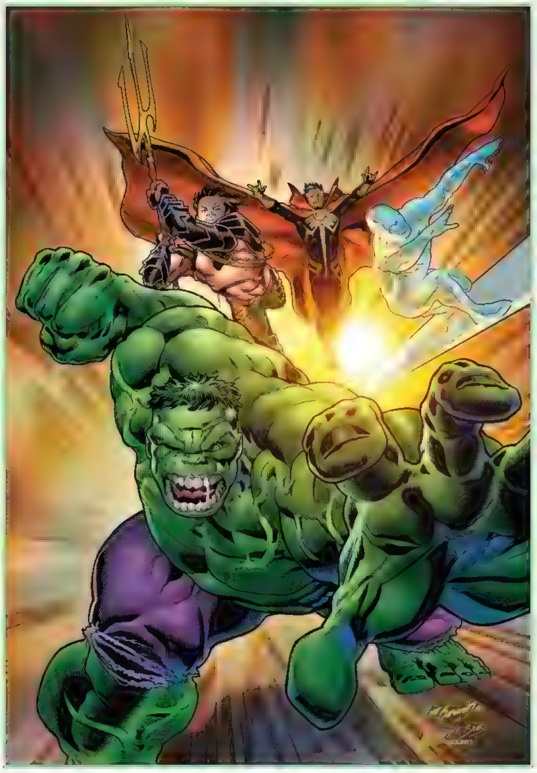
> "IF THESE SHADOWS REMAIN UNALTERED BY THE FUTURE, THE CHILD WILL DIE."
>
> – CHARLES DICKENS,
> *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*



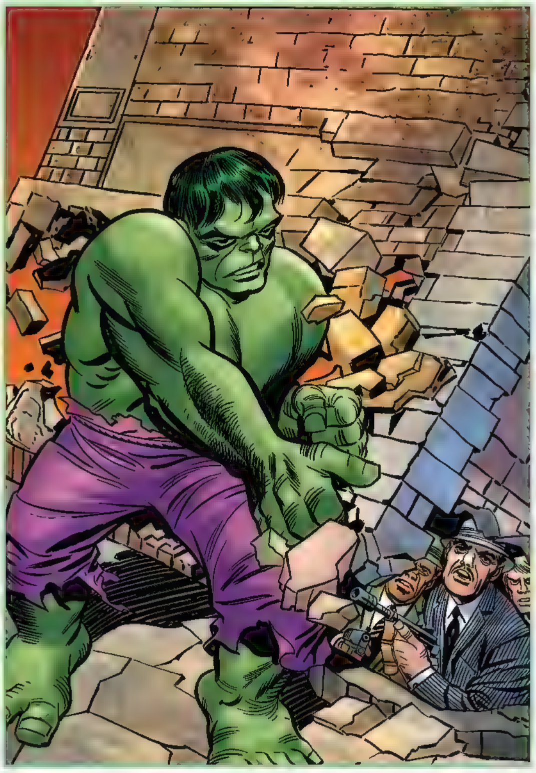
IMMORTAL HULK: THE BEST DEFENSE
VARIANT BY ADI GRANOV



IMMORTAL HULK: THE BEST DEFENSE
VARIANT BY SKOTTIE YOUNG



IMMORTAL HULK: THE BEST DEFENSE
VARIANT BY JOE BENNETT,
BELARDINO BRABO & PAUL MOUNTS

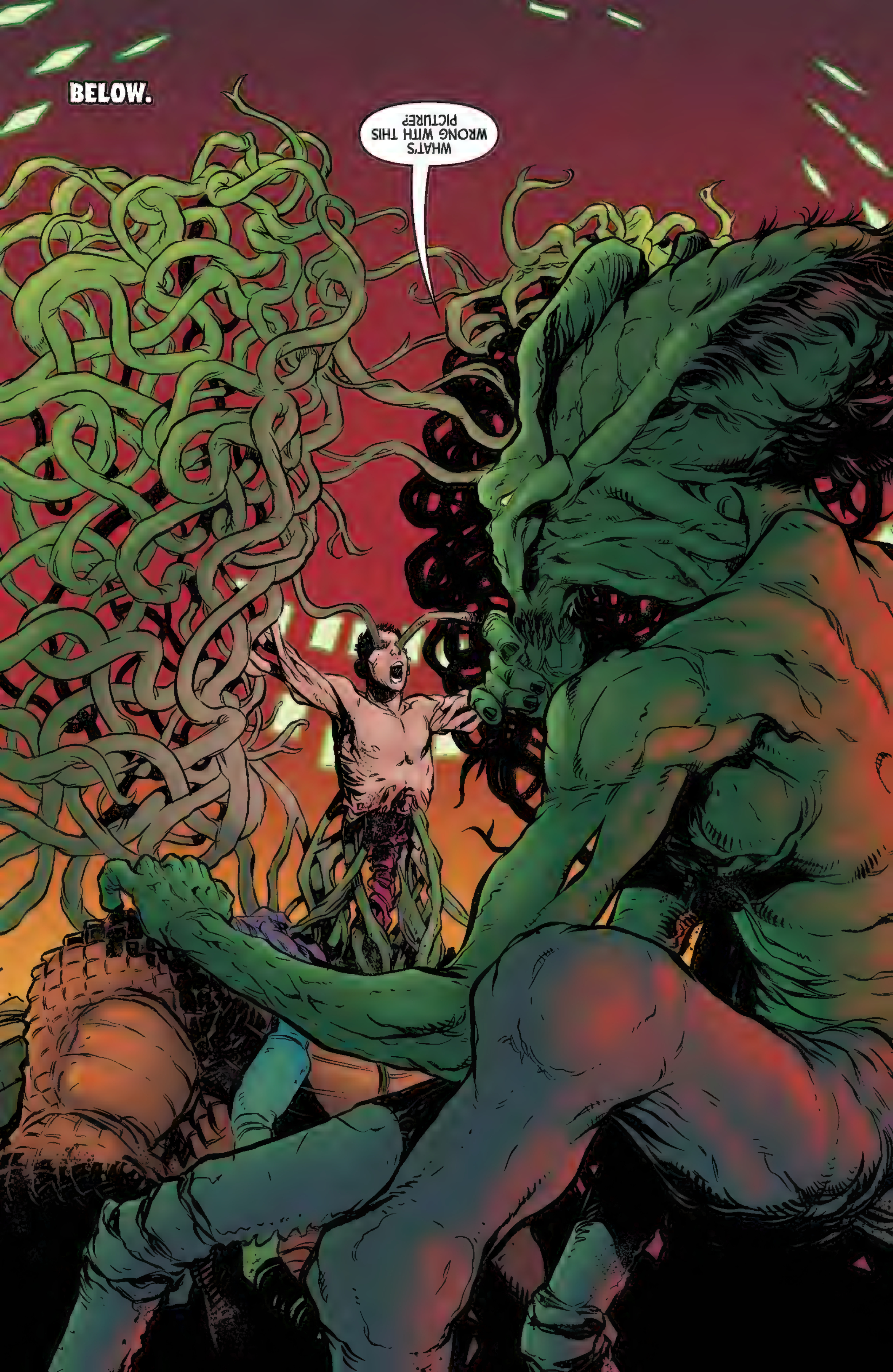


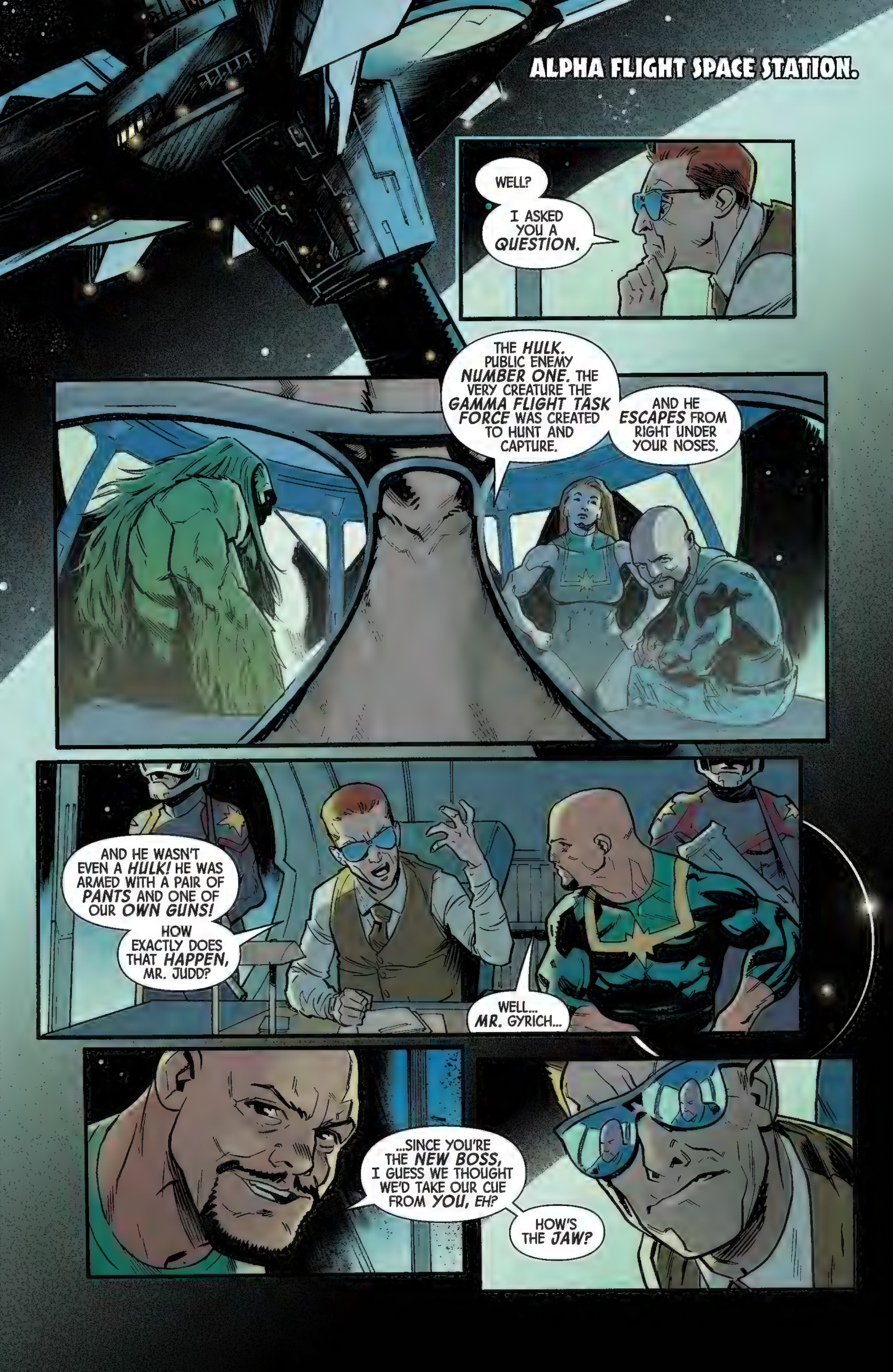
IMMORTAL HULK: THE BEST DEFENSE
HIDDEN GEM VARIANT BY
JACK KIRBY & PAUL MOUNTS

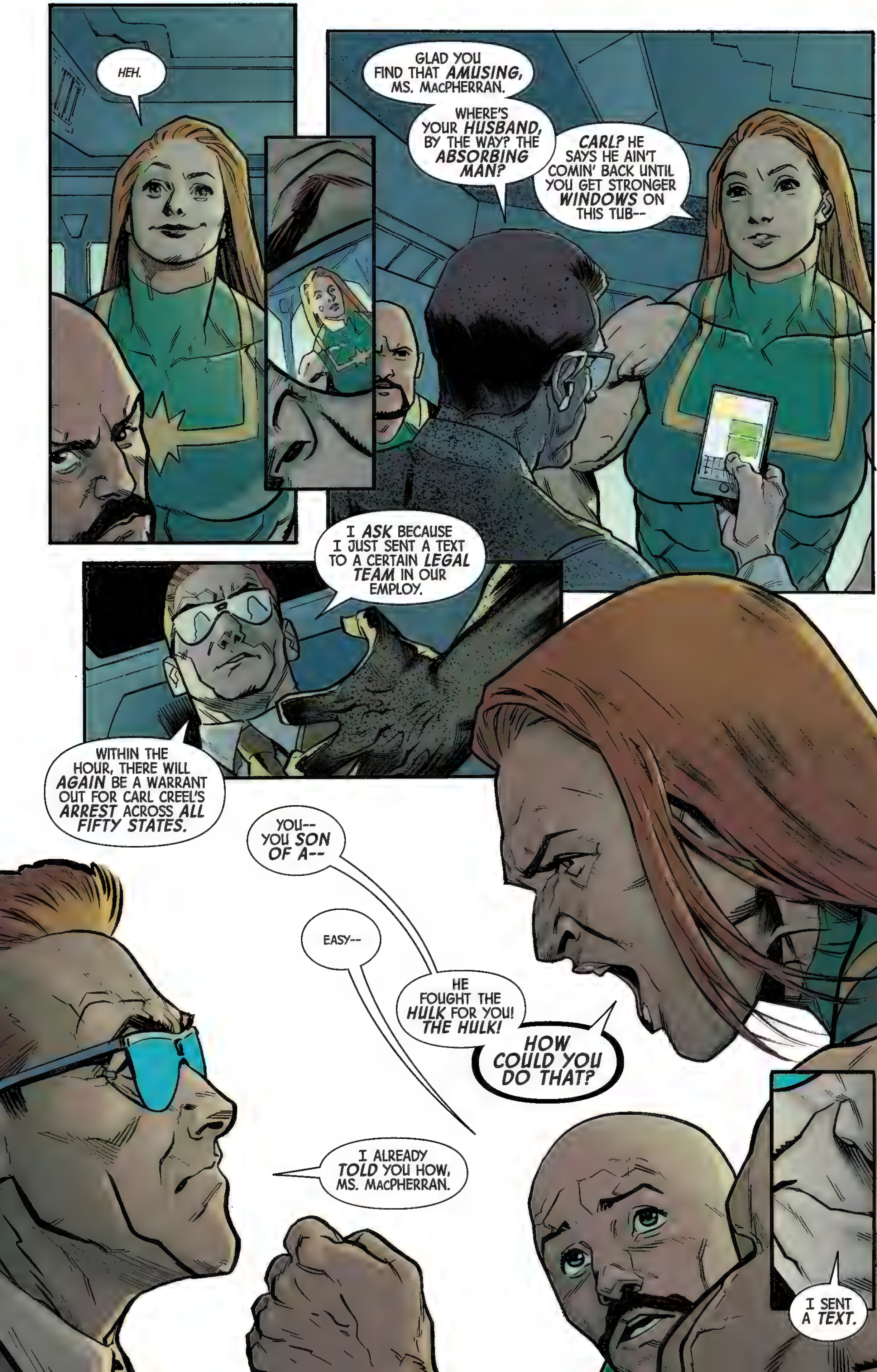
42

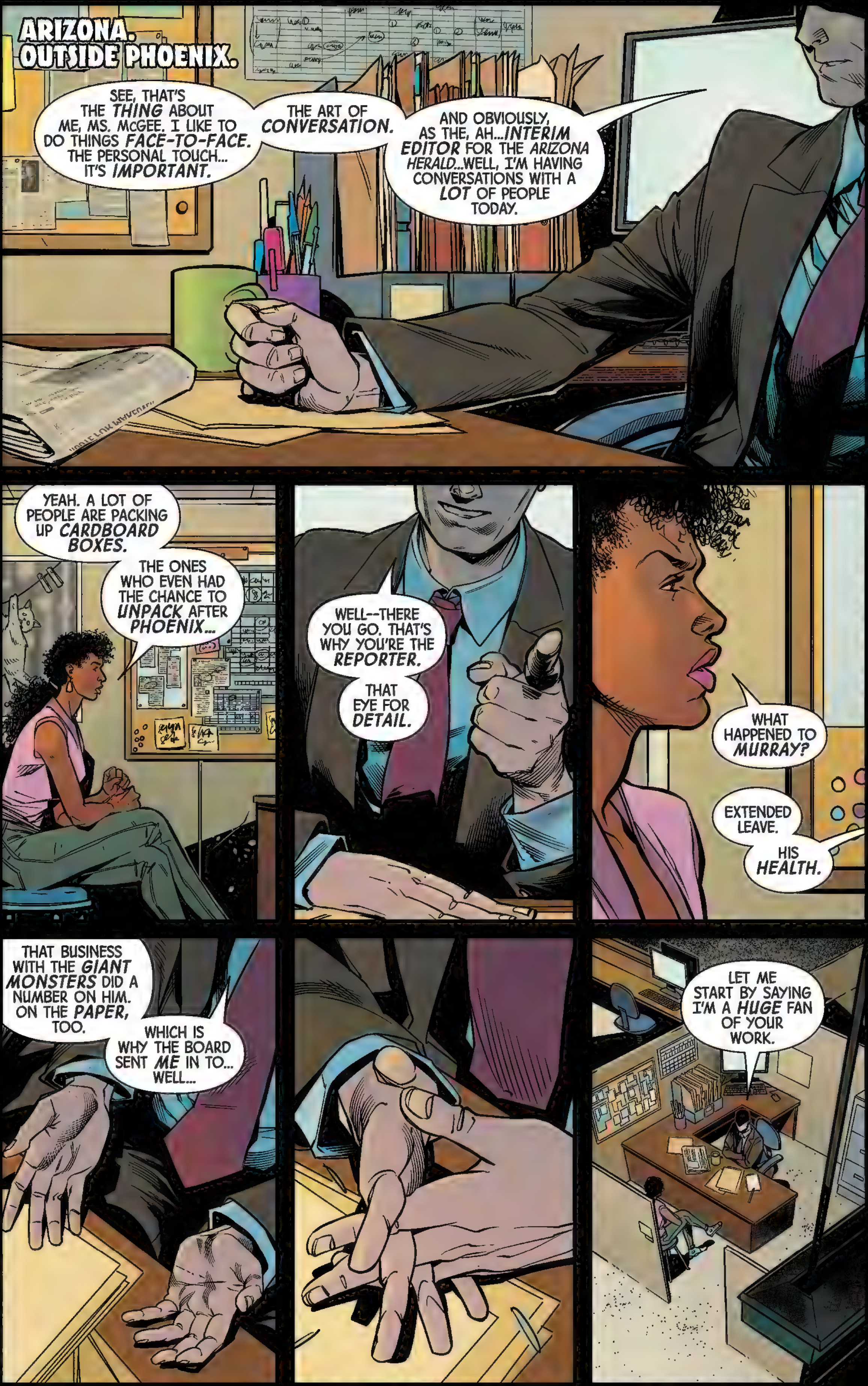
“CONSEQUENCES ARE UNPITYING. OUR DEEDS CARRY THEIR TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES, QUITE APART FROM ANY FLUCTUATIONS THAT WENT BEFORE—CONSEQUENCES THAT ARE HARDLY EVER CONFINED TO OURSELVES.”

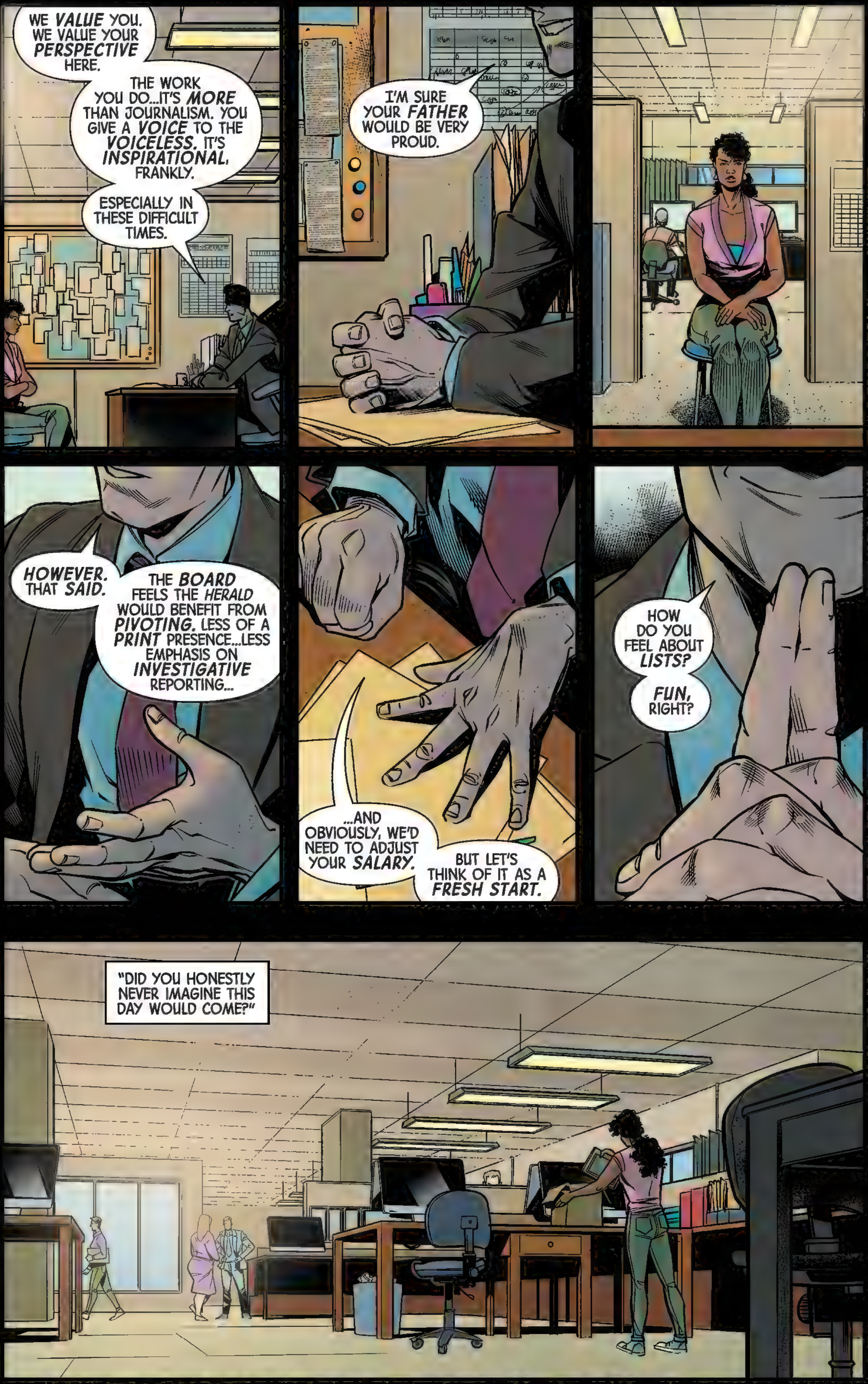
– GEORGE ELIOT,
ADAM BEDE

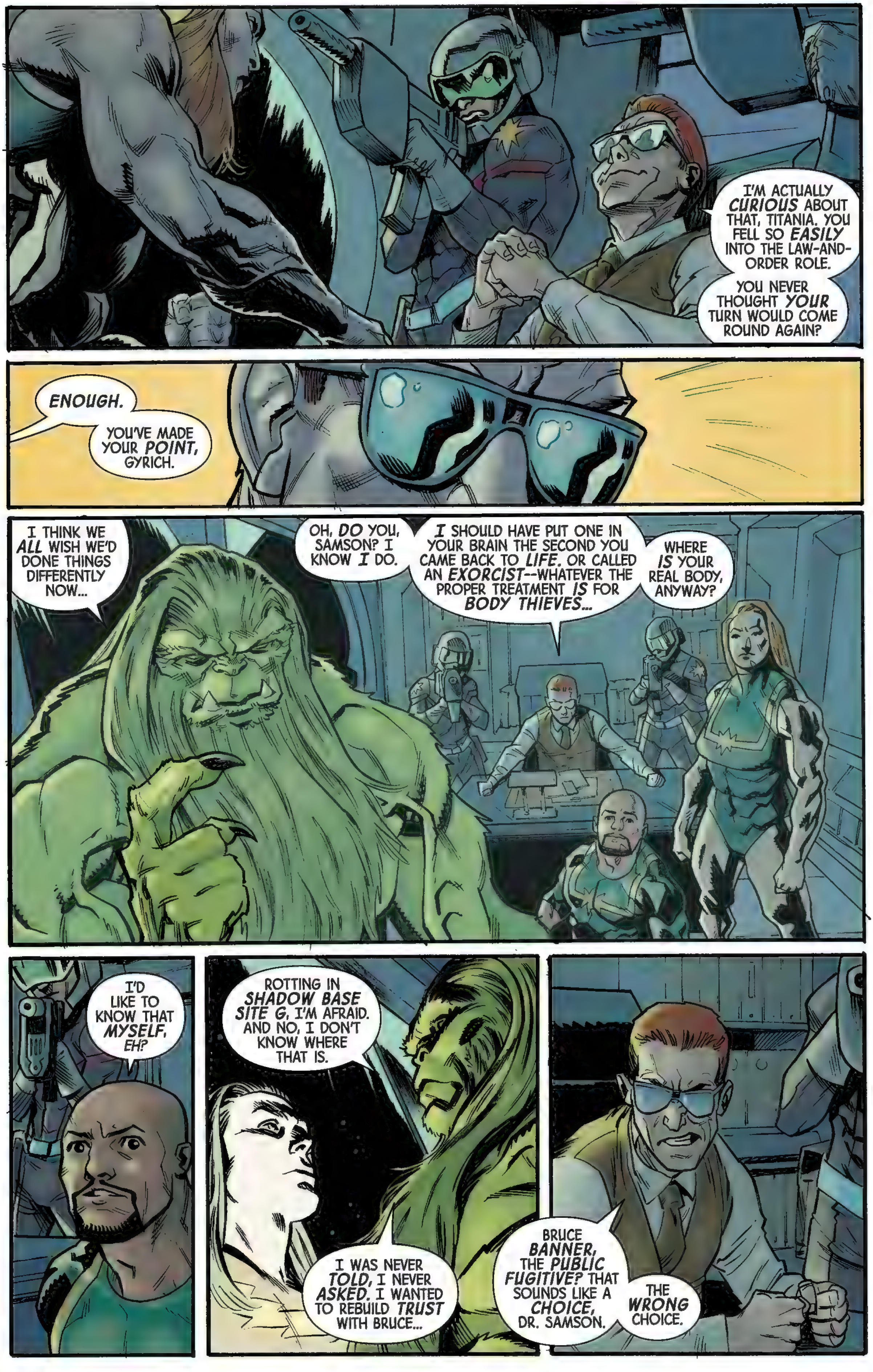

BELOW.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

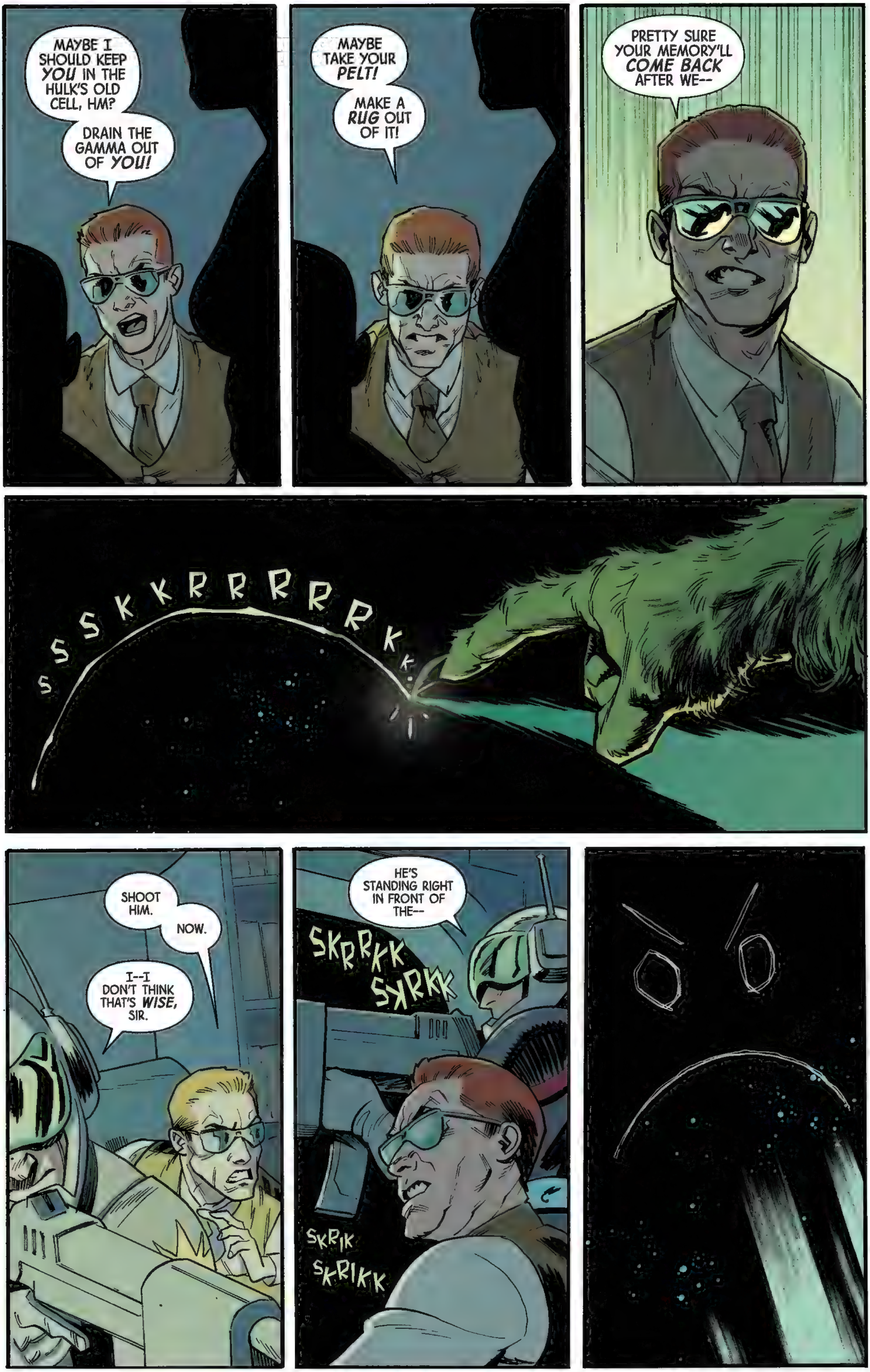

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
WELL?
I ASKED YOU A *QUESTION.*
THE *HULK.* PUBLIC ENEMY *NUMBER ONE.* THE VERY CREATURE THE *GAMMA FLIGHT TASK FORCE* WAS CREATED TO HUNT AND CAPTURE.
AND HE *ESCAPES* FROM RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSES.
AND HE WASN'T EVEN A *HULK!* HE WAS ARMED WITH A PAIR OF *PANTS* AND ONE OF OUR *OWN GUNS!*
HOW EXACTLY DOES THAT *HAPPEN,* MR. JUDD?
WELL... *MR.* GYRICH...
...SINCE YOU'RE THE *NEW BOSS,* I GUESS WE THOUGHT WE'D TAKE OUR CUE FROM *YOU,* EH?
HOW'S THE *JAW?*

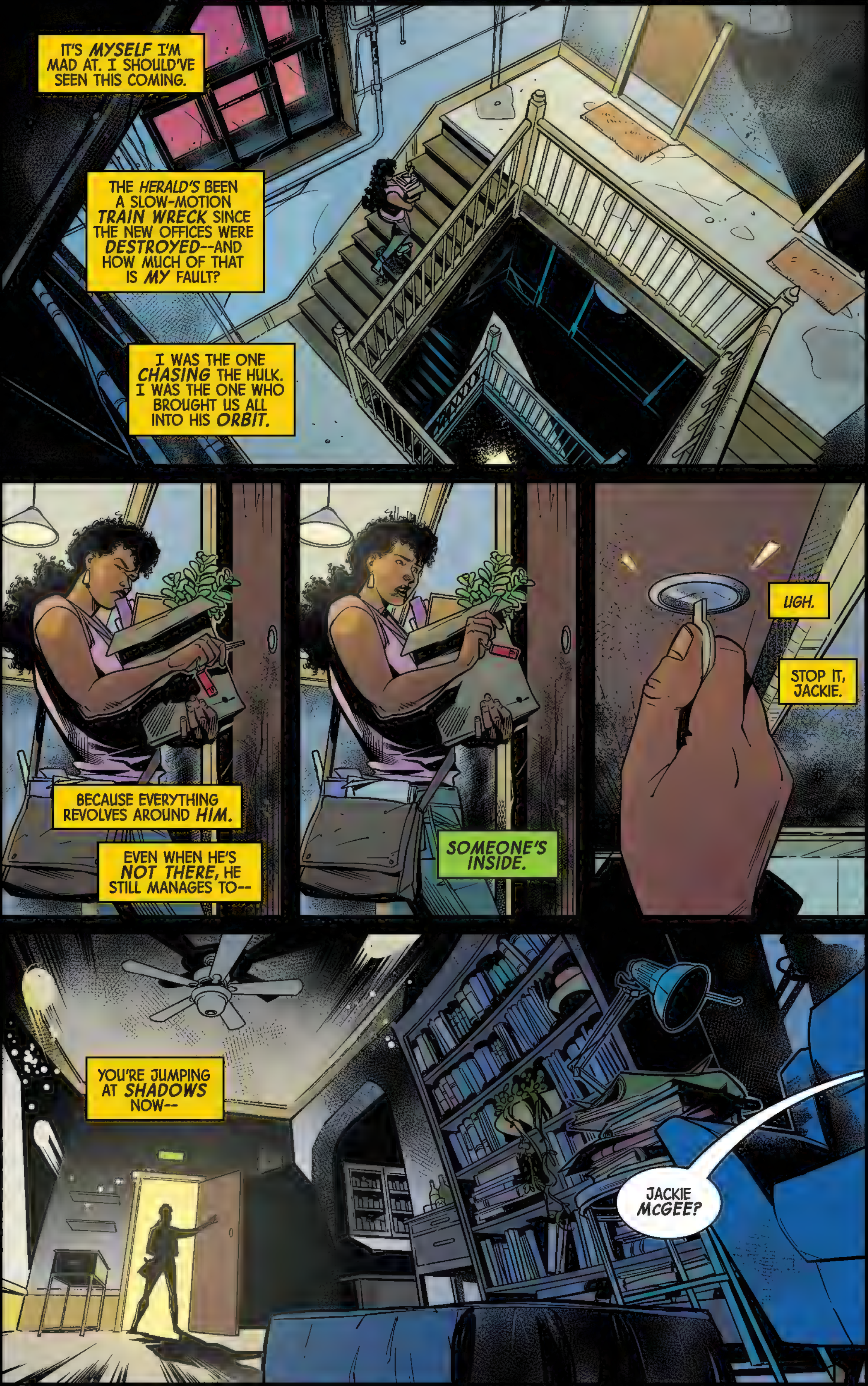

HEH.
GLAD YOU FIND THAT AMUSING, MS. MACPHERRAN.
WHERE'S YOUR HUSBAND, BY THE WAY? THE ABSORBING MAN?
CARL? HE SAYS HE AIN'T COMIN' BACK UNTIL YOU GET STRONGER WINDOWS ON THIS TUB--
I ASK BECAUSE I JUST SENT A TEXT TO A CERTAIN LEGAL TEAM IN OUR EMPLOY.
WITHIN THE HOUR, THERE WILL AGAIN BE A WARRANT OUT FOR CARL CREEL'S ARREST ACROSS ALL FIFTY STATES.
YOU-- YOU SON OF A--
EASY--
HE FOUGHT THE HULK FOR YOU! THE HULK!
HOW COULD YOU DO THAT?
I ALREADY TOLD YOU HOW, MS. MACPHERRAN.
I SENT A TEXT.

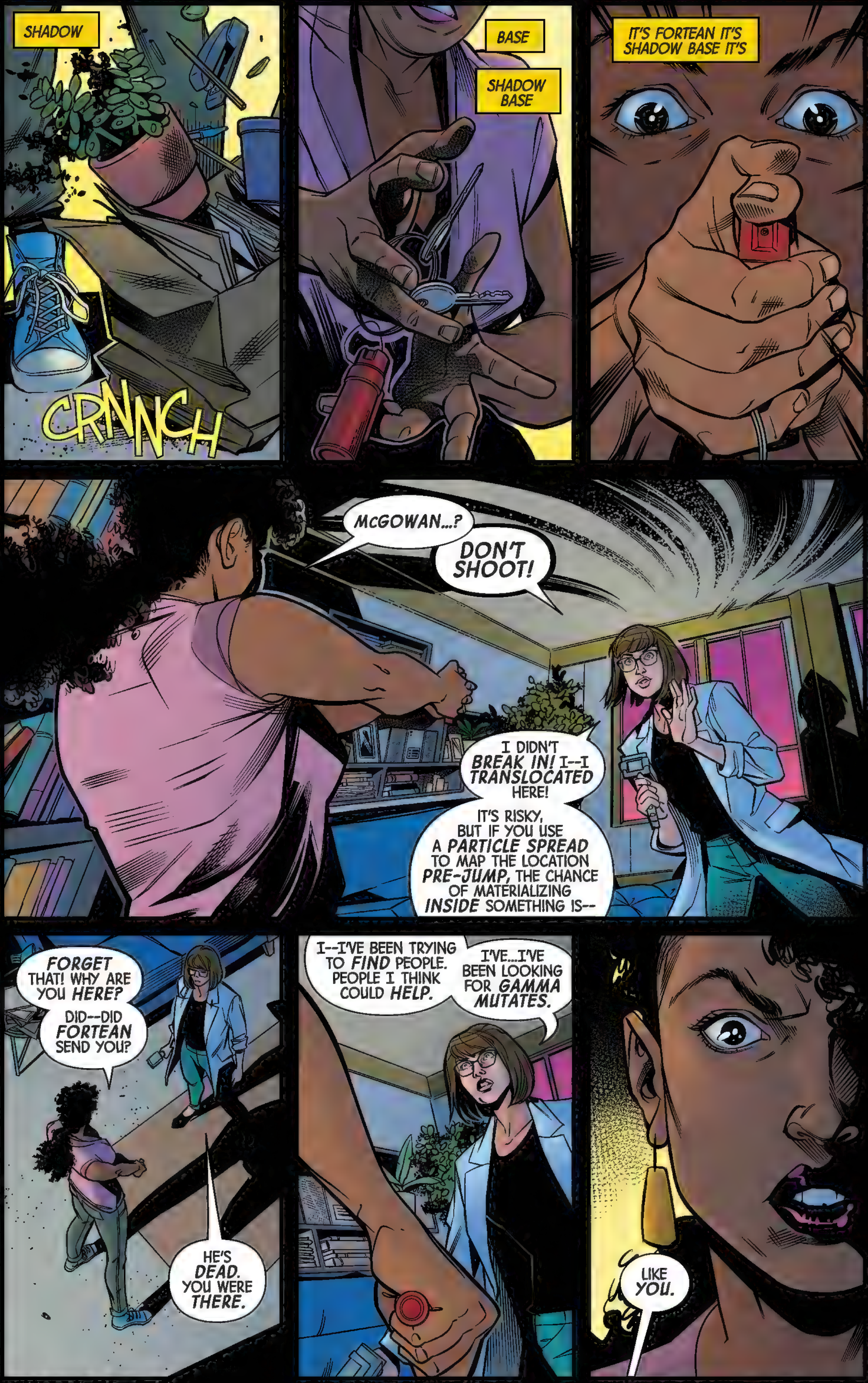

ARIZONA. OUTSIDE PHOENIX.
SEE, THAT'S THE THING ABOUT ME, MS. McGEE. I LIKE TO DO THINGS FACE-TO-FACE. THE PERSONAL TOUCH... IT'S IMPORTANT.
THE ART OF CONVERSATION.
AND OBVIOUSLY, AS THE, AH...INTERIM EDITOR FOR THE ARIZONA HERALD...WELL, I'M HAVING CONVERSATIONS WITH A LOT OF PEOPLE TODAY.
YEAH. A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE PACKING UP CARDBOARD BOXES.
THE ONES WHO EVEN HAD THE CHANCE TO UNPACK AFTER PHOENIX...
WELL--THERE YOU GO. THAT'S WHY YOU'RE THE REPORTER.
THAT EYE FOR DETAIL.
WHAT HAPPENED TO MURRAY?
EXTENDED LEAVE.
HIS HEALTH.
THAT BUSINESS WITH THE GIANT MONSTERS DID A NUMBER ON HIM. ON THE PAPER, TOO.
WHICH IS WHY THE BOARD SENT ME IN TO... WELL...
LET ME START BY SAYING I'M A HUGE FAN OF YOUR WORK.

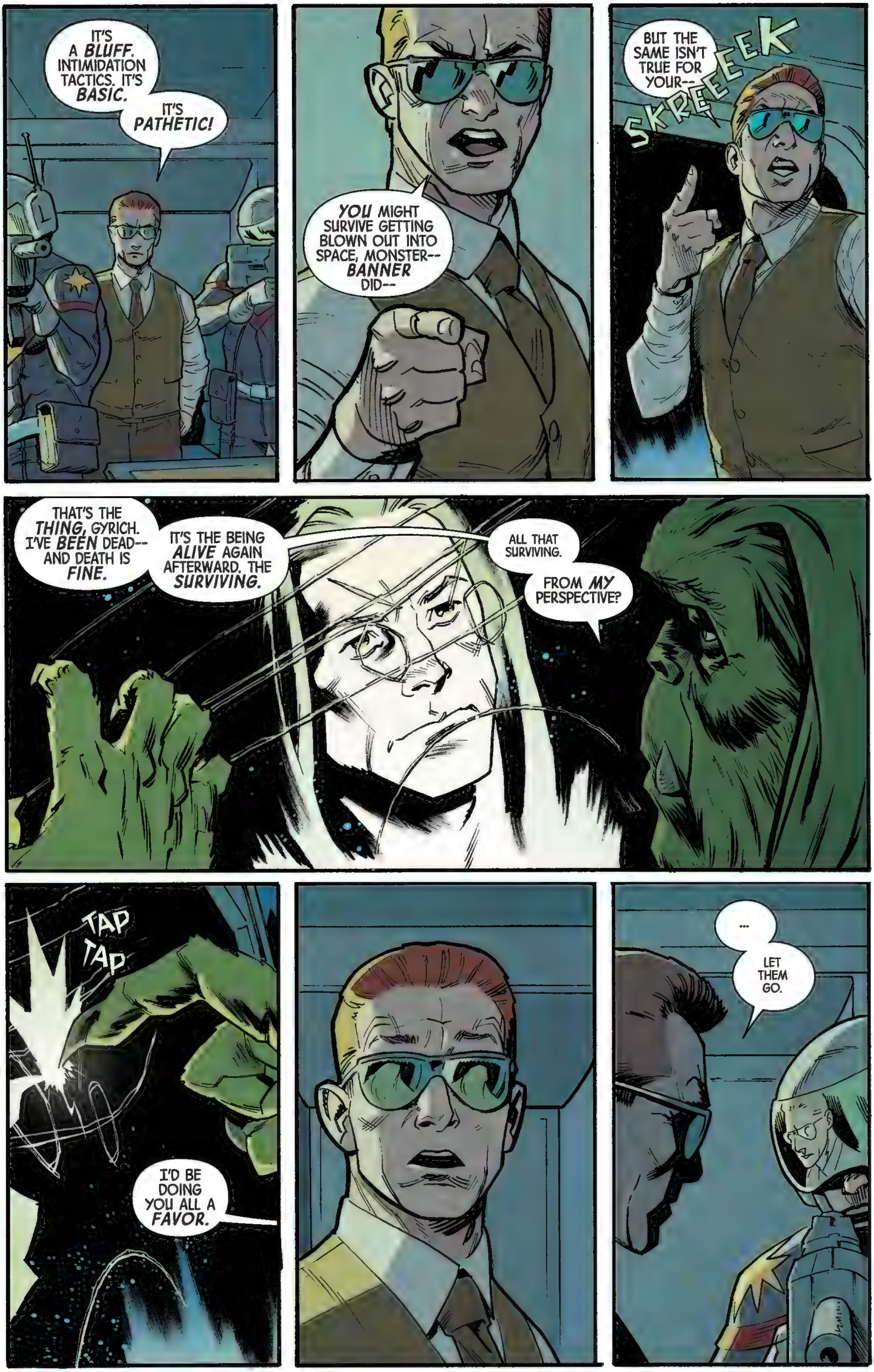

WE VALUE YOU. WE VALUE YOUR PERSPECTIVE HERE.
THE WORK YOU DO...IT'S MORE THAN JOURNALISM. YOU GIVE A VOICE TO THE VOICELESS. IT'S INSPIRATIONAL, FRANKLY.
ESPECIALLY IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES.
I'M SURE YOUR FATHER WOULD BE VERY PROUD.
HOWEVER. THAT SAID.
THE BOARD FEELS THE HERALD WOULD BENEFIT FROM PIVOTING. LESS OF A PRINT PRESENCE...LESS EMPHASIS ON INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING...
...AND OBVIOUSLY, WE'D NEED TO ADJUST YOUR SALARY.
BUT LET'S THINK OF IT AS A FRESH START.
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT LISTS?
FUN, RIGHT?
"DID YOU HONESTLY NEVER IMAGINE THIS DAY WOULD COME?"

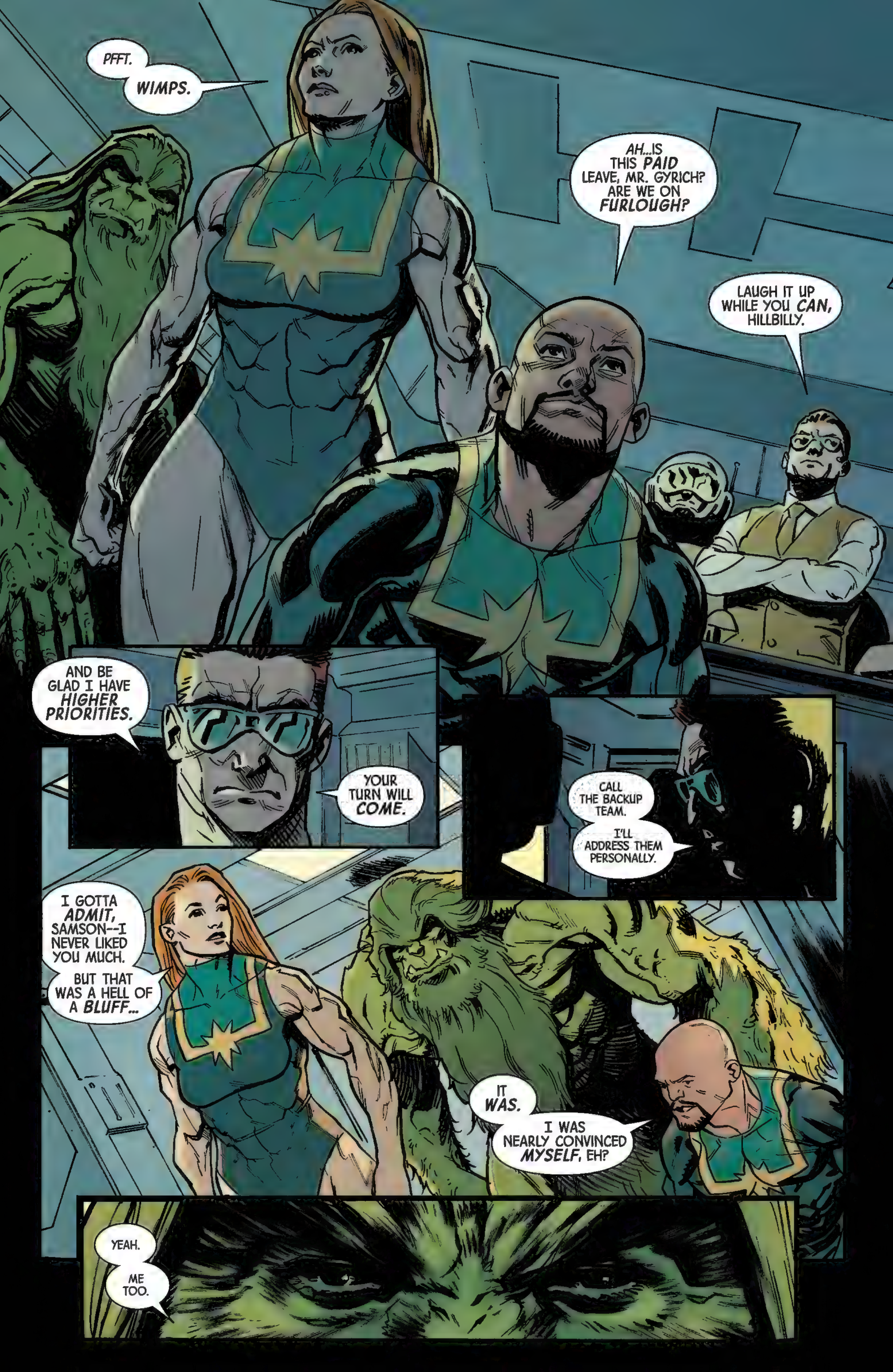

I'M ACTUALLY CURIOUS ABOUT THAT, TITANIA. YOU FELL SO EASILY INTO THE LAW-AND-ORDER ROLE.
YOU NEVER THOUGHT YOUR TURN WOULD COME ROUND AGAIN?
ENOUGH.
YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT, GYRICH.
I THINK WE ALL WISH WE'D DONE THINGS DIFFERENTLY NOW...
OH, DO YOU, SAMSON? I KNOW I DO.
I SHOULD HAVE PUT ONE IN YOUR BRAIN THE SECOND YOU CAME BACK TO LIFE, OR CALLED AN EXORCIST--WHATEVER THE PROPER TREATMENT IS FOR BODY THIEVES...
WHERE IS YOUR REAL BODY, ANYWAY?
I'D LIKE TO KNOW THAT MYSELF, EH?
ROTTING IN SHADOW BASE SITE G, I'M AFRAID. AND NO, I DON'T KNOW WHERE THAT IS.
I WAS NEVER TOLD, I NEVER ASKED. I WANTED TO REBUILD TRUST WITH BRUCE...
BRUCE BANNER, THE PUBLIC FUGITIVE? THAT SOUNDS LIKE A CHOICE, DR. SAMSON.
THE WRONG CHOICE.

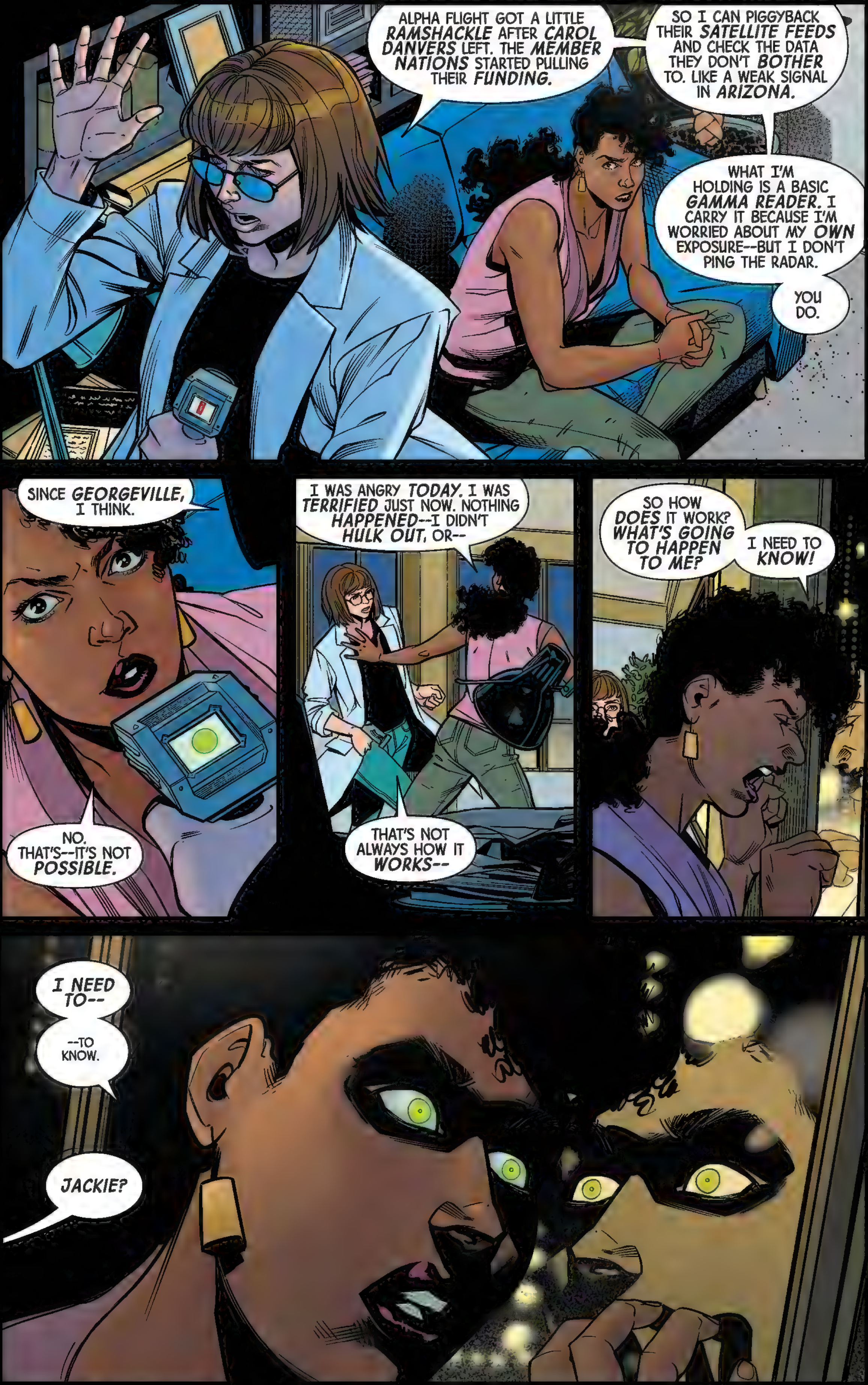

MAYBE I SHOULD KEEP *YOU* IN THE HULK'S OLD CELL, HM?
DRAIN THE GAMMA OUT OF *YOU!*
MAYBE TAKE YOUR *PELT!*
MAKE A *RUG* OUT OF IT!
PRETTY SURE YOUR MEMORY'LL *COME BACK* AFTER WE--
SSSKKRRRRRRKKK
SHOOT HIM.
NOW.
I--I DON'T THINK THAT'S *WISE,* SIR.
HE'S STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE--
SKRRKK
SKRKK
SKRIK
SKRIKK

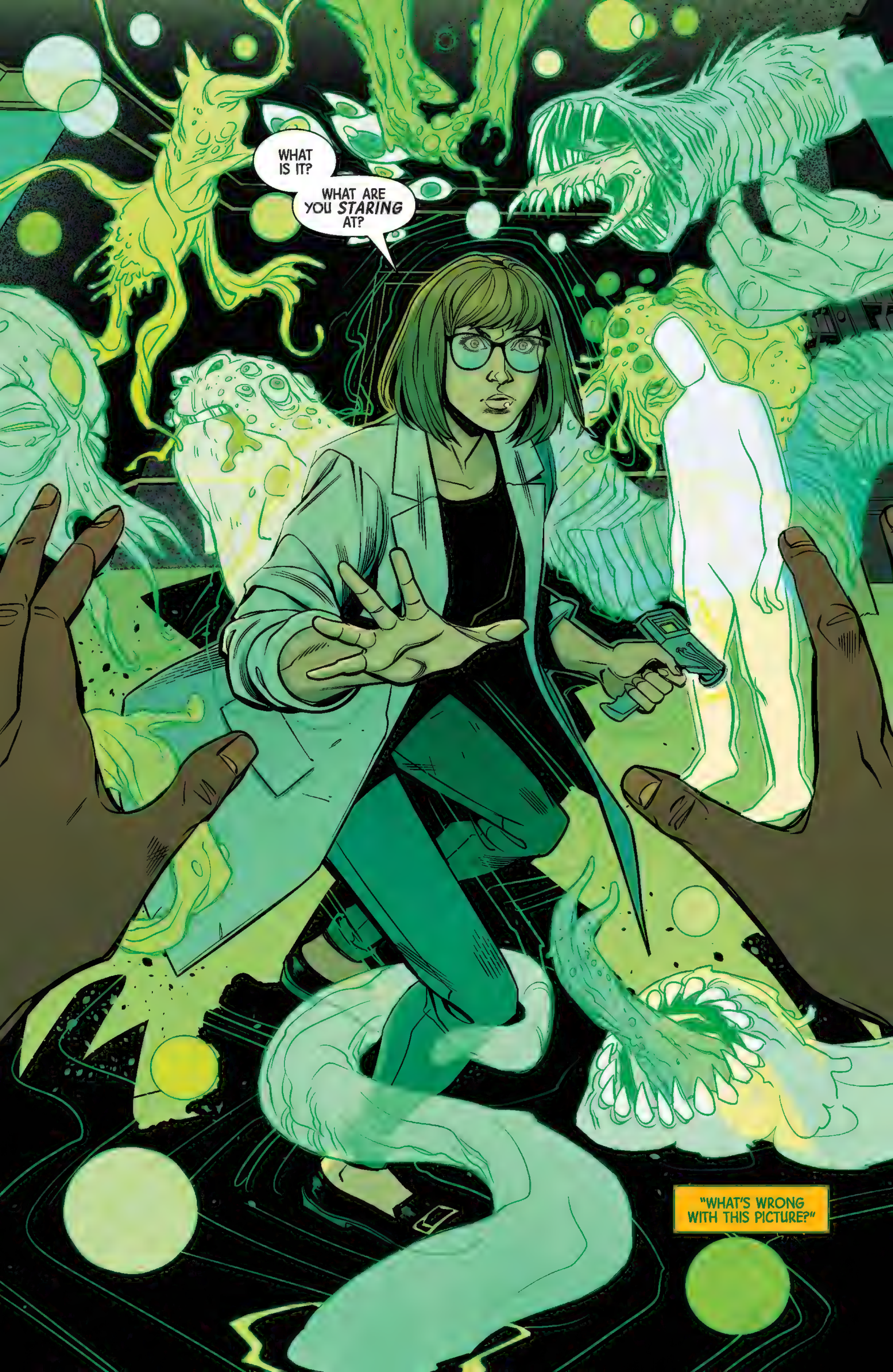

IT'S *MYSELF* I'M MAD AT. I SHOULD'VE SEEN THIS COMING.
THE *HERALD'S* BEEN A SLOW-MOTION *TRAIN WRECK* SINCE THE NEW OFFICES WERE *DESTROYED*--AND HOW MUCH OF THAT IS *MY* FAULT?
I WAS THE ONE *CHASING* THE HULK. I WAS THE ONE WHO BROUGHT US ALL INTO HIS *ORBIT.*
BECAUSE EVERYTHING REVOLVES AROUND *HIM.*
EVEN WHEN HE'S *NOT THERE,* HE STILL MANAGES TO--
SOMEONE'S INSIDE.
UGH.
STOP IT, JACKIE.
YOU'RE JUMPING AT *SHADOWS* NOW--
JACKIE *MCGEE?*

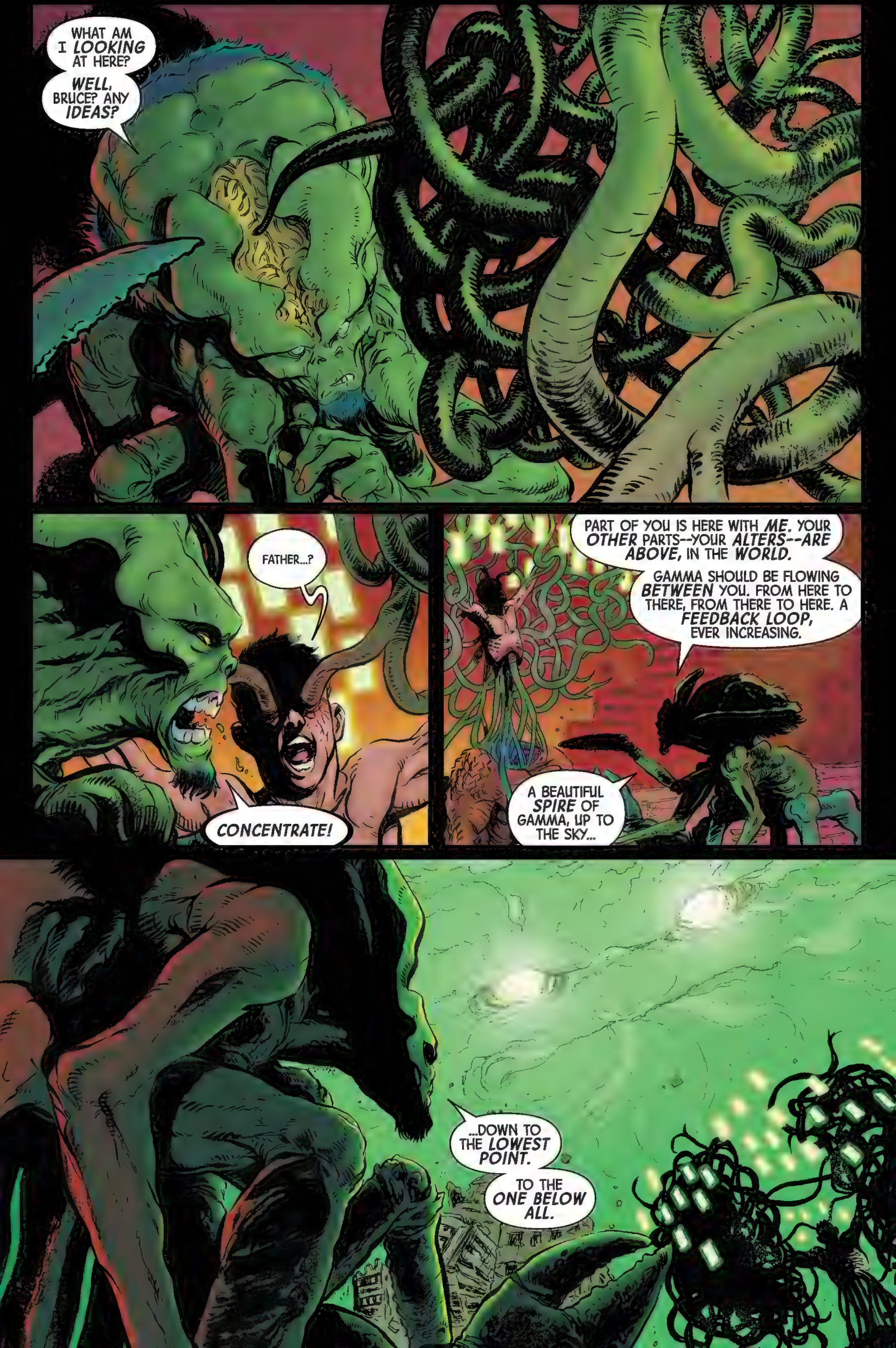

SHADOW
CRNNCH
BASE
SHADOW BASE
IT'S FORTEAN IT'S SHADOW BASE IT'S
McGOWAN...?
DON'T SHOOT!
I DIDN'T BREAK IN! I--I TRANSLOCATED HERE!
IT'S RISKY, BUT IF YOU USE A PARTICLE SPREAD TO MAP THE LOCATION PRE-JUMP, THE CHANCE OF MATERIALIZING INSIDE SOMETHING IS--
FORGET THAT! WHY ARE YOU HERE?
DID--DID FORTEAN SEND YOU?
HE'S DEAD. YOU WERE THERE.
I--I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND PEOPLE. PEOPLE I THINK COULD HELP.
I'VE...I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR GAMMA MUTATES.
LIKE YOU.

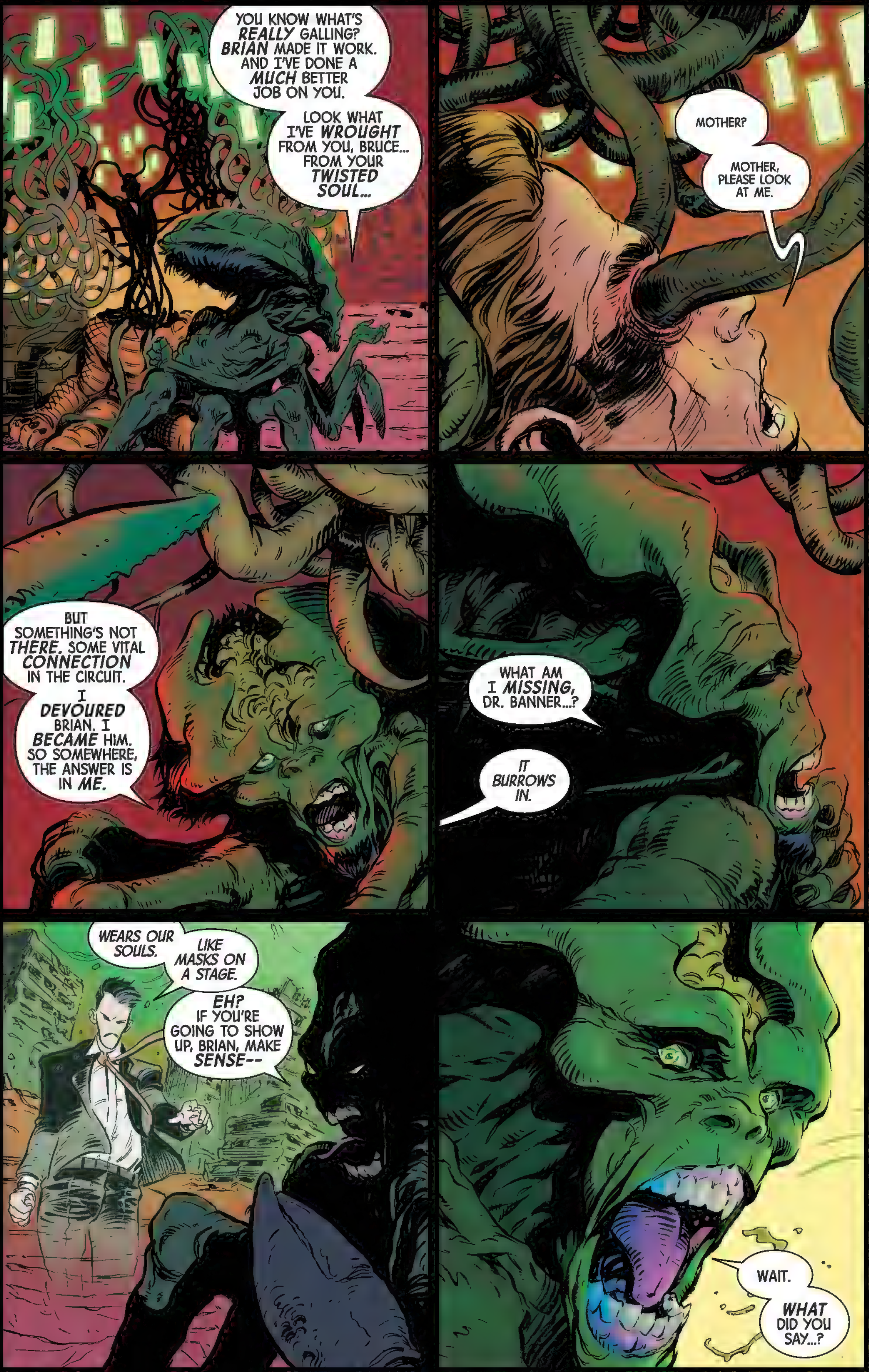

IT'S A BLUFF. INTIMIDATION TACTICS. IT'S BASIC.
IT'S PATHETIC!
YOU MIGHT SURVIVE GETTING BLOWN OUT INTO SPACE, MONSTER-- BANNER DID--
BUT THE SAME ISN'T TRUE FOR YOUR--
SKREEEEK
THAT'S THE THING, GYRICH. I'VE BEEN DEAD-- AND DEATH IS FINE.
IT'S THE BEING ALIVE AGAIN AFTERWARD. THE SURVIVING.
ALL THAT SURVIVING.
FROM MY PERSPECTIVE?
TAP TAP
I'D BE DOING YOU ALL A FAVOR.
...
LET THEM GO.

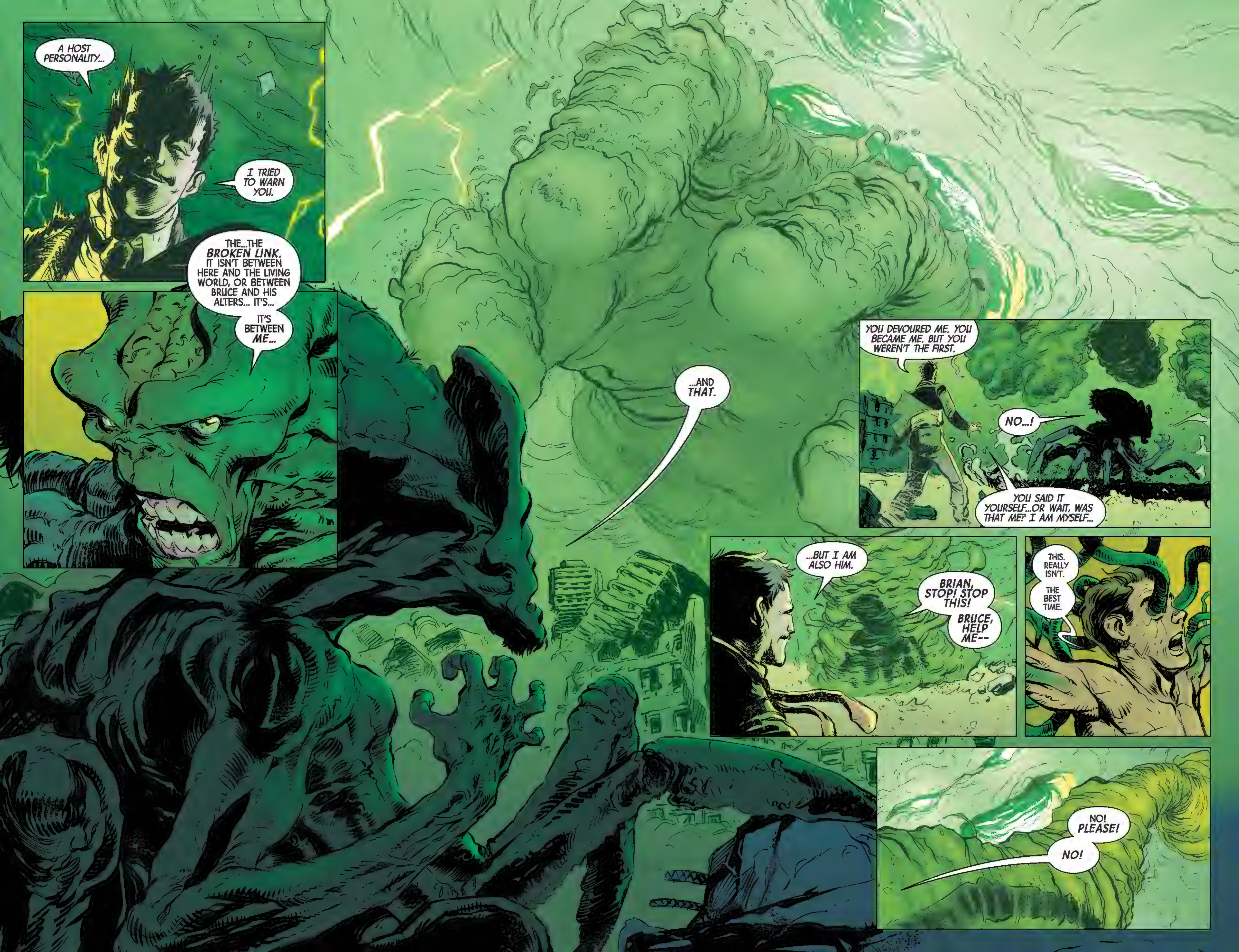

PFFT.
WIMPS.
AH...IS THIS PAID LEAVE, MR. GYRICH? ARE WE ON FURLOUGH?
LAUGH IT UP WHILE YOU CAN, HILLBILLY.
AND BE GLAD I HAVE HIGHER PRIORITIES.
YOUR TURN WILL COME.
CALL THE BACKUP TEAM.
I'LL ADDRESS THEM PERSONALLY.
I GOTTA ADMIT, SAMSON--I NEVER LIKED YOU MUCH.
BUT THAT WAS A HELL OF A BLUFF...
IT WAS.
I WAS NEARLY CONVINCED MYSELF, EH?
YEAH.
ME TOO.

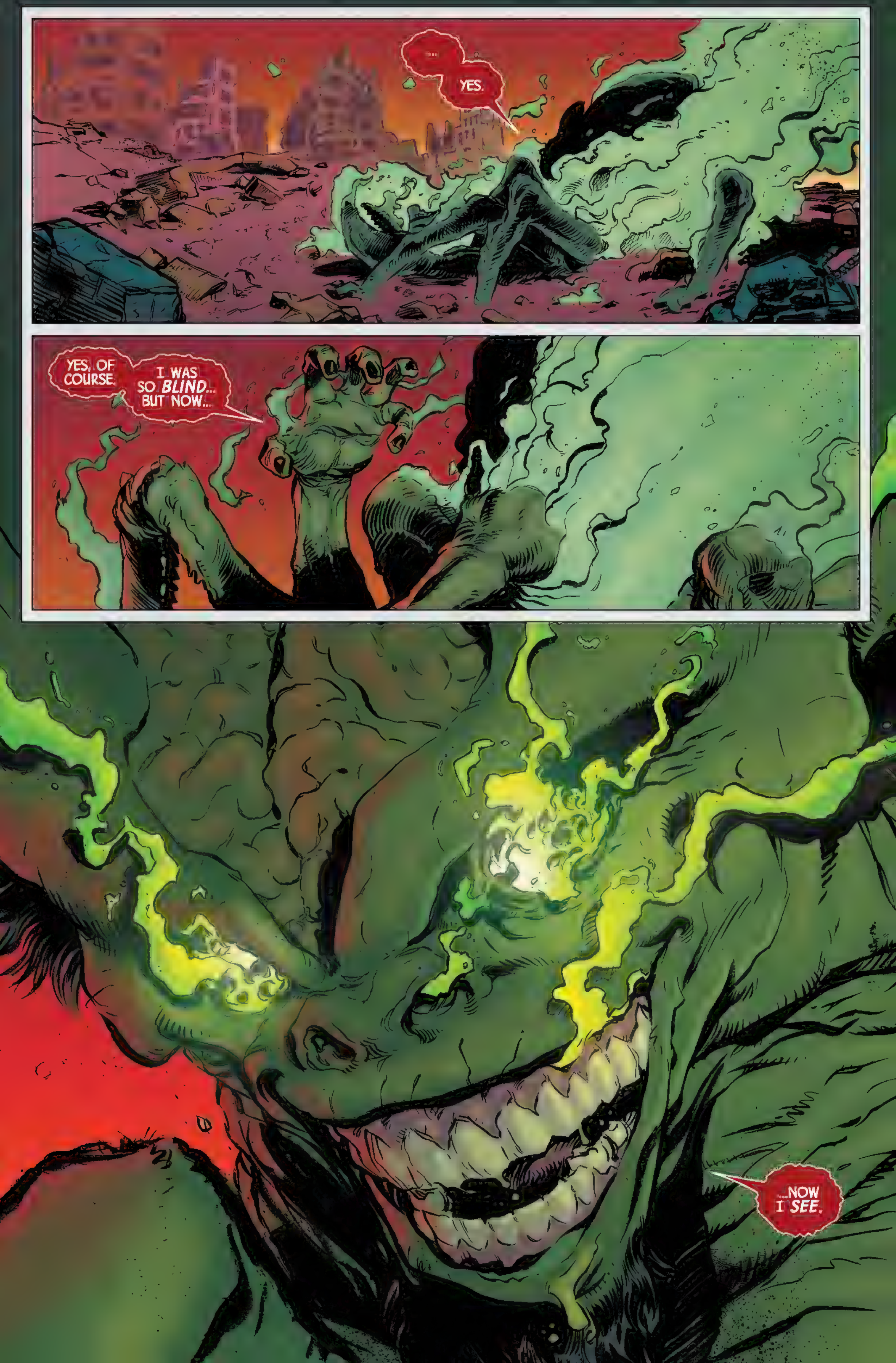

ALPHA FLIGHT GOT A LITTLE RAMSHACKLE AFTER CAROL DANVERS LEFT. THE MEMBER NATIONS STARTED PULLING THEIR FUNDING.
SO I CAN PIGGYBACK THEIR SATELLITE FEEDS AND CHECK THE DATA THEY DON'T BOTHER TO. LIKE A WEAK SIGNAL IN ARIZONA.
WHAT I'M HOLDING IS A BASIC GAMMA READER. I CARRY IT BECAUSE I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY OWN EXPOSURE--BUT I DON'T PING THE RADAR.
YOU DO.
SINCE GEORGEVILLE, I THINK.
NO. THAT'S--IT'S NOT POSSIBLE.
I WAS ANGRY TODAY. I WAS TERRIFIED JUST NOW. NOTHING HAPPENED--I DIDN'T HULK OUT, OR--
THAT'S NOT ALWAYS HOW IT WORKS--
SO HOW DOES IT WORK? WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME?
I NEED TO KNOW!
I NEED TO--
--TO KNOW.
JACKIE?

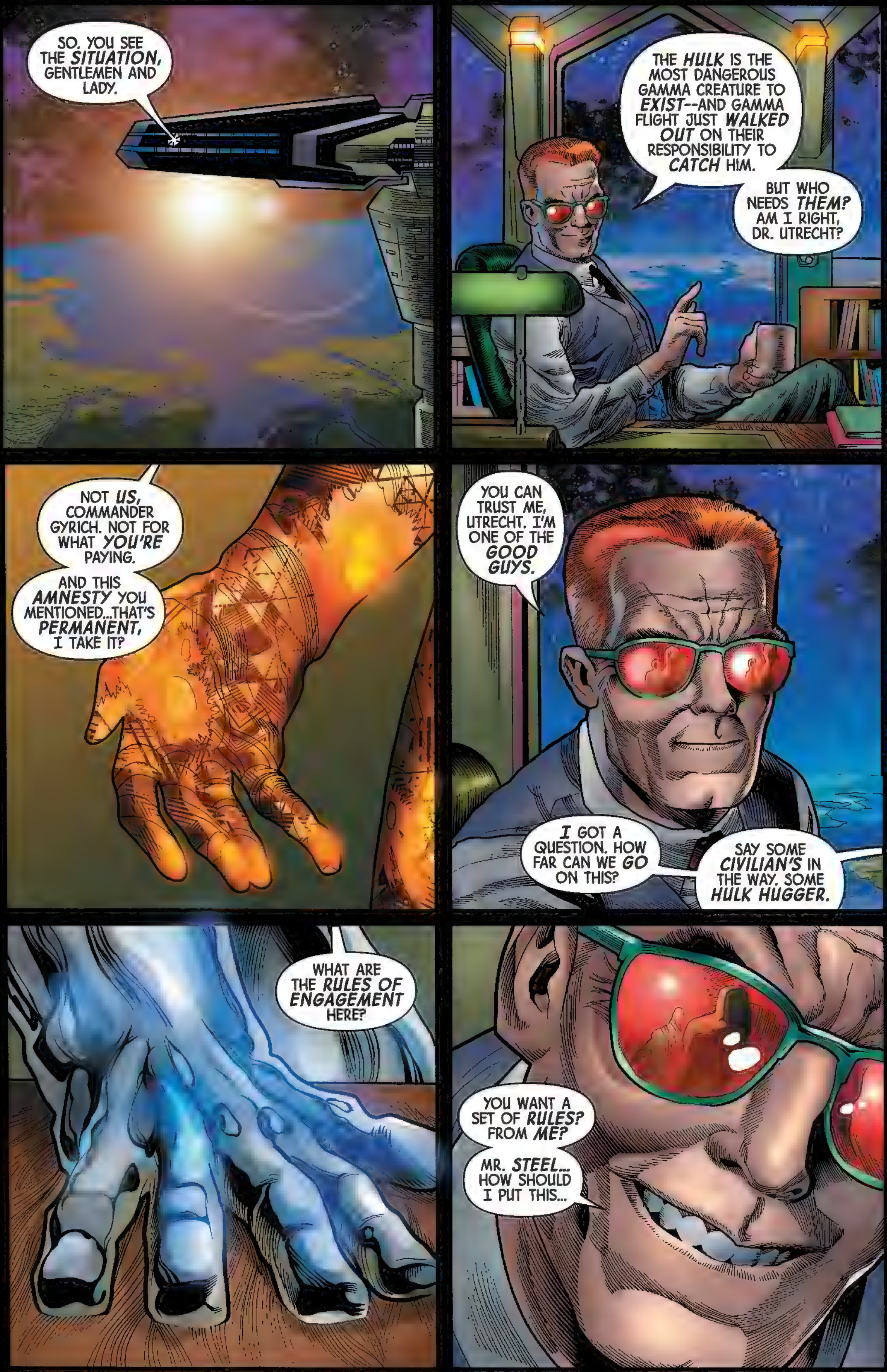

WHAT IS IT?
WHAT ARE YOU *STARING* AT?
"WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?"

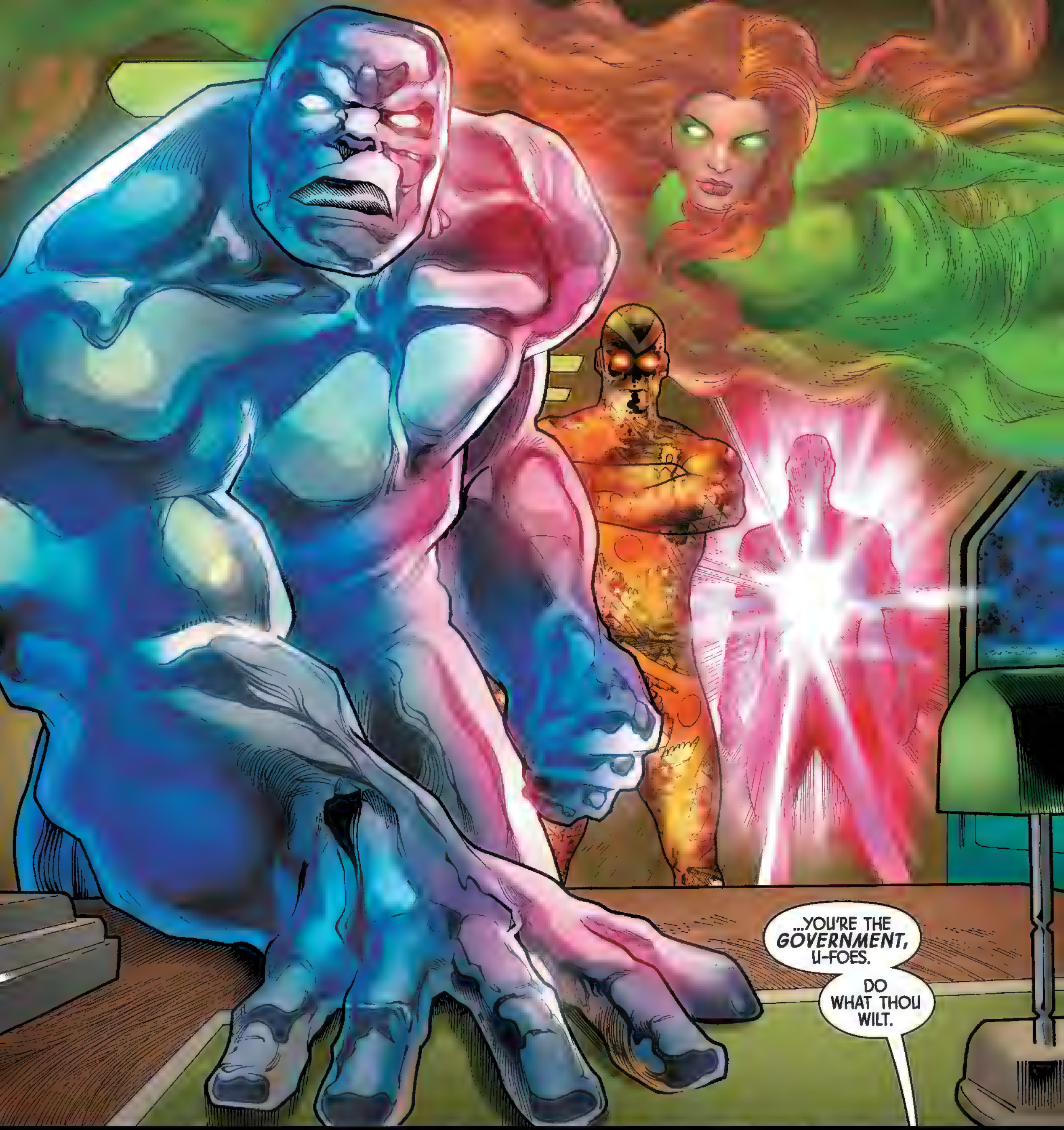

WHAT AM I *LOOKING* AT HERE?
WELL, BRUCE? ANY *IDEAS?*
FATHER...?
CONCENTRATE!
PART OF YOU IS HERE WITH *ME.* YOUR *OTHER* PARTS--YOUR *ALTERS--ARE ABOVE,* IN THE *WORLD.*
GAMMA SHOULD BE FLOWING *BETWEEN* YOU. FROM HERE TO THERE, FROM THERE TO HERE. A *FEEDBACK LOOP,* EVER INCREASING.
A BEAUTIFUL *SPIRE* OF GAMMA, UP TO THE SKY...
...DOWN TO THE *LOWEST POINT.*
TO THE *ONE BELOW ALL.*


YOU KNOW WHAT'S *REALLY* GALLING? *BRIAN* MADE IT WORK. AND I'VE DONE A *MUCH* BETTER JOB ON YOU.
LOOK WHAT I'VE *WROUGHT* FROM YOU, BRUCE... FROM YOUR *TWISTED SOUL...*
MOTHER?
MOTHER, PLEASE LOOK AT ME.
BUT SOMETHING'S NOT *THERE*. SOME VITAL *CONNECTION* IN THE CIRCUIT.
I *DEVOURED* BRIAN. I *BECAME* HIM. SO SOMEWHERE, THE ANSWER IS IN *ME*.
WHAT AM I *MISSING*, DR. BANNER...?
IT BURROWS IN.
WEARS OUR SOULS.
LIKE MASKS ON A STAGE.
EH? IF YOU'RE GOING TO SHOW UP, BRIAN, MAKE *SENSE--*
WAIT.
WHAT DID YOU SAY...?


A HOST PERSONALITY...
I TRIED TO WARN YOU.
THE...THE **BROKEN LINK.** IT ISN'T BETWEEN HERE AND THE LIVING WORLD, OR BETWEEN BRUCE AND HIS ALTERS... IT'S...
IT'S BETWEEN ***ME...***
...AND ***THAT.***
YOU DEVOURED ME. YOU BECAME ME. BUT YOU WEREN'T THE FIRST.
NO...!
YOU SAID IT YOURSELF...OR WAIT, WAS THAT ME? I AM MYSELF...
...BUT I AM ALSO HIM.
BRIAN, STOP! STOP THIS!
BRUCE, HELP ME--
THIS. REALLY ISN'T.
THE BEST TIME.
NO! ***PLEASE!***
NO!


...
YES.
YES, OF COURSE.
I WAS SO *BLIND*... BUT NOW...
...NOW I *SEE*.


SO, YOU SEE THE *SITUATION*, GENTLEMEN AND LADY.
THE *HULK* IS THE MOST DANGEROUS GAMMA CREATURE TO *EXIST*--AND GAMMA FLIGHT JUST *WALKED OUT* ON THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO *CATCH* HIM.
BUT WHO NEEDS *THEM?* AM I RIGHT, DR. UTRECHT?
NOT *US*, COMMANDER GYRICH. NOT FOR WHAT *YOU'RE* PAYING.
AND THIS *AMNESTY* YOU MENTIONED...THAT'S *PERMANENT*, I TAKE IT?
YOU CAN TRUST ME, UTRECHT. I'M ONE OF THE *GOOD GUYS*.
I GOT A QUESTION. HOW FAR CAN WE *GO* ON THIS?
SAY SOME *CIVILIAN'S* IN THE WAY. SOME *HULK HUGGER*.
WHAT ARE THE *RULES OF ENGAGEMENT* HERE?
YOU WANT A SET OF *RULES?* FROM *ME?*
MR. *STEEL*... HOW SHOULD I PUT THIS...

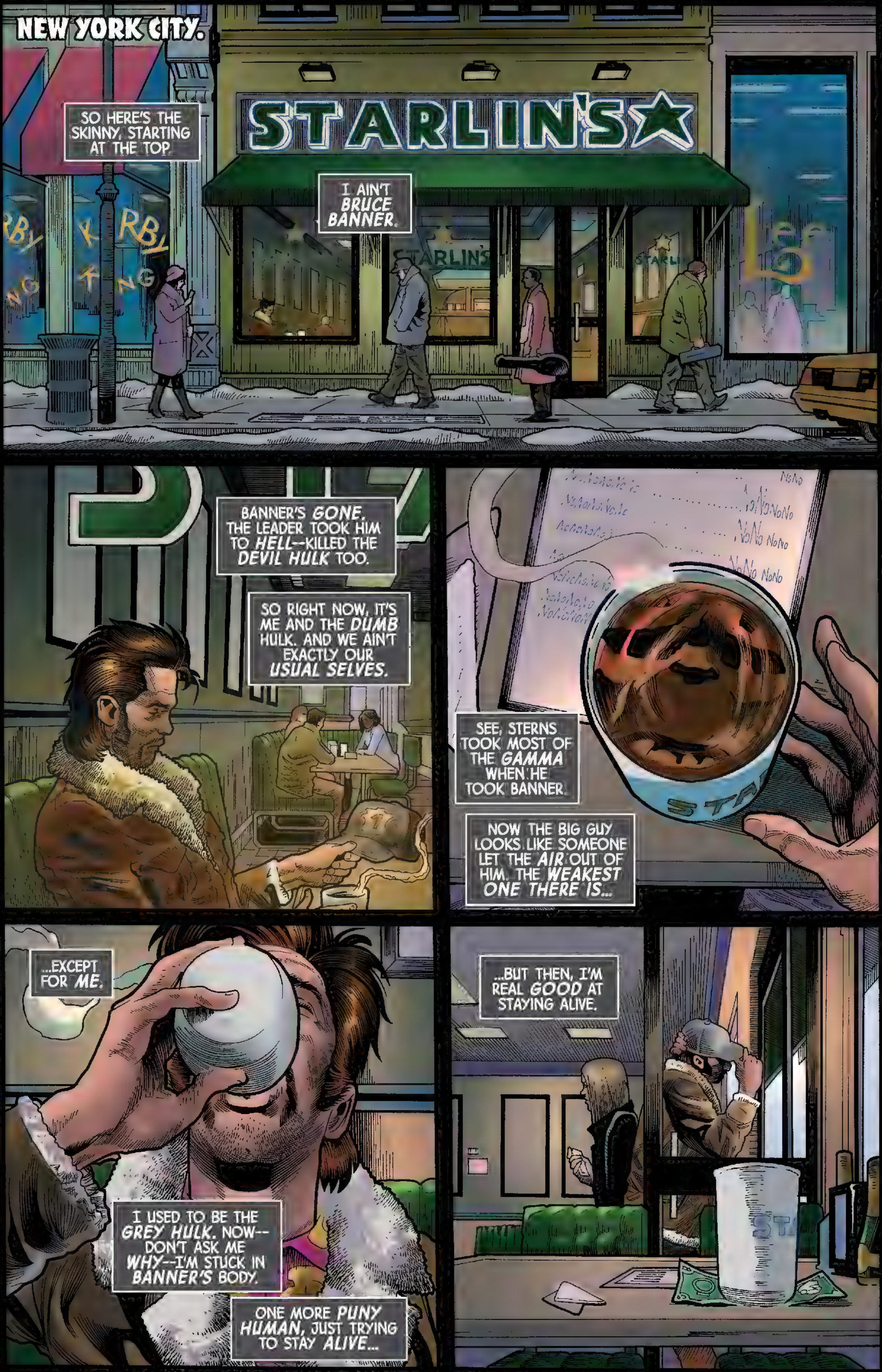

...YOU'RE THE *GOVERNMENT*, U-FOES.
DO WHAT THOU WILT.

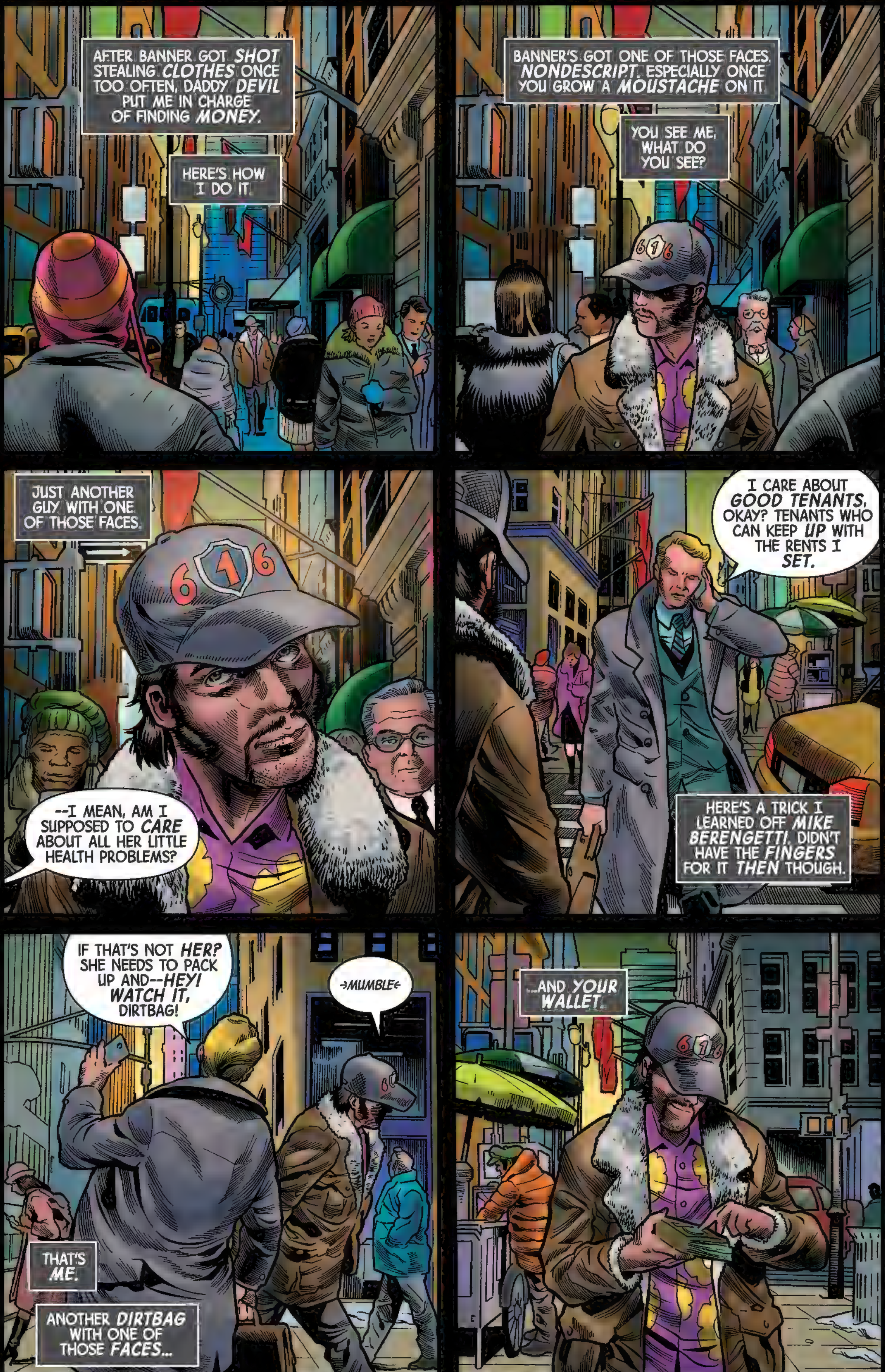
A GAME OF CONSEQUENCES

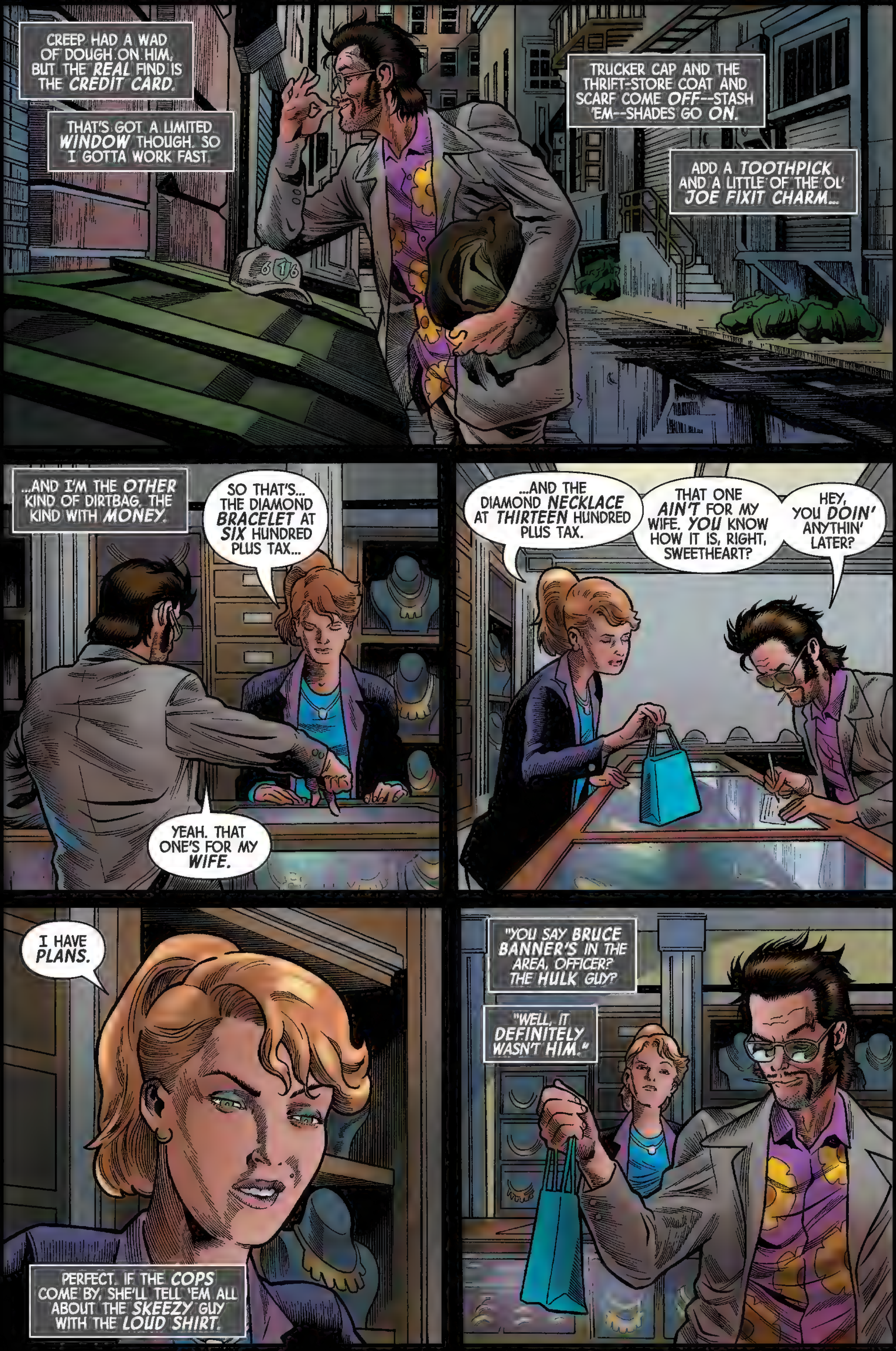
43

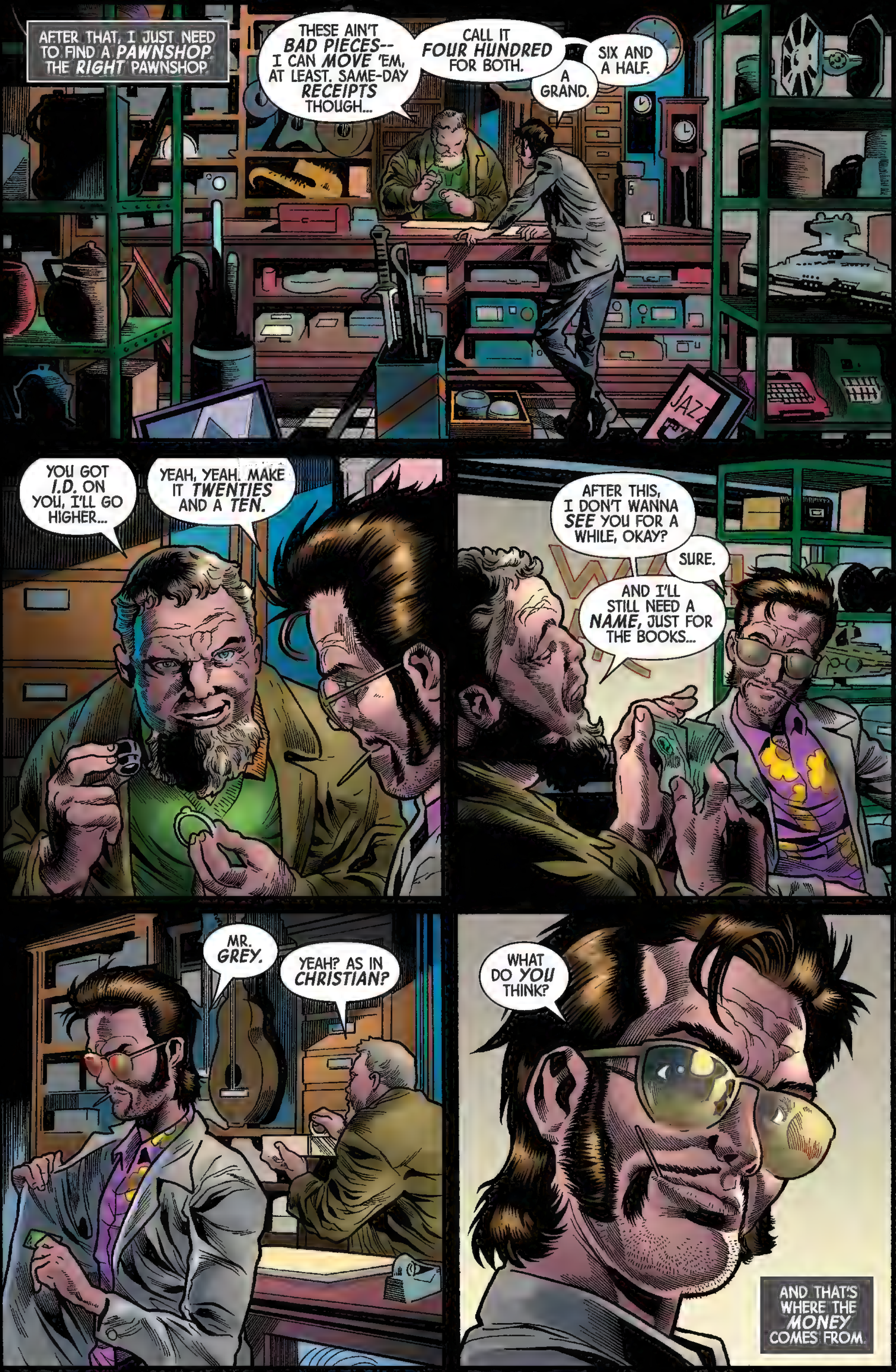
"IT IS POSSIBLE THAT TO BE A GOOD MAN IS NOT THE SAME AS TO BE A GOOD CITIZEN."

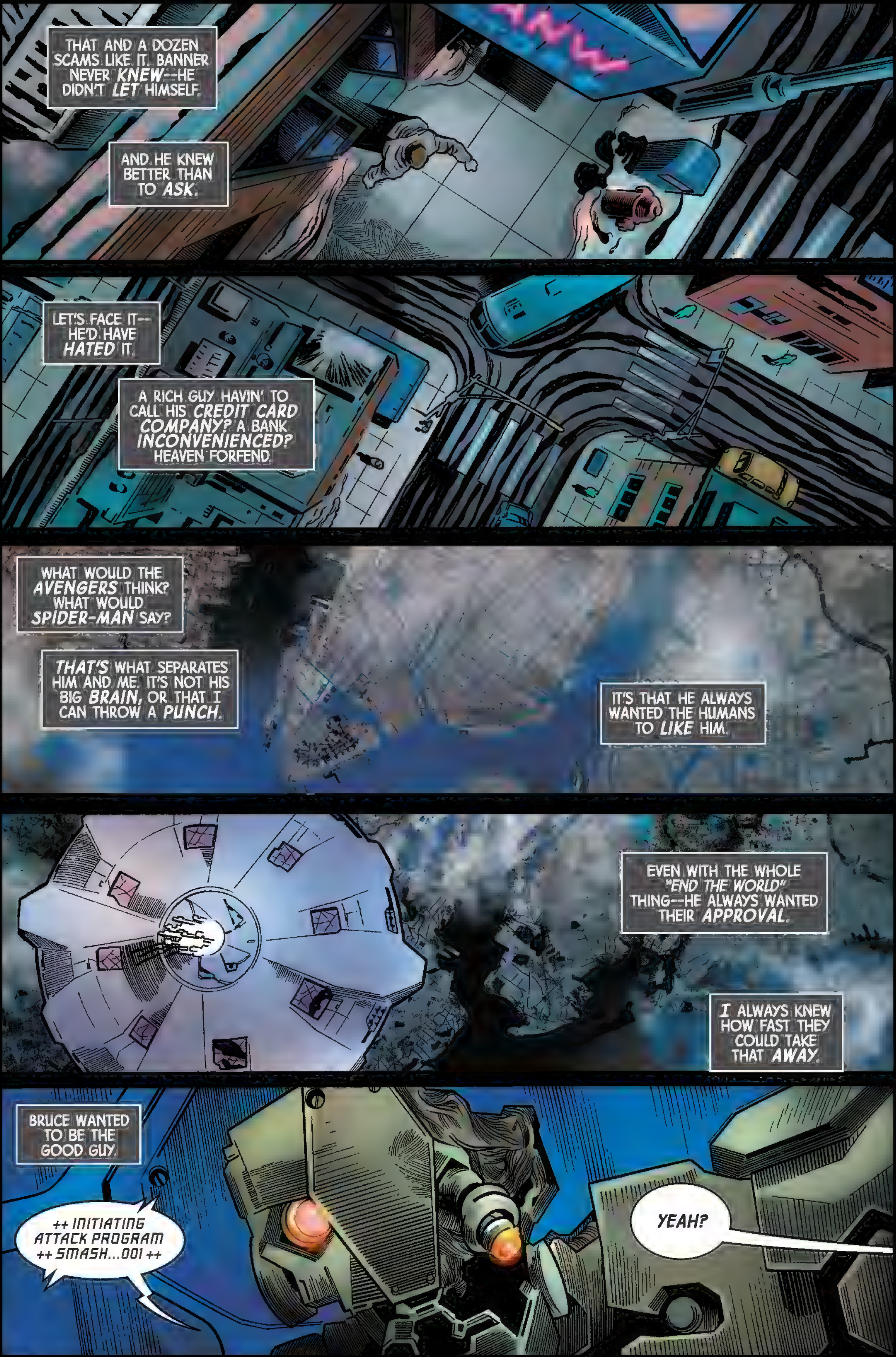
– ARISTOTLE,
THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

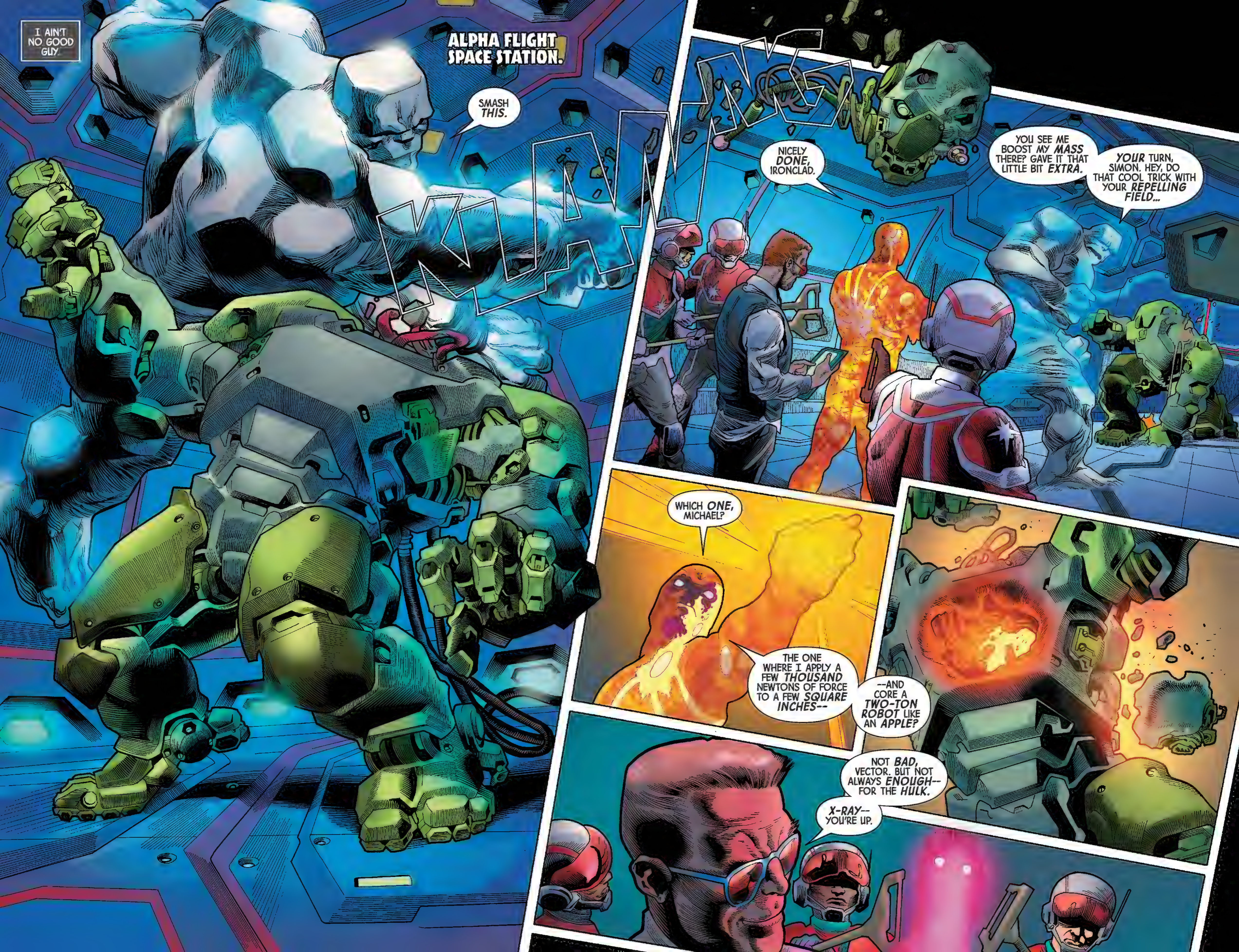

NEW YORK CITY.
SO HERE'S THE SKINNY, STARTING AT THE TOP.
STARLIN'S
I AIN'T *BRUCE BANNER.*
BANNER'S *GONE.* THE LEADER TOOK HIM TO *HELL*--KILLED THE *DEVIL HULK* TOO.
SO RIGHT NOW, IT'S ME AND THE *DUMB* HULK. AND WE AIN'T EXACTLY OUR *USUAL SELVES.*
SEE, STERNS TOOK MOST OF THE *GAMMA* WHEN HE TOOK BANNER.
NOW THE BIG GUY LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE LET THE *AIR* OUT OF HIM. THE *WEAKEST ONE THERE IS...*
...EXCEPT FOR *ME.*
I USED TO BE THE *GREY HULK.* NOW--DON'T ASK ME *WHY*--I'M STUCK IN *BANNER'S* BODY.
ONE MORE *PUNY HUMAN,* JUST TRYING TO STAY *ALIVE...*
...BUT THEN, I'M REAL *GOOD* AT STAYING ALIVE.

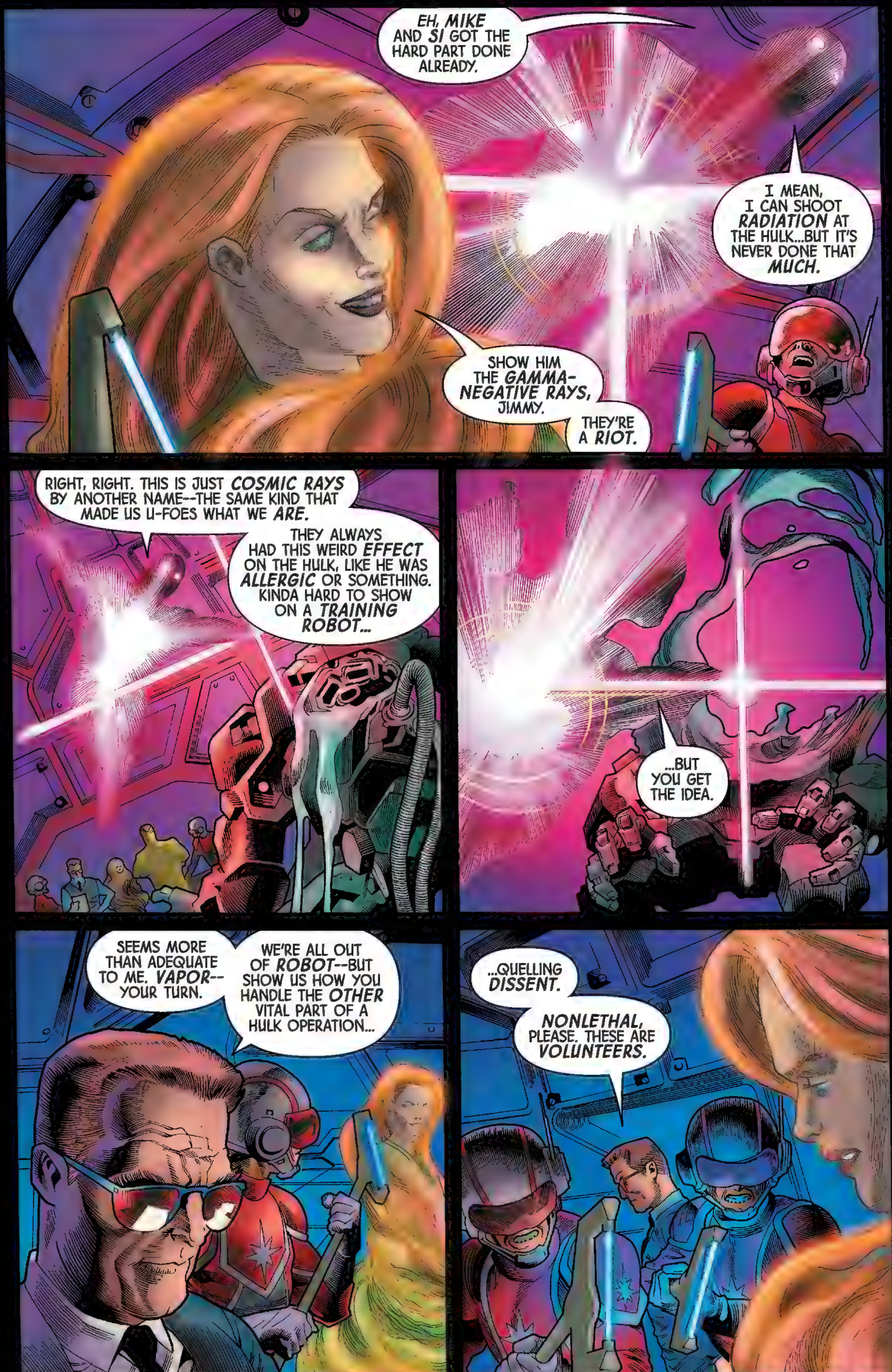

AFTER BANNER GOT *SHOT* STEALING *CLOTHES* ONCE TOO OFTEN, DADDY *DEVIL* PUT ME IN CHARGE OF FINDING *MONEY*.
HERE'S HOW I DO IT.
BANNER'S GOT ONE OF THOSE FACES. *NONDESCRIPT*, ESPECIALLY ONCE YOU GROW A *MOUSTACHE* ON IT.
YOU SEE ME, WHAT DO YOU SEE?
616
JUST ANOTHER GUY WITH ONE OF THOSE FACES.
616
--I MEAN, AM I SUPPOSED TO *CARE* ABOUT ALL HER LITTLE HEALTH PROBLEMS?
I CARE ABOUT *GOOD TENANTS*, OKAY? TENANTS WHO CAN KEEP *UP* WITH THE RENTS I *SET*.
HERE'S A TRICK I LEARNED OFF *MIKE BERENGETTI*. DIDN'T HAVE THE *FINGERS* FOR IT *THEN* THOUGH.
IF THAT'S NOT *HER?* SHE NEEDS TO PACK UP AND--*HEY! WATCH IT*, DIRTBAG!
›*MUMBLE*‹
THAT'S *ME*.
ANOTHER *DIRTBAG* WITH ONE OF THOSE *FACES*...
...AND *YOUR WALLET*.
616

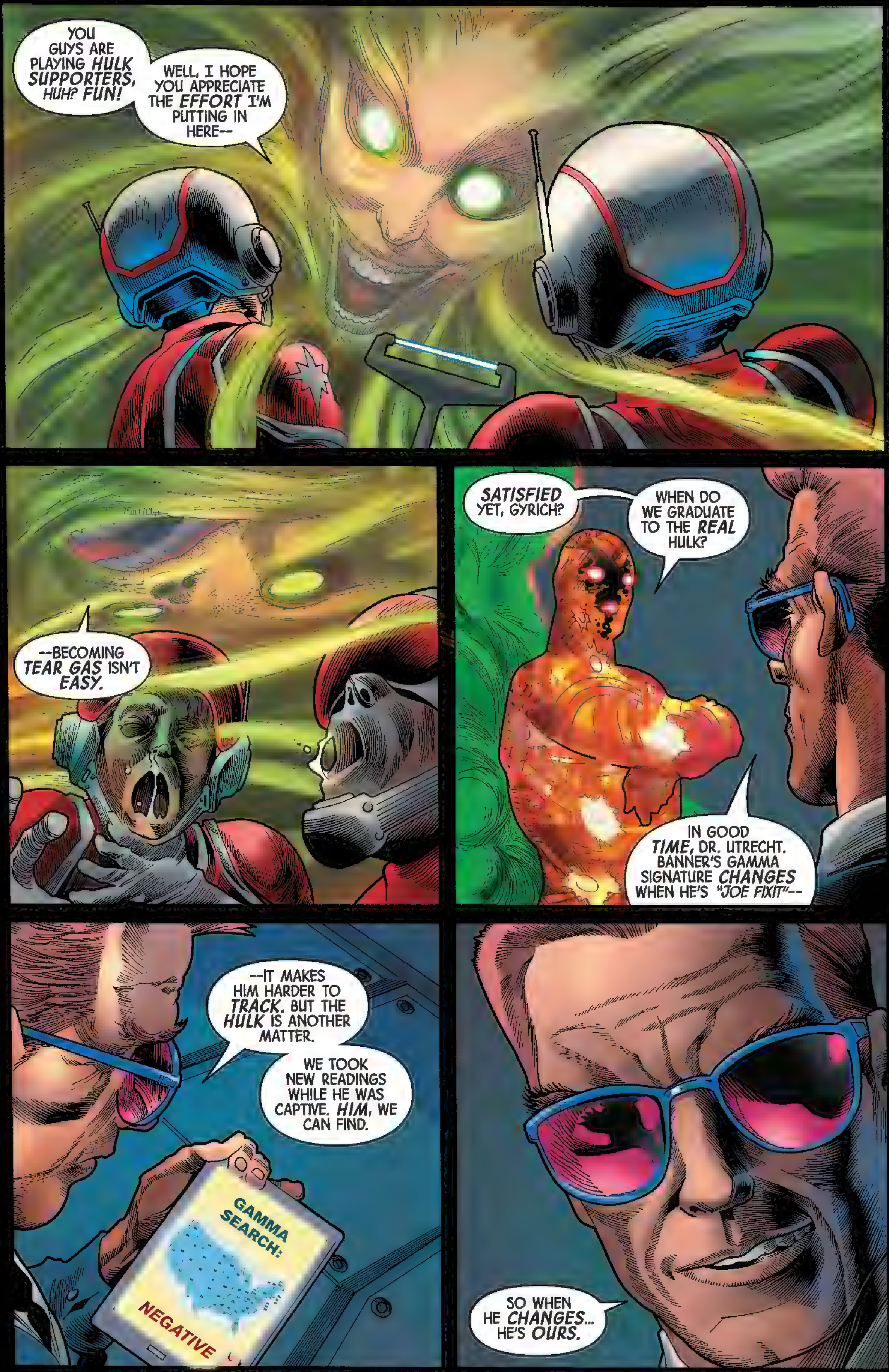

CREEP HAD A WAD OF DOUGH ON HIM, BUT THE *REAL* FIND IS THE *CREDIT CARD.*
THAT'S GOT A LIMITED *WINDOW* THOUGH. SO I GOTTA WORK FAST.
TRUCKER CAP AND THE THRIFT-STORE COAT AND SCARF COME *OFF*--STASH 'EM--SHADES GO *ON.*
ADD A *TOOTHPICK* AND A LITTLE OF THE OL' *JOE FIXIT CHARM...*
6 1 6
...AND I'M THE *OTHER* KIND OF DIRTBAG. THE KIND WITH *MONEY.*
SO THAT'S... THE DIAMOND *BRACELET* AT *SIX* HUNDRED PLUS TAX...
YEAH. THAT ONE'S FOR MY *WIFE.*
...AND THE DIAMOND *NECKLACE* AT *THIRTEEN* HUNDRED PLUS TAX.
THAT ONE *AIN'T* FOR MY WIFE. *YOU* KNOW HOW IT IS, RIGHT, SWEETHEART?
HEY, YOU *DOIN'* ANYTHIN' LATER?
I HAVE *PLANS.*
PERFECT. IF THE *COPS* COME BY, SHE'LL TELL 'EM ALL ABOUT THE *SKEEZY* GUY WITH THE *LOUD SHIRT.*
"YOU SAY *BRUCE BANNER'S* IN THE AREA, OFFICER? THE *HULK* GUY?
"WELL, IT *DEFINITELY* WASN'T HIM."

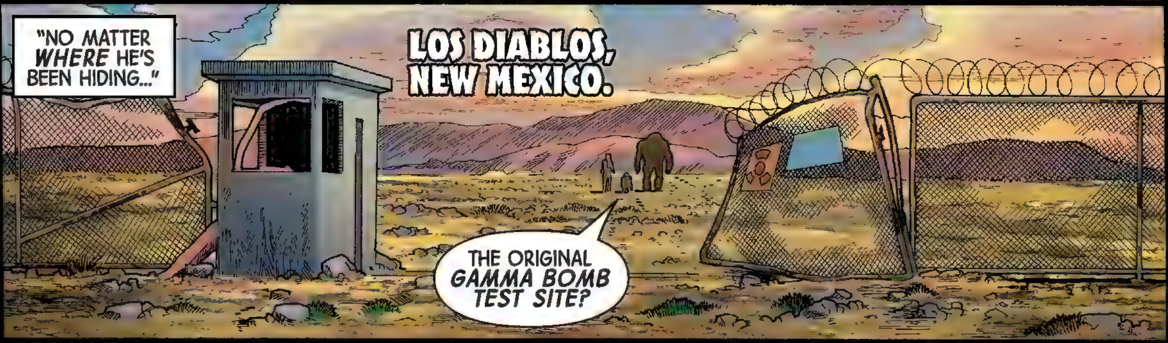

AFTER THAT, I JUST NEED TO FIND A PAWNSHOP. THE RIGHT PAWNSHOP.
THESE AIN'T BAD PIECES-- I CAN MOVE 'EM, AT LEAST. SAME-DAY RECEIPTS THOUGH...
CALL IT FOUR HUNDRED FOR BOTH.
SIX AND A HALF.
A GRAND.
YOU GOT I.D. ON YOU, I'LL GO HIGHER...
YEAH, YEAH. MAKE IT TWENTIES AND A TEN.
AFTER THIS, I DON'T WANNA SEE YOU FOR A WHILE, OKAY?
SURE.
AND I'LL STILL NEED A NAME, JUST FOR THE BOOKS...
MR. GREY.
YEAH? AS IN CHRISTIAN?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
AND THAT'S WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM.

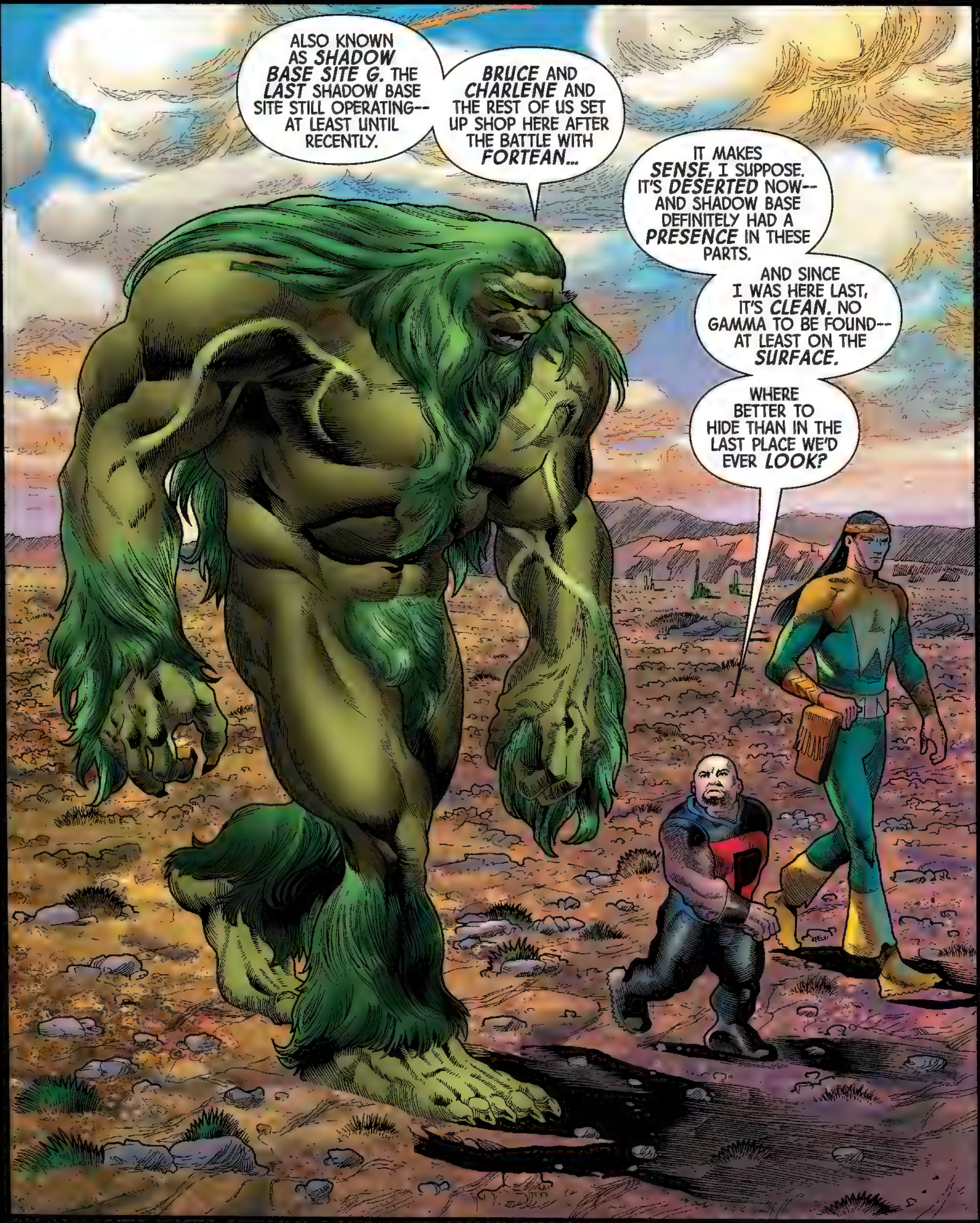

THAT AND A DOZEN SCAMS LIKE IT. BANNER NEVER KNEW--HE DIDN'T LET HIMSELF.
AND HE KNEW BETTER THAN TO ASK.
LET'S FACE IT--HE'D HAVE HATED IT.
A RICH GUY HAVIN' TO CALL HIS CREDIT CARD COMPANY? A BANK INCONVENIENCED? HEAVEN FORFEND.
WHAT WOULD THE AVENGERS THINK? WHAT WOULD SPIDER-MAN SAY?
THAT'S WHAT SEPARATES HIM AND ME. IT'S NOT HIS BIG BRAIN, OR THAT I CAN THROW A PUNCH.
IT'S THAT HE ALWAYS WANTED THE HUMANS TO LIKE HIM.
EVEN WITH THE WHOLE "END THE WORLD" THING--HE ALWAYS WANTED THEIR APPROVAL.
I ALWAYS KNEW HOW FAST THEY COULD TAKE THAT AWAY.
BRUCE WANTED TO BE THE GOOD GUY.
++ INITIATING ATTACK PROGRAM ++ SMASH...001 ++
YEAH?

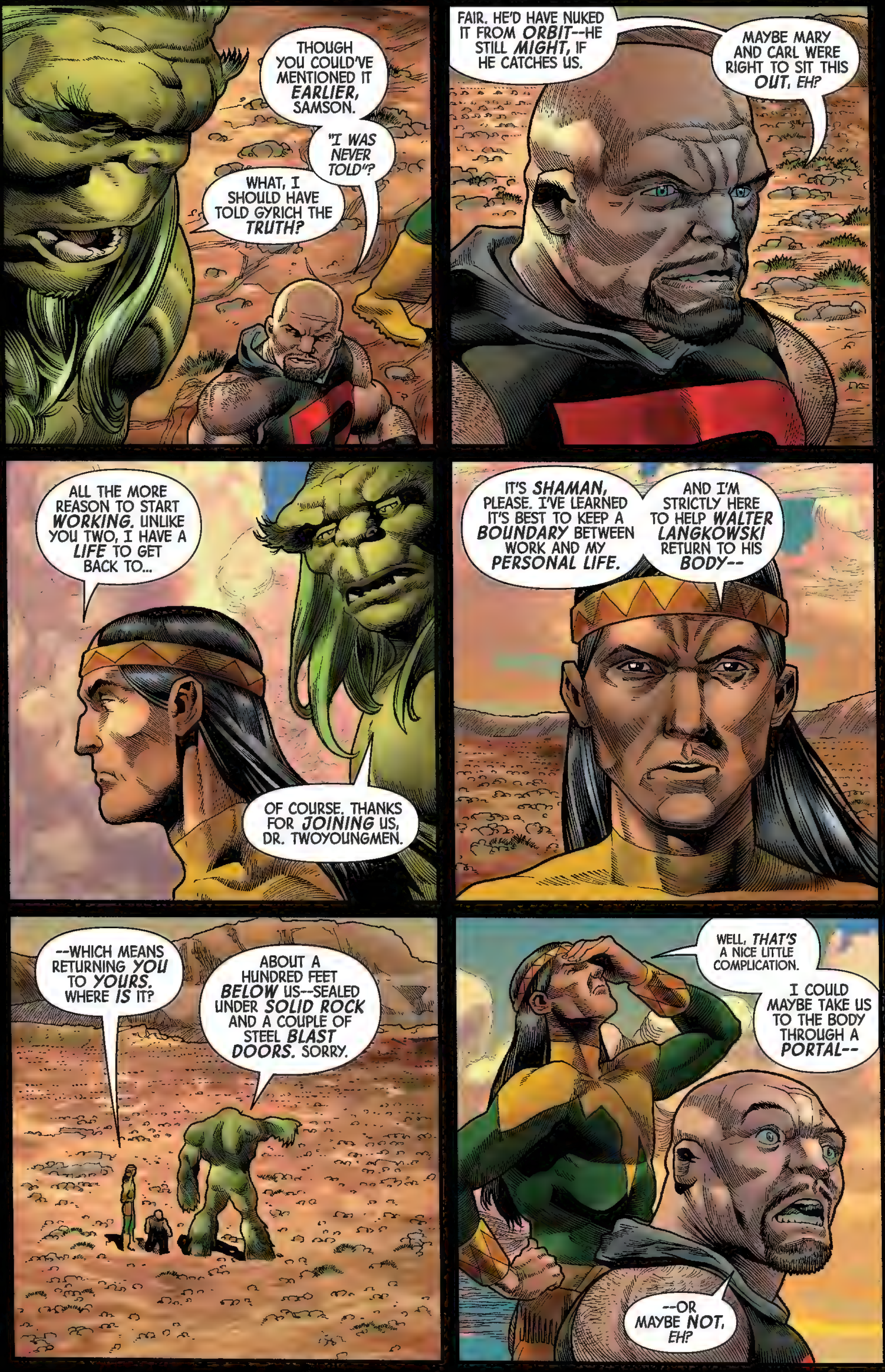

ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
SMASH *THIS.*
KLANNGG
NICELY *DONE,* IRONCLAD.
YOU SEE ME BOOST MY *MASS* THERE? GAVE IT THAT LITTLE BIT *EXTRA.*
YOUR TURN, SIMON. HEY, DO THAT COOL TRICK WITH YOUR *REPELLING FIELD...*
WHICH *ONE,* MICHAEL?
THE ONE WHERE I APPLY A FEW *THOUSAND* NEWTONS OF FORCE TO A FEW *SQUARE INCHES--*
--AND CORE A *TWO-TON ROBOT* LIKE AN *APPLE?*
NOT *BAD,* VECTOR. BUT NOT ALWAYS *ENOUGH--* FOR THE *HULK.*
X-RAY-- YOU'RE UP.

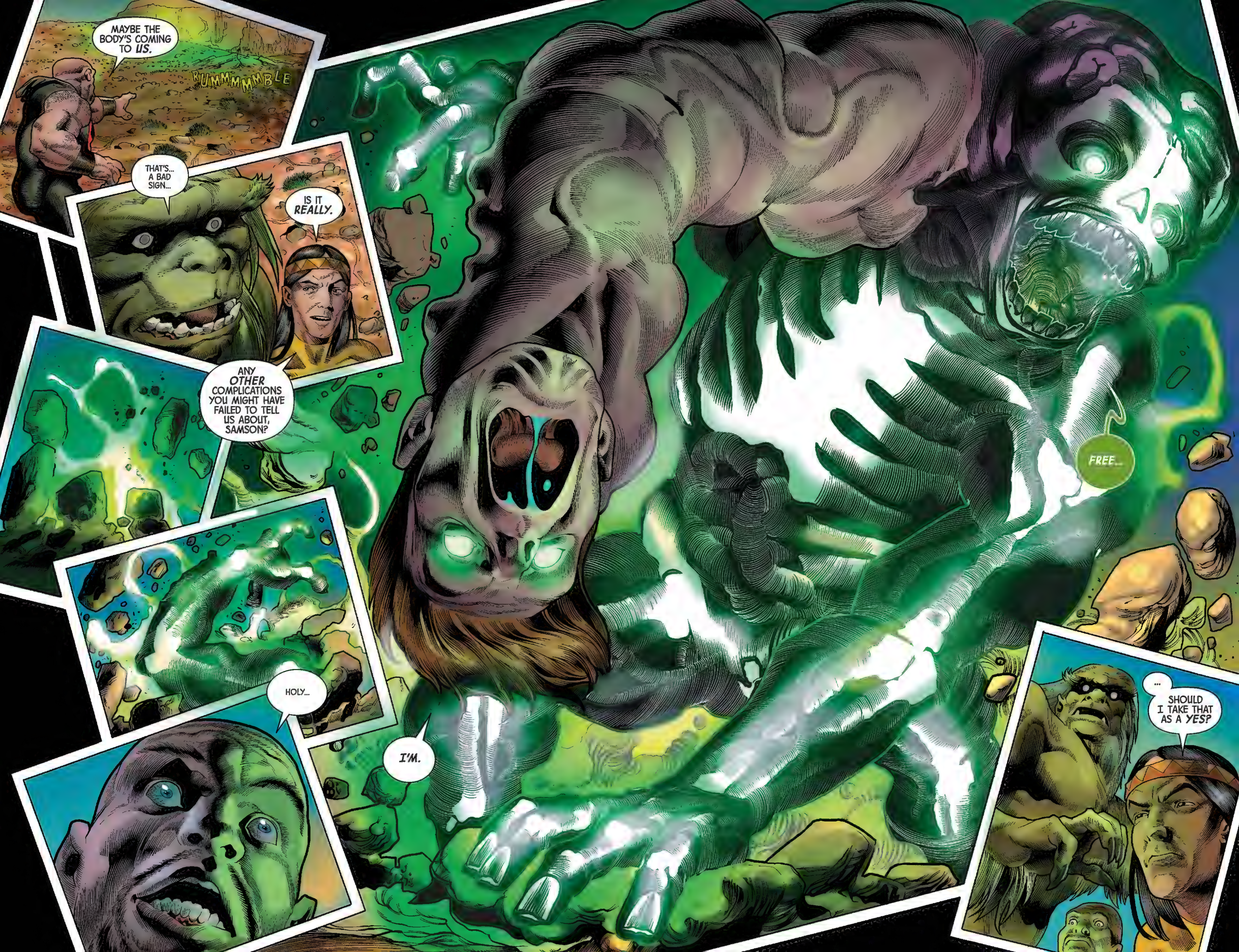

EH, *MIKE* AND *SI* GOT THE HARD PART DONE ALREADY.
SHOW HIM THE *GAMMA-NEGATIVE RAYS,* JIMMY.
THEY'RE A *RIOT.*
I MEAN, I CAN SHOOT *RADIATION* AT THE HULK...BUT IT'S NEVER DONE THAT *MUCH.*
RIGHT, RIGHT. THIS IS JUST *COSMIC RAYS* BY ANOTHER NAME--THE SAME KIND THAT MADE US U-FOES WHAT WE *ARE.*
THEY ALWAYS HAD THIS WEIRD *EFFECT* ON THE HULK, LIKE HE WAS *ALLERGIC* OR SOMETHING. KINDA HARD TO SHOW ON A *TRAINING ROBOT...*
...BUT YOU GET THE IDEA.
SEEMS MORE THAN ADEQUATE TO ME. *VAPOR*--YOUR TURN.
WE'RE ALL OUT OF *ROBOT*--BUT SHOW US HOW YOU HANDLE THE *OTHER* VITAL PART OF A HULK OPERATION...
...QUELLING *DISSENT.*
NONLETHAL, PLEASE. THESE ARE *VOLUNTEERS.*

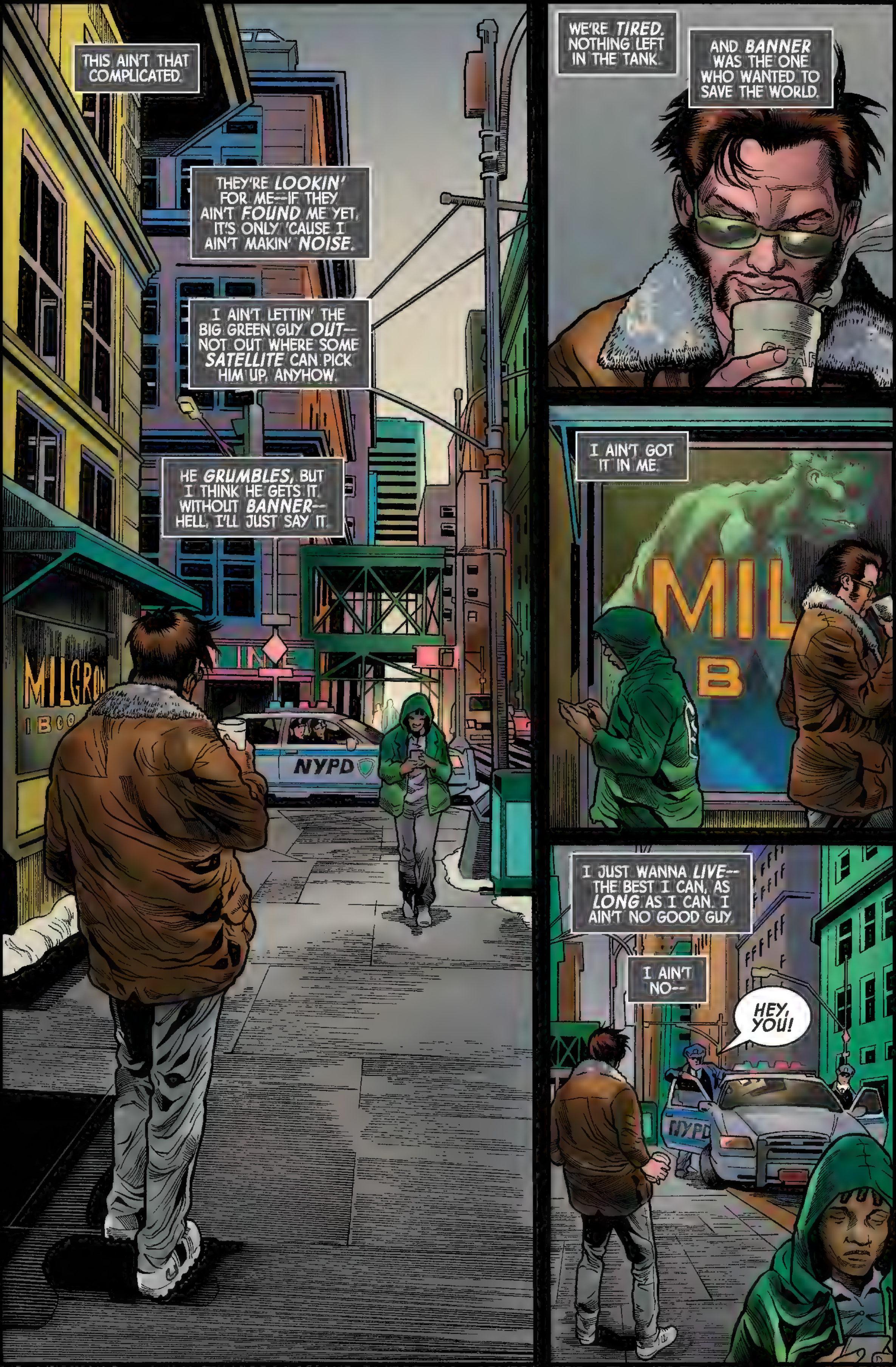

YOU GUYS ARE PLAYING *HULK SUPPORTERS*, HUH? *FUN!*
WELL, I HOPE YOU APPRECIATE THE *EFFORT* I'M PUTTING IN HERE--
--BECOMING *TEAR GAS* ISN'T *EASY.*
SATISFIED YET, GYRICH?
WHEN DO WE GRADUATE TO THE *REAL* HULK?
IN GOOD *TIME*, DR. UTRECHT. BANNER'S GAMMA SIGNATURE *CHANGES* WHEN HE'S *"JOE FIXIT"*--
--IT MAKES HIM HARDER TO *TRACK.* BUT THE *HULK* IS ANOTHER MATTER.
WE TOOK NEW READINGS WHILE HE WAS CAPTIVE. *HIM*, WE CAN FIND.
GAMMA SEARCH:
NEGATIVE
SO WHEN HE *CHANGES*... HE'S *OURS.*

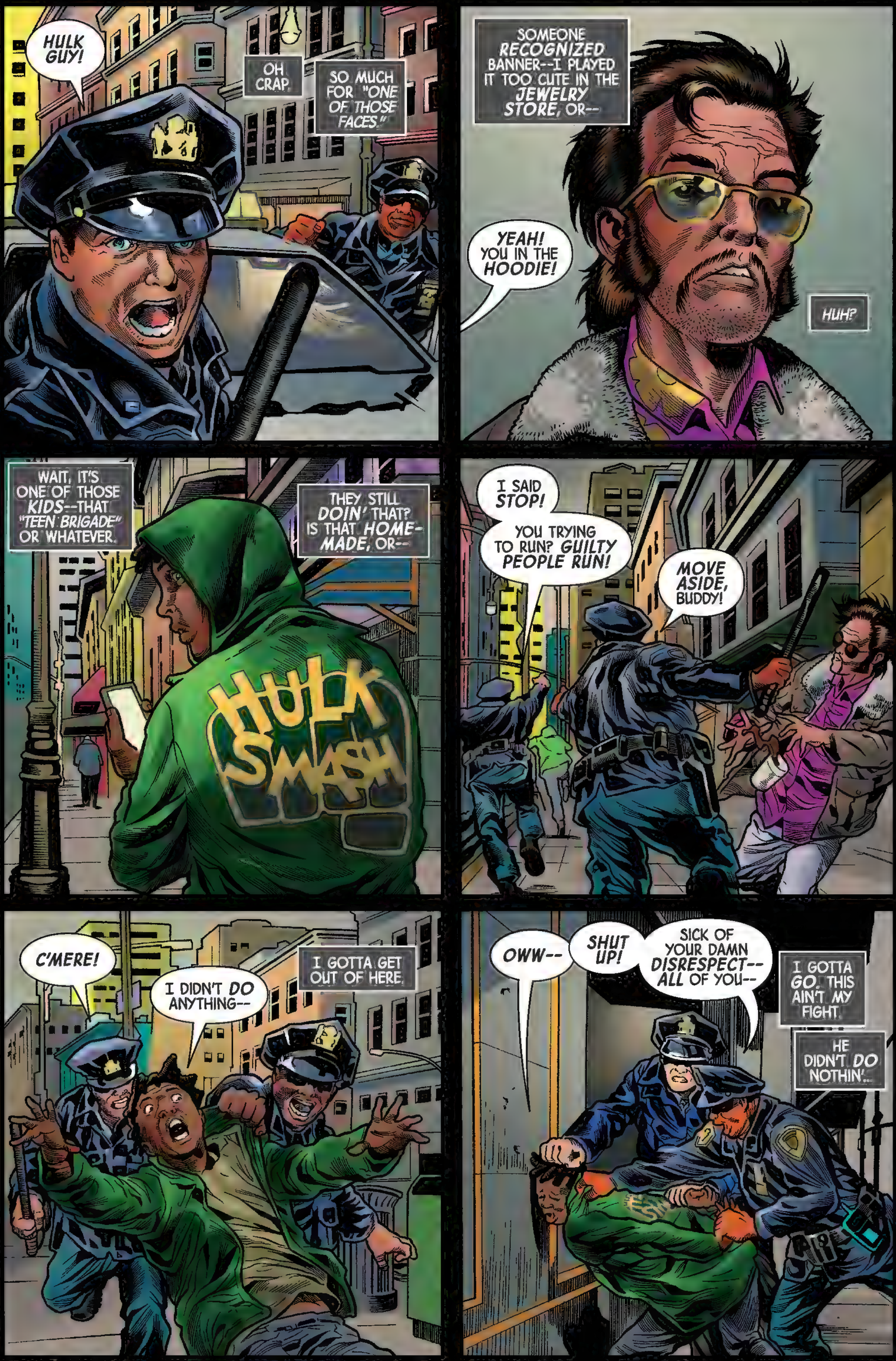

"NO MATTER *WHERE* HE'S BEEN HIDING..."
LOS DIABLOS, NEW MEXICO.
THE ORIGINAL *GAMMA BOMB TEST SITE?*

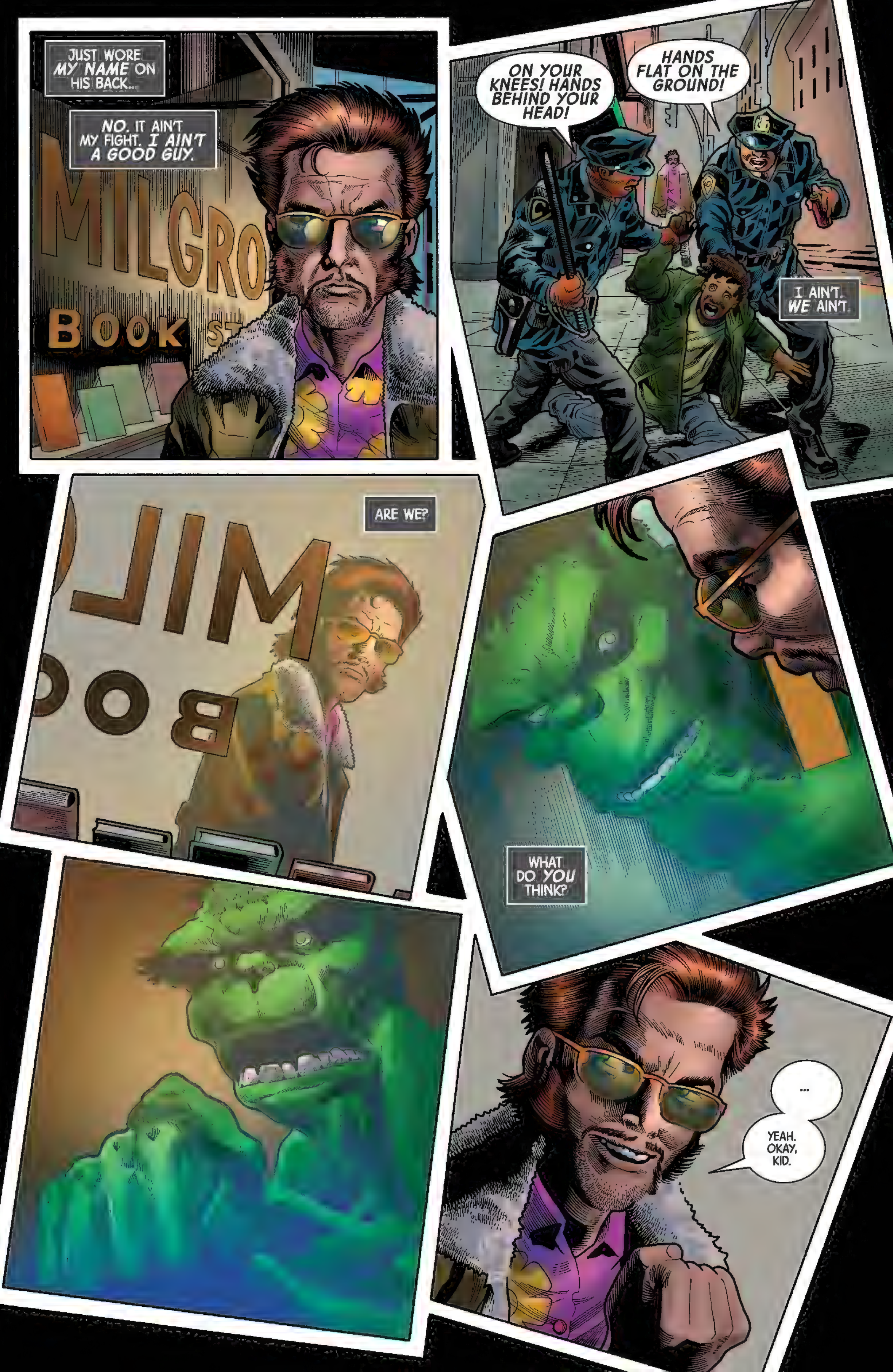

ALSO KNOWN AS *SHADOW BASE SITE G.* THE *LAST* SHADOW BASE SITE STILL OPERATING--AT LEAST UNTIL RECENTLY.
BRUCE AND *CHARLENE* AND THE REST OF US SET UP SHOP HERE AFTER THE BATTLE WITH *FORTEAN...*
IT MAKES *SENSE,* I SUPPOSE. IT'S *DESERTED* NOW--AND SHADOW BASE DEFINITELY HAD A *PRESENCE* IN THESE PARTS.
AND SINCE I WAS HERE LAST, IT'S *CLEAN.* NO GAMMA TO BE FOUND--AT LEAST ON THE *SURFACE.*
WHERE BETTER TO HIDE THAN IN THE LAST PLACE WE'D EVER *LOOK?*

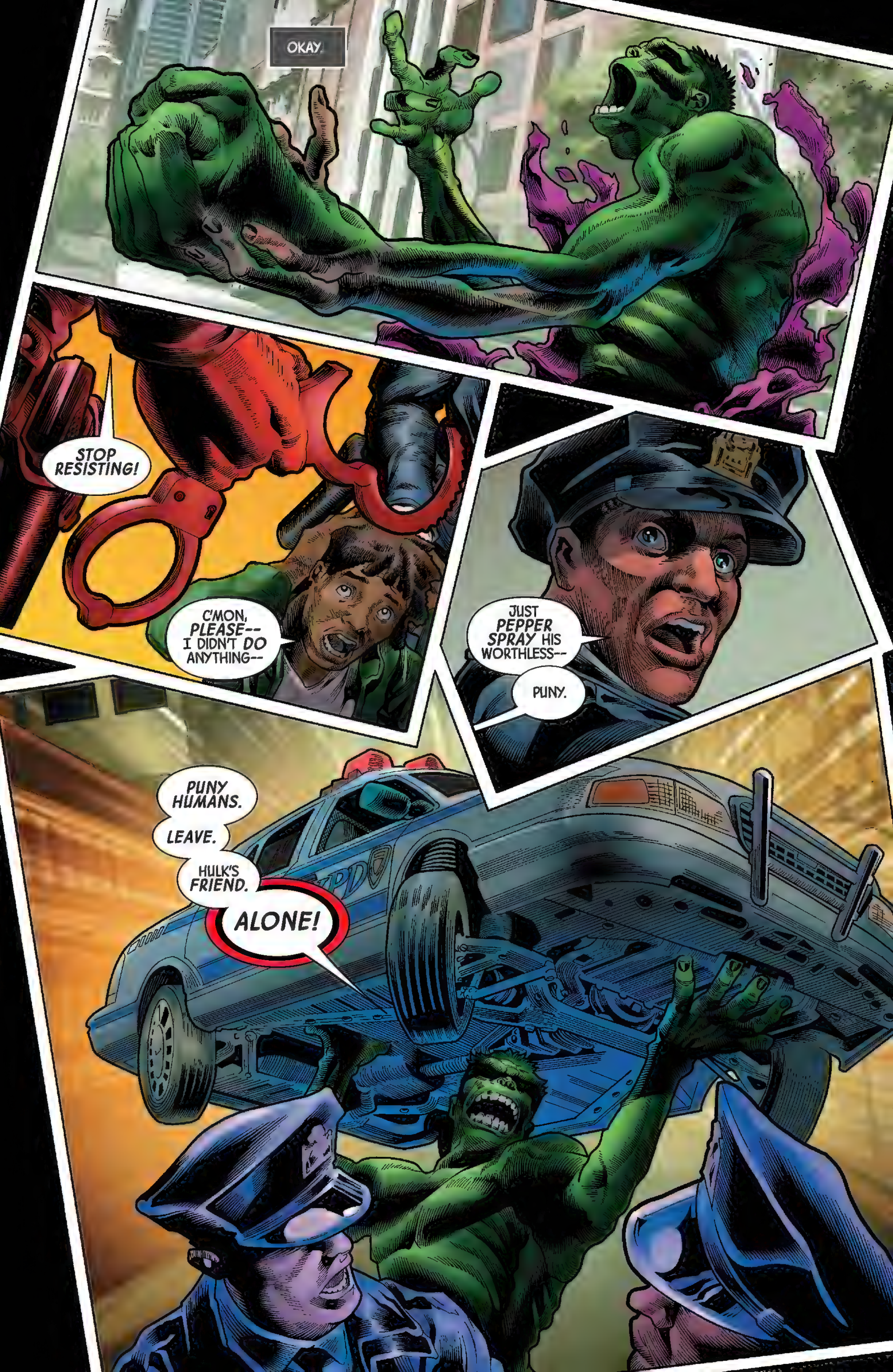

THOUGH YOU COULD'VE MENTIONED IT *EARLIER,* SAMSON.
"I WAS NEVER TOLD"?
WHAT, I SHOULD HAVE TOLD GYRICH THE *TRUTH?*
FAIR. HE'D HAVE NUKED IT FROM *ORBIT*--HE STILL *MIGHT,* IF HE CATCHES US.
MAYBE MARY AND CARL WERE RIGHT TO SIT THIS *OUT,* EH?
ALL THE MORE REASON TO START *WORKING.* UNLIKE YOU TWO, I HAVE A *LIFE* TO GET BACK TO...
OF COURSE. THANKS FOR *JOINING* US, DR. TWOYOUNGMEN.
IT'S *SHAMAN,* PLEASE. I'VE LEARNED IT'S BEST TO KEEP A *BOUNDARY* BETWEEN WORK AND MY *PERSONAL LIFE.*
AND I'M STRICTLY HERE TO HELP *WALTER LANGKOWSKI* RETURN TO HIS *BODY*--
--WHICH MEANS RETURNING *YOU* TO *YOURS.* WHERE *IS* IT?
ABOUT A HUNDRED FEET *BELOW* US--SEALED UNDER *SOLID ROCK* AND A COUPLE OF STEEL *BLAST DOORS.* SORRY.
WELL, *THAT'S* A NICE LITTLE COMPLICATION.
I COULD MAYBE TAKE US TO THE BODY THROUGH A *PORTAL*--
--OR MAYBE *NOT,* EH?

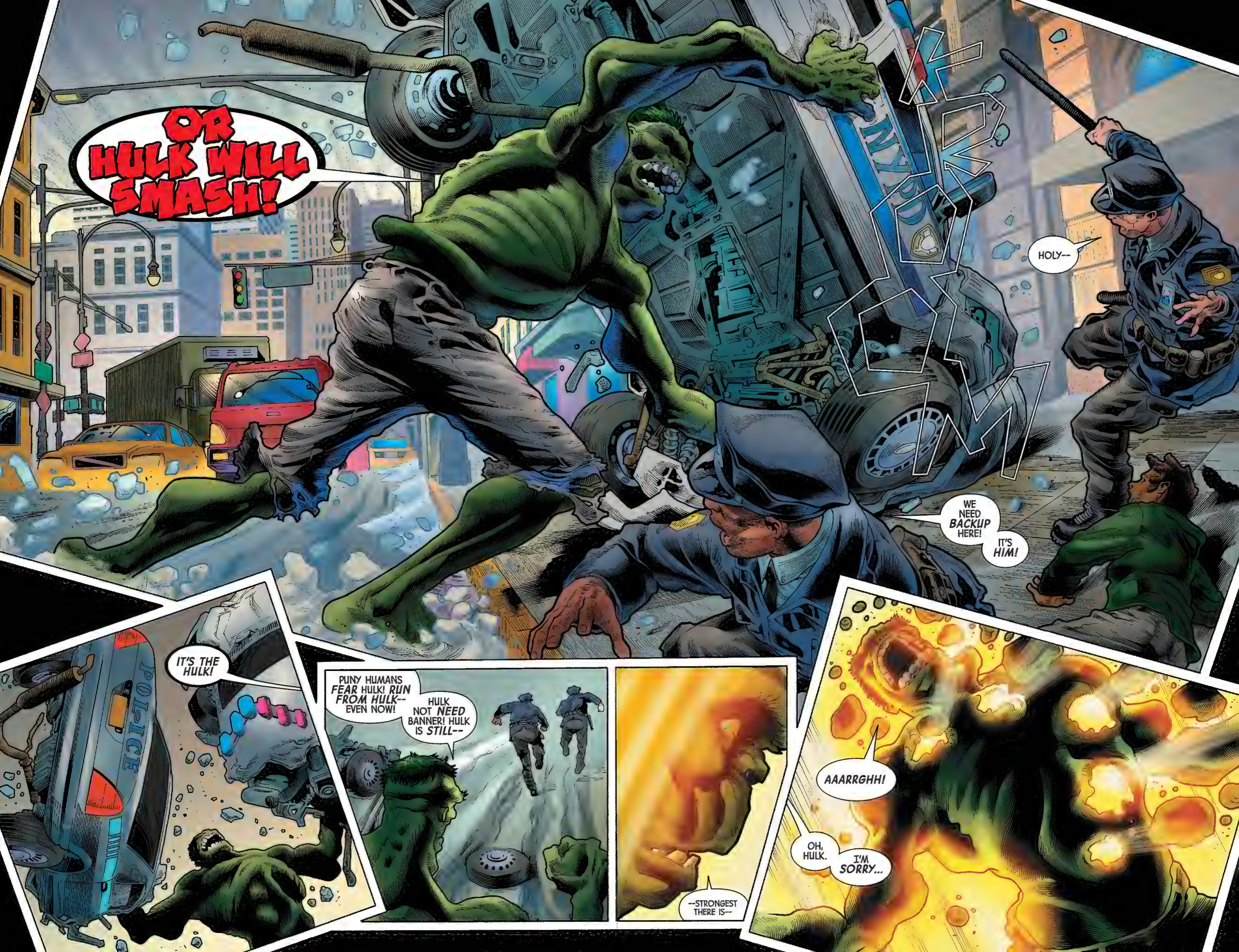

MAYBE THE BODY'S COMING TO *US*.
RUMMMMMBLE
THAT'S... A BAD SIGN...
IS IT *REALLY*.
ANY *OTHER* COMPLICATIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE FAILED TO TELL US ABOUT, SAMSON?
FREE...
HOLY...
I'M.
... SHOULD I TAKE THAT AS A *YES*?

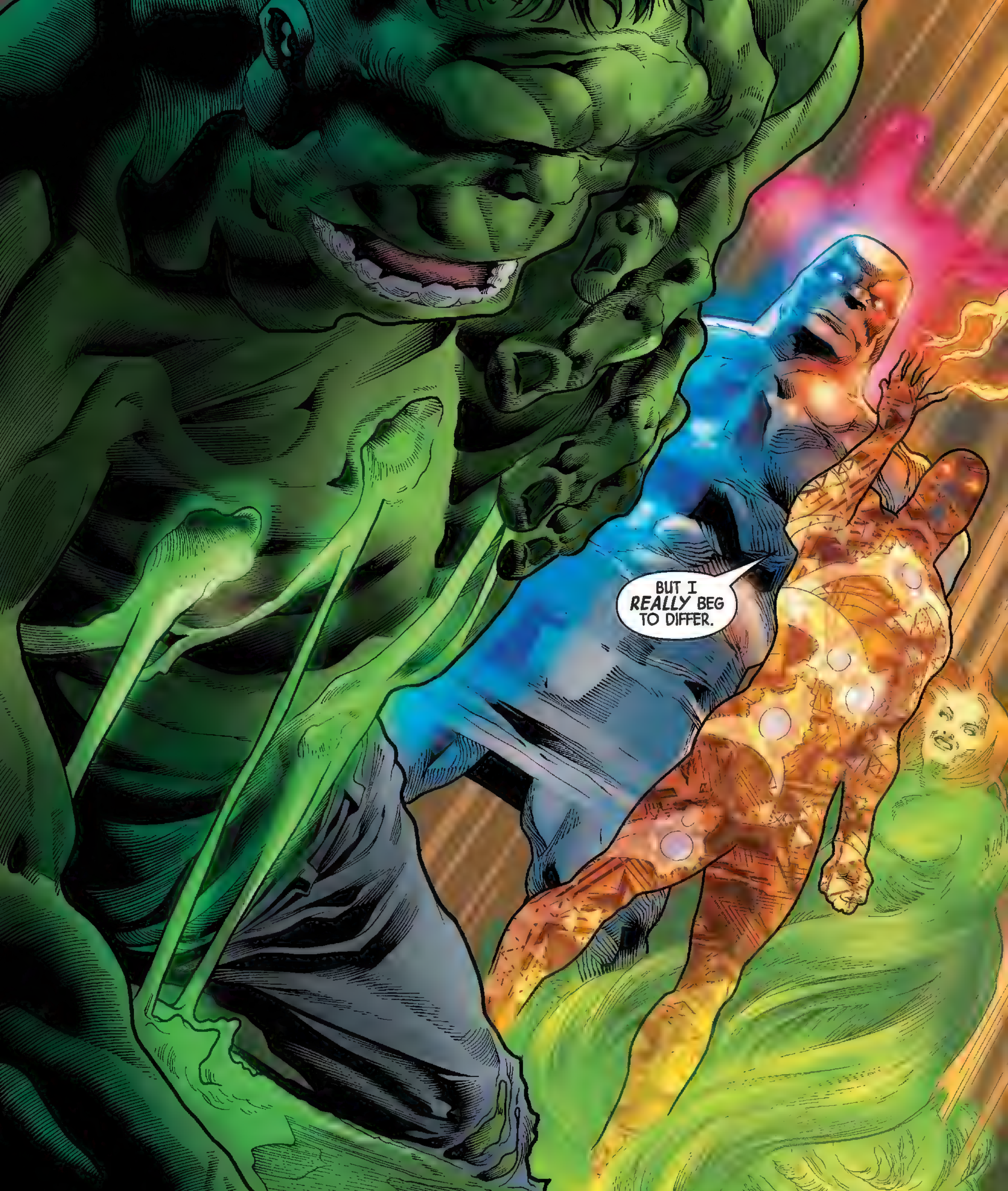

THIS AIN'T THAT COMPLICATED.
THEY'RE LOOKIN' FOR ME--IF THEY AIN'T FOUND ME YET, IT'S ONLY 'CAUSE I AIN'T MAKIN' NOISE.
I AIN'T LETTIN' THE BIG GREEN GUY OUT--NOT OUT WHERE SOME SATELLITE CAN PICK HIM UP, ANYHOW.
HE GRUMBLES, BUT I THINK HE GETS IT. WITHOUT BANNER--HELL, I'LL JUST SAY IT.
MILGROM
NYPD
WE'RE TIRED. NOTHING LEFT IN THE TANK.
AND BANNER WAS THE ONE WHO WANTED TO SAVE THE WORLD.
I AIN'T GOT IT IN ME.
MIL
B
I JUST WANNA LIVE--THE BEST I CAN, AS LONG AS I CAN. I AIN'T NO GOOD GUY.
I AIN'T NO--
HEY, YOU!
NYPD


HULK GUY!
OH CRAP.
SO MUCH FOR "ONE OF THOSE FACES."
SOMEONE RECOGNIZED BANNER--I PLAYED IT TOO CUTE IN THE JEWELRY STORE, OR--
YEAH! YOU IN THE HOODIE!
HUH?
WAIT, IT'S ONE OF THOSE KIDS--THAT "TEEN BRIGADE" OR WHATEVER.
THEY STILL DOIN' THAT? IS THAT HOMEMADE, OR--
HULK SMASH
I SAID STOP!
YOU TRYING TO RUN? GUILTY PEOPLE RUN!
MOVE ASIDE, BUDDY!
C'MERE!
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING--
I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE.
OWW--
SHUT UP!
SICK OF YOUR DAMN DISRESPECT--ALL OF YOU--
I GOTTA GO. THIS AIN'T MY FIGHT.
HE DIDN'T DO NOTHIN'...


JUST WORE MY NAME ON HIS BACK...
NO. IT AIN'T MY FIGHT. I AIN'T A GOOD GUY.
MILGRO
BOOK ST
ON YOUR KNEES! HANDS BEHIND YOUR HEAD!
HANDS FLAT ON THE GROUND!
I AIN'T. WE AIN'T.
ARE WE?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
...
YEAH. OKAY, KID.


OKAY.
STOP RESISTING!
C'MON, PLEASE-- I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING--
JUST PEPPER SPRAY HIS WORTHLESS--
PUNY.
PUNY HUMANS.
LEAVE.
HULK'S FRIEND.
ALONE!
NYPD


OR HULK WILL SMASH!
KROOM
NYPD
HOLY--
WE NEED BACKUP HERE!
IT'S HIM!
POLICE
IT'S THE HULK!
PUNY HUMANS FEAR HULK! RUN FROM HULK-- EVEN NOW!
HULK NOT NEED BANNER! HULK IS STILL--
--STRONGEST THERE IS--
AAARRGHH!
OH, HULK.
I'M SORRY...

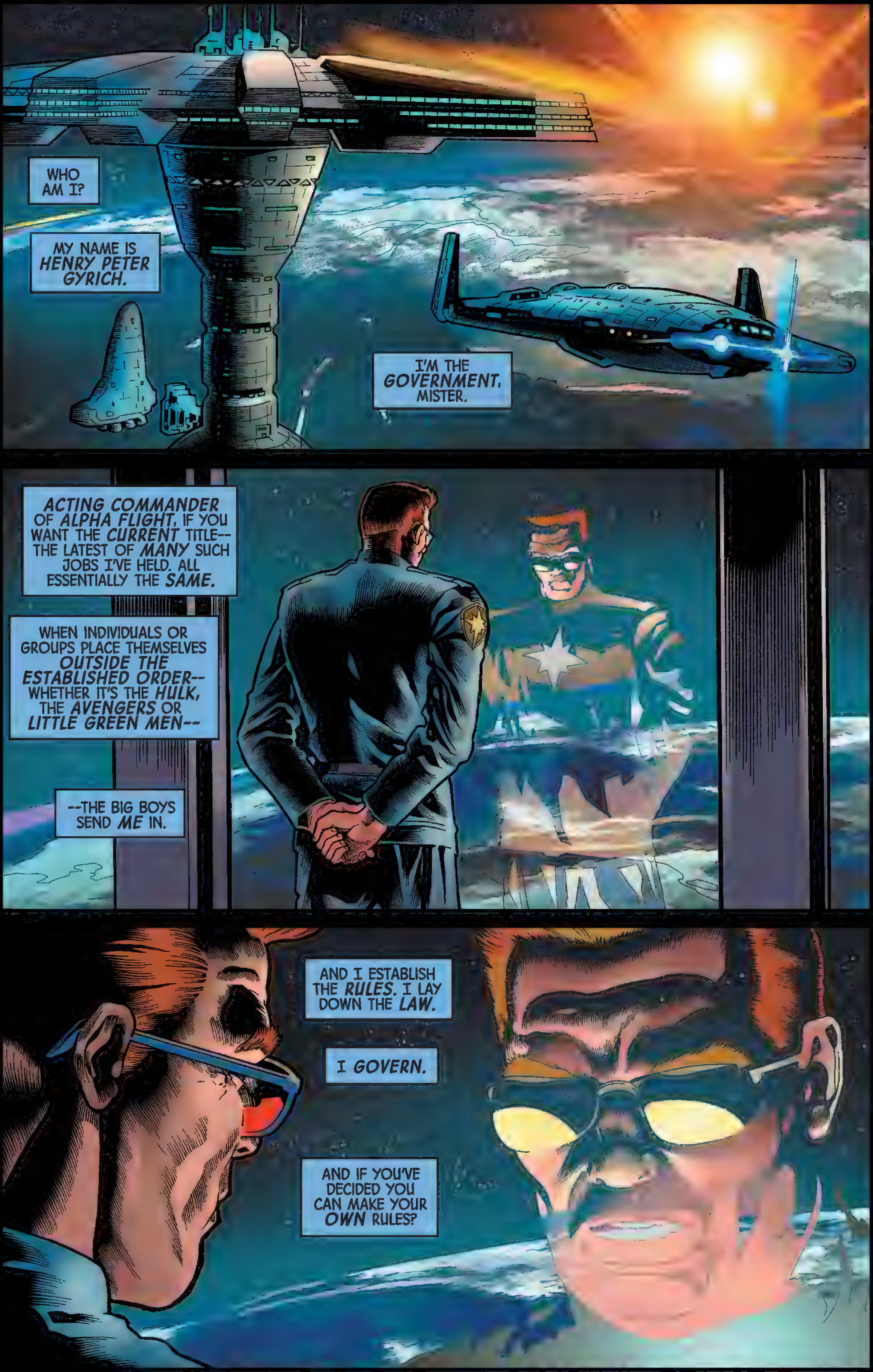

BUT I *REALLY* BEG TO DIFFER.

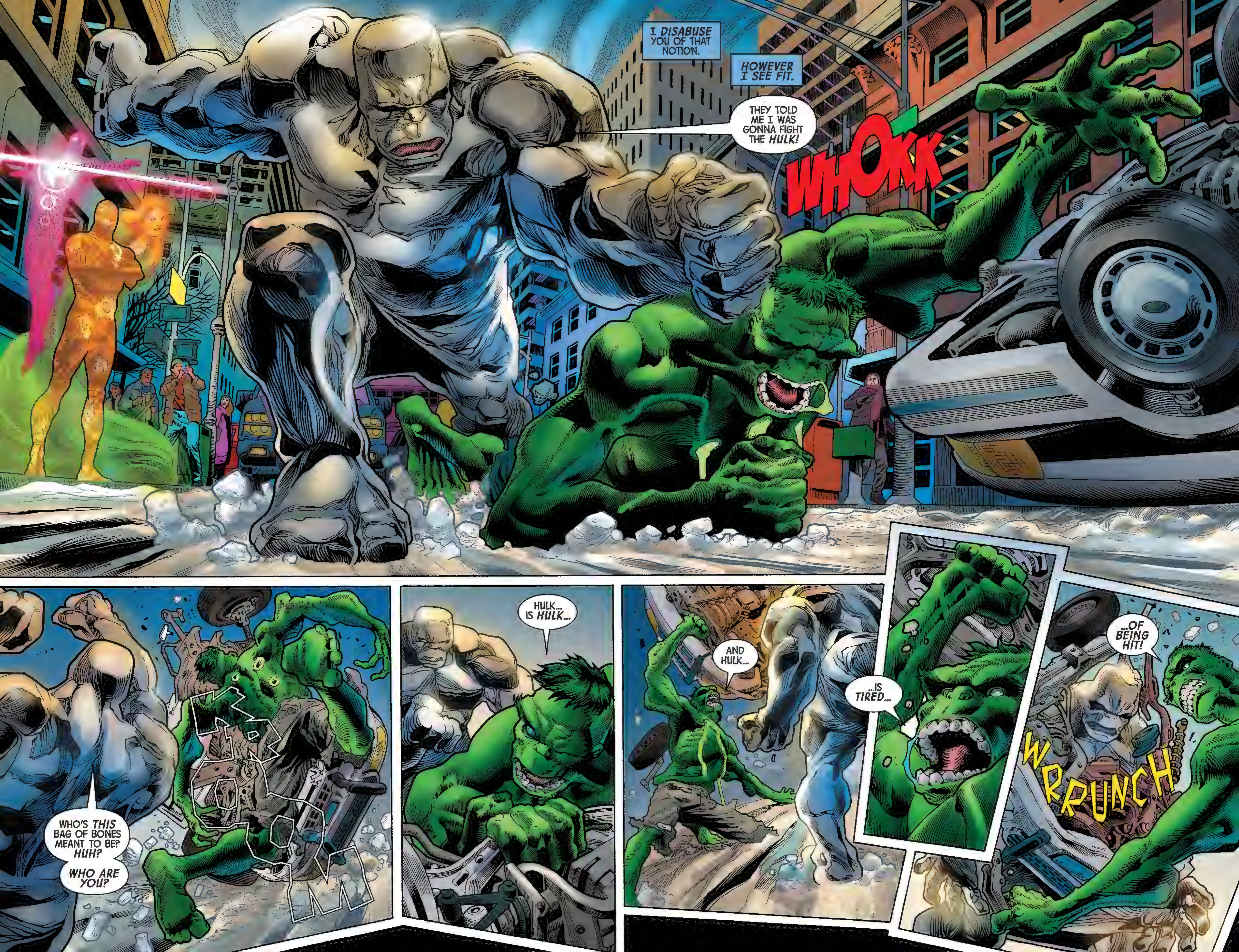
WE'RE THE **GOOD GUYS**

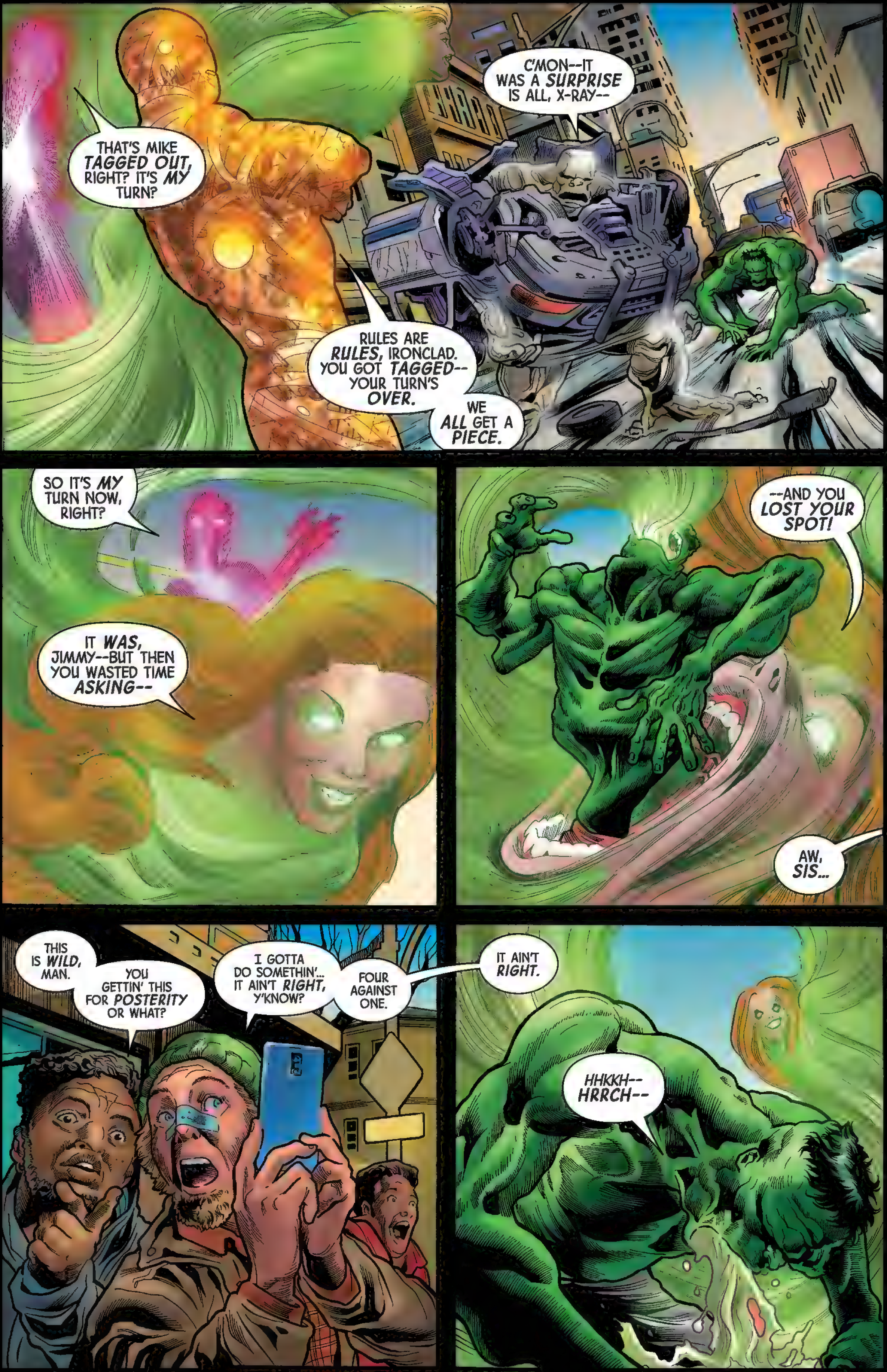
44
ORCHIS COMIX
$4
39 NOV
THE ASTOUNDING U-FOES
ASSAULT ON THE HULK!

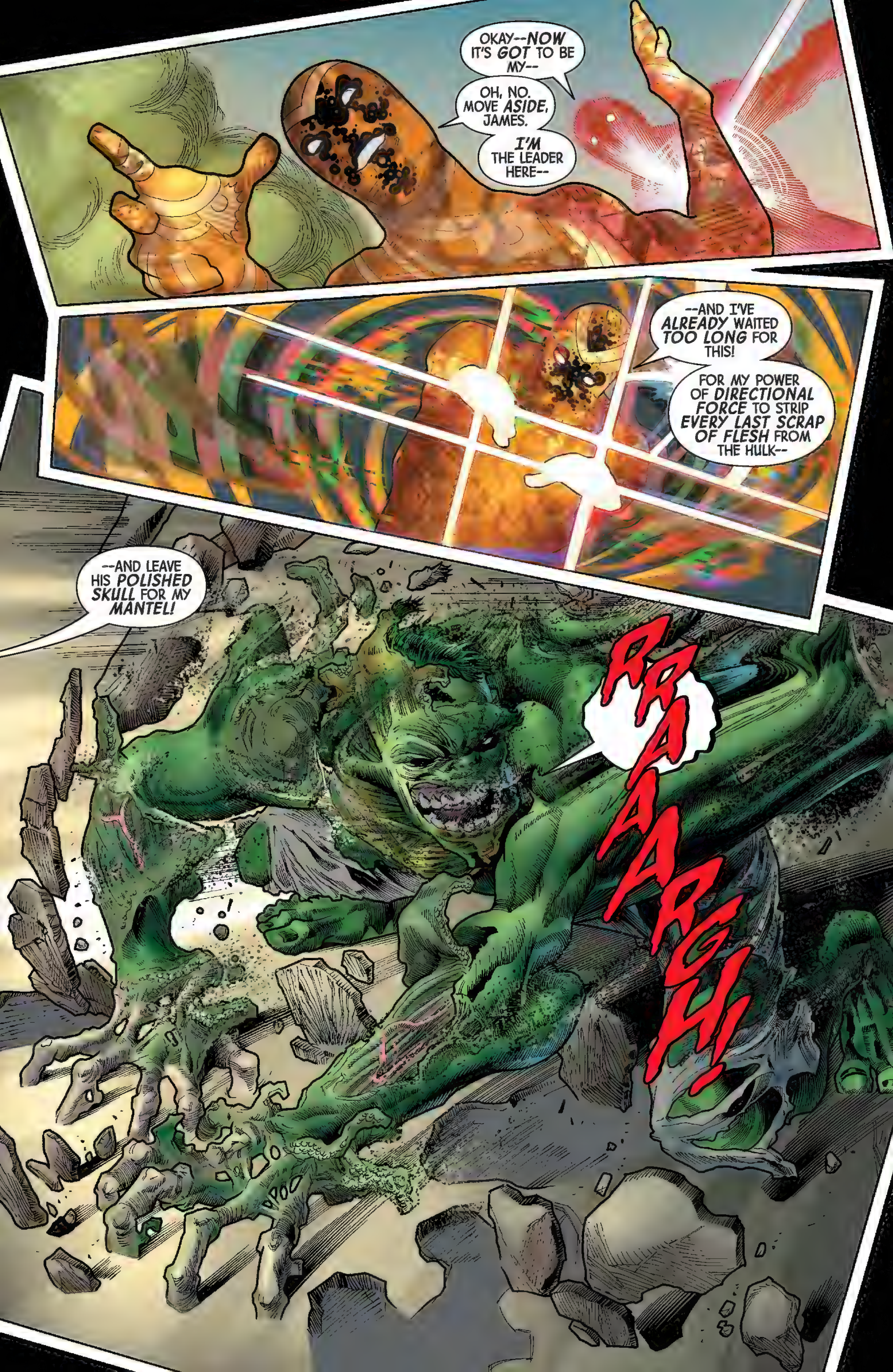
"I WAS AT EASE, BUT HE HATH BROKEN ME ASUNDER: HE HATH ALSO TAKEN ME BY MY NECK, AND SHAKEN ME TO PIECES, AND SET ME UP FOR HIS MARK."

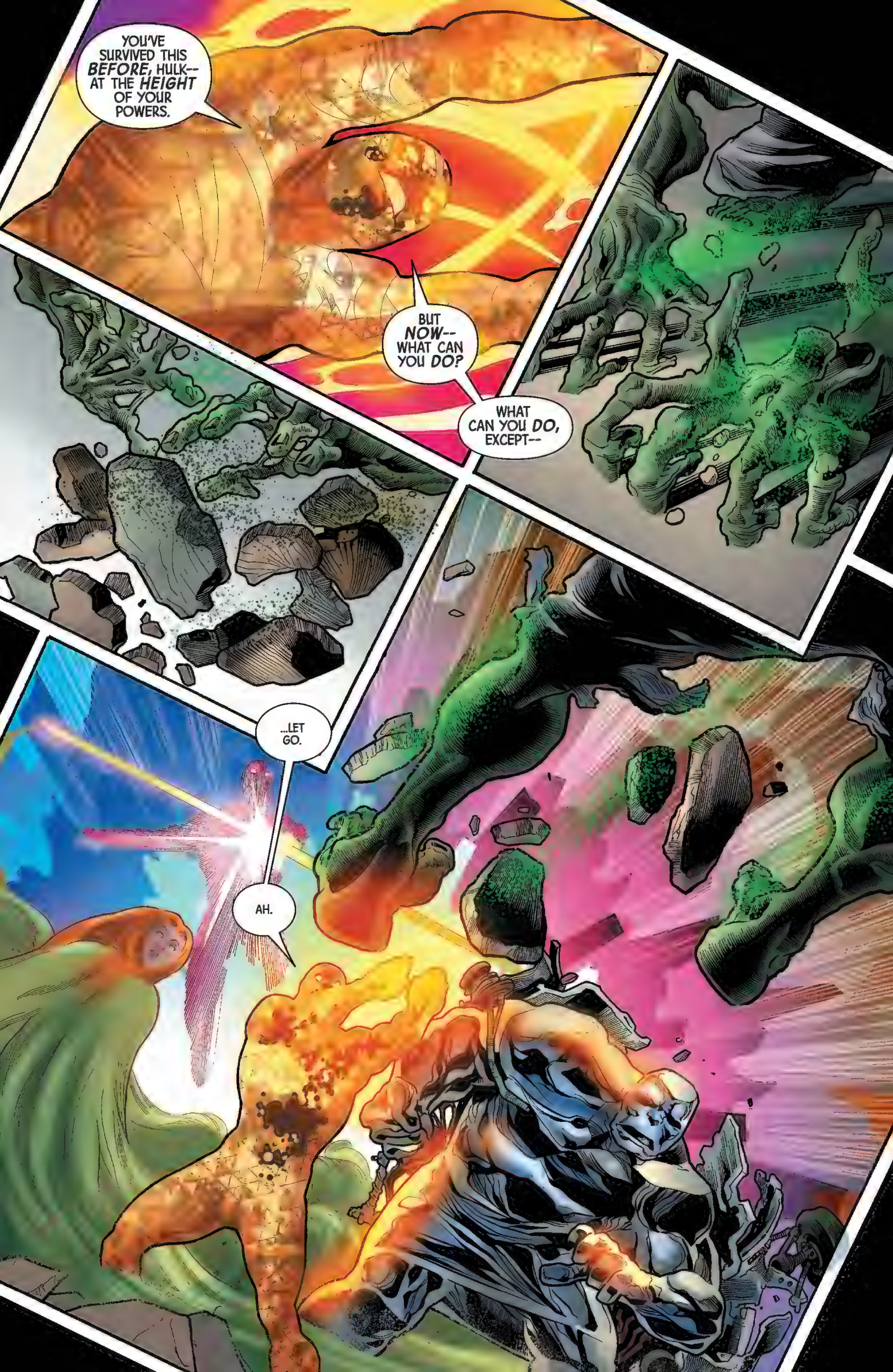
– JOB 16:12

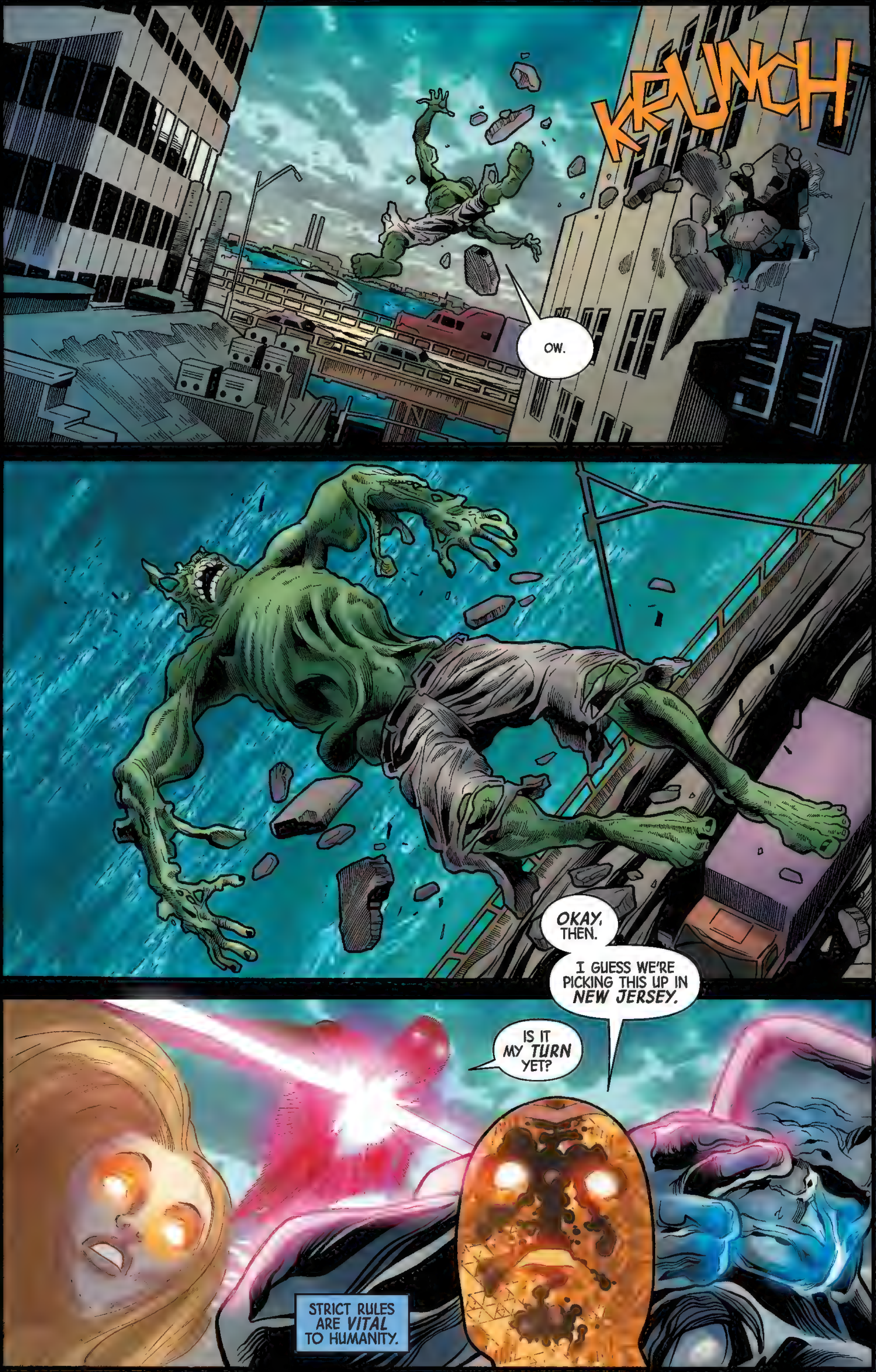

WHO AM I?
MY NAME IS *HENRY PETER GYRICH.*
I'M THE *GOVERNMENT,* MISTER.
ACTING COMMANDER OF *ALPHA FLIGHT,* IF YOU WANT THE *CURRENT* TITLE-- THE LATEST OF *MANY* SUCH JOBS I'VE HELD. ALL ESSENTIALLY THE *SAME.*
WHEN INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS PLACE THEMSELVES *OUTSIDE THE ESTABLISHED ORDER--* WHETHER IT'S THE *HULK,* THE *AVENGERS* OR *LITTLE GREEN MEN--*
--THE BIG BOYS SEND *ME* IN.
AND I ESTABLISH THE *RULES.* I LAY DOWN THE *LAW.*
I *GOVERN.*
AND IF YOU'VE DECIDED YOU CAN MAKE YOUR *OWN* RULES?

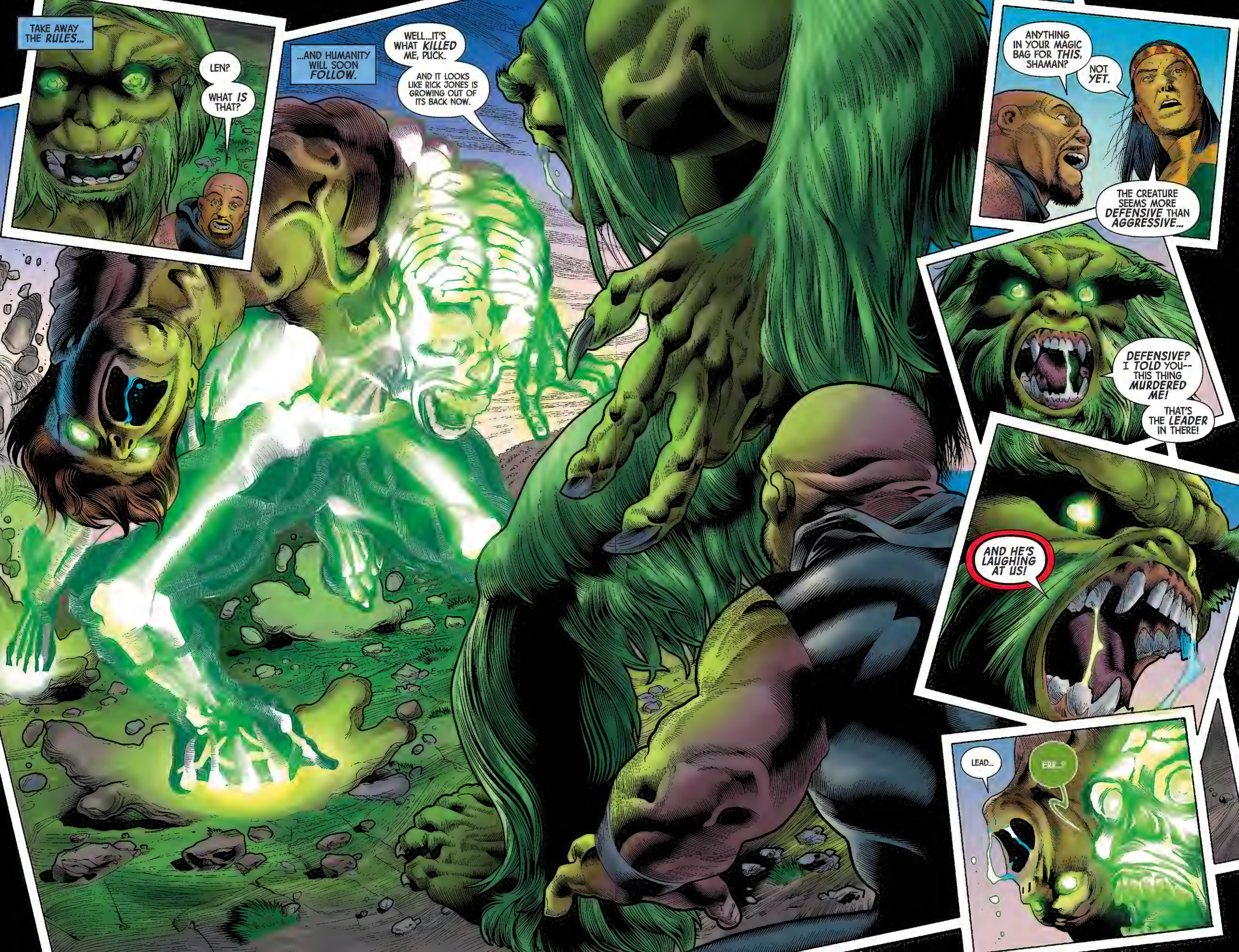

I *DISABUSE* YOU OF THAT NOTION.
HOWEVER I *SEE FIT.*
THEY TOLD ME I WAS GONNA FIGHT THE *HULK!*
WHOKK
WHO'S *THIS* BAG OF BONES MEANT TO BE? *HUH?*
WHO ARE YOU?
KROOM
HULK... IS *HULK*...
AND HULK...
...IS *TIRED*...
...OF *BEING HIT!*
WRRUNCH

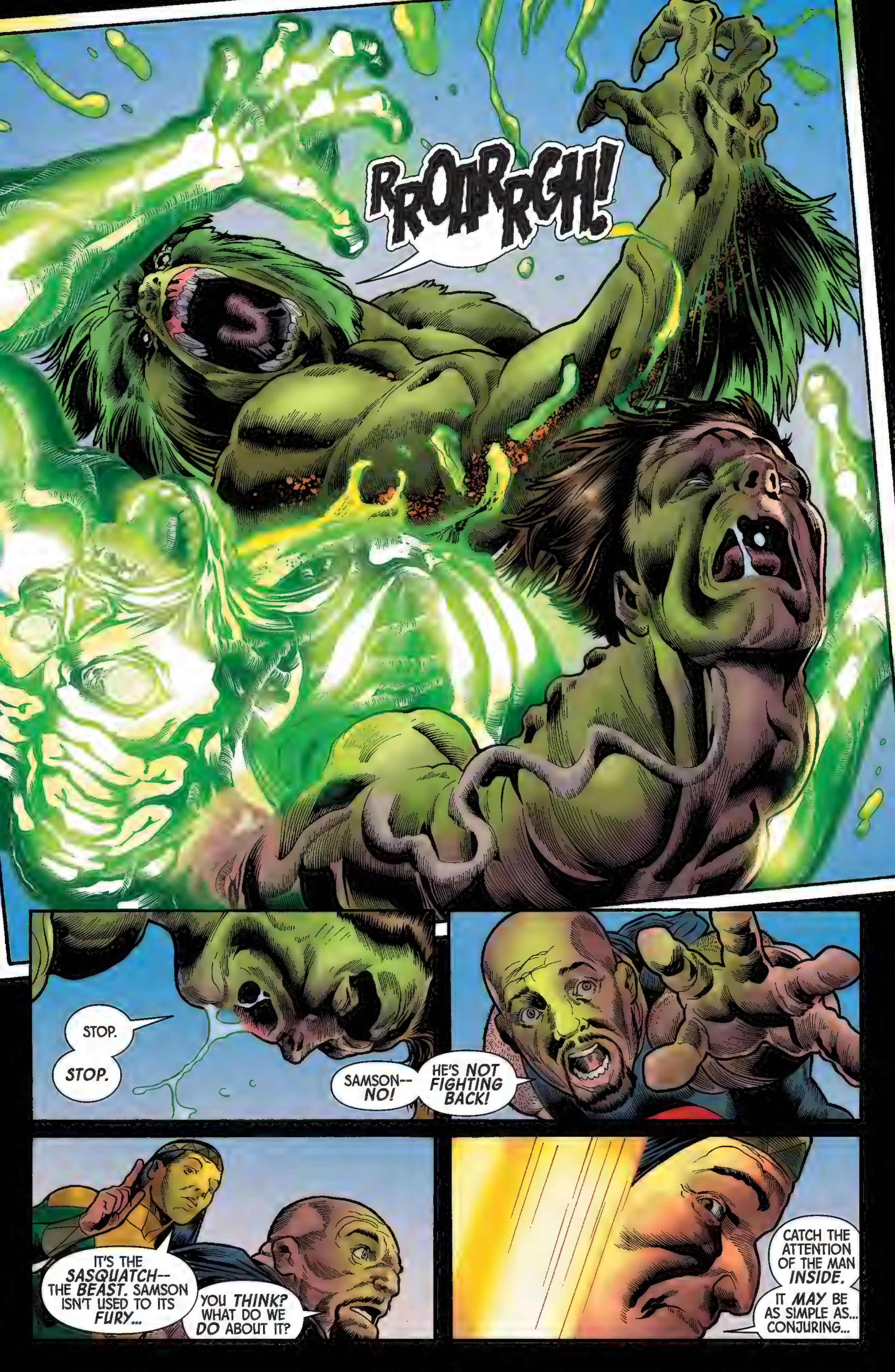

THAT'S MIKE *TAGGED OUT,* RIGHT? IT'S *MY* TURN?
C'MON--IT WAS A *SURPRISE* IS ALL, X-RAY--
RULES ARE *RULES,* IRONCLAD. YOU GOT *TAGGED*-- YOUR TURN'S *OVER.*
WE *ALL* GET A *PIECE.*
SO IT'S *MY* TURN NOW, RIGHT?
IT *WAS,* JIMMY--BUT THEN YOU WASTED TIME *ASKING*--
--AND YOU *LOST YOUR SPOT!*
AW, *SIS...*
THIS IS *WILD,* MAN.
YOU GETTIN' THIS FOR *POSTERITY* OR WHAT?
I GOTTA DO SOMETHIN'... IT AIN'T *RIGHT,* Y'KNOW?
FOUR AGAINST ONE.
IT AIN'T *RIGHT.*
HHKKH-- HRRCH--

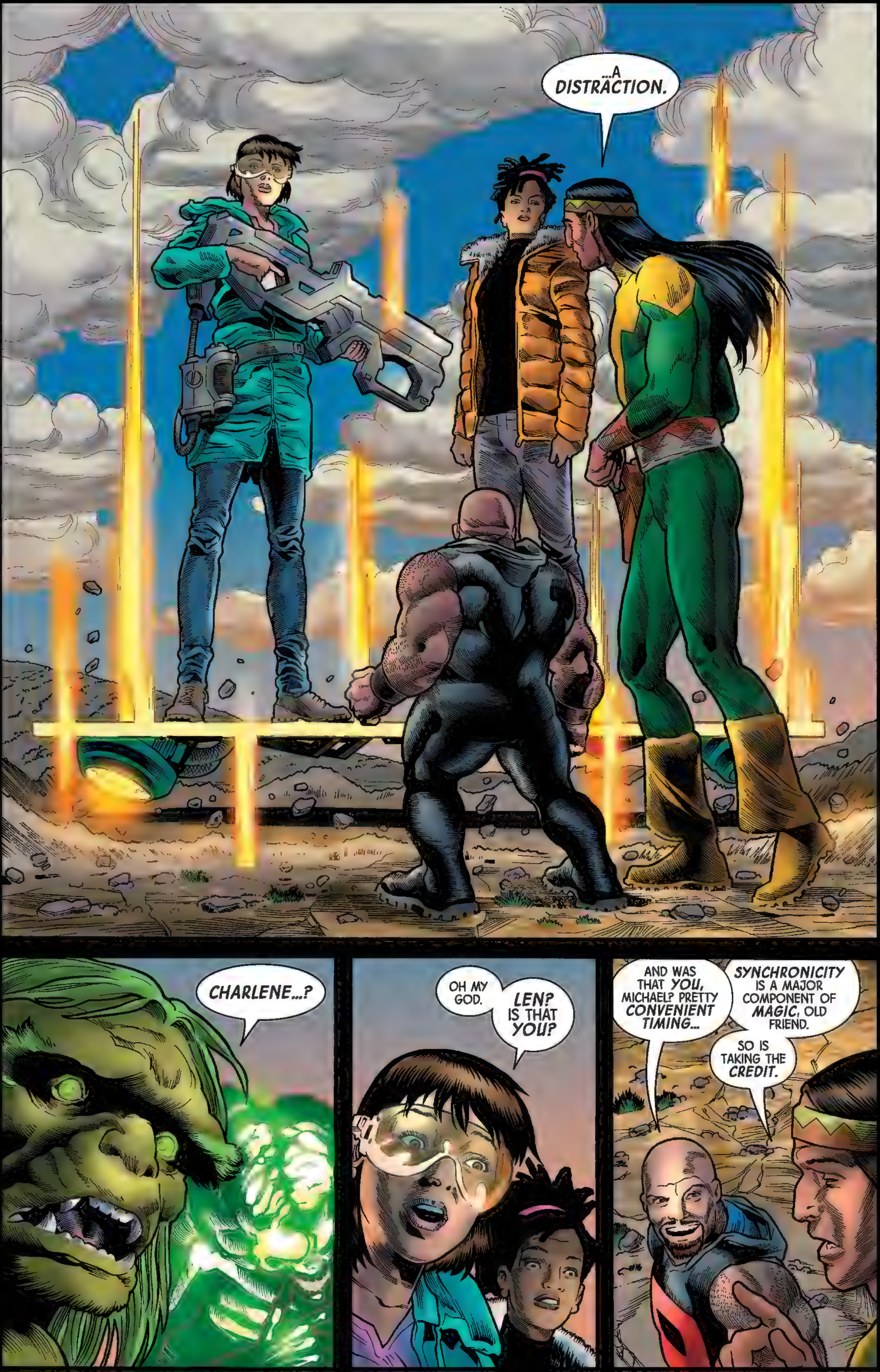

OKAY--NOW IT'S GOT TO BE MY--
OH, NO. MOVE ASIDE, JAMES.
I'M THE LEADER HERE--
--AND I'VE ALREADY WAITED TOO LONG FOR THIS!
FOR MY POWER OF DIRECTIONAL FORCE TO STRIP EVERY LAST SCRAP OF FLESH FROM THE HULK--
--AND LEAVE HIS POLISHED SKULL FOR MY MANTEL!
RRAAAARGH!

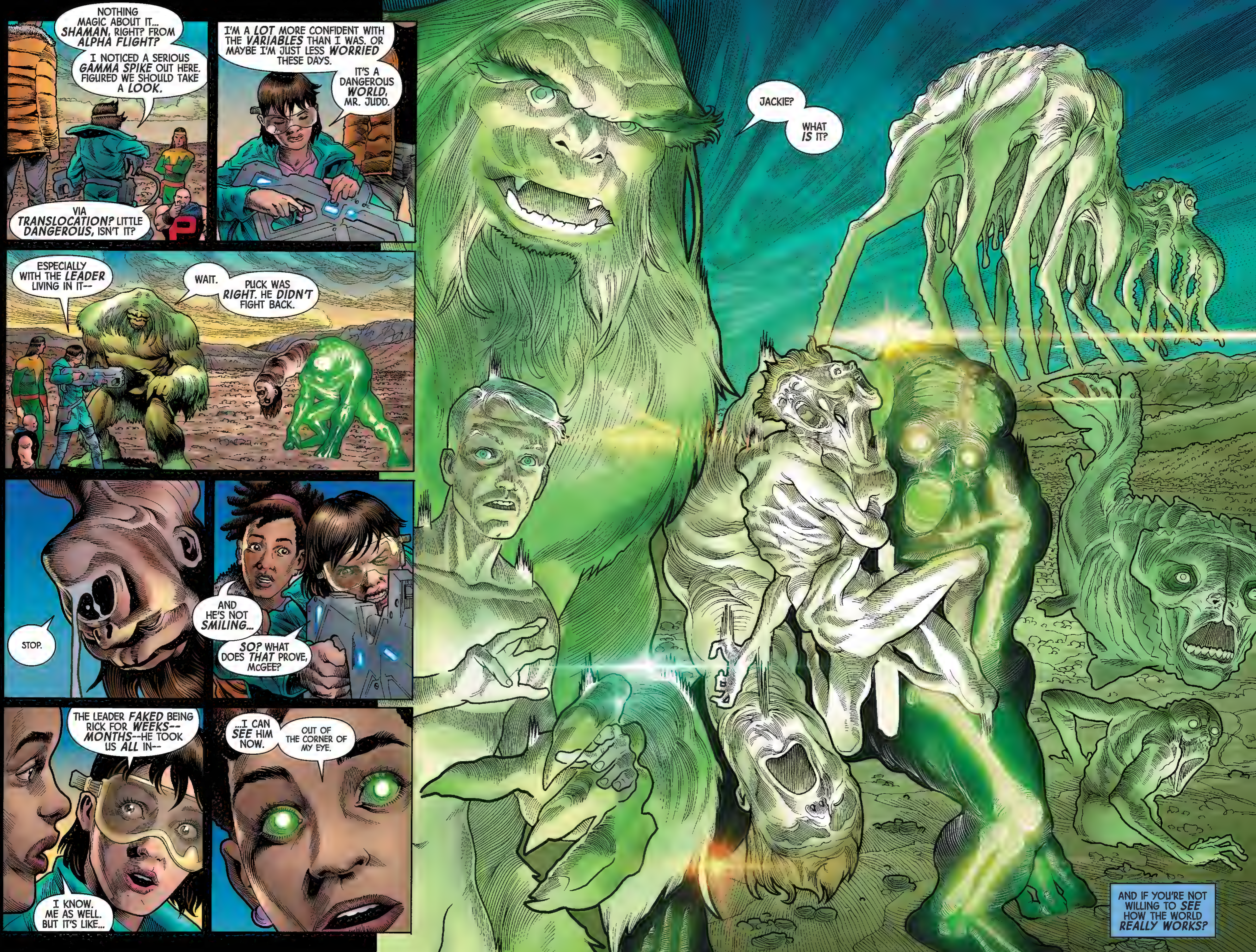

YOU'VE SURVIVED THIS *BEFORE,* HULK-- AT THE *HEIGHT* OF YOUR POWERS.
BUT *NOW*-- WHAT CAN YOU *DO?*
WHAT CAN YOU *DO,* EXCEPT--
...LET GO.
AH.

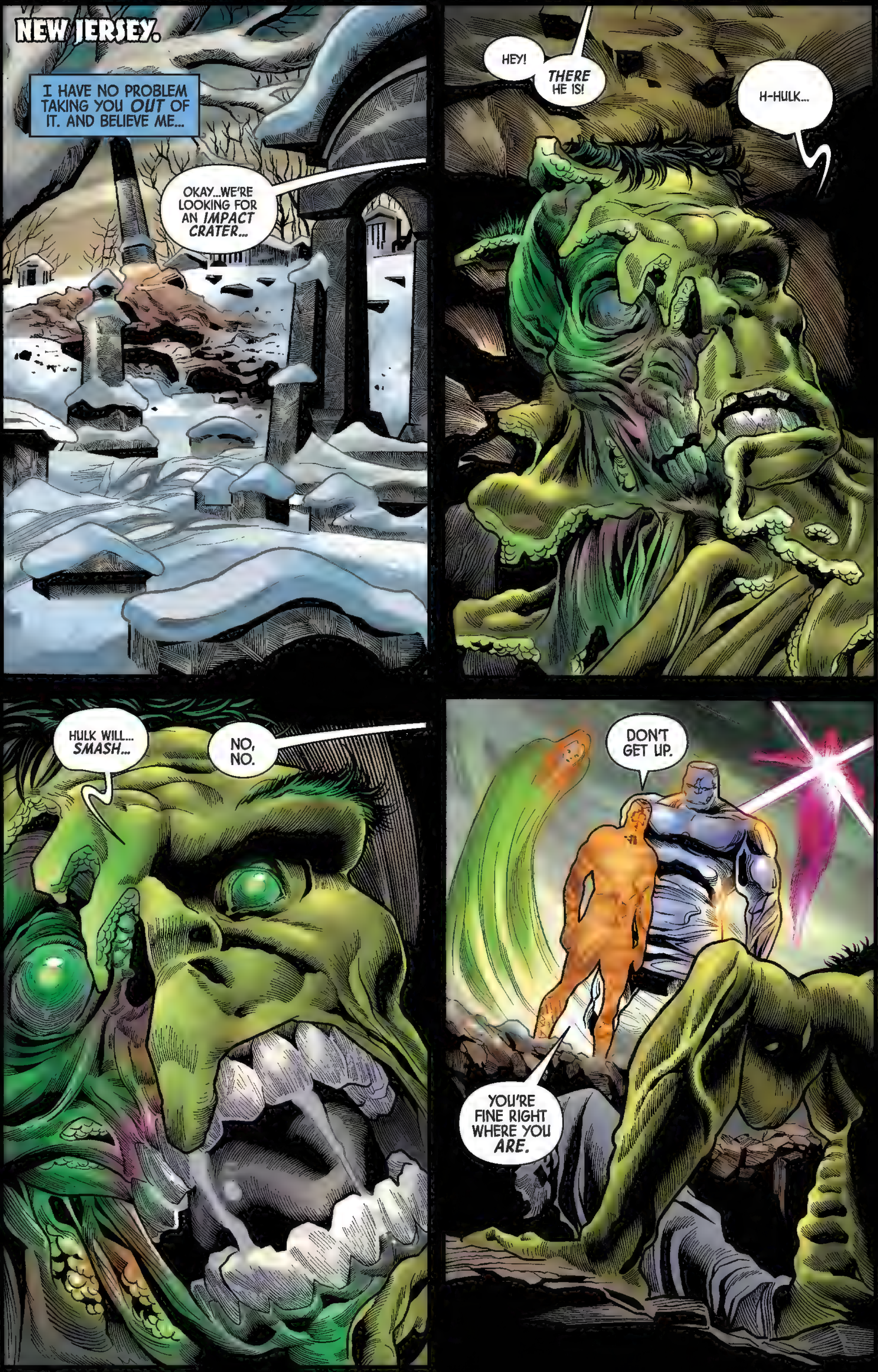

KRUNCH
OW.
OKAY, THEN.
I GUESS WE'RE PICKING THIS UP IN *NEW JERSEY.*
IS IT MY *TURN* YET?
STRICT RULES ARE *VITAL* TO HUMANITY.

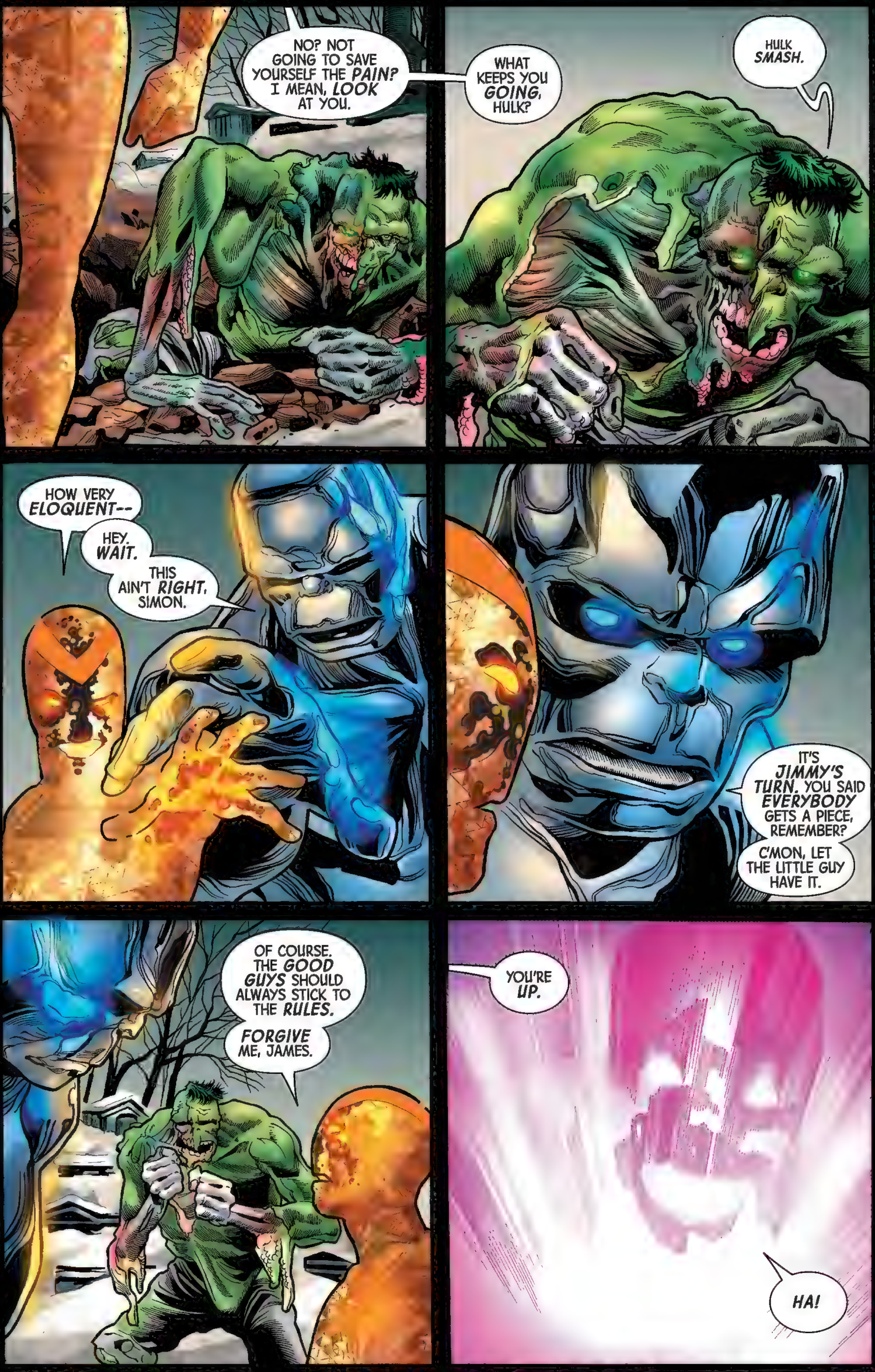

TAKE AWAY THE *RULES*...
LEN?
WHAT *IS* THAT?
...AND HUMANITY WILL SOON *FOLLOW*.
WELL...IT'S WHAT *KILLED* ME, PUCK.
AND IT LOOKS LIKE RICK JONES IS GROWING OUT OF ITS BACK NOW.
ANYTHING IN YOUR MAGIC BAG FOR *THIS*, SHAMAN?
NOT *YET*.
THE CREATURE SEEMS MORE *DEFENSIVE* THAN *AGGRESSIVE*...
DEFENSIVE? I *TOLD* YOU-- THIS THING *MURDERED ME!*
THAT'S THE *LEADER* IN THERE!
AND HE'S LAUGHING AT US!
LEAD...
ERR...?

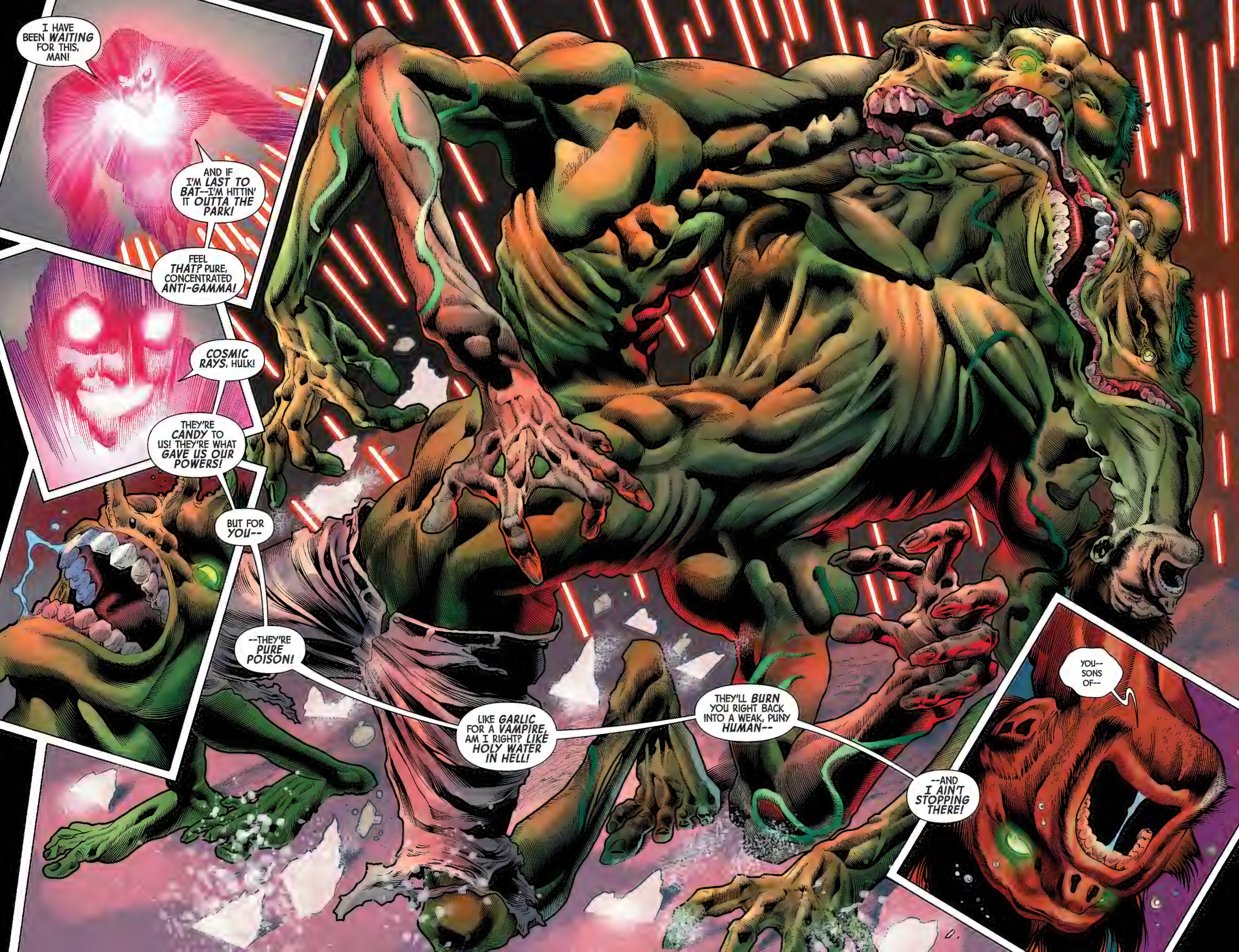

RROARRGH!
STOP.
STOP.
SAMSON-- NO!
HE'S NOT FIGHTING BACK!
IT'S THE SASQUATCH-- THE BEAST. SAMSON ISN'T USED TO ITS FURY...
YOU THINK? WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?
CATCH THE ATTENTION OF THE MAN INSIDE.
IT MAY BE AS SIMPLE AS... CONJURING...

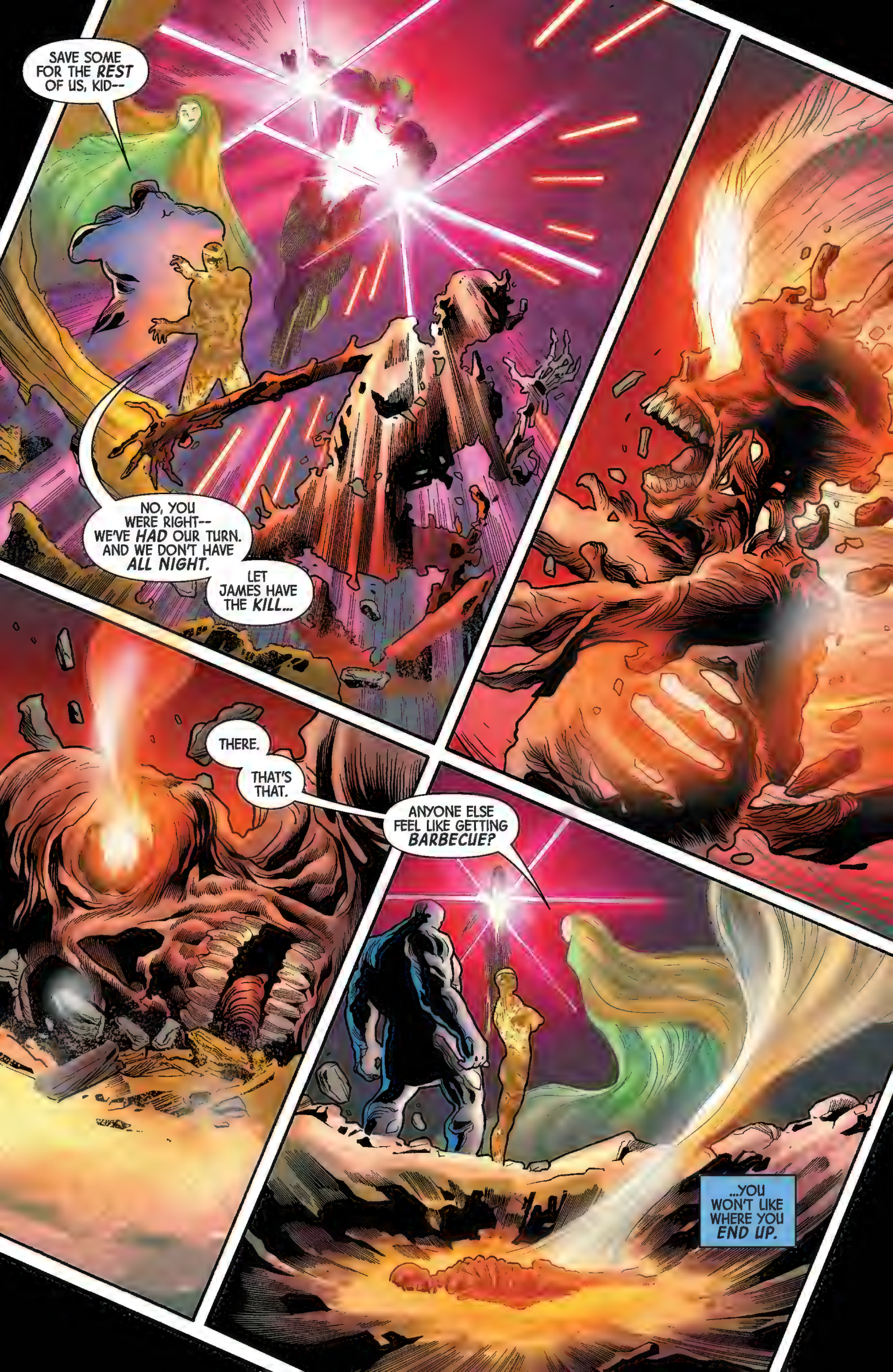

...A DISTRACTION.
CHARLENE...?
OH MY GOD.
LEN? IS THAT YOU?
AND WAS THAT YOU, MICHAEL? PRETTY CONVENIENT TIMING...
SYNCHRONICITY IS A MAJOR COMPONENT OF MAGIC, OLD FRIEND.
SO IS TAKING THE CREDIT.

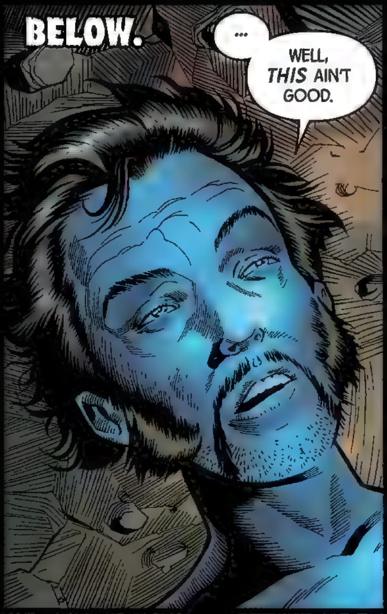

NOTHING MAGIC ABOUT IT... *SHAMAN*, RIGHT? FROM *ALPHA FLIGHT?*
I NOTICED A SERIOUS *GAMMA SPIKE* OUT HERE. FIGURED WE SHOULD TAKE A *LOOK*.
VIA *TRANSLOCATION?* LITTLE *DANGEROUS*, ISN'T IT?
I'M A *LOT* MORE CONFIDENT WITH THE *VARIABLES* THAN I WAS. OR MAYBE I'M JUST LESS *WORRIED* THESE DAYS.
IT'S A DANGEROUS *WORLD*, MR. JUDD.
ESPECIALLY WITH THE *LEADER* LIVING IN IT--
WAIT.
PUCK WAS *RIGHT*. HE *DIDN'T* FIGHT BACK.
STOP.
AND HE'S NOT *SMILING*...
SO? WHAT DOES *THAT* PROVE, McGEE?
THE LEADER *FAKED* BEING RICK FOR *WEEKS-- MONTHS*--HE TOOK US *ALL* IN--
I KNOW. ME AS WELL. BUT IT'S LIKE...
...I CAN *SEE* HIM NOW.
OUT OF THE CORNER OF MY EYE.
JACKIE?
WHAT *IS* IT?
AND IF YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO *SEE* HOW THE WORLD *REALLY WORKS?*

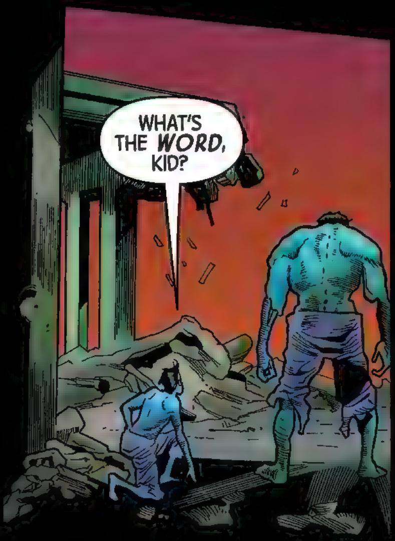

NEW JERSEY.
I HAVE NO PROBLEM TAKING YOU *OUT* OF IT. AND BELIEVE ME...
OKAY...WE'RE LOOKING FOR AN *IMPACT CRATER...*
HEY!
THERE HE IS!
H-HULK...
HULK WILL... *SMASH...*
NO, NO.
DON'T GET UP.
YOU'RE FINE RIGHT WHERE YOU *ARE.*

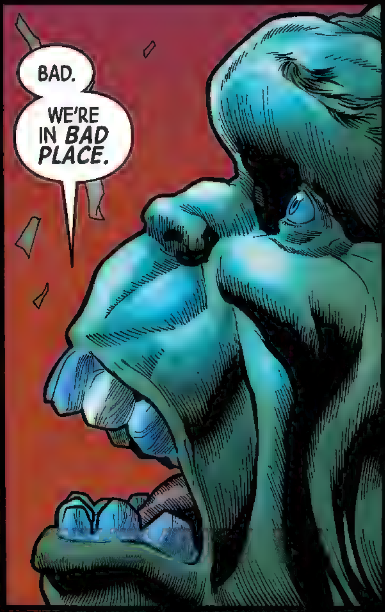

NO? NOT GOING TO SAVE YOURSELF THE *PAIN?* I MEAN, *LOOK* AT YOU.
WHAT KEEPS YOU *GOING,* HULK?
HULK *SMASH.*
HOW VERY *ELOQUENT--*
HEY. *WAIT.*
THIS AIN'T *RIGHT,* SIMON.
IT'S *JIMMY'S TURN.* YOU SAID *EVERYBODY* GETS A PIECE, REMEMBER?
C'MON, LET THE LITTLE GUY HAVE IT.
OF COURSE. THE *GOOD GUYS* SHOULD ALWAYS STICK TO THE *RULES.*
FORGIVE ME, JAMES.
YOU'RE *UP.*
HA!

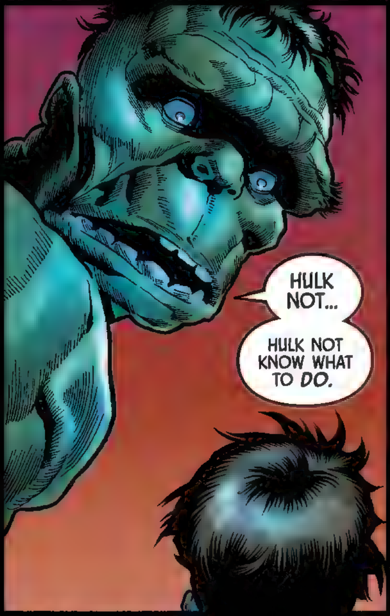

I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS, MAN!
AND IF I'M LAST TO BAT--I'M HITTIN' IT OUTTA THE PARK!
FEEL THAT? PURE, CONCENTRATED ANTI-GAMMA!
COSMIC RAYS, HULK!
THEY'RE CANDY TO US! THEY'RE WHAT GAVE US OUR POWERS!
BUT FOR YOU--
--THEY'RE PURE POISON!
LIKE GARLIC FOR A VAMPIRE, AM I RIGHT? LIKE HOLY WATER IN HELL!
THEY'LL BURN YOU RIGHT BACK INTO A WEAK, PUNY HUMAN--
--AND I AIN'T STOPPING THERE!
YOU-- SONS OF--

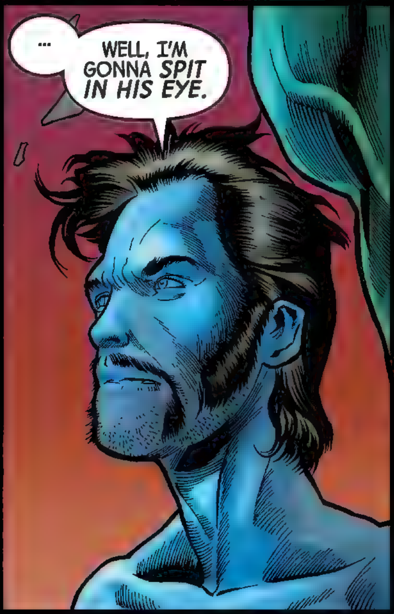

SAVE SOME FOR THE *REST* OF US, KID--
NO, YOU WERE RIGHT-- WE'VE *HAD* OUR TURN. AND WE DON'T HAVE *ALL NIGHT.*
LET JAMES HAVE THE *KILL*...
THERE.
THAT'S THAT.
ANYONE ELSE FEEL LIKE GETTING *BARBECUE?*
...YOU WON'T LIKE WHERE YOU *END UP.*

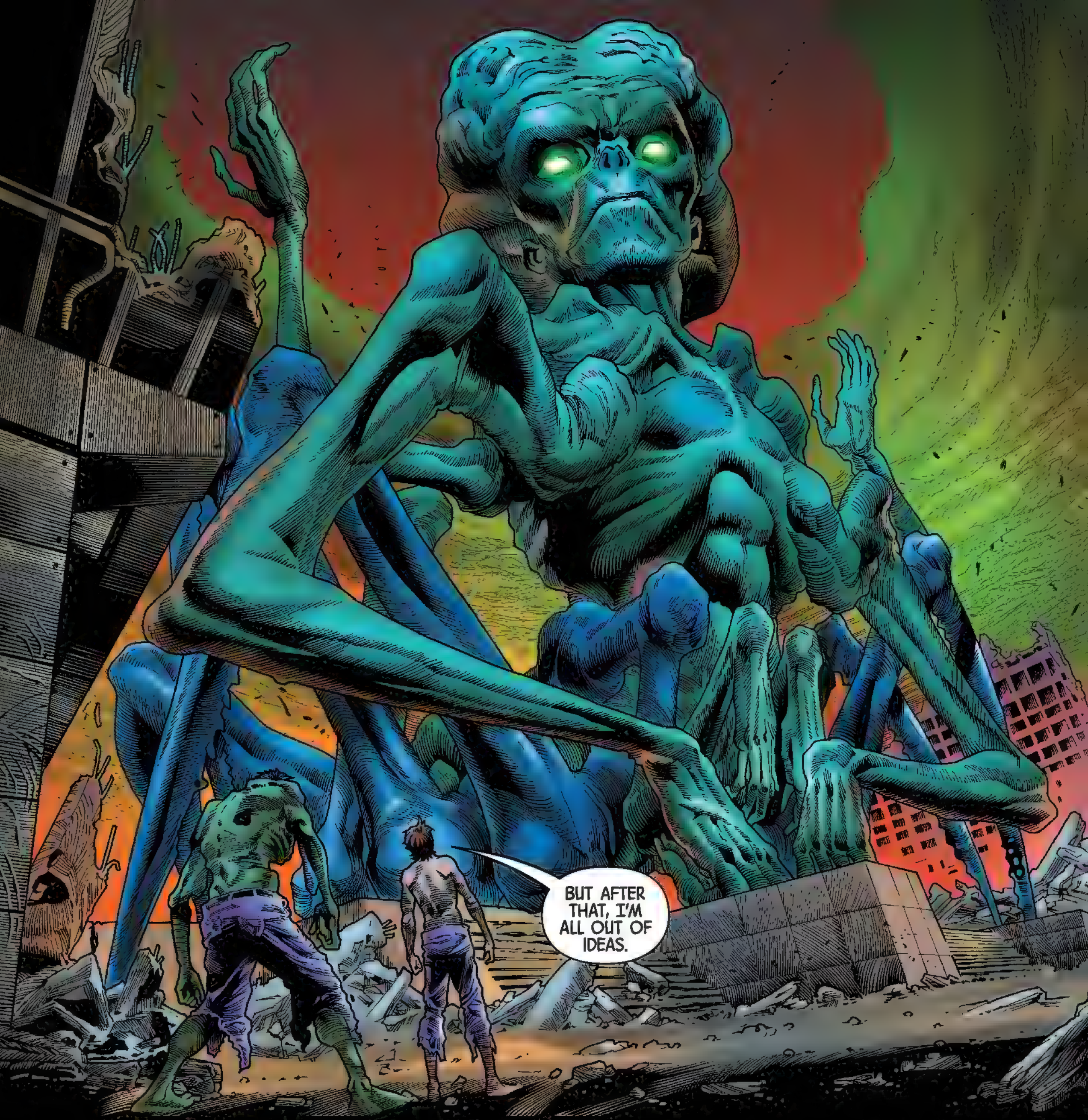

BELOW.
...
WELL, THIS AIN'T GOOD.


WHAT'S THE WORD, KID?


BAD.
WE'RE IN BAD PLACE.


HULK NOT...
HULK NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO.


...
WELL, I'M GONNA SPIT IN HIS EYE.

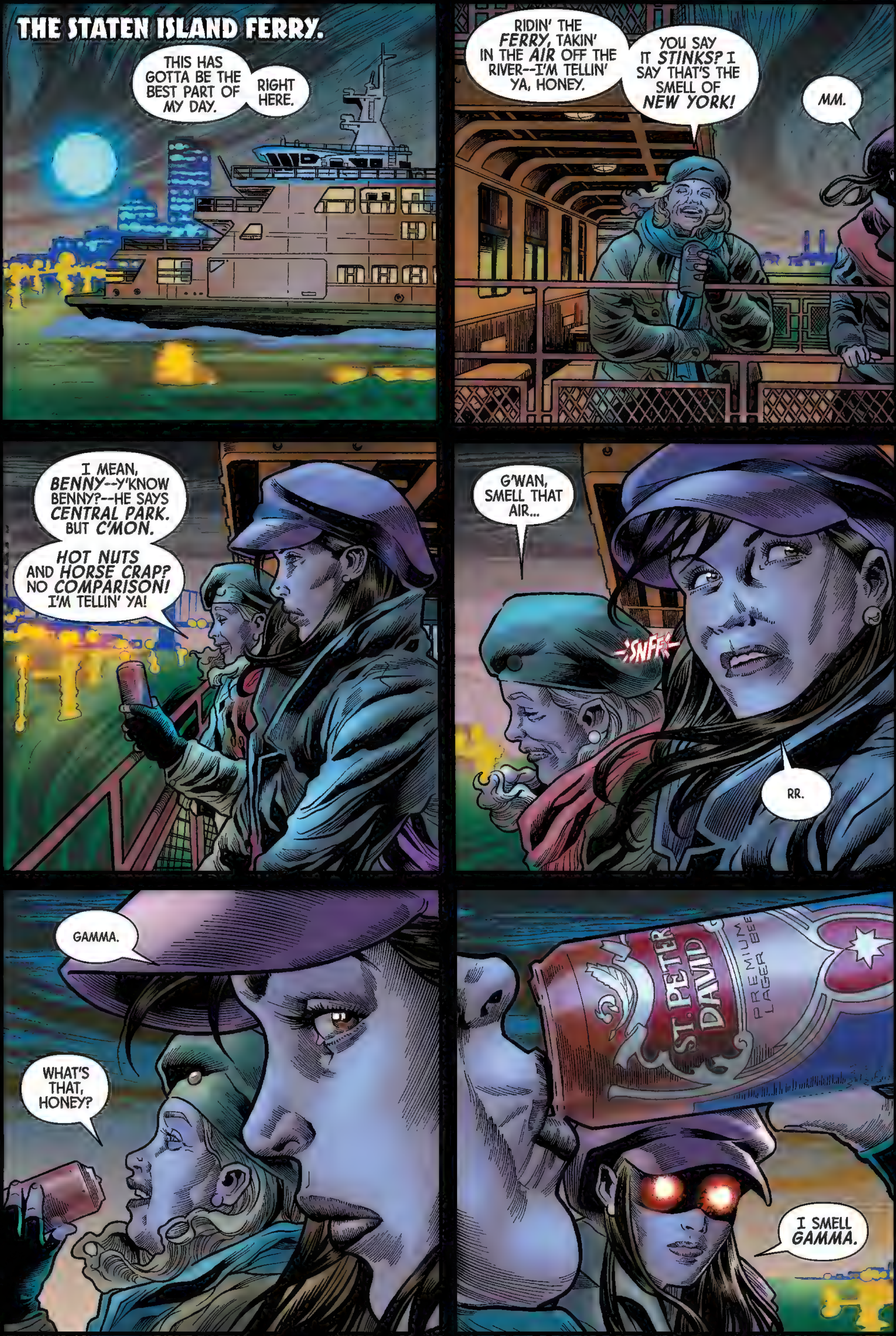

BUT AFTER THAT, I'M ALL OUT OF IDEAS.

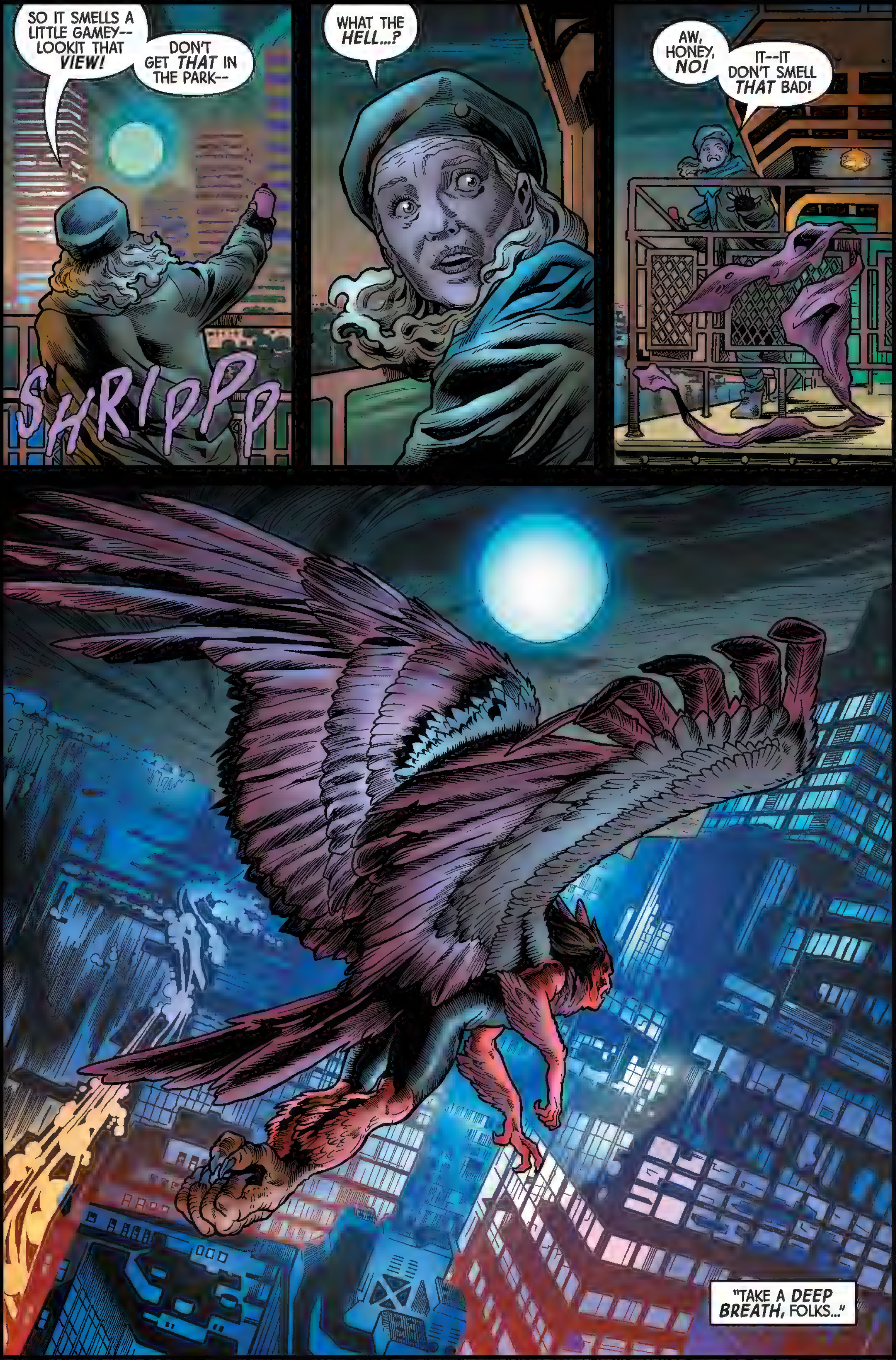
TO RULE IN HELL

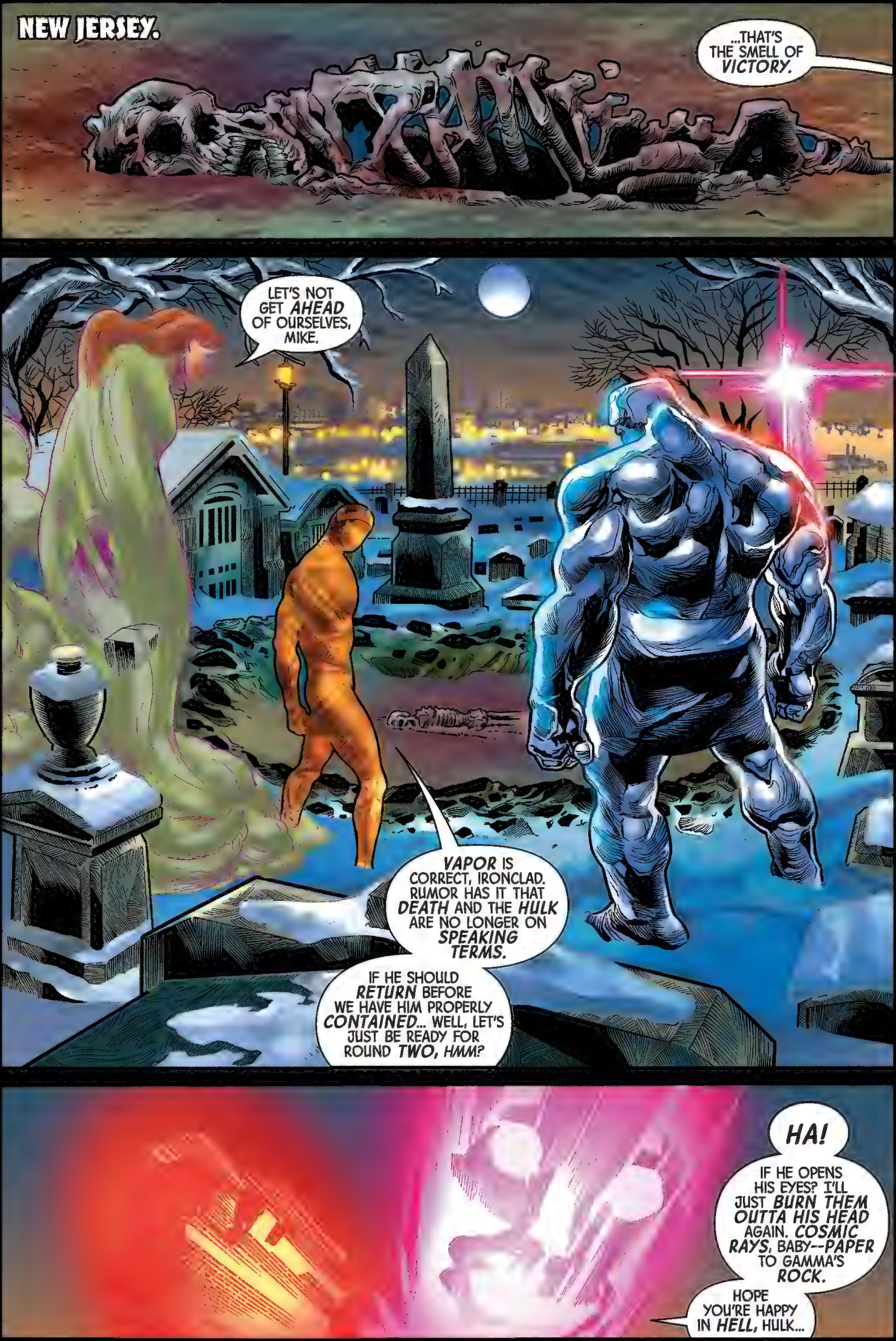
45

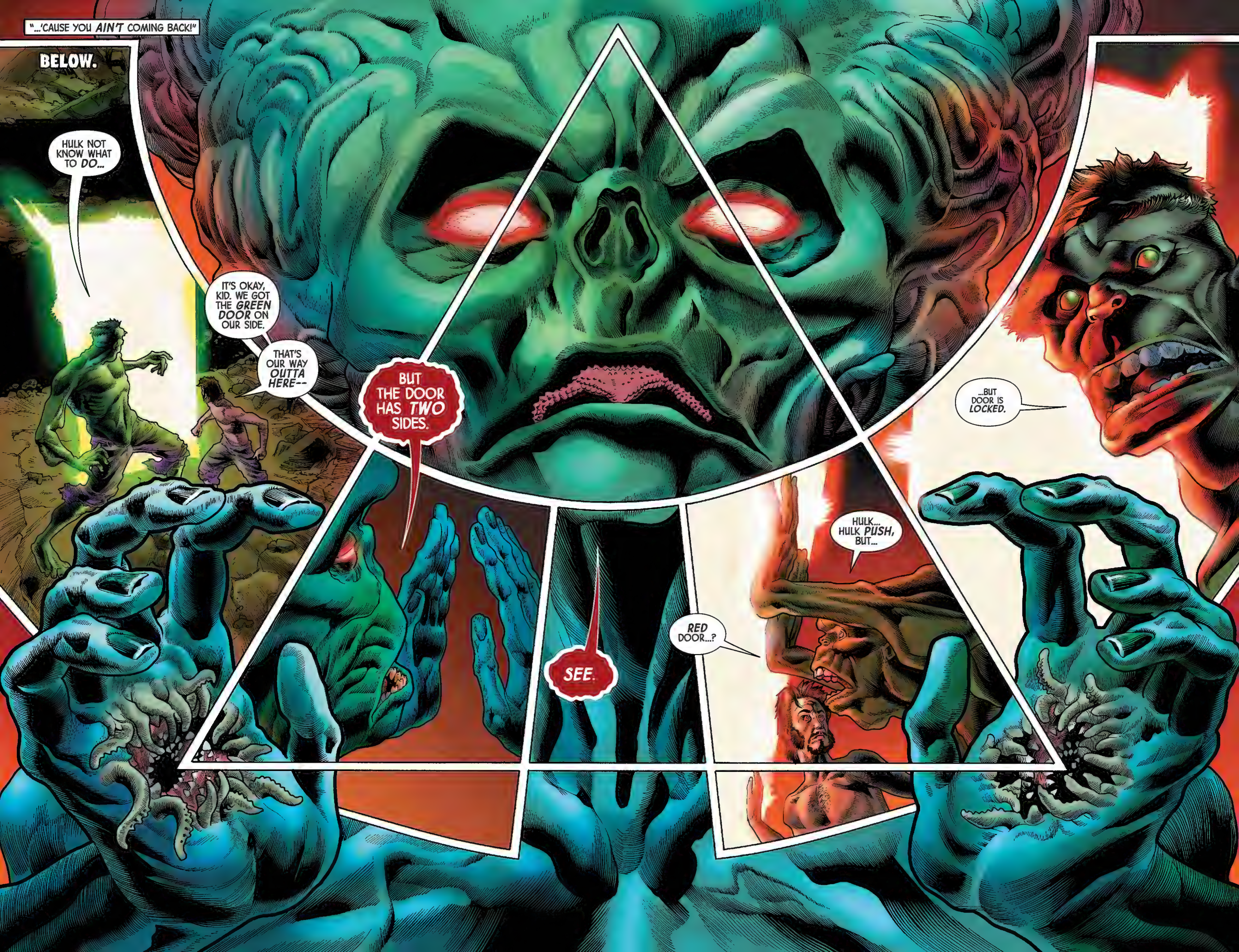
“THE LOWEST EBB IS THE TURN OF THE TIDE.”

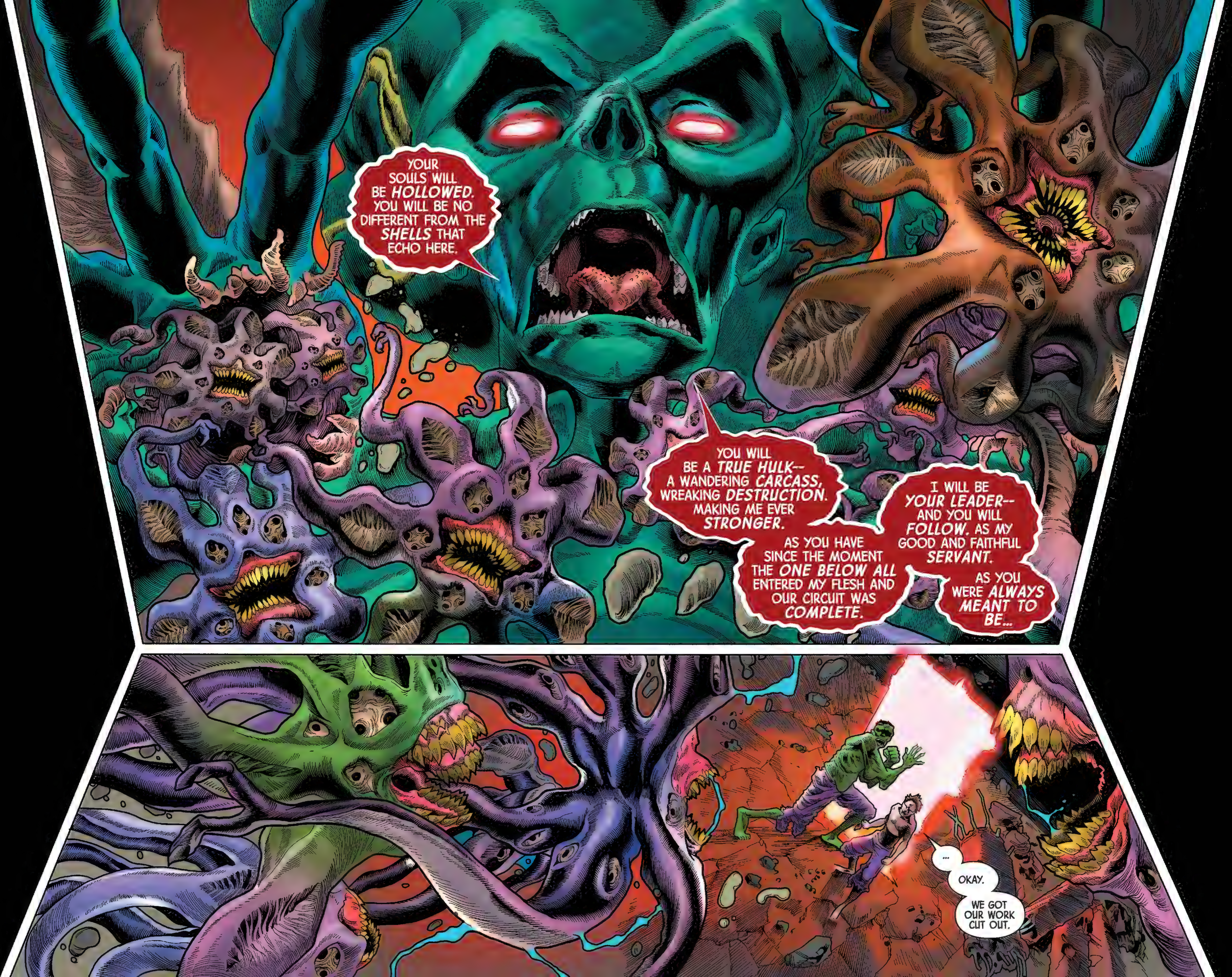
– HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW,
“LOSS AND GAIN”

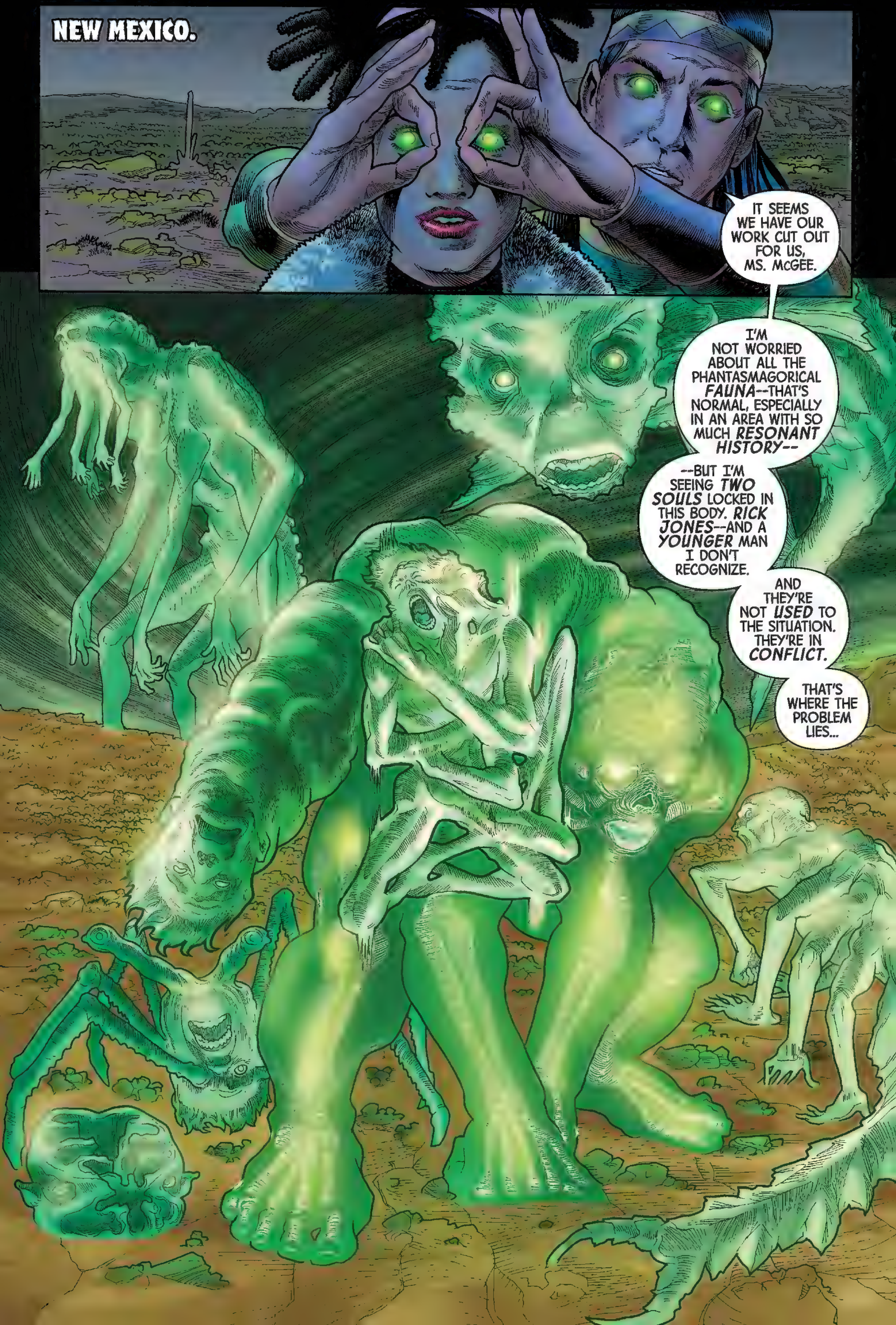

THE STATEN ISLAND FERRY.
THIS HAS GOTTA BE THE BEST PART OF MY DAY.
RIGHT HERE.
RIDIN' THE *FERRY*, TAKIN' IN THE *AIR* OFF THE RIVER--I'M TELLIN' YA, HONEY.
YOU SAY IT *STINKS?* I SAY THAT'S THE SMELL OF *NEW YORK!*
MM.
I MEAN, *BENNY*--Y'KNOW BENNY?--HE SAYS *CENTRAL PARK.* BUT *C'MON.*
HOT NUTS AND *HORSE CRAP?* NO *COMPARISON!* I'M TELLIN' YA!
G'WAN, SMELL THAT AIR...
SNFF
RR.
GAMMA.
WHAT'S THAT, HONEY?
ST. PETER DAVID
PREMIUM LAGER BEE
I SMELL *GAMMA.*

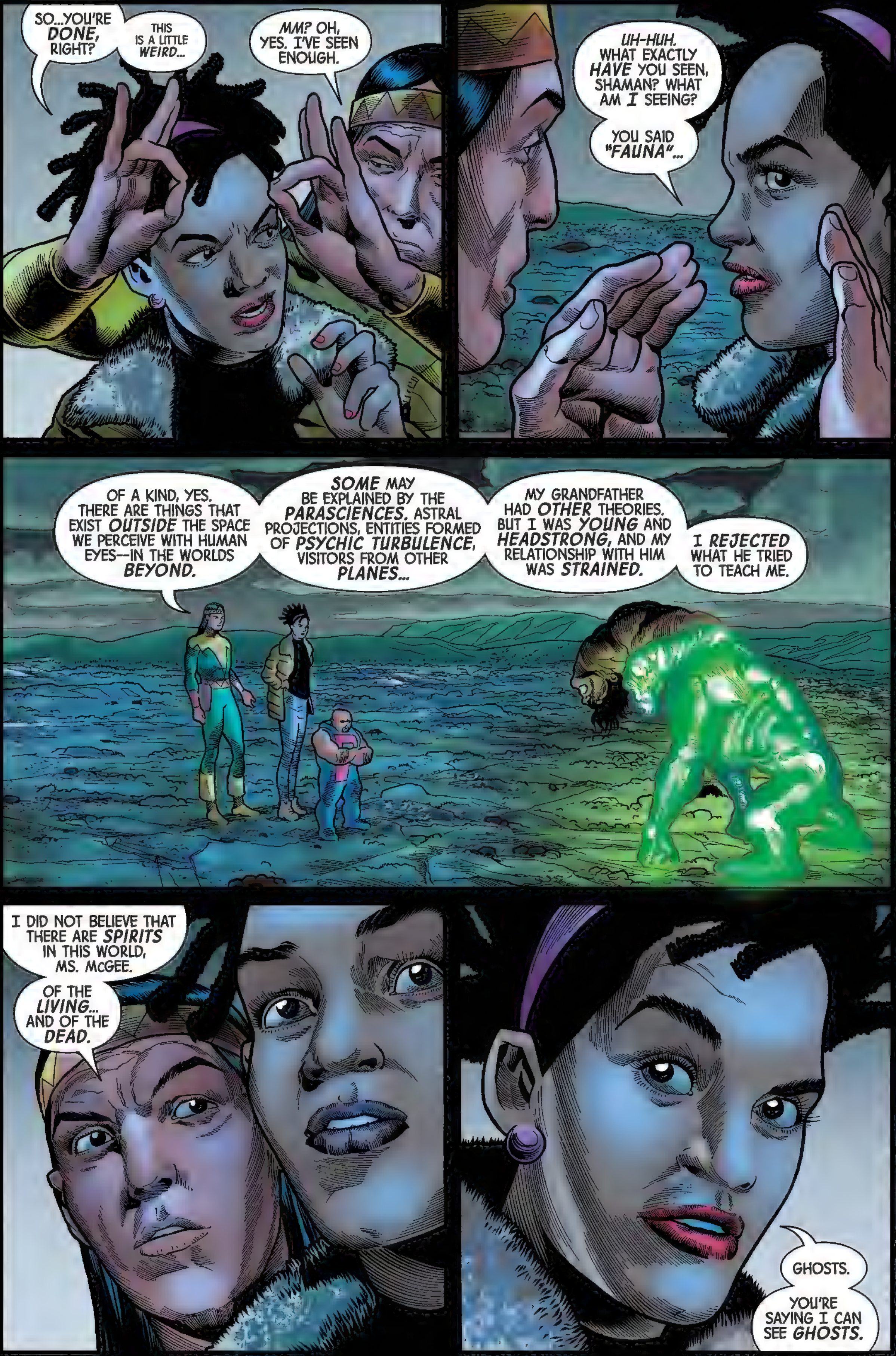

SO IT SMELLS A LITTLE GAMEY--LOOKIT THAT *VIEW!*
DON'T GET *THAT* IN THE PARK--
SHRIPPP
WHAT THE *HELL...?*
AW, HONEY, *NO!*
IT--IT DON'T SMELL *THAT* BAD!
"TAKE A *DEEP BREATH,* FOLKS..."

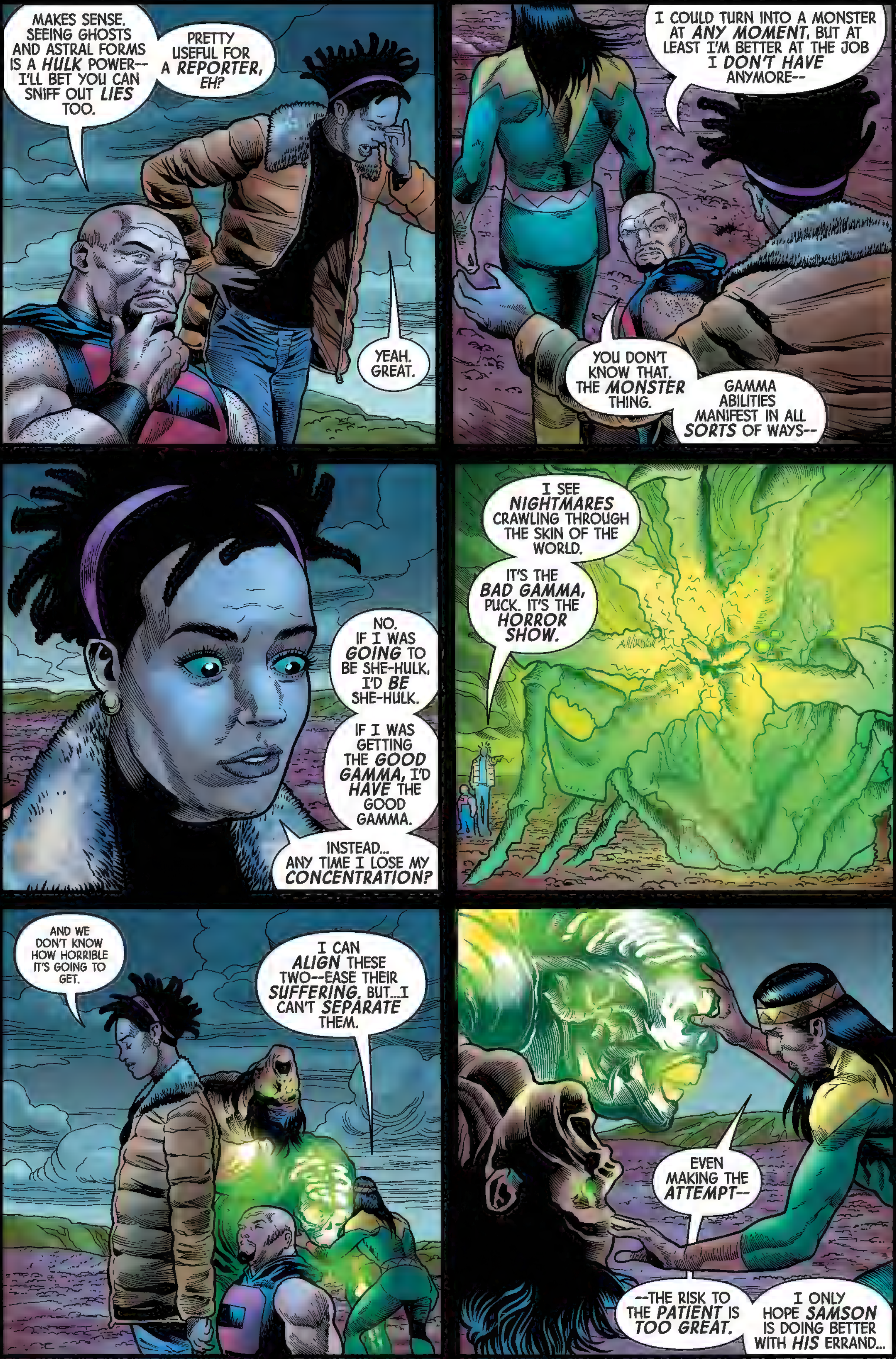

NEW JERSEY.
...THAT'S THE SMELL OF *VICTORY.*
LET'S NOT GET *AHEAD* OF OURSELVES, MIKE.
VAPOR IS CORRECT, IRONCLAD. RUMOR HAS IT THAT *DEATH* AND THE *HULK* ARE NO LONGER ON *SPEAKING TERMS.*
IF HE SHOULD *RETURN* BEFORE WE HAVE HIM PROPERLY *CONTAINED*... WELL, LET'S JUST BE READY FOR ROUND *TWO, HMM?*
HA!
IF HE OPENS HIS EYES? I'LL JUST *BURN THEM OUTTA HIS HEAD* AGAIN. *COSMIC RAYS,* BABY--*PAPER* TO GAMMA'S *ROCK.*
HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY IN *HELL,* HULK...

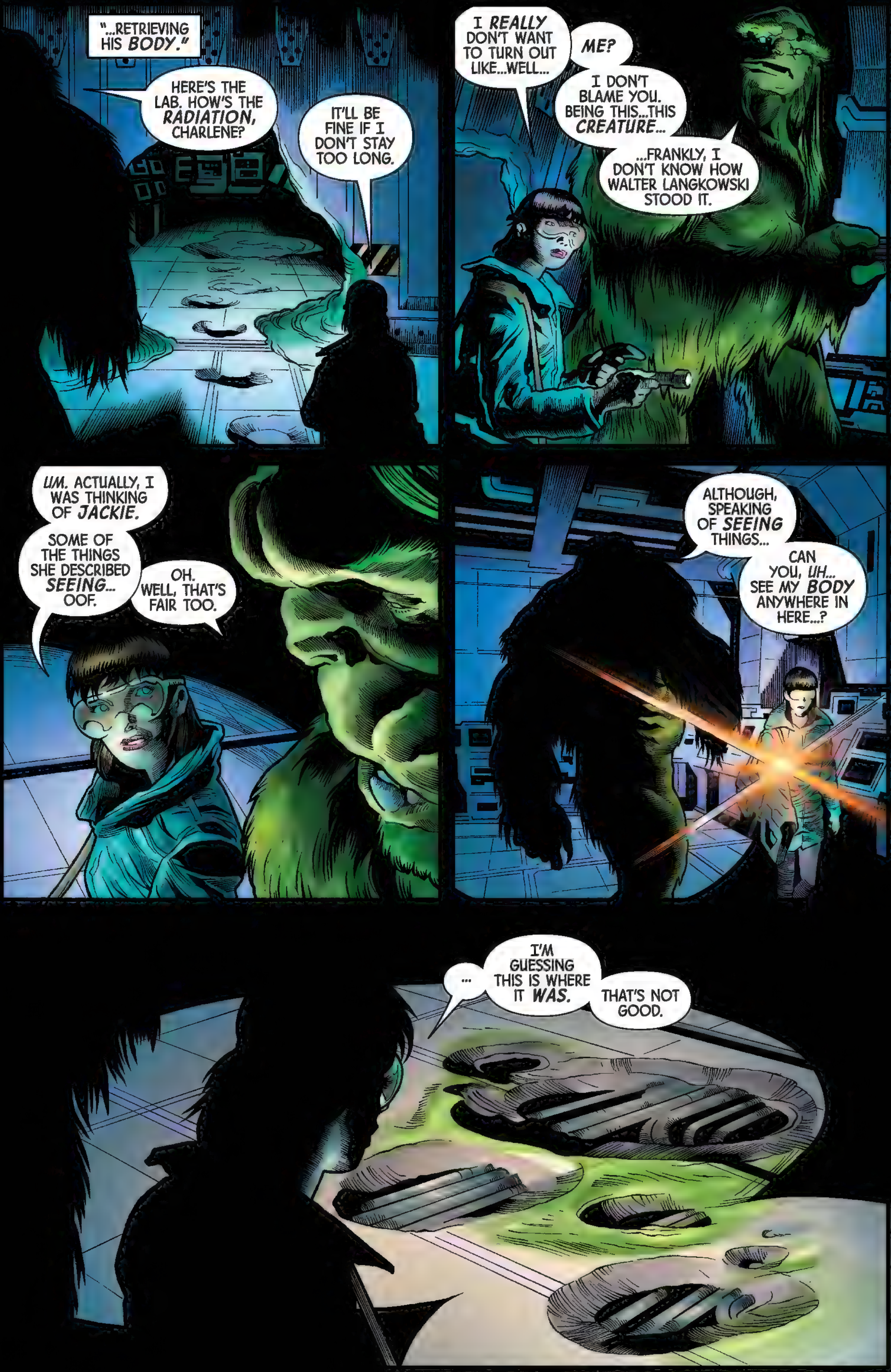

"...'CAUSE YOU *AIN'T* COMING BACK!"
BELOW.
HULK NOT KNOW WHAT TO *DO*...
IT'S OKAY, KID. WE GOT THE *GREEN DOOR* ON OUR SIDE.
THAT'S OUR WAY *OUTTA HERE*--
BUT THE DOOR HAS *TWO* SIDES.
...BUT DOOR IS *LOCKED*.
HULK... HULK *PUSH*, BUT...
RED DOOR...?
SEE.

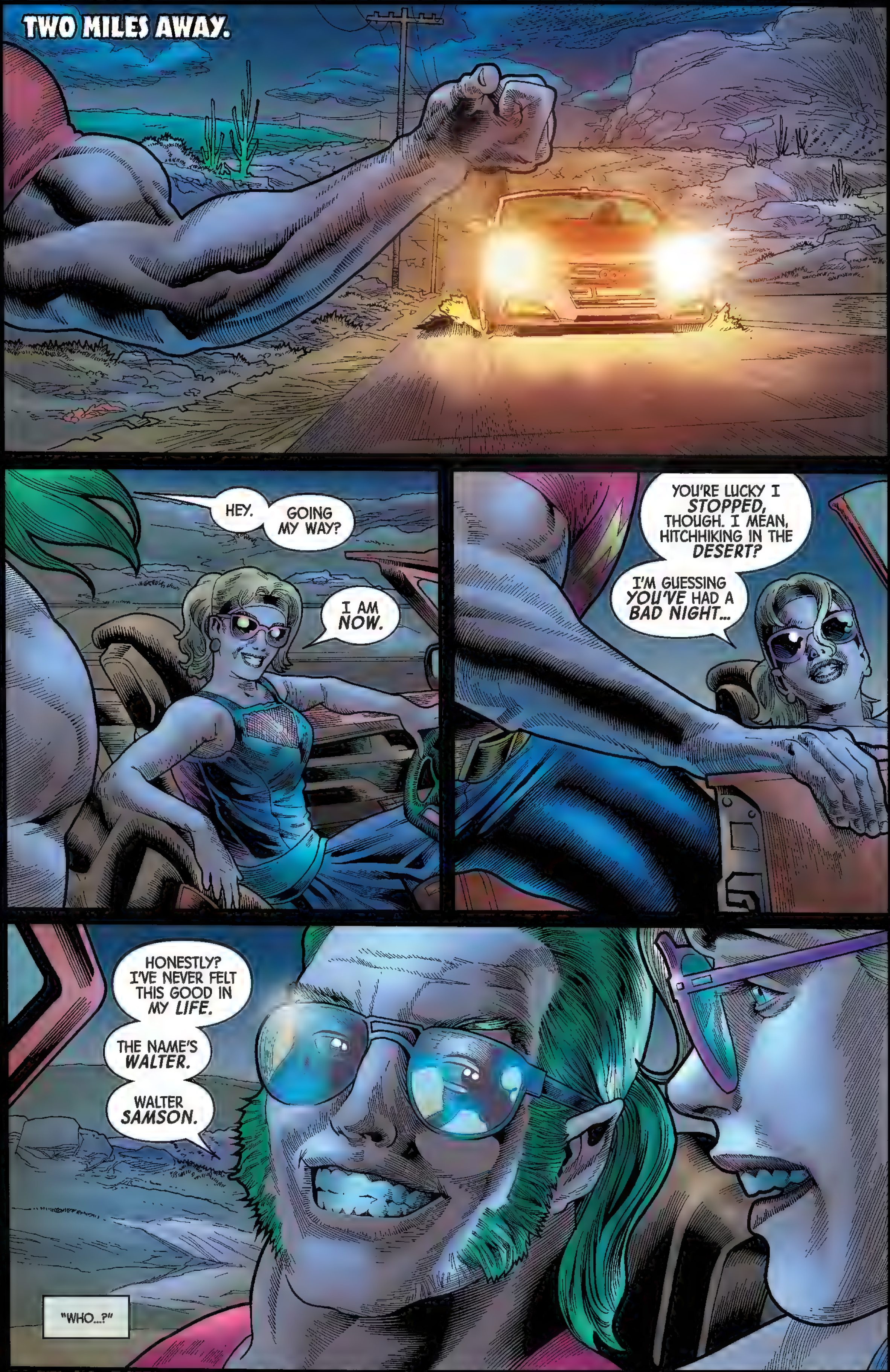

YOUR SOULS WILL BE *HOLLOWED.* YOU WILL BE NO DIFFERENT FROM THE *SHELLS* THAT ECHO HERE.
YOU WILL BE A *TRUE HULK*-- A WANDERING *CARCASS,* WREAKING *DESTRUCTION.* MAKING ME EVER *STRONGER.*
AS YOU HAVE SINCE THE MOMENT THE *ONE BELOW ALL* ENTERED MY FLESH AND OUR CIRCUIT WAS *COMPLETE.*
I WILL BE *YOUR LEADER*-- AND YOU WILL *FOLLOW,* AS MY GOOD AND FAITHFUL *SERVANT.*
AS YOU WERE *ALWAYS MEANT TO BE...*
...
OKAY.
WE GOT OUR WORK CUT OUT.

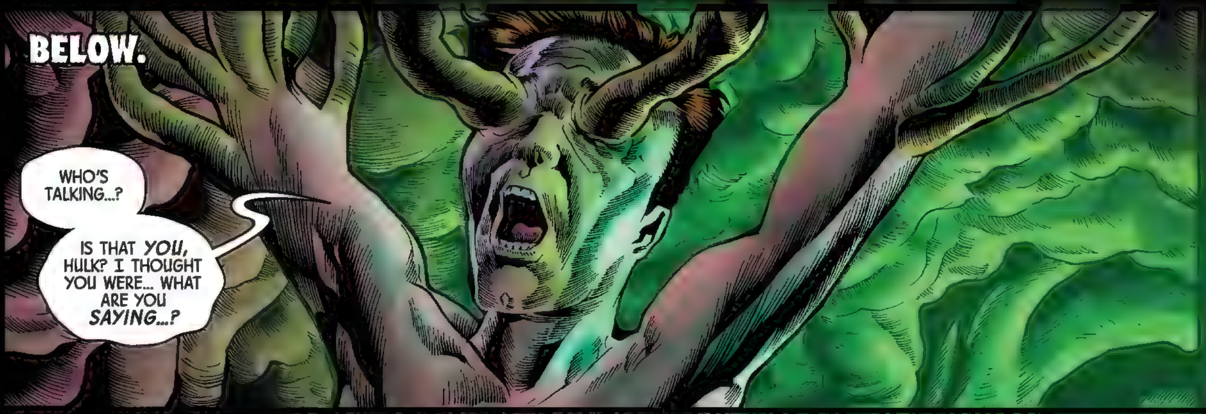

NEW MEXICO.
IT SEEMS WE HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US, MS. McGEE.
I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT ALL THE PHANTASMAGORICAL *FAUNA*--THAT'S NORMAL, ESPECIALLY IN AN AREA WITH SO MUCH *RESONANT HISTORY*--
--BUT I'M SEEING *TWO SOULS* LOCKED IN THIS BODY. *RICK JONES*--AND A *YOUNGER* MAN I DON'T RECOGNIZE.
AND THEY'RE NOT *USED* TO THE SITUATION. THEY'RE IN *CONFLICT.*
THAT'S WHERE THE PROBLEM LIES...

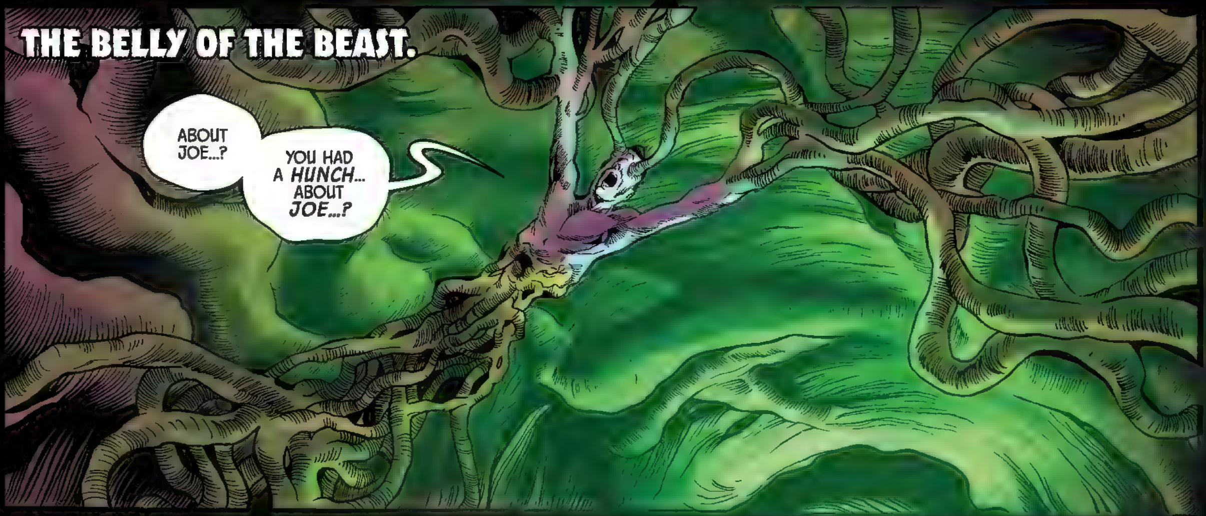

SO...YOU'RE *DONE,* RIGHT?
THIS IS A LITTLE *WEIRD...*
MM? OH, YES. I'VE SEEN ENOUGH.
UH-HUH. WHAT EXACTLY *HAVE* YOU SEEN, SHAMAN? WHAT AM *I* SEEING?
YOU SAID *"FAUNA"...*
OF A KIND, YES. THERE ARE THINGS THAT EXIST *OUTSIDE* THE SPACE WE PERCEIVE WITH HUMAN EYES--IN THE WORLDS *BEYOND.*
SOME MAY BE EXPLAINED BY THE *PARASCIENCES.* ASTRAL PROJECTIONS, ENTITIES FORMED OF *PSYCHIC TURBULENCE,* VISITORS FROM OTHER *PLANES...*
MY GRANDFATHER HAD *OTHER* THEORIES. BUT I WAS *YOUNG* AND *HEADSTRONG,* AND MY RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM WAS *STRAINED.*
I *REJECTED* WHAT HE TRIED TO TEACH ME.
I DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE *SPIRITS* IN THIS WORLD, MS. MCGEE.
OF THE *LIVING...* AND OF THE *DEAD.*
GHOSTS.
YOU'RE SAYING I CAN SEE *GHOSTS.*

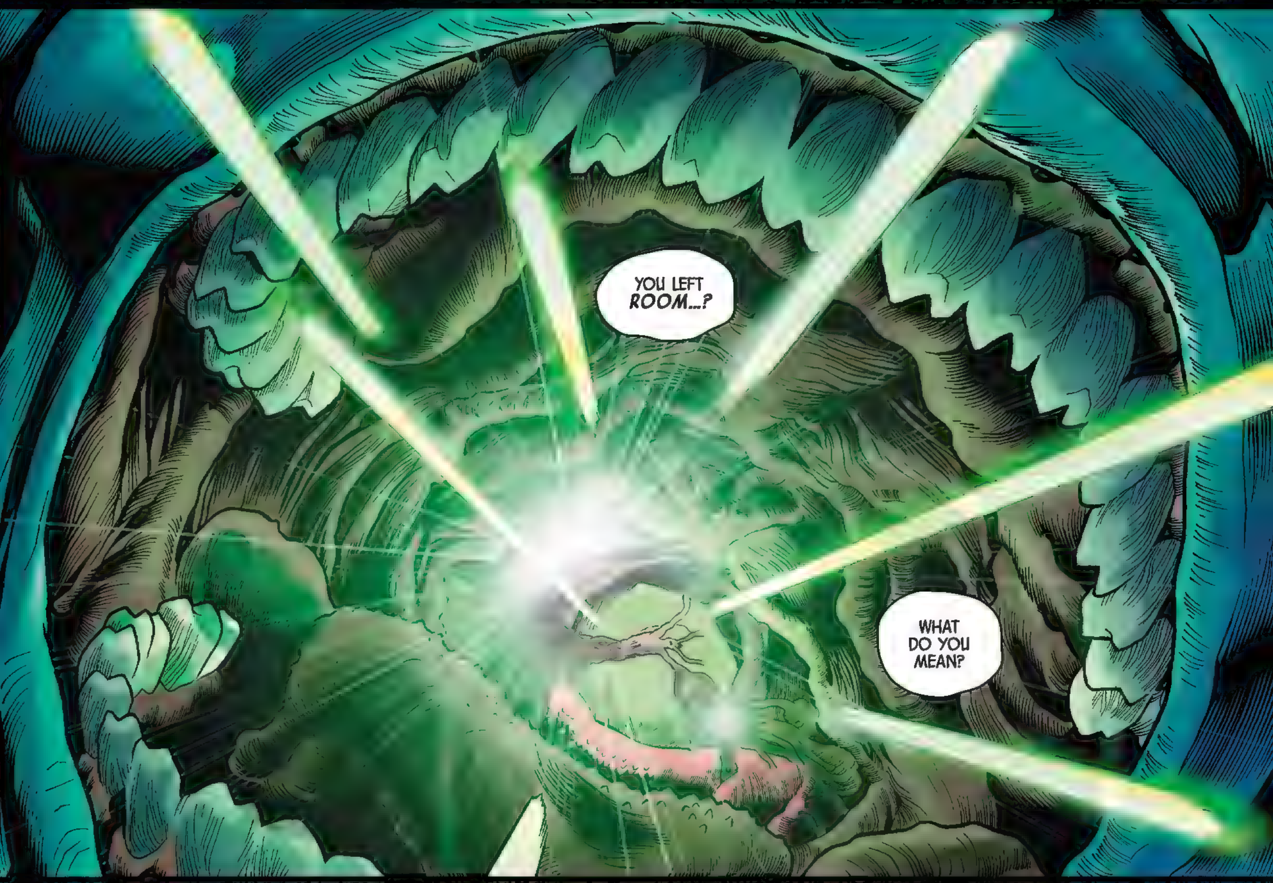

MAKES SENSE. SEEING GHOSTS AND ASTRAL FORMS IS A *HULK* POWER-- I'LL BET YOU CAN SNIFF OUT *LIES* TOO.
PRETTY USEFUL FOR A *REPORTER,* EH?
YEAH. GREAT.
I COULD TURN INTO A MONSTER AT *ANY MOMENT,* BUT AT LEAST I'M BETTER AT THE JOB I *DON'T HAVE* ANYMORE--
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT. THE *MONSTER* THING.
GAMMA ABILITIES MANIFEST IN ALL *SORTS* OF WAYS--
NO. IF I WAS *GOING* TO BE SHE-HULK, I'D *BE* SHE-HULK.
IF I WAS GETTING THE *GOOD GAMMA,* I'D *HAVE* THE GOOD GAMMA.
INSTEAD... ANY TIME I LOSE MY *CONCENTRATION?*
I SEE *NIGHTMARES* CRAWLING THROUGH THE SKIN OF THE WORLD.
IT'S THE *BAD GAMMA,* PUCK. IT'S THE *HORROR SHOW.*
AND WE DON'T KNOW HOW HORRIBLE IT'S GOING TO GET.
I CAN *ALIGN* THESE TWO--EASE THEIR *SUFFERING,* BUT...I CAN'T *SEPARATE* THEM.
EVEN MAKING THE *ATTEMPT*--
--THE RISK TO THE *PATIENT* IS *TOO GREAT.*
I ONLY HOPE *SAMSON* IS DOING BETTER WITH *HIS* ERRAND...

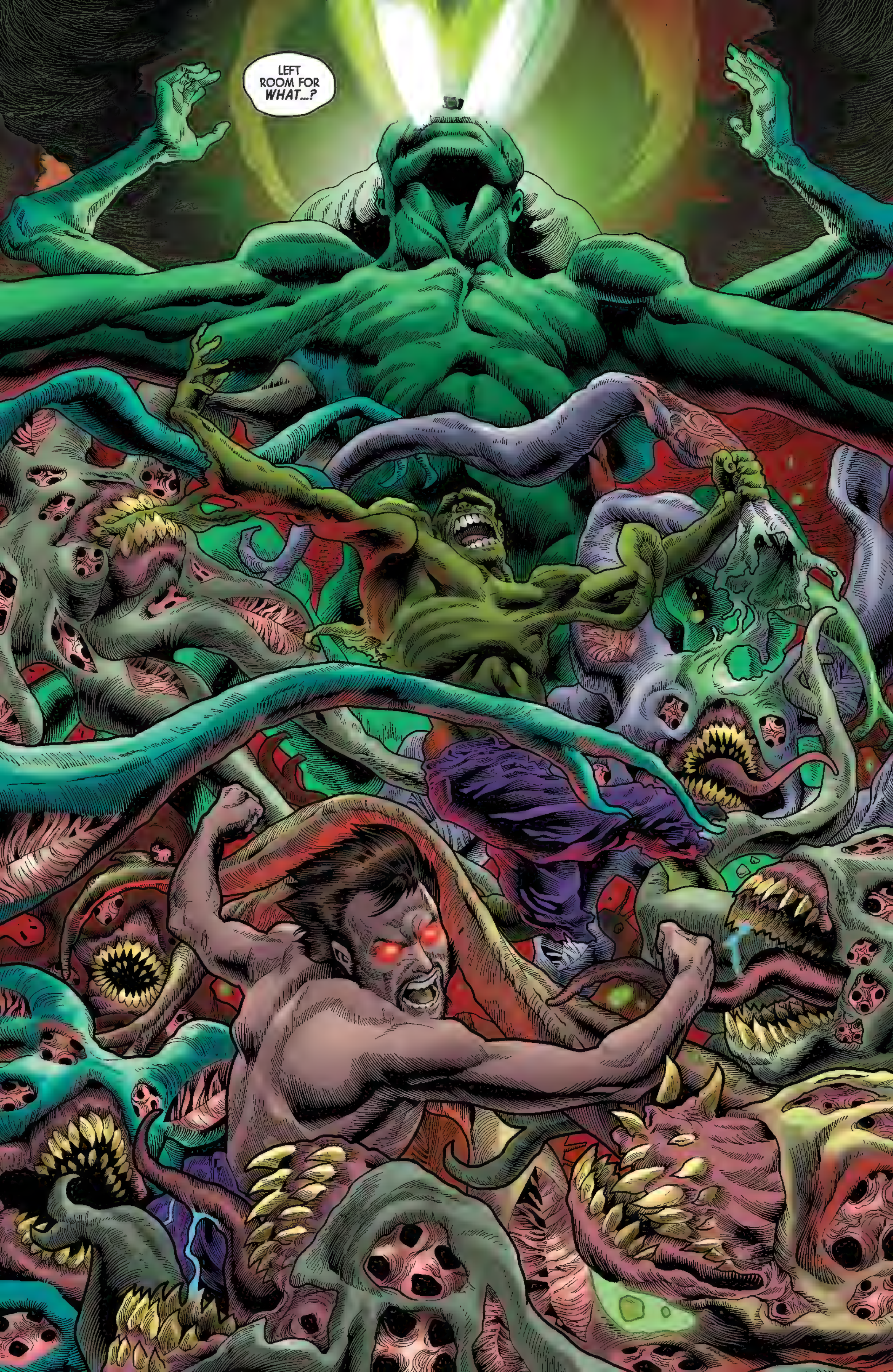

"...RETRIEVING HIS *BODY.*"
HERE'S THE LAB. HOW'S THE *RADIATION,* CHARLENE?
IT'LL BE FINE IF I DON'T STAY TOO LONG.
I *REALLY* DON'T WANT TO TURN OUT LIKE...WELL...
ME?
I DON'T BLAME YOU. BEING THIS...THIS *CREATURE*...
...FRANKLY, I DON'T KNOW HOW WALTER LANGKOWSKI STOOD IT.
UM. ACTUALLY, I WAS THINKING OF *JACKIE.*
SOME OF THE THINGS SHE DESCRIBED *SEEING*... OOF.
OH. WELL, THAT'S FAIR TOO.
ALTHOUGH, SPEAKING OF *SEEING* THINGS...
CAN YOU, *UH*... SEE *MY BODY* ANYWHERE IN HERE...?
...
I'M GUESSING THIS IS WHERE IT *WAS.*
THAT'S NOT GOOD.

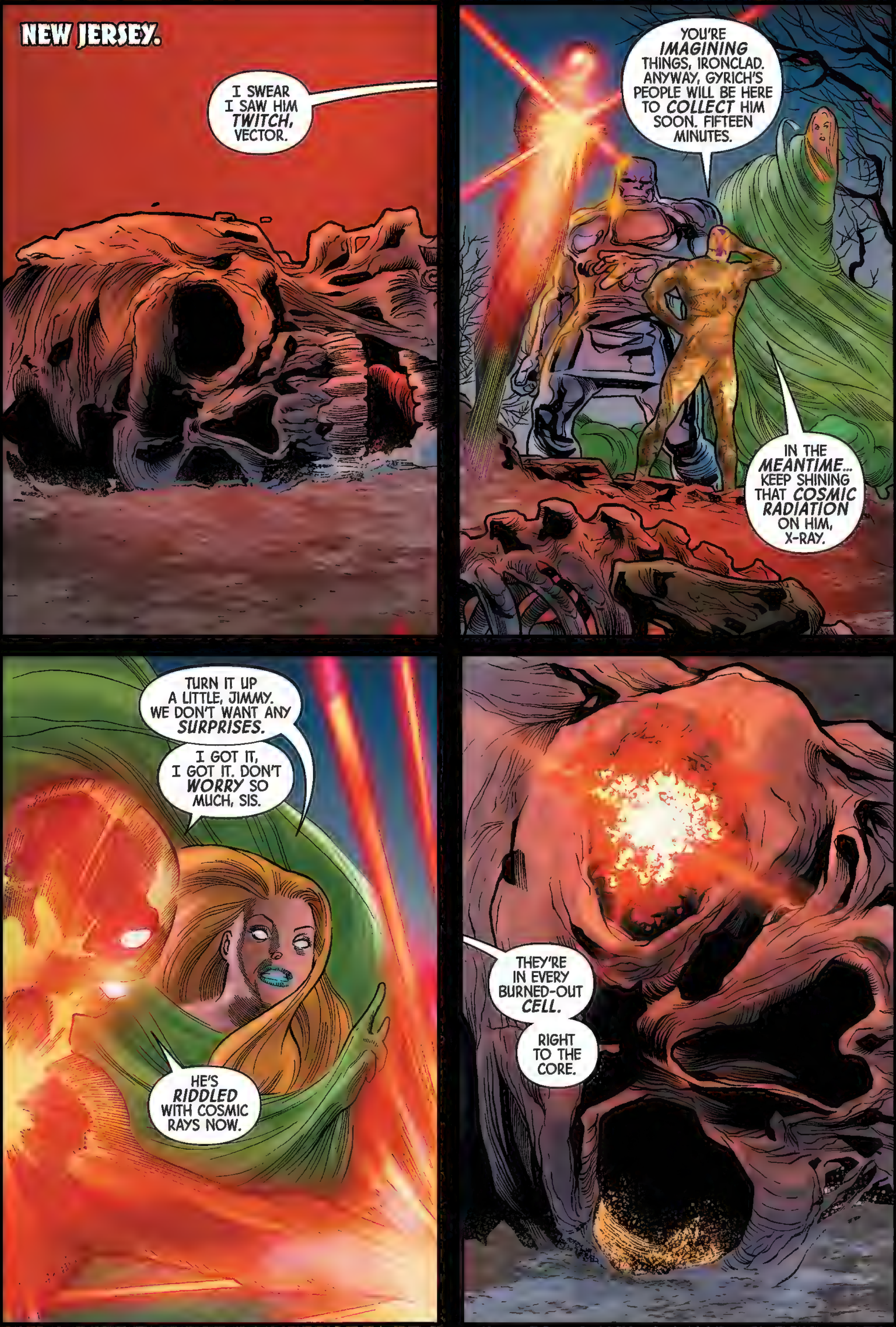

TWO MILES AWAY.
HEY.
GOING MY WAY?
I AM NOW.
YOU'RE LUCKY I STOPPED, THOUGH. I MEAN, HITCHHIKING IN THE DESERT?
I'M GUESSING YOU'VE HAD A BAD NIGHT...
HONESTLY? I'VE NEVER FELT THIS GOOD IN MY LIFE.
THE NAME'S WALTER.
WALTER SAMSON.
"WHO...?"

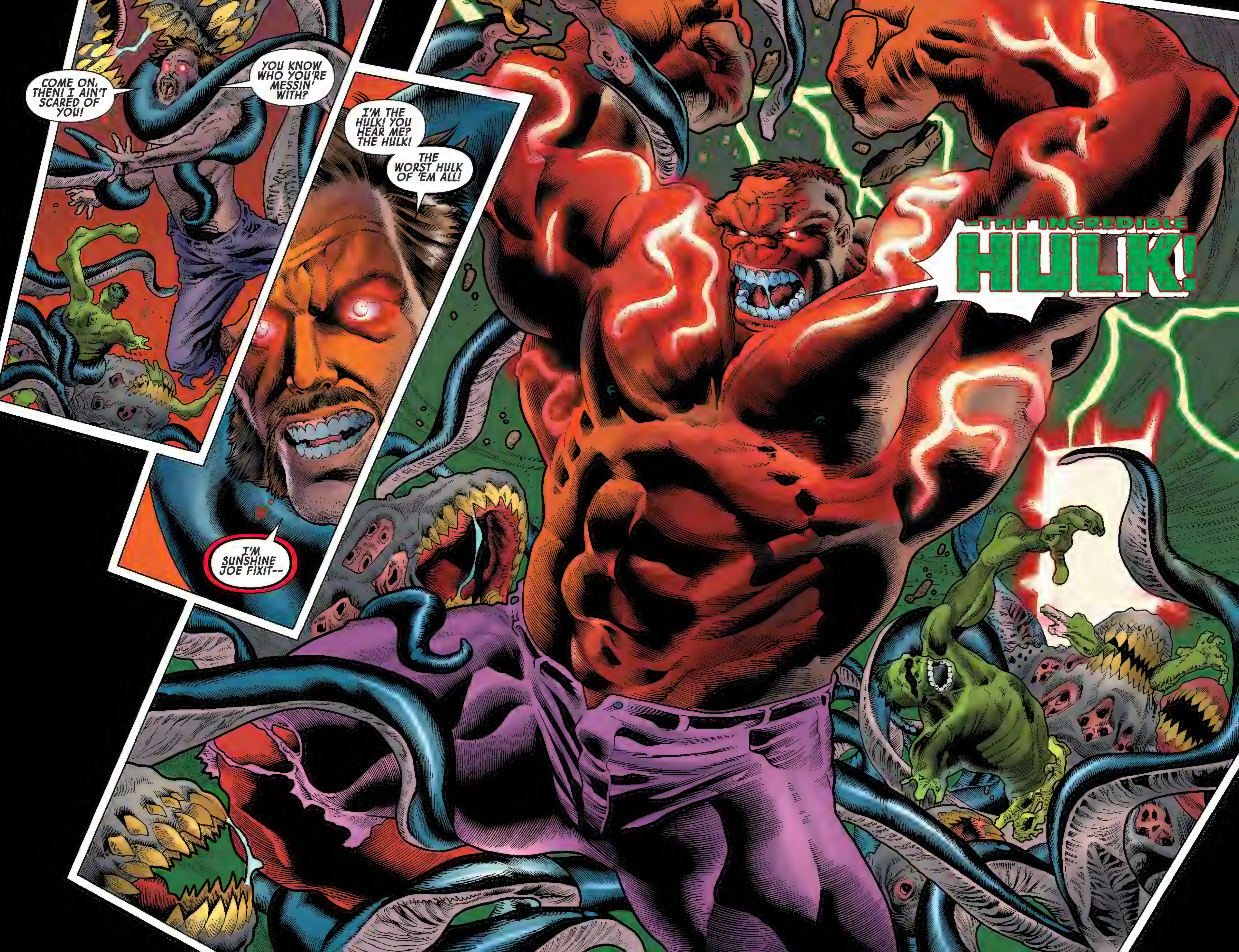

BELOW.
WHO'S TALKING...?
IS THAT *YOU*, HULK? I THOUGHT YOU WERE... WHAT ARE YOU *SAYING...?*

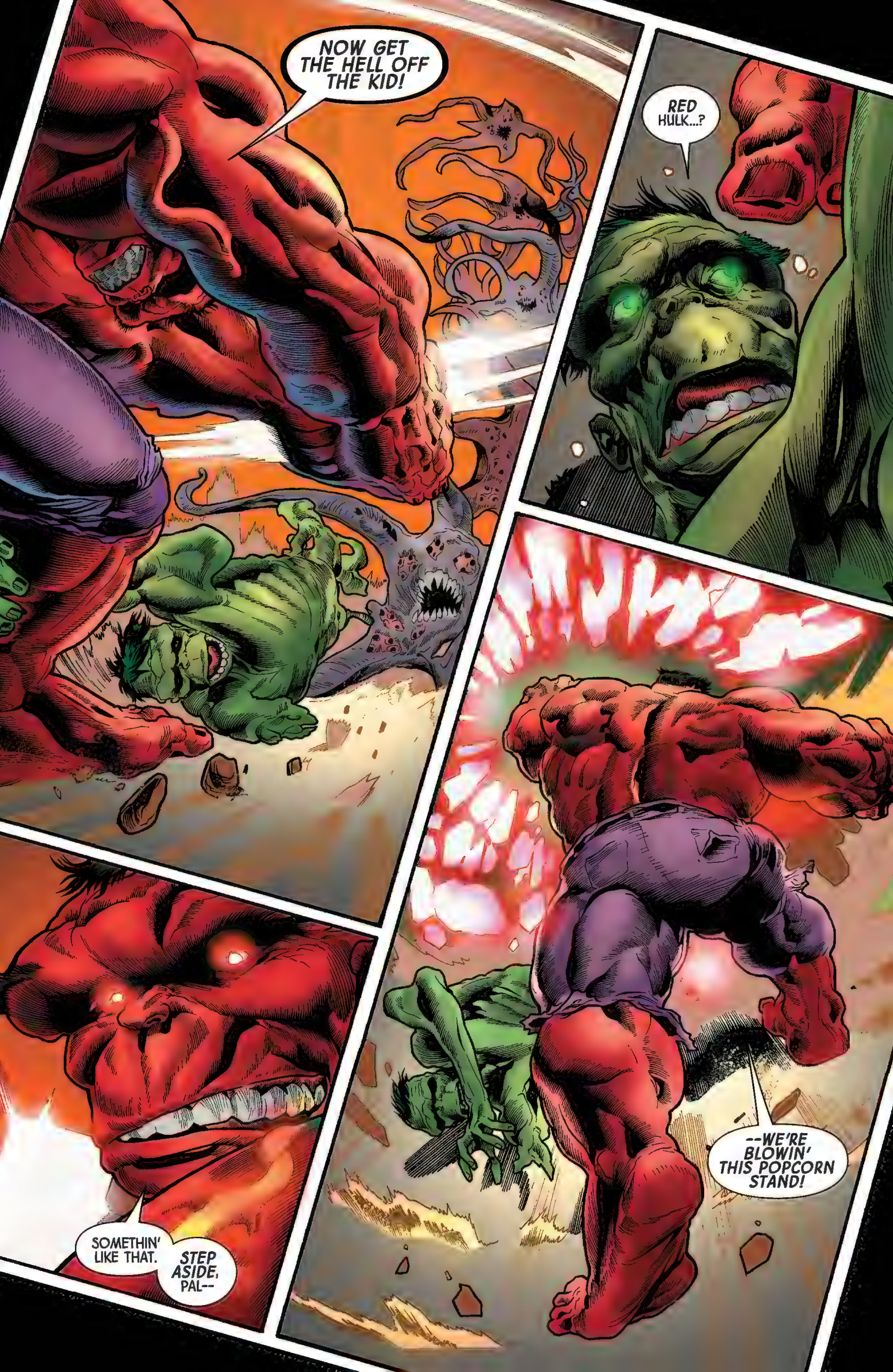

THE BELLY OF THE BEAST.
ABOUT JOE...?
YOU HAD A *HUNCH...* ABOUT *JOE...?*

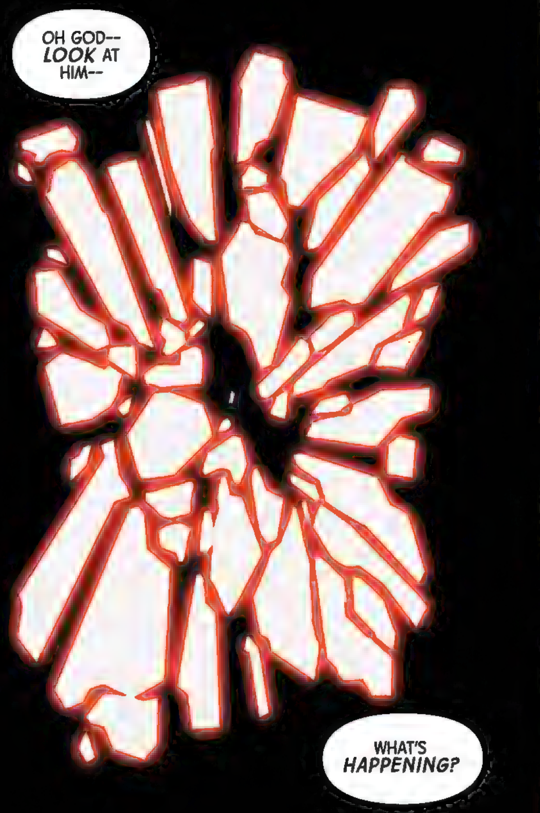

YOU LEFT *ROOM...?*
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

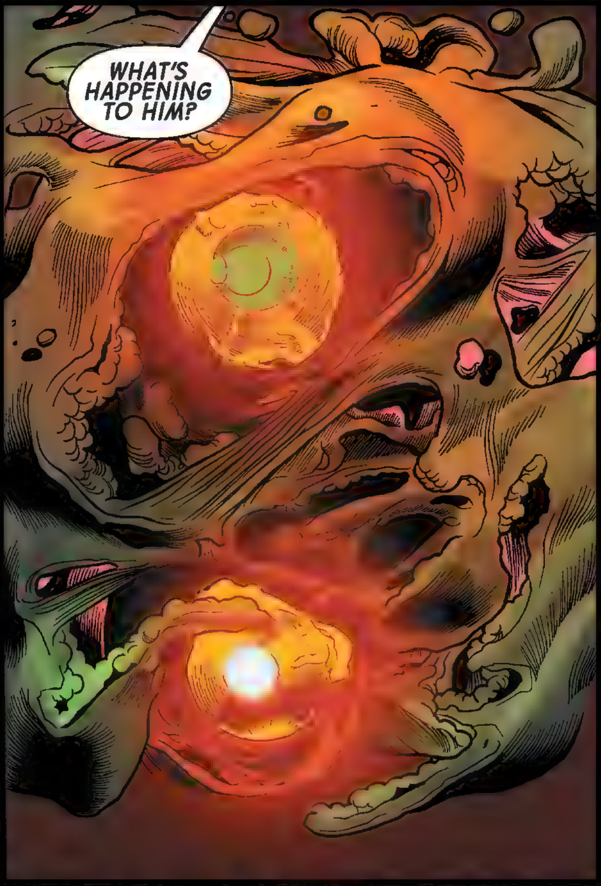

LEFT ROOM FOR *WHAT...?*

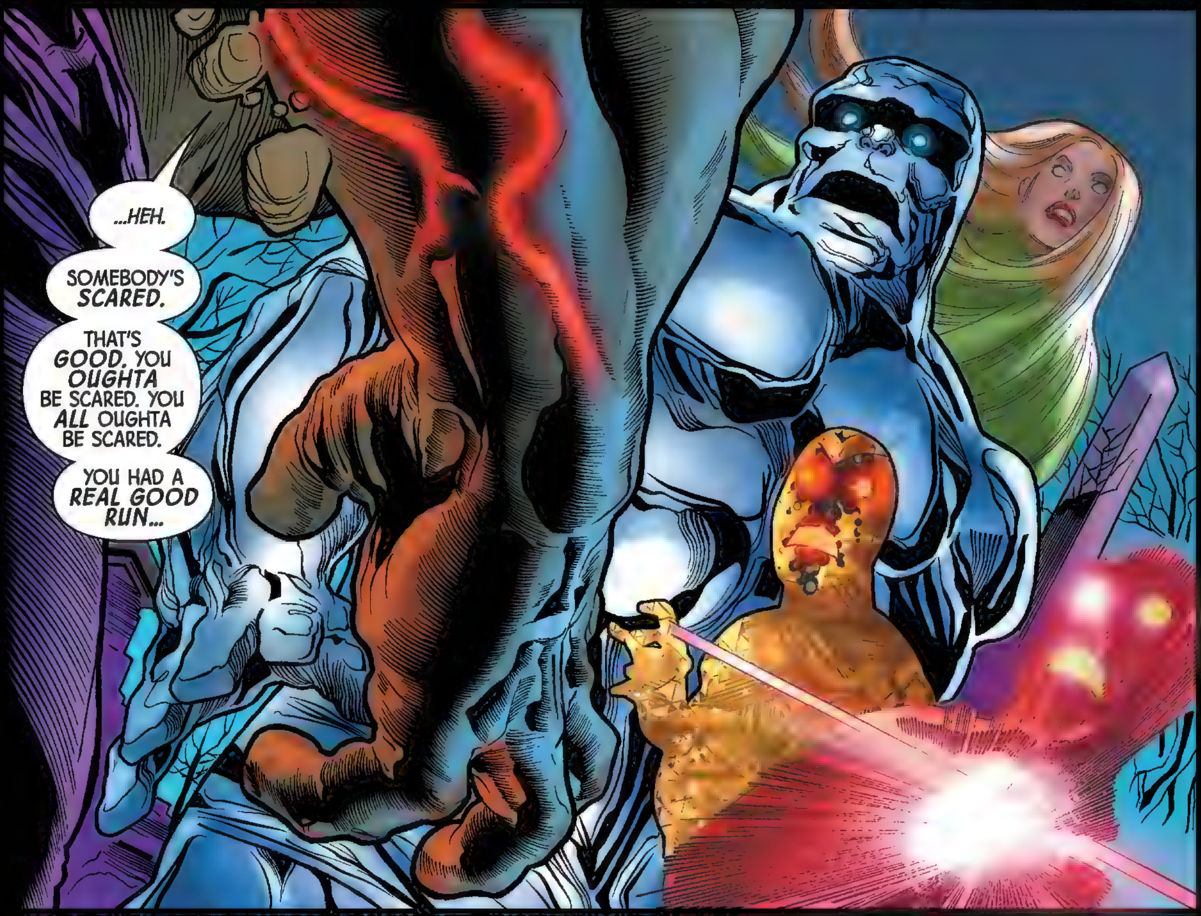

NEW JERSEY.
I SWEAR I SAW HIM *TWITCH,* VECTOR.
YOU'RE *IMAGINING* THINGS, IRONCLAD. ANYWAY, GYRICH'S PEOPLE WILL BE HERE TO *COLLECT* HIM SOON. FIFTEEN MINUTES.
IN THE *MEANTIME...* KEEP SHINING THAT *COSMIC RADIATION* ON HIM, X-RAY.
TURN IT UP A LITTLE, JIMMY. WE DON'T WANT ANY *SURPRISES.*
I GOT IT, I GOT IT. DON'T *WORRY* SO MUCH, SIS.
HE'S *RIDDLED* WITH COSMIC RAYS NOW.
THEY'RE IN EVERY BURNED-OUT *CELL.*
RIGHT TO THE CORE.

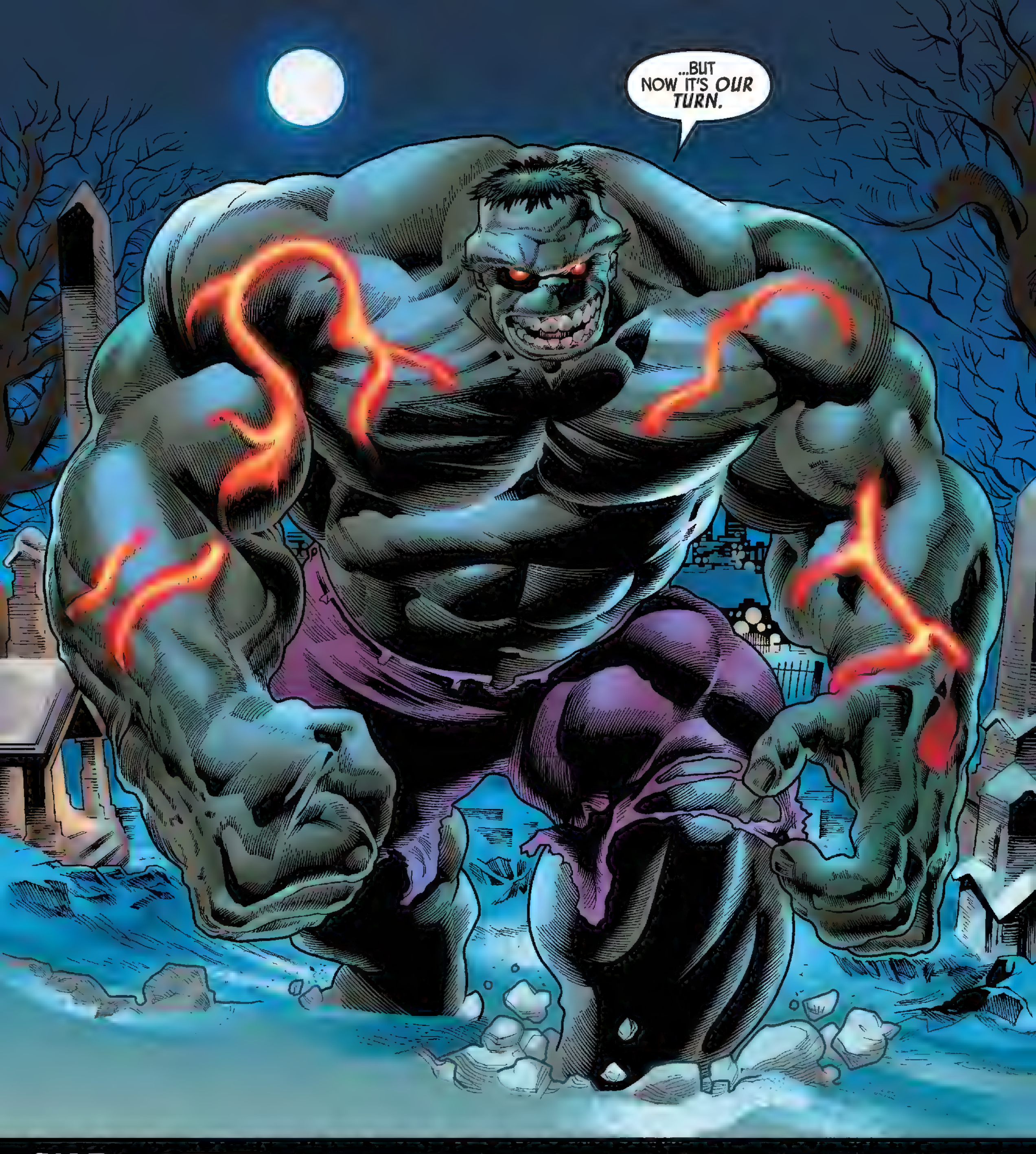

COME ON, THEN! I AIN'T SCARED OF YOU!
YOU KNOW WHO YOU'RE MESSIN' WITH?
I'M THE HULK! YOU HEAR ME? THE HULK!
THE WORST HULK OF 'EM ALL!
I'M SUNSHINE JOE FIXIT--
--THE INCREDIBLE HULK!


NOW GET THE HELL OFF THE KID!
RED HULK...?
SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT.
STEP ASIDE, PAL--
--WE'RE BLOWIN' THIS POPCORN STAND!


OH GOD-- *LOOK* AT HIM--
WHAT'S *HAPPENING?*


WHAT'S HAPPENING TO HIM?


...*HEH.*
SOMEBODY'S *SCARED.*
THAT'S *GOOD.* YOU *OUGHTA* BE SCARED. YOU *ALL* OUGHTA BE SCARED.
YOU HAD A *REAL GOOD RUN...*

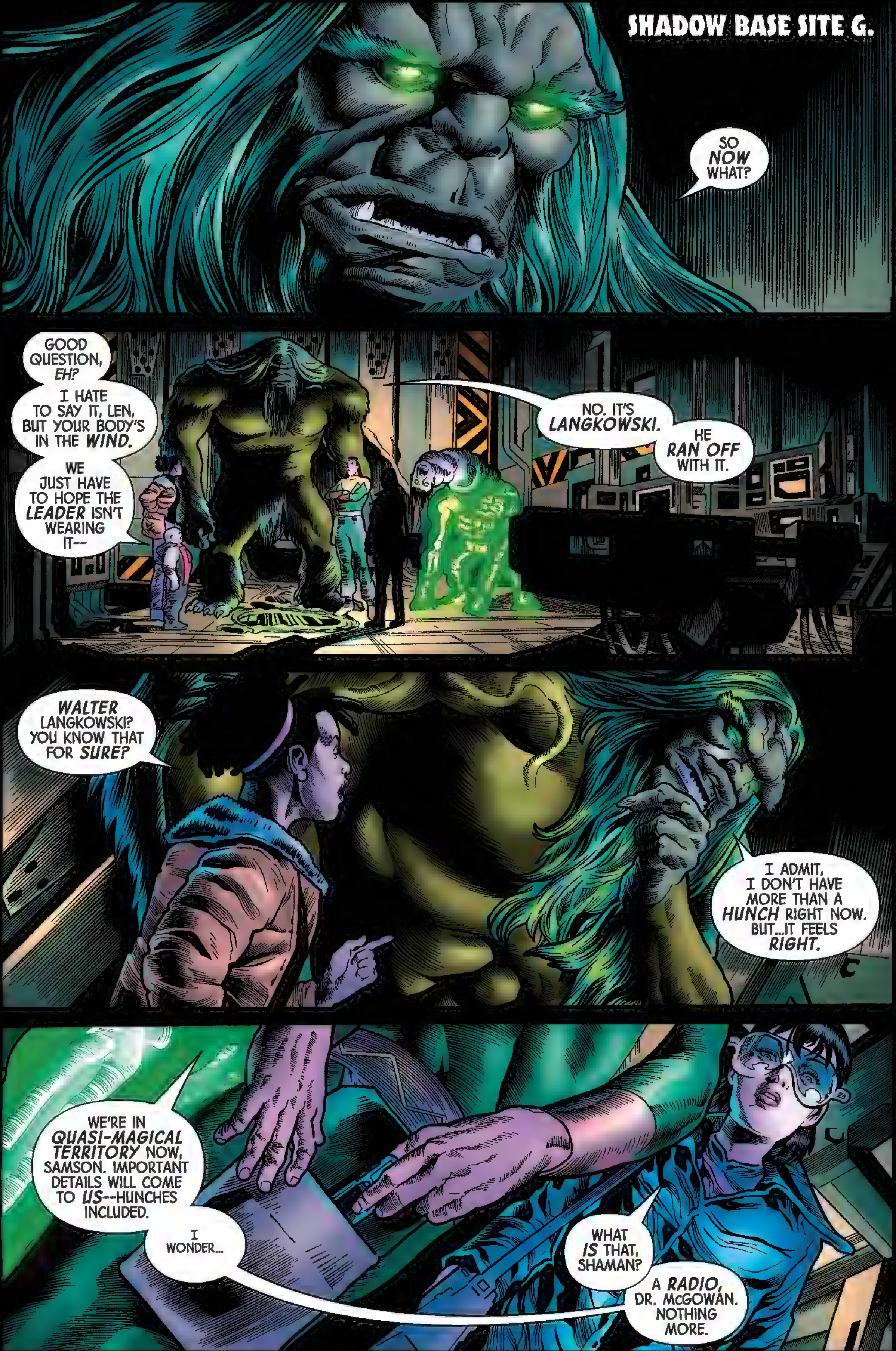

...BUT NOW IT'S *OUR* *TURN.*

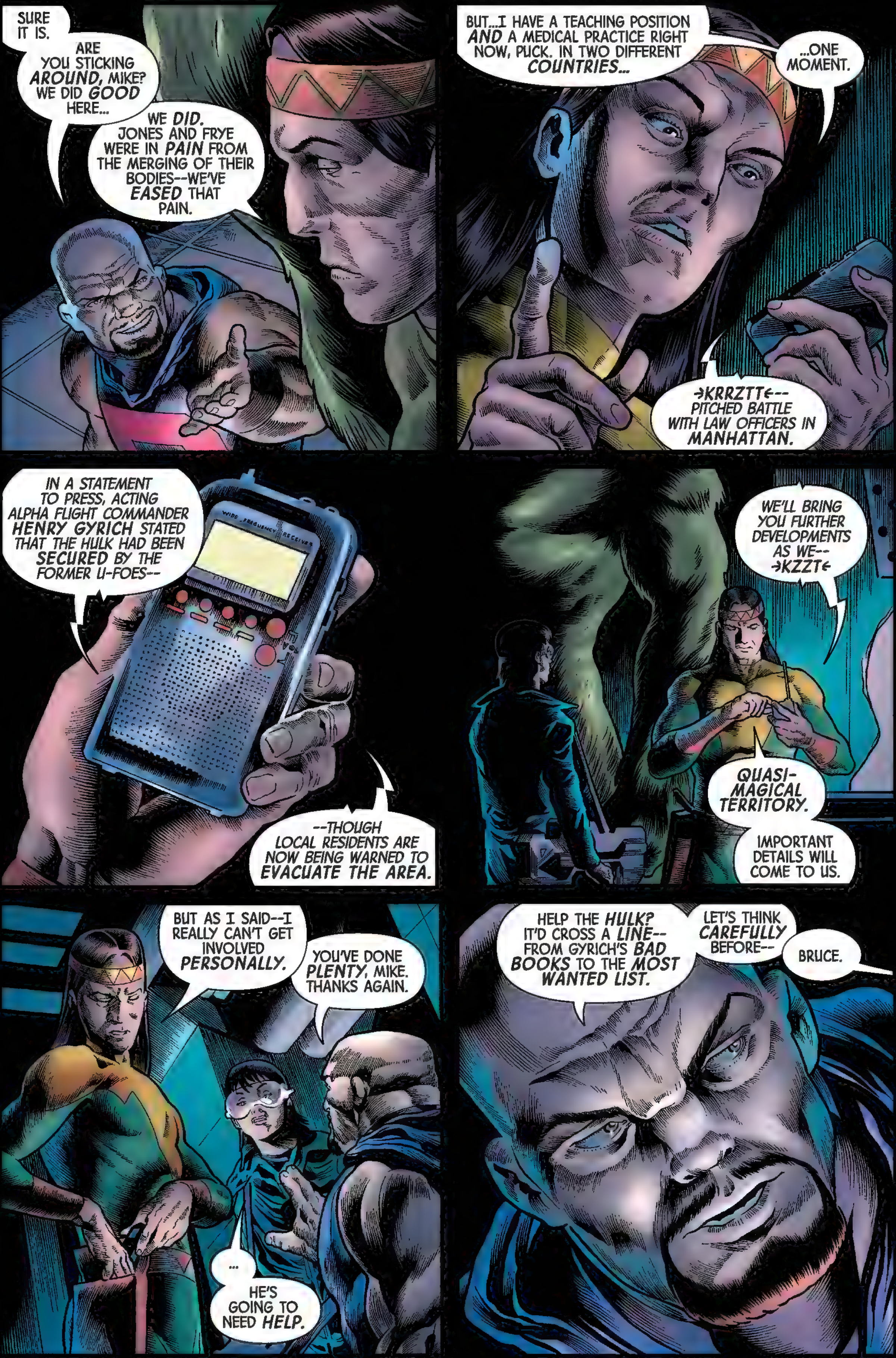
READY OR NOT

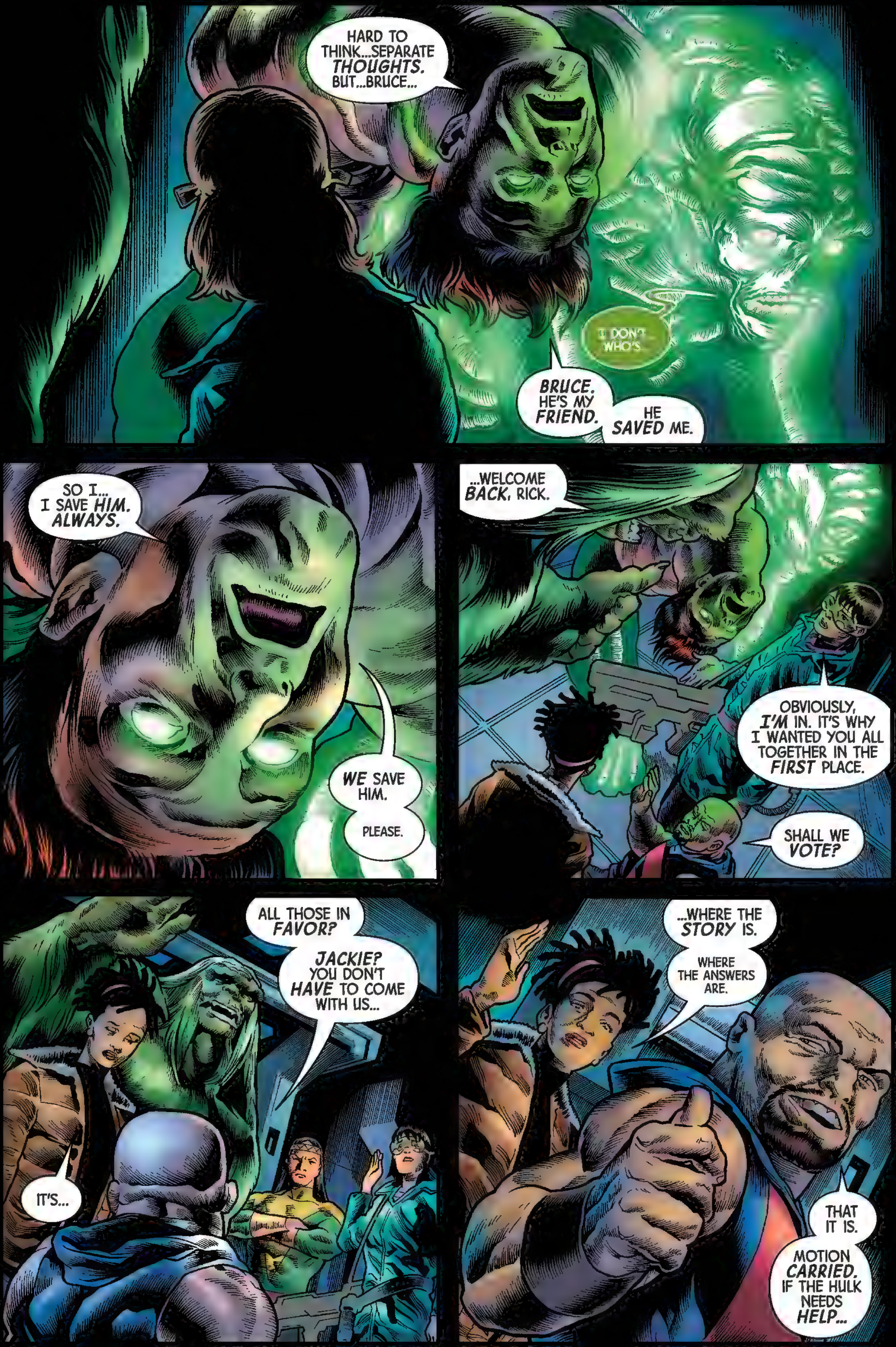
46

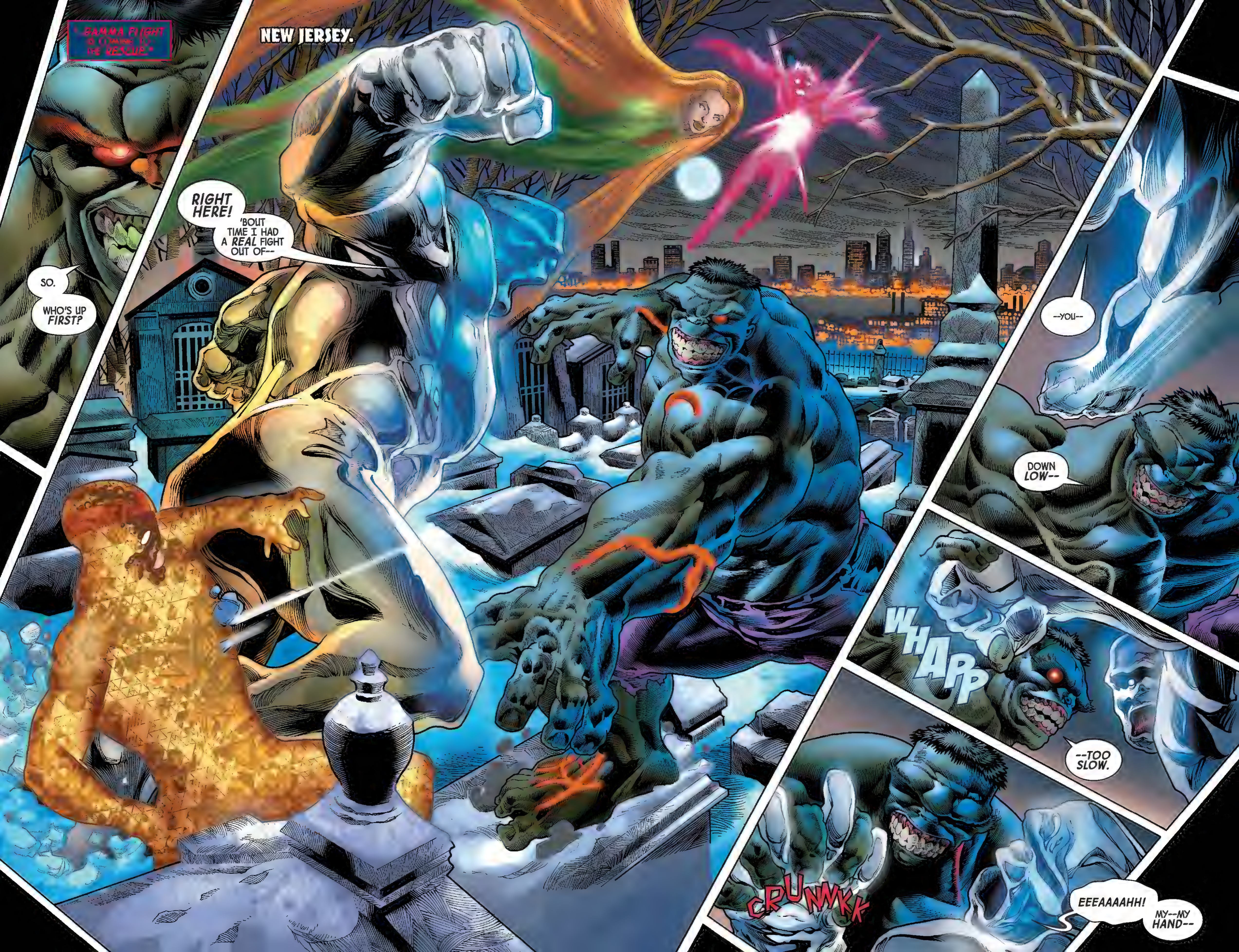
"REVENGE IS FROM THE INDIVIDUAL,
PUNISHMENT IS FROM GOD."

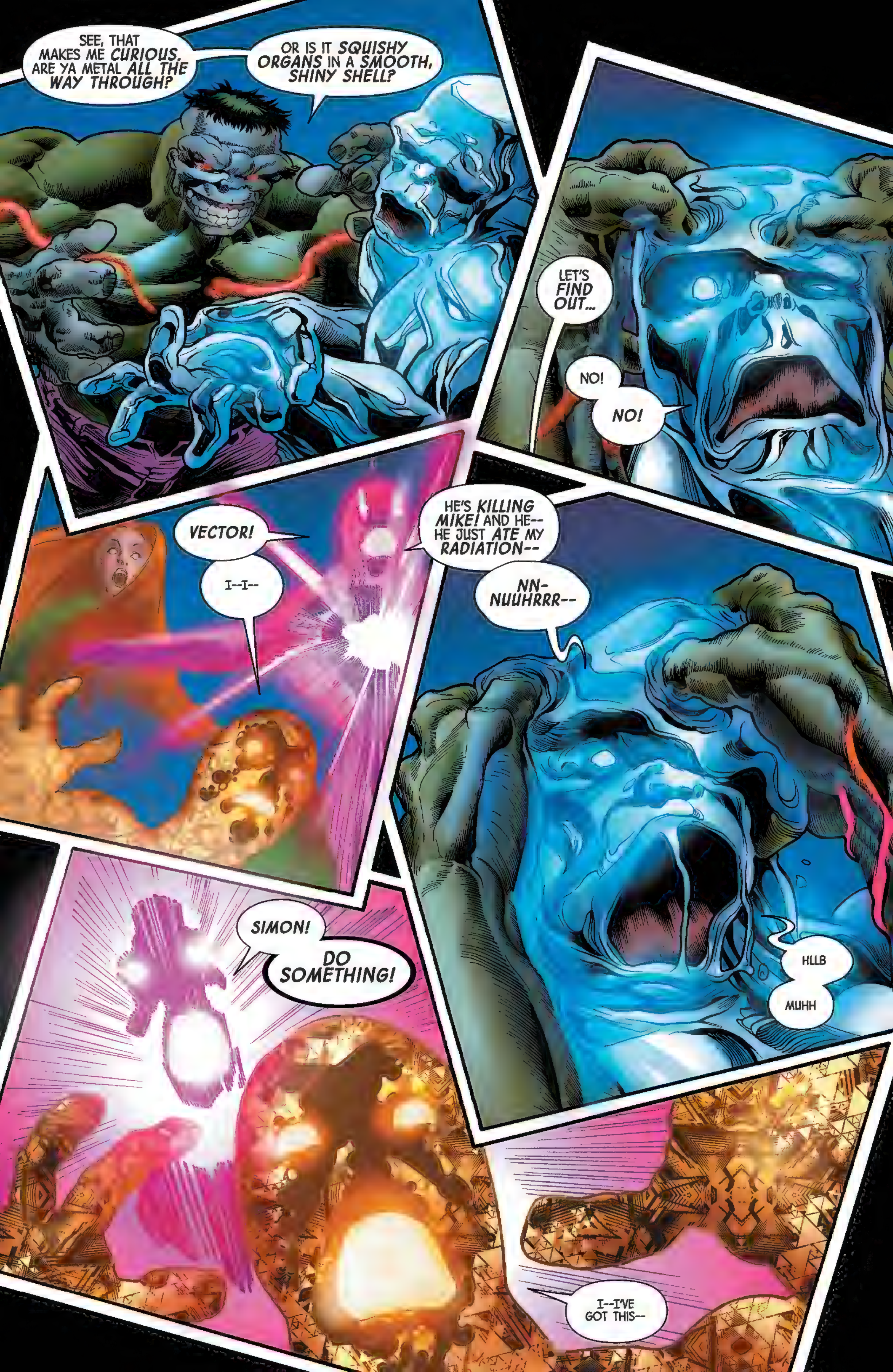
— VICTOR HUGO,
THE LAST DAY OF A CONDEMNED MAN

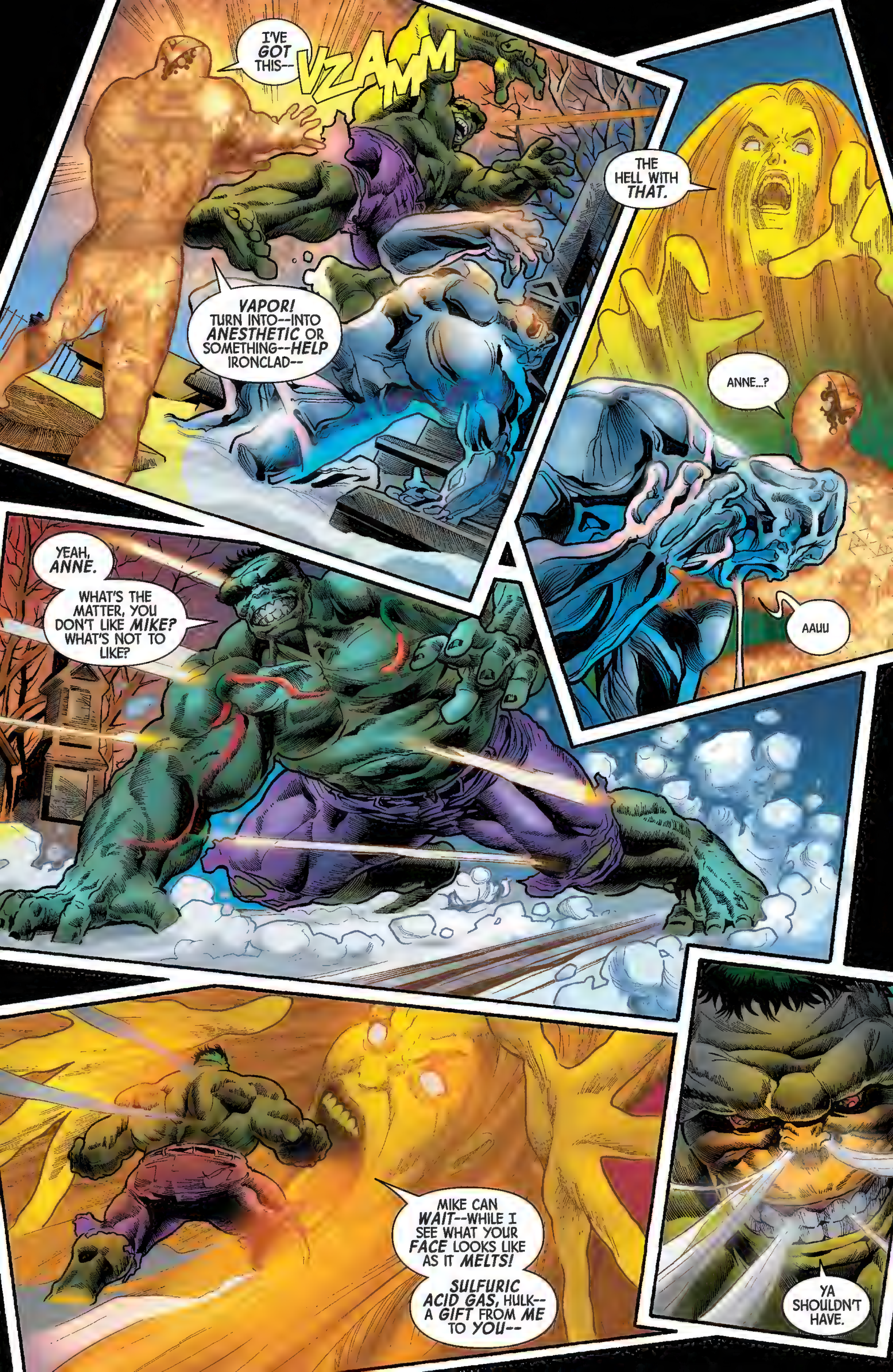

SHADOW BASE SITE G.
SO *NOW* WHAT?
GOOD QUESTION, *EH?*
I HATE TO SAY IT, LEN, BUT YOUR BODY'S IN THE *WIND.*
WE JUST HAVE TO HOPE THE *LEADER* ISN'T WEARING IT--
NO. IT'S *LANGKOWSKI.*
HE *RAN OFF* WITH IT.
WALTER LANGKOWSKI? YOU KNOW THAT FOR *SURE?*
I ADMIT, I DON'T HAVE MORE THAN A *HUNCH* RIGHT NOW. BUT...IT FEELS *RIGHT.*
WE'RE IN *QUASI-MAGICAL TERRITORY* NOW, SAMSON. IMPORTANT DETAILS WILL COME TO *US*--HUNCHES INCLUDED.
I WONDER...
WHAT *IS* THAT, SHAMAN?
A *RADIO,* DR. McGOWAN. NOTHING MORE.

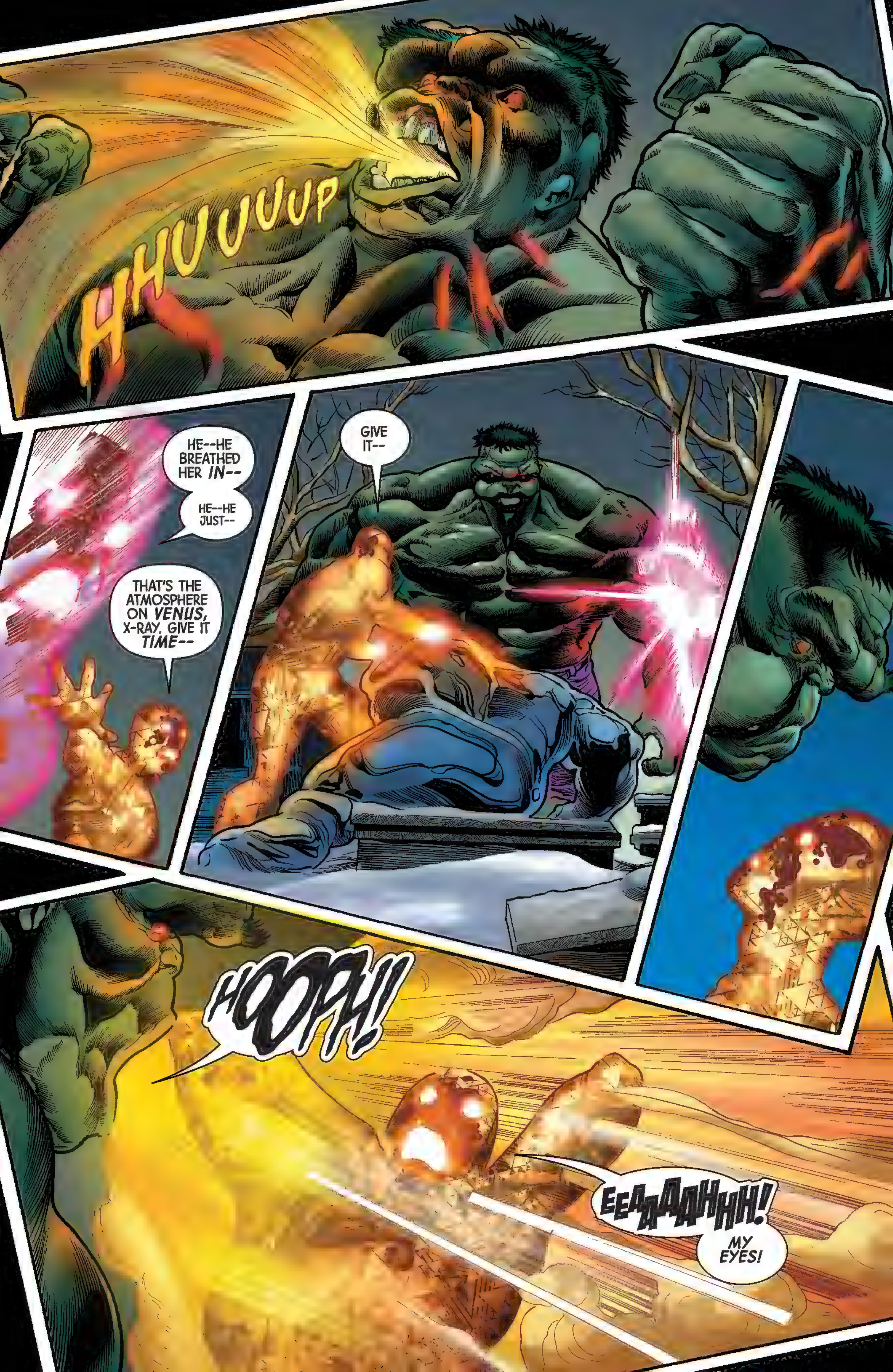

SURE IT IS.
ARE YOU STICKING *AROUND*, MIKE? WE DID *GOOD* HERE...
WE *DID*. JONES AND FRYE WERE IN *PAIN* FROM THE MERGING OF THEIR BODIES--WE'VE *EASED* THAT PAIN.
BUT...I HAVE A TEACHING POSITION *AND* A MEDICAL PRACTICE RIGHT NOW, PUCK. IN TWO DIFFERENT *COUNTRIES*...
...ONE MOMENT.
→KRRZTT←--PITCHED BATTLE WITH LAW OFFICERS IN *MANHATTAN*.
IN A STATEMENT TO PRESS, ACTING ALPHA FLIGHT COMMANDER *HENRY GYRICH* STATED THAT THE HULK HAD BEEN *SECURED* BY THE FORMER U-FOES--
WIDE FREQUENCY RECEIVER
--THOUGH LOCAL RESIDENTS ARE NOW BEING WARNED TO *EVACUATE THE AREA*.
WE'LL BRING YOU FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AS WE--→KZZT←
QUASI-MAGICAL TERRITORY.
IMPORTANT DETAILS WILL COME TO US.
BUT AS I SAID--I REALLY CAN'T GET INVOLVED *PERSONALLY*.
YOU'VE DONE *PLENTY*, MIKE. THANKS AGAIN.
...
HE'S GOING TO NEED *HELP*.
HELP THE *HULK*? IT'D CROSS A *LINE*--FROM GYRICH'S *BAD BOOKS* TO THE *MOST WANTED LIST*.
LET'S THINK *CAREFULLY* BEFORE--
BRUCE.

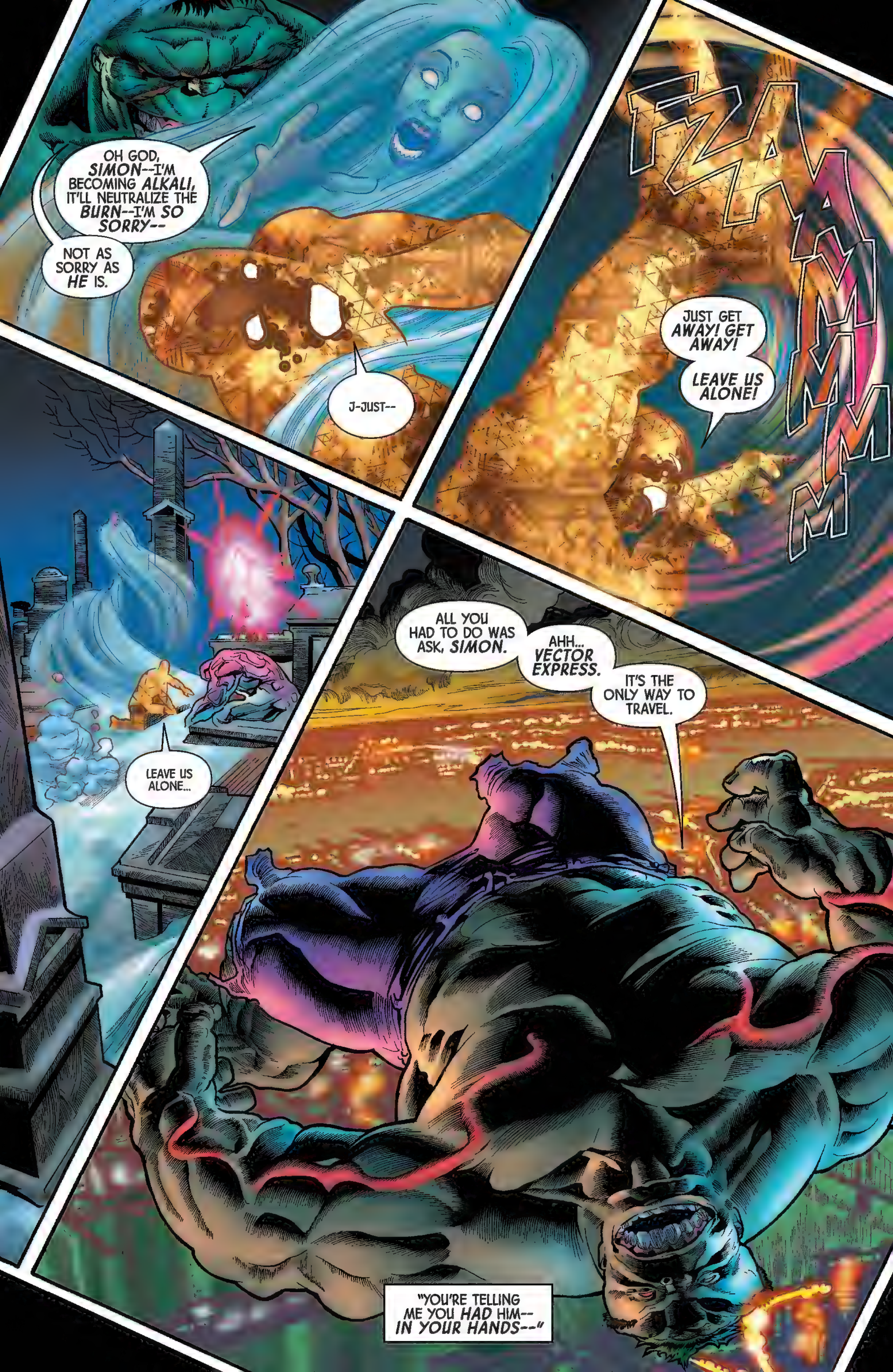

HARD TO THINK...SEPARATE *THOUGHTS.* BUT...BRUCE...
I DON'T WHO'S...
BRUCE. HE'S MY *FRIEND.*
HE *SAVED* ME.
SO I... I SAVE *HIM.* *ALWAYS.*
WE SAVE HIM.
PLEASE.
...WELCOME *BACK,* RICK.
OBVIOUSLY, *I'M* IN. IT'S WHY I WANTED YOU ALL TOGETHER IN THE *FIRST* PLACE.
SHALL WE *VOTE?*
ALL THOSE IN *FAVOR?*
JACKIE? YOU DON'T *HAVE* TO COME WITH US...
IT'S...
...WHERE THE *STORY* IS.
WHERE THE ANSWERS ARE.
THAT IT IS.
MOTION *CARRIED.* IF THE HULK NEEDS *HELP...*

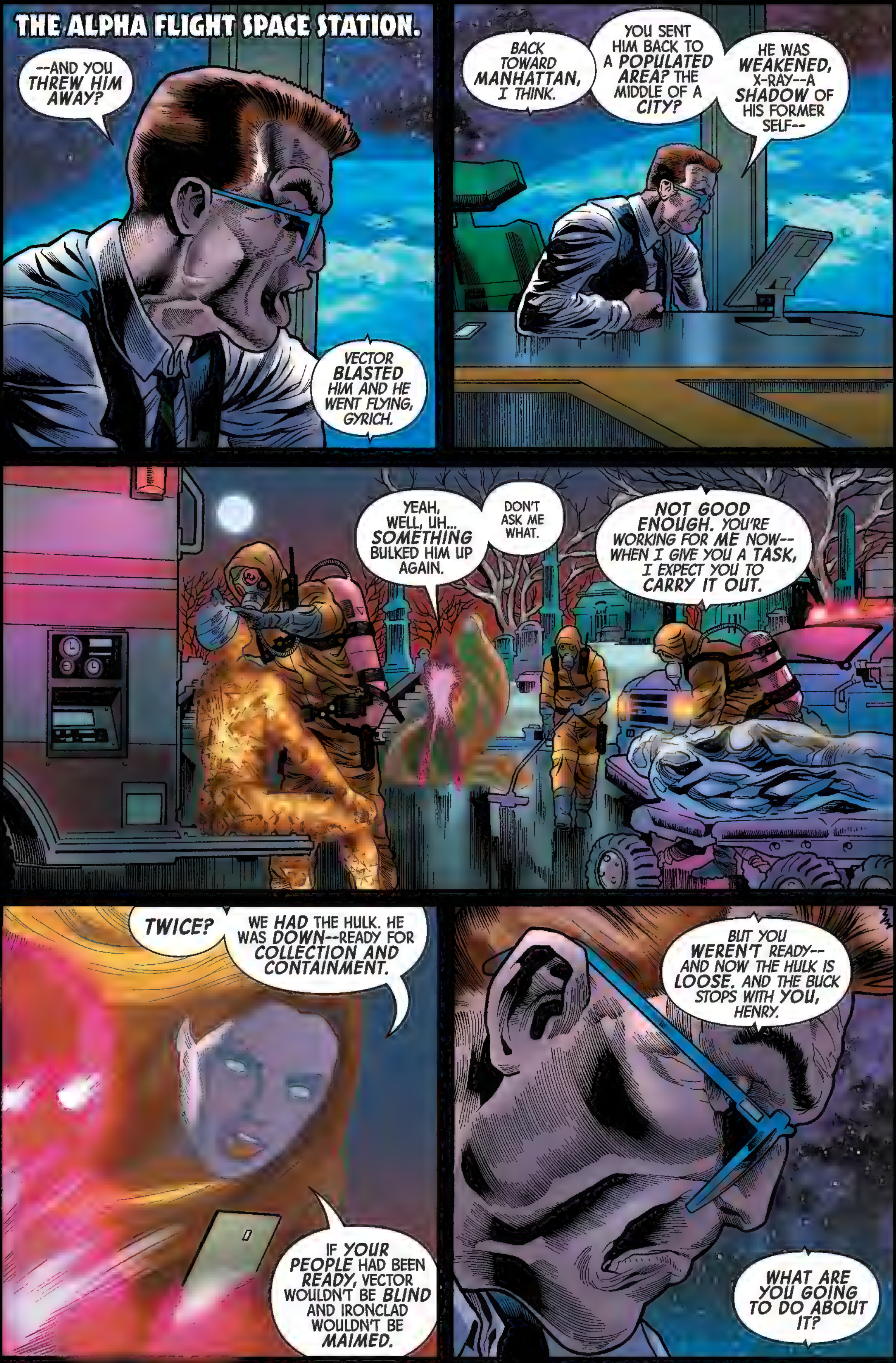

"GAMMA FLIGHT IS COMING TO THE RESCUE."
SO.
WHO'S UP FIRST?
NEW JERSEY.
RIGHT HERE!
'BOUT TIME I HAD A REAL FIGHT OUT OF--
--YOU--
DOWN LOW--
WHAPP
--TOO SLOW.
CRUNKK
EEEAAAAHH!
MY--MY HAND--

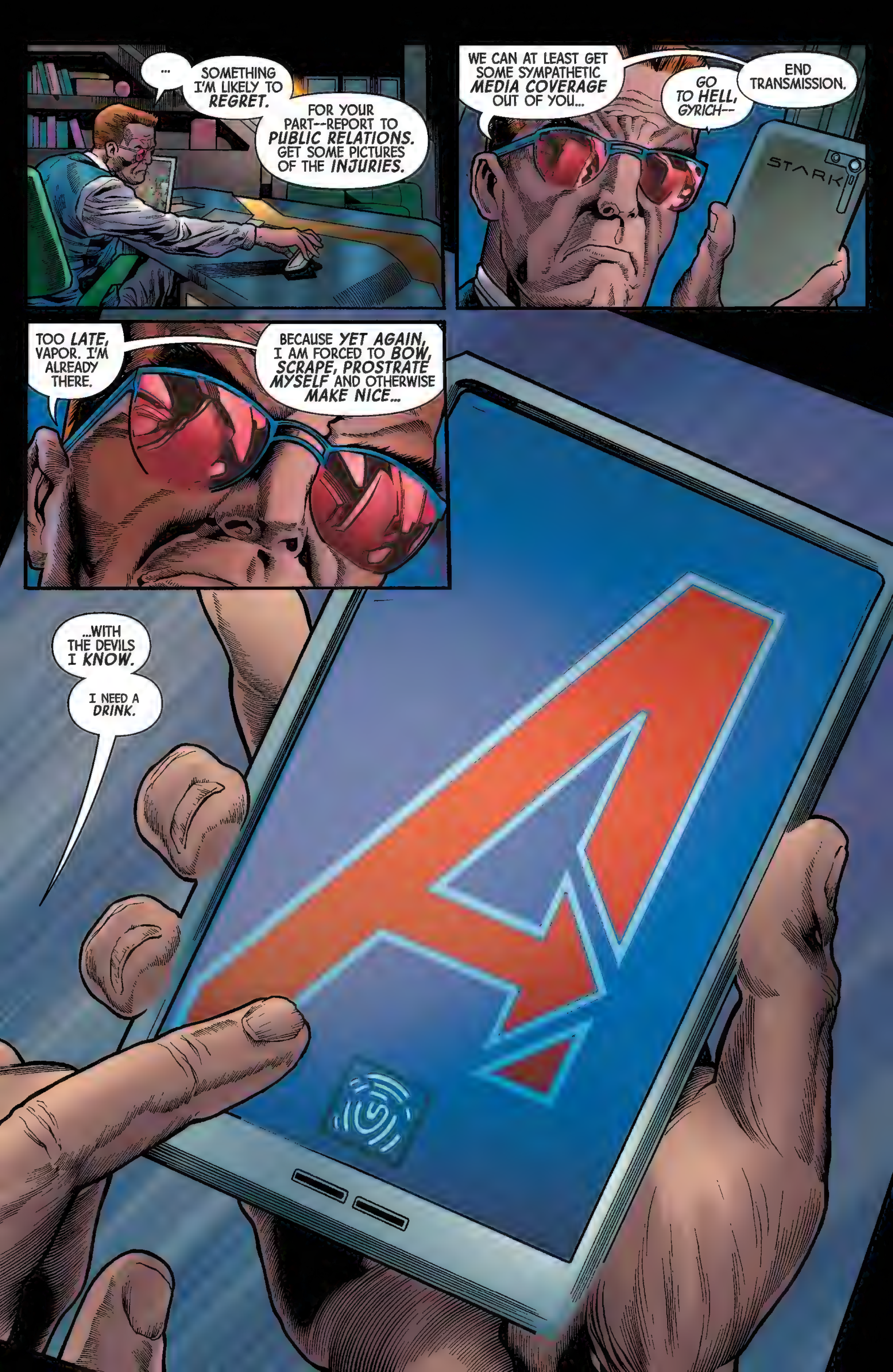

SEE, THAT MAKES ME CURIOUS. ARE YA METAL ALL THE WAY THROUGH?
OR IS IT SQUISHY ORGANS IN A SMOOTH, SHINY SHELL?
LET'S FIND OUT...
NO!
NO!
VECTOR!
I--I--
HE'S KILLING MIKE! AND HE--HE JUST ATE MY RADIATION--
NN-NUUHRRR--
HLLB
MUHH
SIMON!
DO SOMETHING!
I--I'VE GOT THIS--

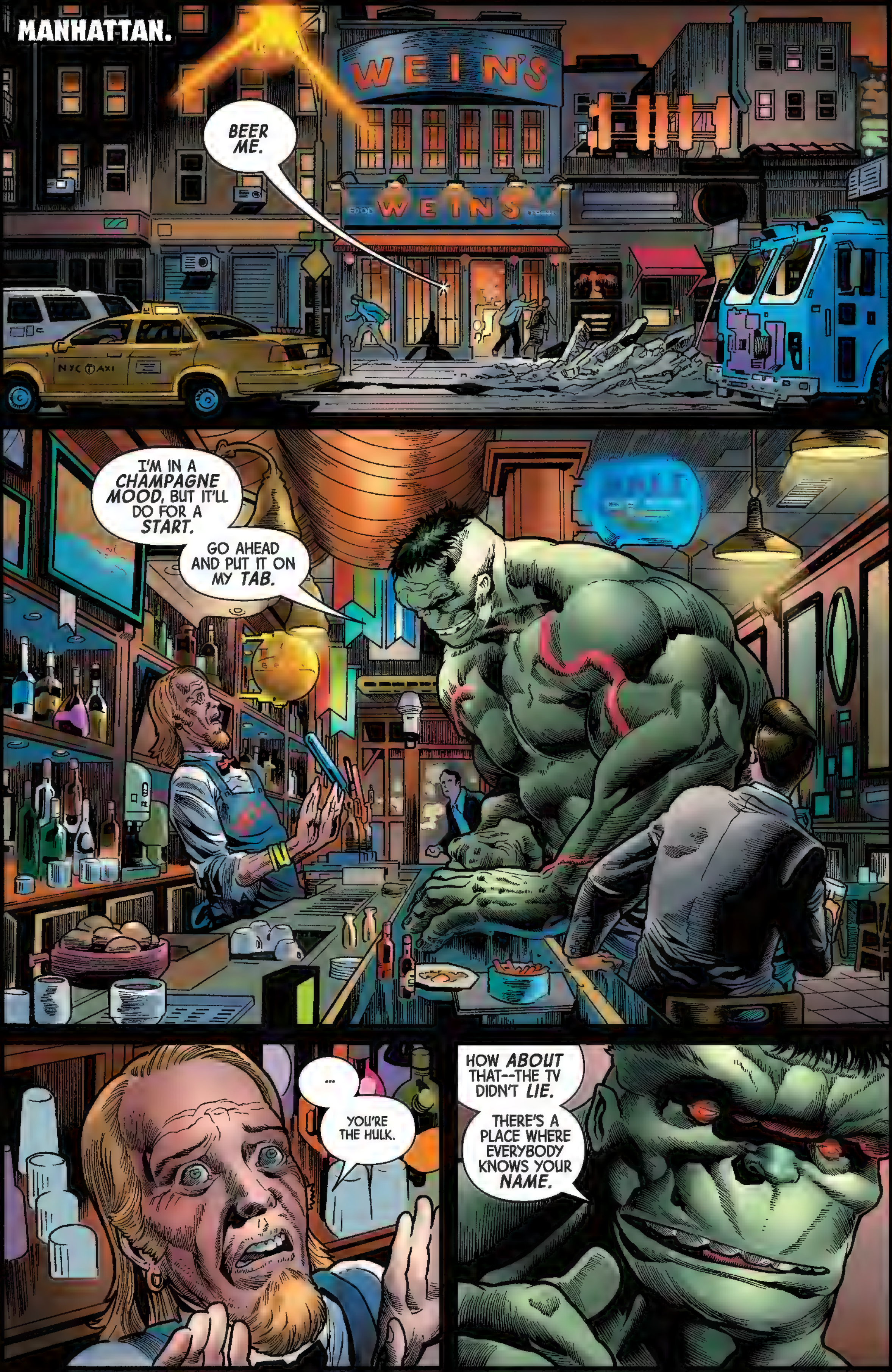

I'VE GOT THIS--
VZAMM
VAPOR! TURN INTO--INTO ANESTHETIC OR SOMETHING--HELP IRONCLAD--
THE HELL WITH THAT.
ANNE...?
AAUU
YEAH, ANNE.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, YOU DON'T LIKE MIKE? WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?
MIKE CAN WAIT--WHILE I SEE WHAT YOUR FACE LOOKS LIKE AS IT MELTS!
SULFURIC ACID GAS, HULK--A GIFT FROM ME TO YOU--
YA SHOULDN'T HAVE.

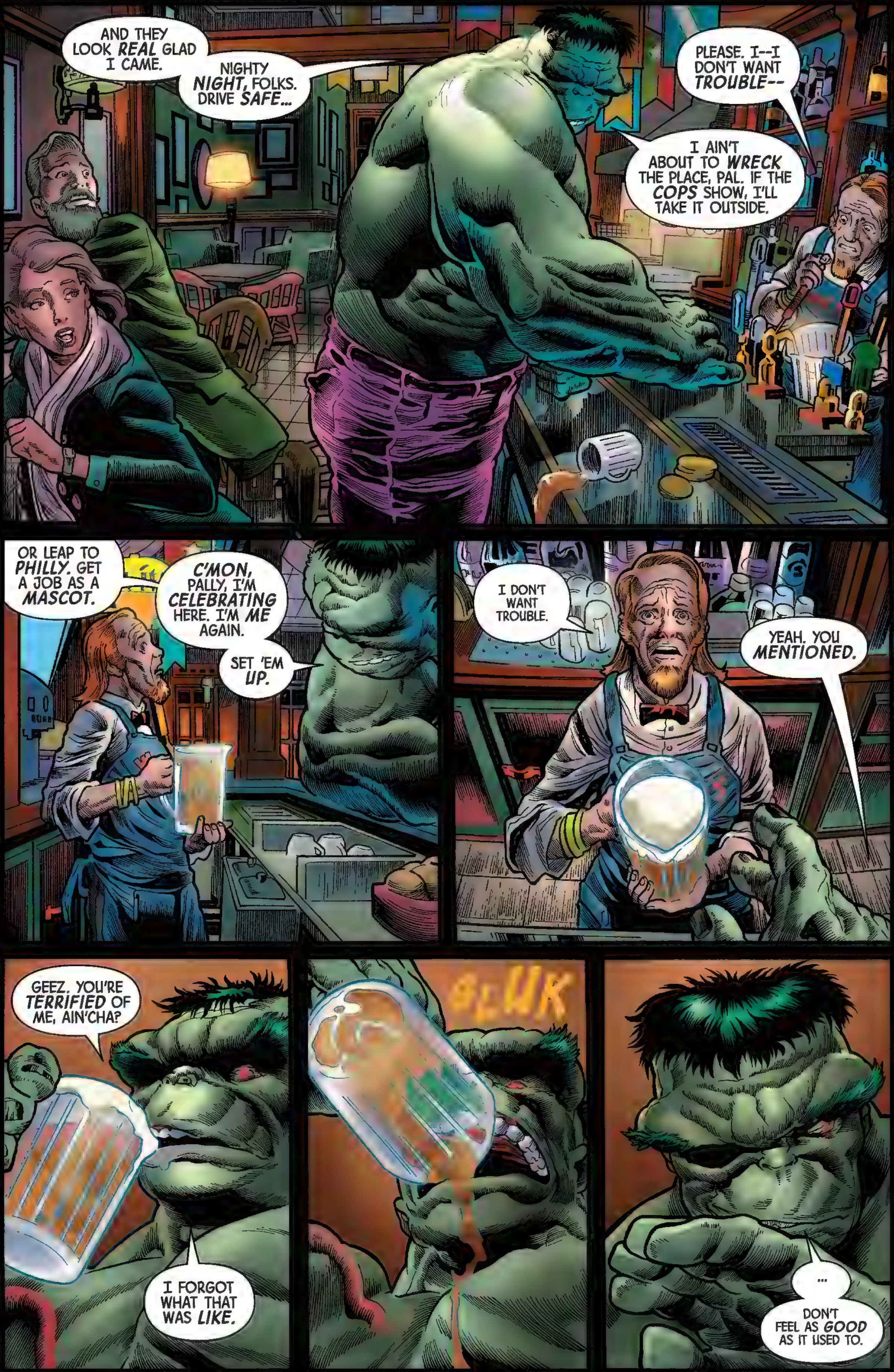

HHUUUUP
HE--HE BREATHED HER *IN*--
HE--HE JUST--
THAT'S THE ATMOSPHERE ON *VENUS*, X-RAY. GIVE IT *TIME*--
GIVE IT--
HOOPH!
EEAAAAHHHH!
MY EYES!


OH GOD, SIMON--I'M BECOMING ALKALI, IT'LL NEUTRALIZE THE BURN--I'M SO SORRY--
NOT AS SORRY AS HE IS.
J-JUST--
FZZAAMMMMM
JUST GET AWAY! GET AWAY!
LEAVE US ALONE!
LEAVE US ALONE...
ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS ASK, SIMON.
AHH... VECTOR EXPRESS.
IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO TRAVEL.
"YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU HAD HIM-- IN YOUR HANDS--"

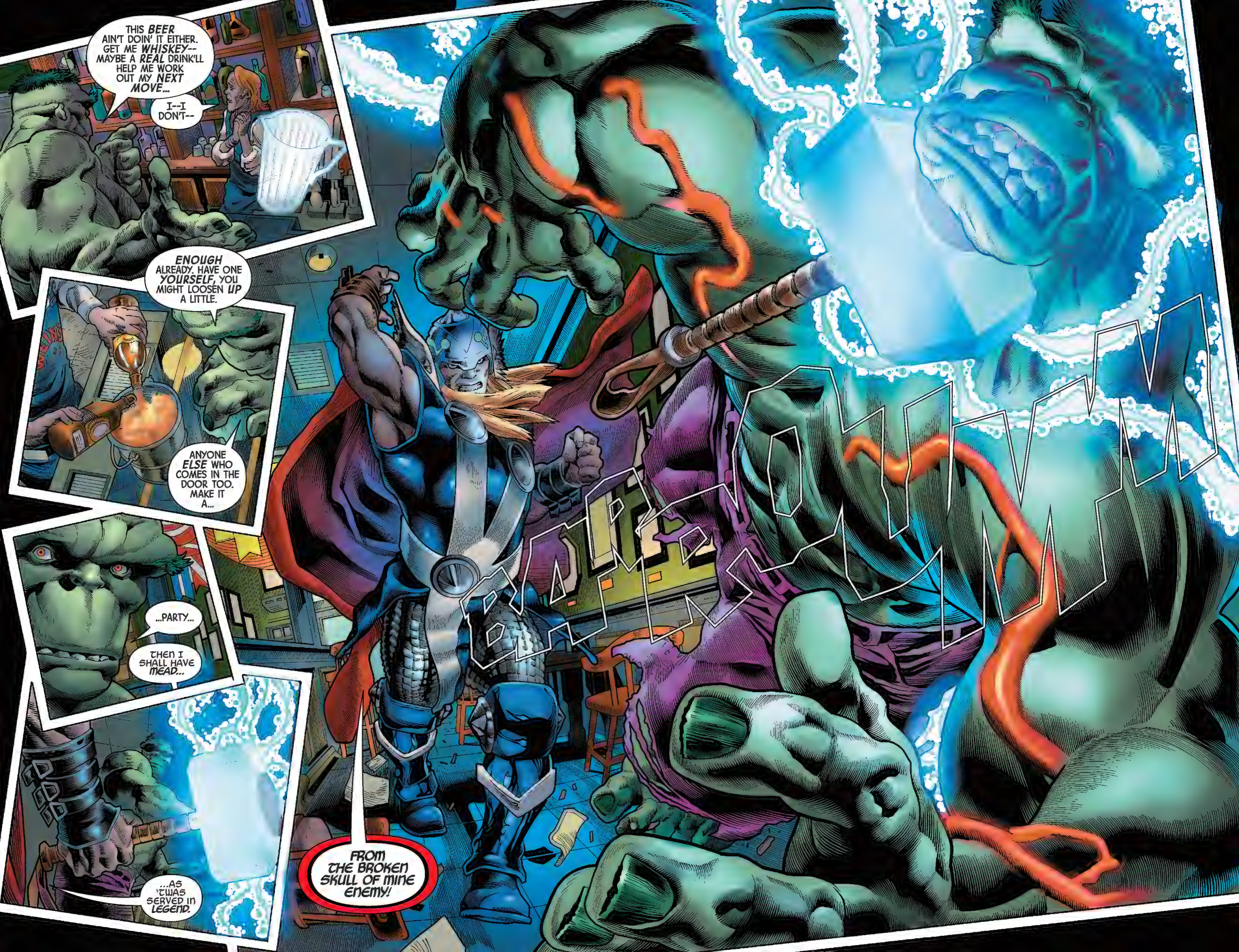

THE ALPHA FLIGHT SPACE STATION.
--AND YOU THREW HIM AWAY?
VECTOR BLASTED HIM AND HE WENT FLYING, GYRICH.
BACK TOWARD MANHATTAN, I THINK.
YOU SENT HIM BACK TO A POPULATED AREA? THE MIDDLE OF A CITY?
HE WAS WEAKENED, X-RAY--A SHADOW OF HIS FORMER SELF--
YEAH, WELL, UH... SOMETHING BULKED HIM UP AGAIN.
DON'T ASK ME WHAT.
NOT GOOD ENOUGH. YOU'RE WORKING FOR ME NOW--WHEN I GIVE YOU A TASK, I EXPECT YOU TO CARRY IT OUT.
TWICE?
WE HAD THE HULK. HE WAS DOWN--READY FOR COLLECTION AND CONTAINMENT.
IF YOUR PEOPLE HAD BEEN READY, VECTOR WOULDN'T BE BLIND AND IRONCLAD WOULDN'T BE MAIMED.
BUT YOU WEREN'T READY--AND NOW THE HULK IS LOOSE. AND THE BUCK STOPS WITH YOU, HENRY.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

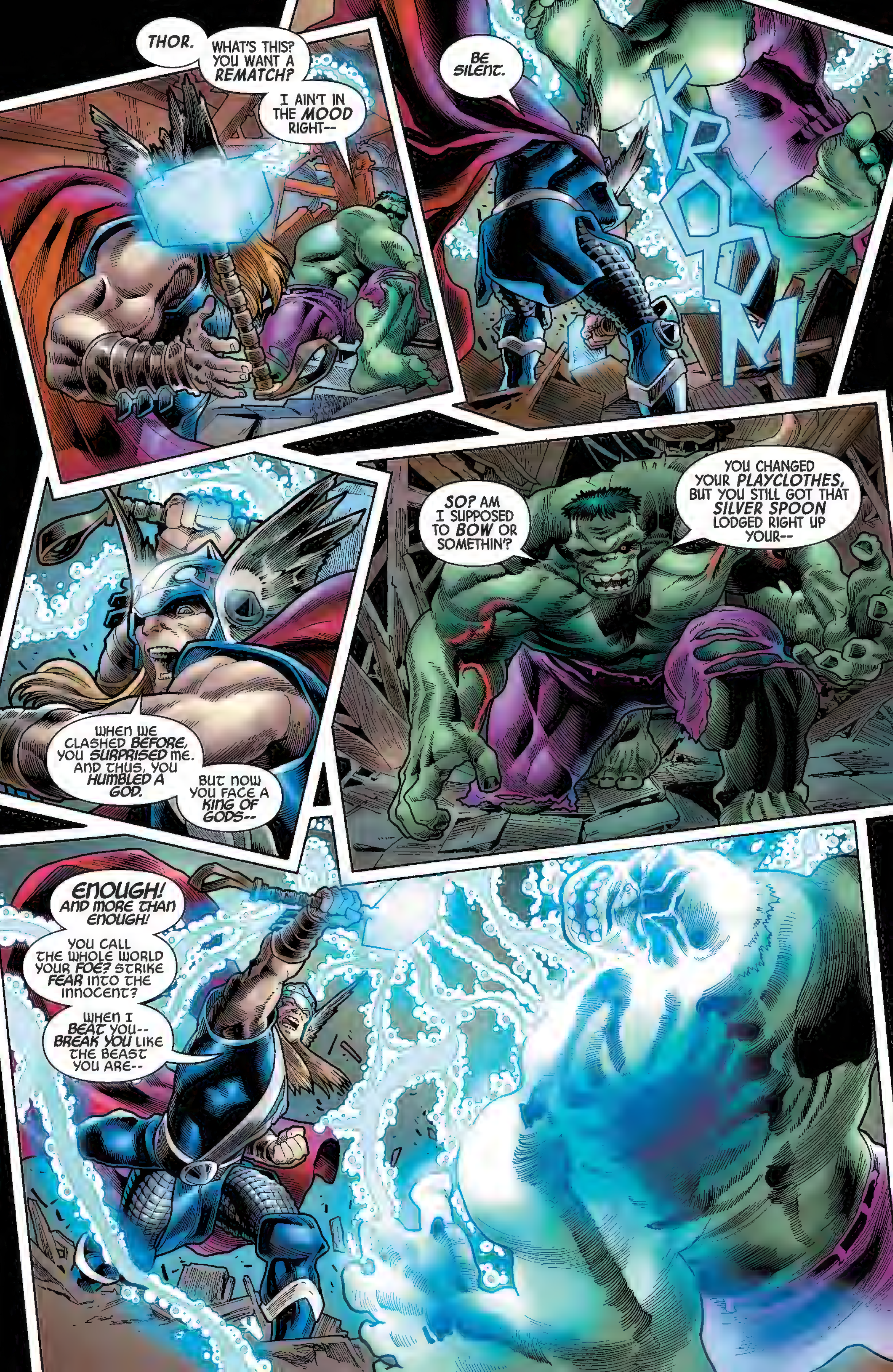

...
SOMETHING I'M LIKELY TO *REGRET.*
FOR YOUR PART--REPORT TO *PUBLIC RELATIONS.* GET SOME PICTURES OF THE *INJURIES.*
WE CAN AT LEAST GET SOME SYMPATHETIC *MEDIA COVERAGE* OUT OF YOU...
GO TO *HELL,* GYRICH--
END TRANSMISSION.
STARK
TOO *LATE,* VAPOR. I'M ALREADY THERE.
BECAUSE *YET AGAIN,* I AM FORCED TO *BOW, SCRAPE, PROSTRATE MYSELF* AND OTHERWISE *MAKE NICE...*
...WITH THE DEVILS I *KNOW.*
I NEED A *DRINK.*

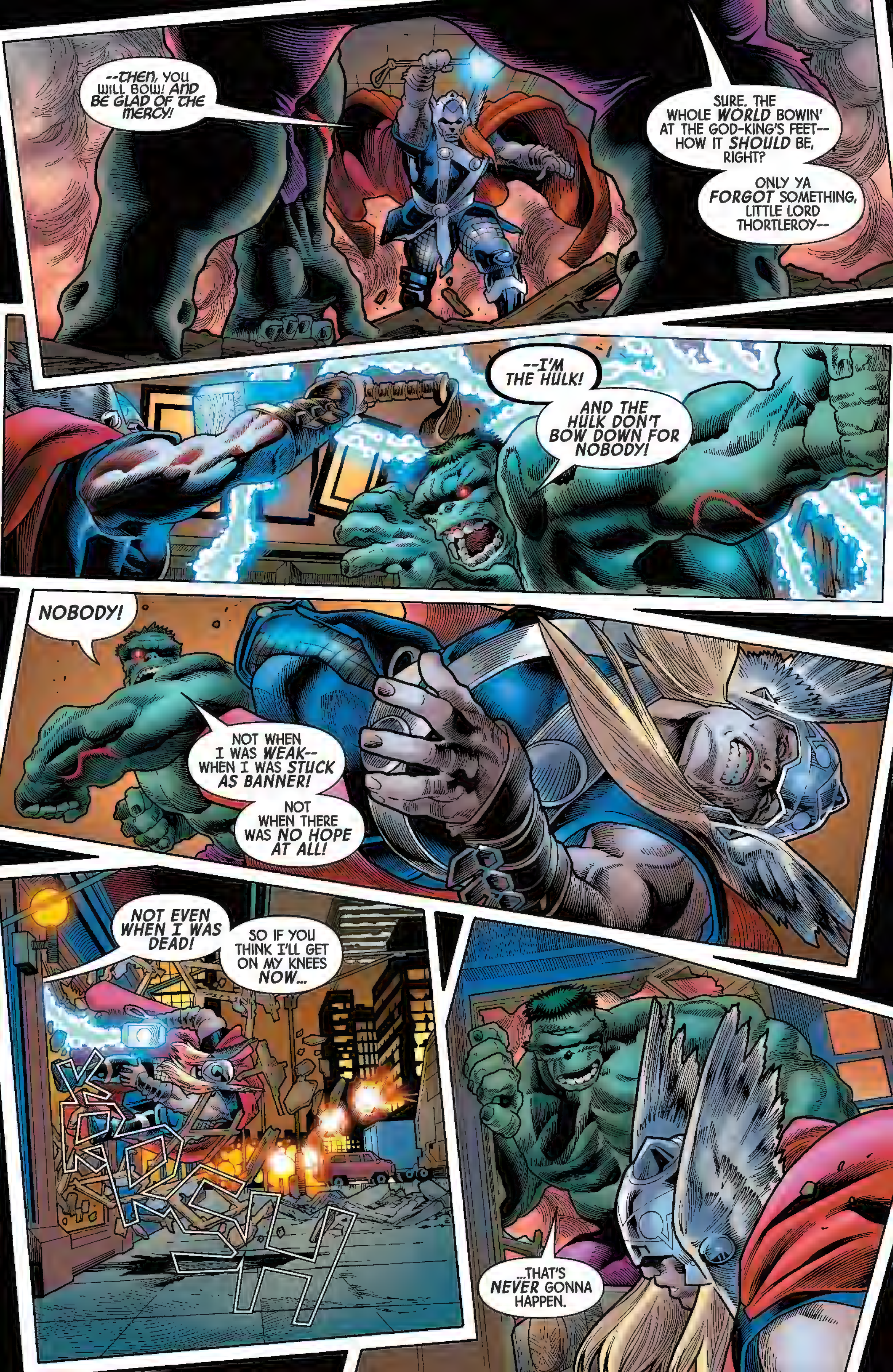

MANHATTAN.
WEIN'S
BEER ME.
WEINS
NYC TAXI
I'M IN A *CHAMPAGNE MOOD*, BUT IT'LL DO FOR A *START*.
GO AHEAD AND PUT IT ON MY *TAB*.
...
YOU'RE THE HULK.
HOW *ABOUT* THAT--THE TV DIDN'T *LIE*.
THERE'S A PLACE WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR *NAME*.

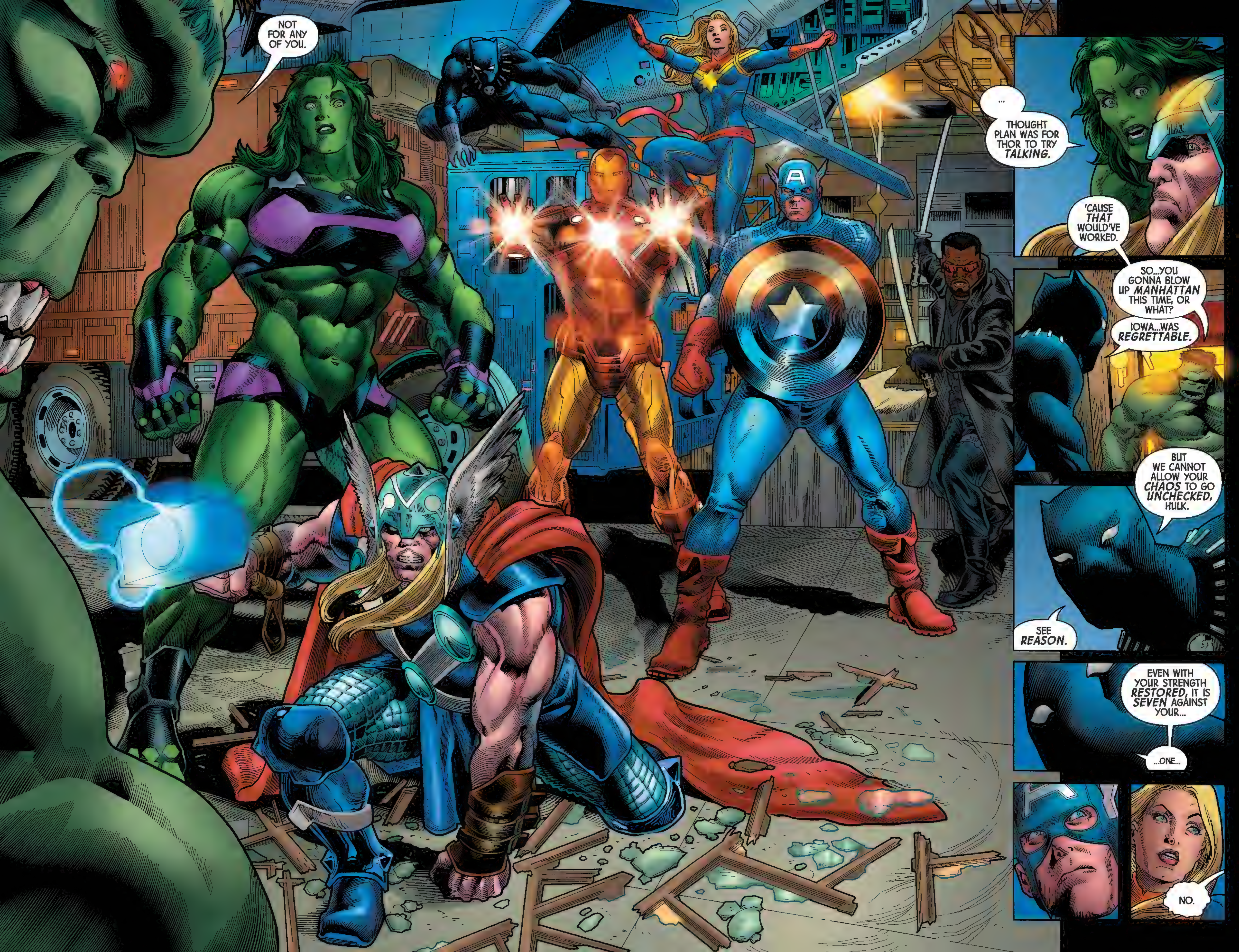


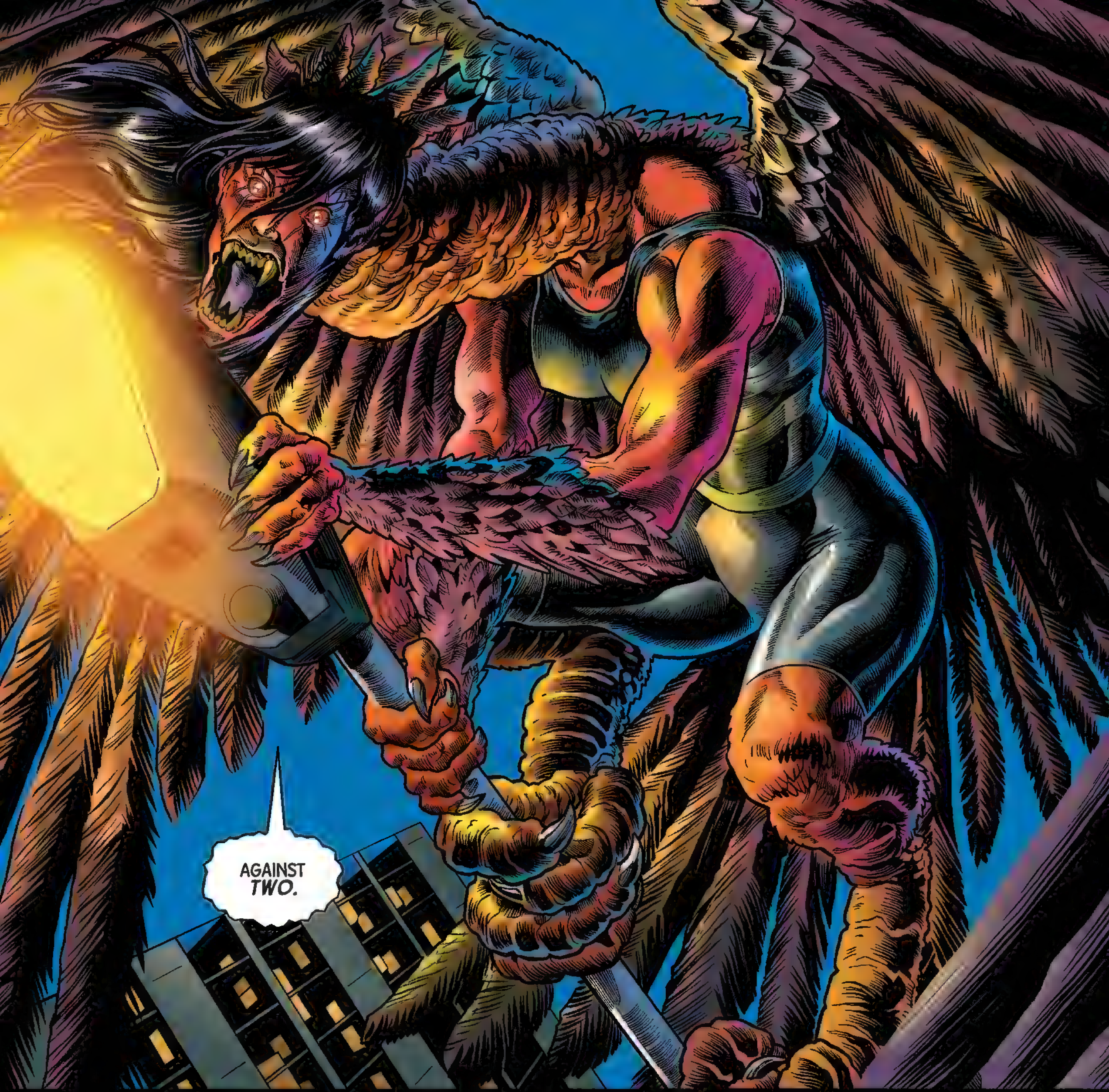
AND THEY LOOK *REAL* GLAD I CAME.
NIGHTY *NIGHT*, FOLKS. DRIVE *SAFE*...
PLEASE. I--I DON'T WANT *TROUBLE*--
I AIN'T ABOUT TO *WRECK* THE PLACE, PAL. IF THE *COPS* SHOW, I'LL TAKE IT OUTSIDE.
OR LEAP TO *PHILLY*. GET A JOB AS A *MASCOT*.
C'MON, PALLY, I'M *CELEBRATING* HERE. I'M *ME* AGAIN.
SET 'EM *UP*.
I DON'T WANT TROUBLE.
YEAH. YOU *MENTIONED*.
GEEZ. YOU'RE *TERRIFIED* OF ME, AIN'CHA?
I FORGOT WHAT THAT WAS *LIKE*.
GLUK
...
DON'T FEEL AS *GOOD* AS IT USED TO.


THIS BEER AIN'T DOIN' IT EITHER. GET ME WHISKEY-- MAYBE A REAL DRINK'LL HELP ME WORK OUT MY NEXT MOVE...
I--I DON'T--
ENOUGH ALREADY. HAVE ONE YOURSELF, YOU MIGHT LOOSEN UP A LITTLE.
ANYONE ELSE WHO COMES IN THE DOOR TOO. MAKE IT A...
...PARTY...
THEN I SHALL HAVE MEAD...
...AS 'TWAS SERVED IN LEGEND.
FROM THE BROKEN SKULL OF MINE ENEMY!
BAROOOMM

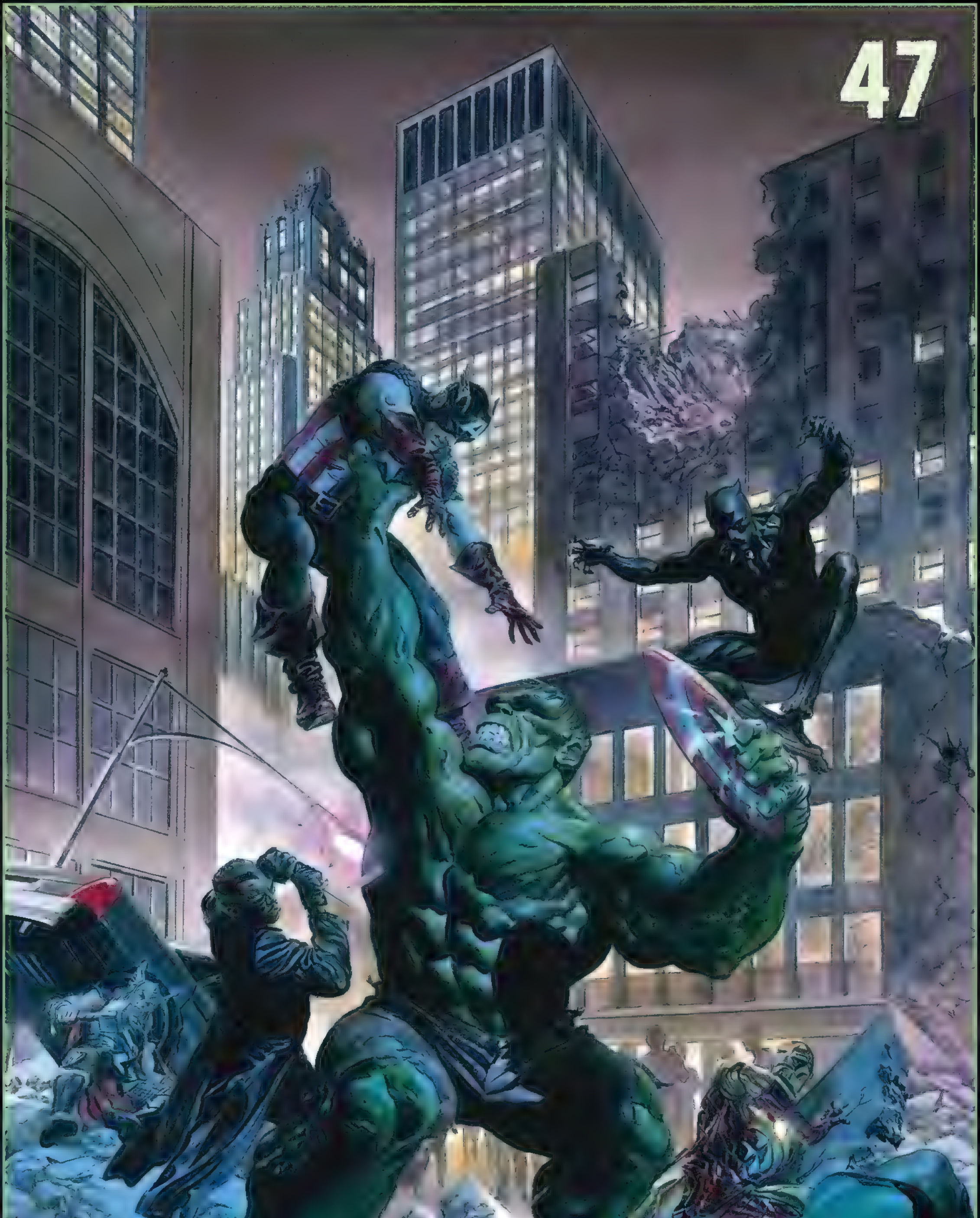

THOR.
WHAT'S THIS? YOU WANT A *REMATCH?*
I AIN'T IN THE *MOOD* RIGHT--
BE SILENT.
KROOM
WHEN WE CLASHED *BEFORE,* YOU *SURPRISED* ME. AND THUS, YOU *HUMBLED A GOD.*
BUT NOW YOU FACE A *KING OF GODS--*
SO? AM I SUPPOSED TO *BOW* OR SOMETHIN'?
YOU CHANGED YOUR *PLAYCLOTHES,* BUT YOU STILL GOT THAT *SILVER SPOON* LODGED RIGHT UP YOUR--
ENOUGH! AND MORE THAN *ENOUGH!*
YOU CALL THE WHOLE WORLD YOUR *FOE?* STRIKE *FEAR* INTO THE INNOCENT?
WHEN I *BEAT* YOU-- *BREAK YOU* LIKE THE BEAST YOU ARE--


--THEN, YOU WILL BOW! AND BE GLAD OF THE MERCY!
SURE. THE WHOLE WORLD BOWIN' AT THE GOD-KING'S FEET-- HOW IT SHOULD BE, RIGHT?
ONLY YA FORGOT SOMETHING, LITTLE LORD THORTLEROY--
--I'M THE HULK!
AND THE HULK DON'T BOW DOWN FOR NOBODY!
NOBODY!
NOT WHEN I WAS WEAK-- WHEN I WAS STUCK AS BANNER!
NOT WHEN THERE WAS NO HOPE AT ALL!
NOT EVEN WHEN I WAS DEAD!
SO IF YOU THINK I'LL GET ON MY KNEES NOW...
KRASH
...THAT'S NEVER GONNA HAPPEN.


NOT FOR ANY OF YOU.
...
THOUGHT PLAN WAS FOR THOR TO TRY *TALKING.*
'CAUSE *THAT* WOULD'VE WORKED.
SO...YOU GONNA BLOW UP *MANHATTAN* THIS TIME, OR WHAT?
IOWA...WAS *REGRETTABLE.*
BUT WE CANNOT ALLOW YOUR *CHAOS* TO GO *UNCHECKED,* HULK.
SEE *REASON.*
EVEN WITH YOUR STRENGTH *RESTORED,* IT IS *SEVEN* AGAINST YOUR...
...ONE...
NO.

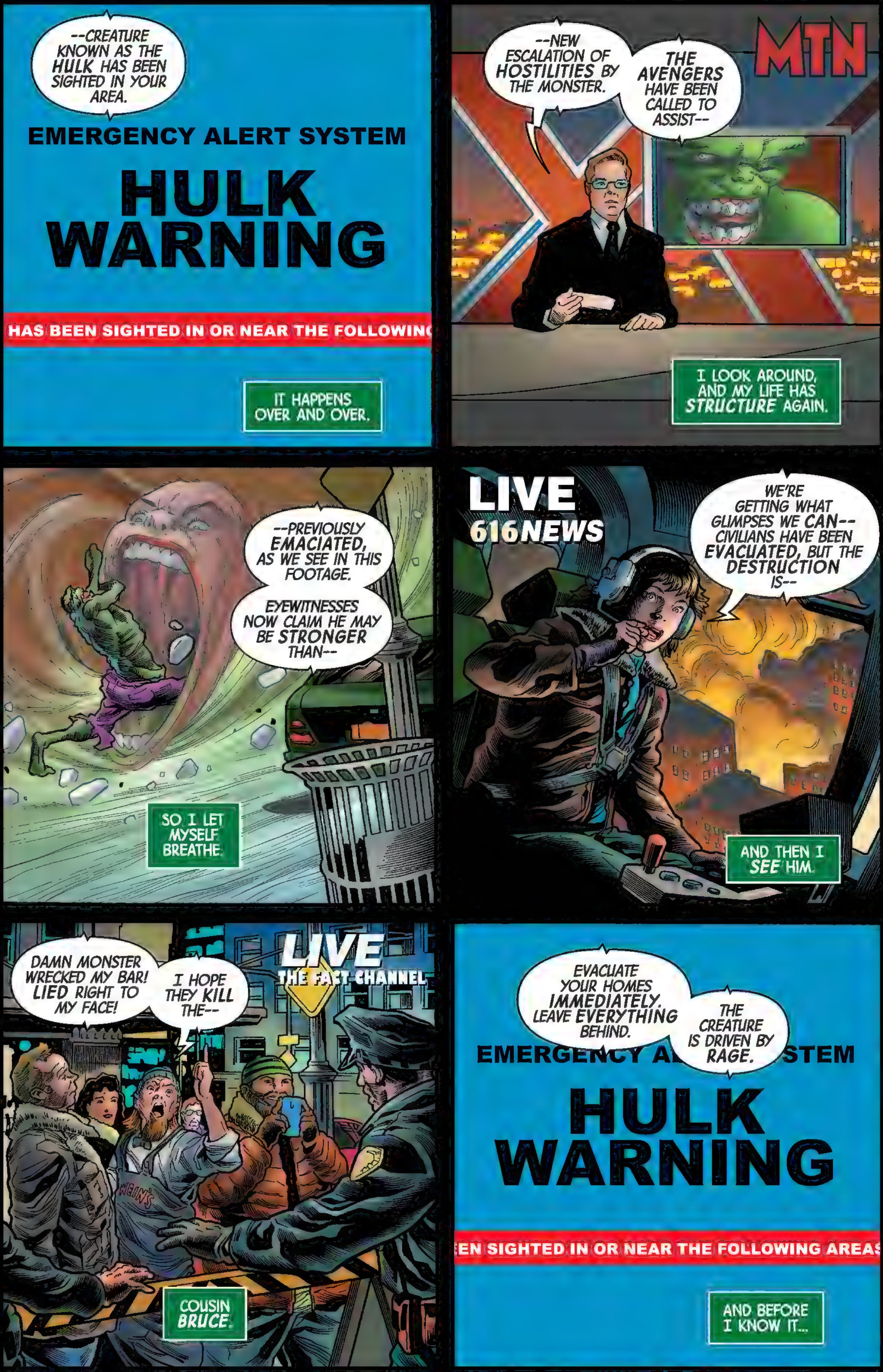

AGAINST *TWO.*

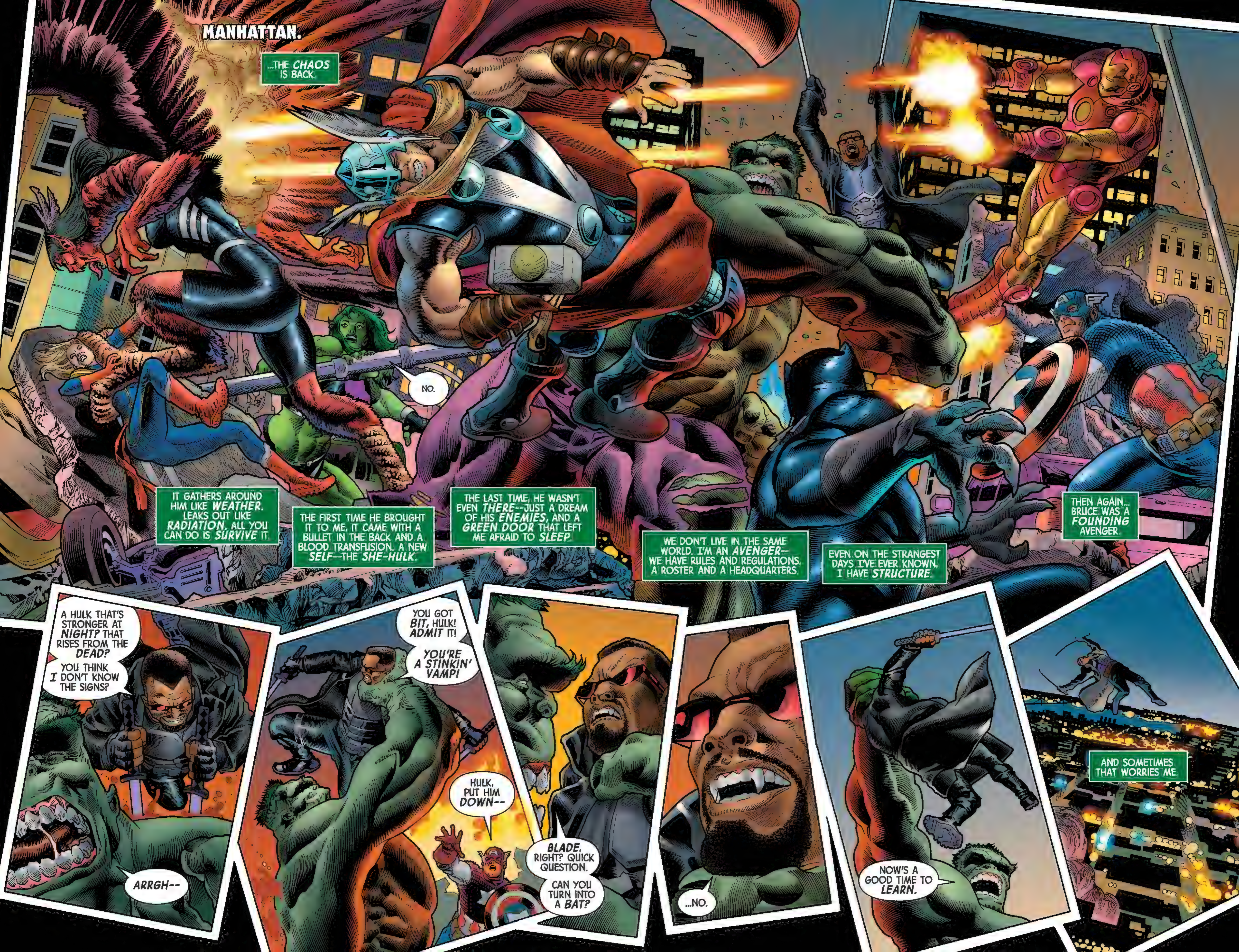
YOU AND ME
AGAINST THE WORLD

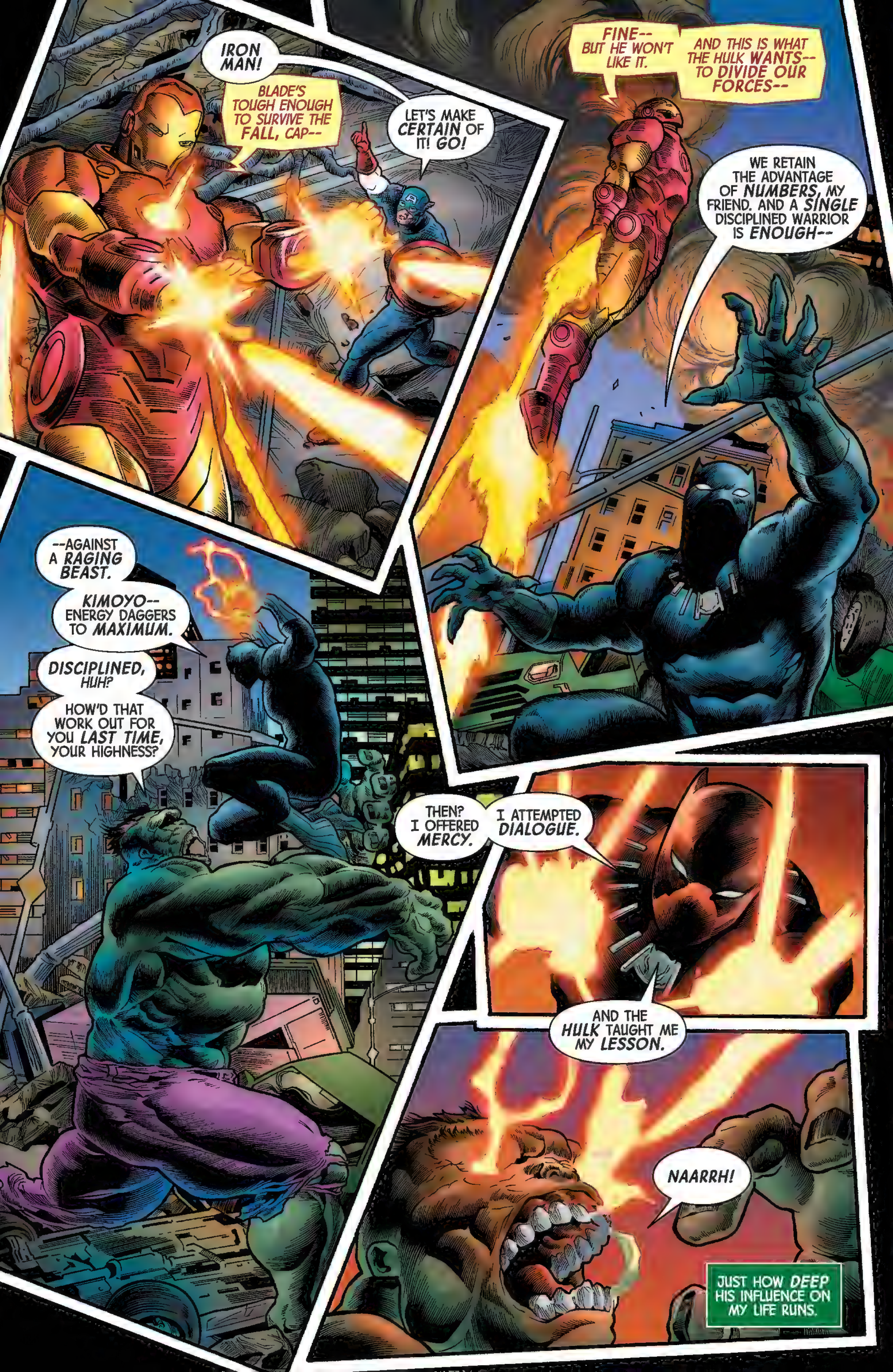

47

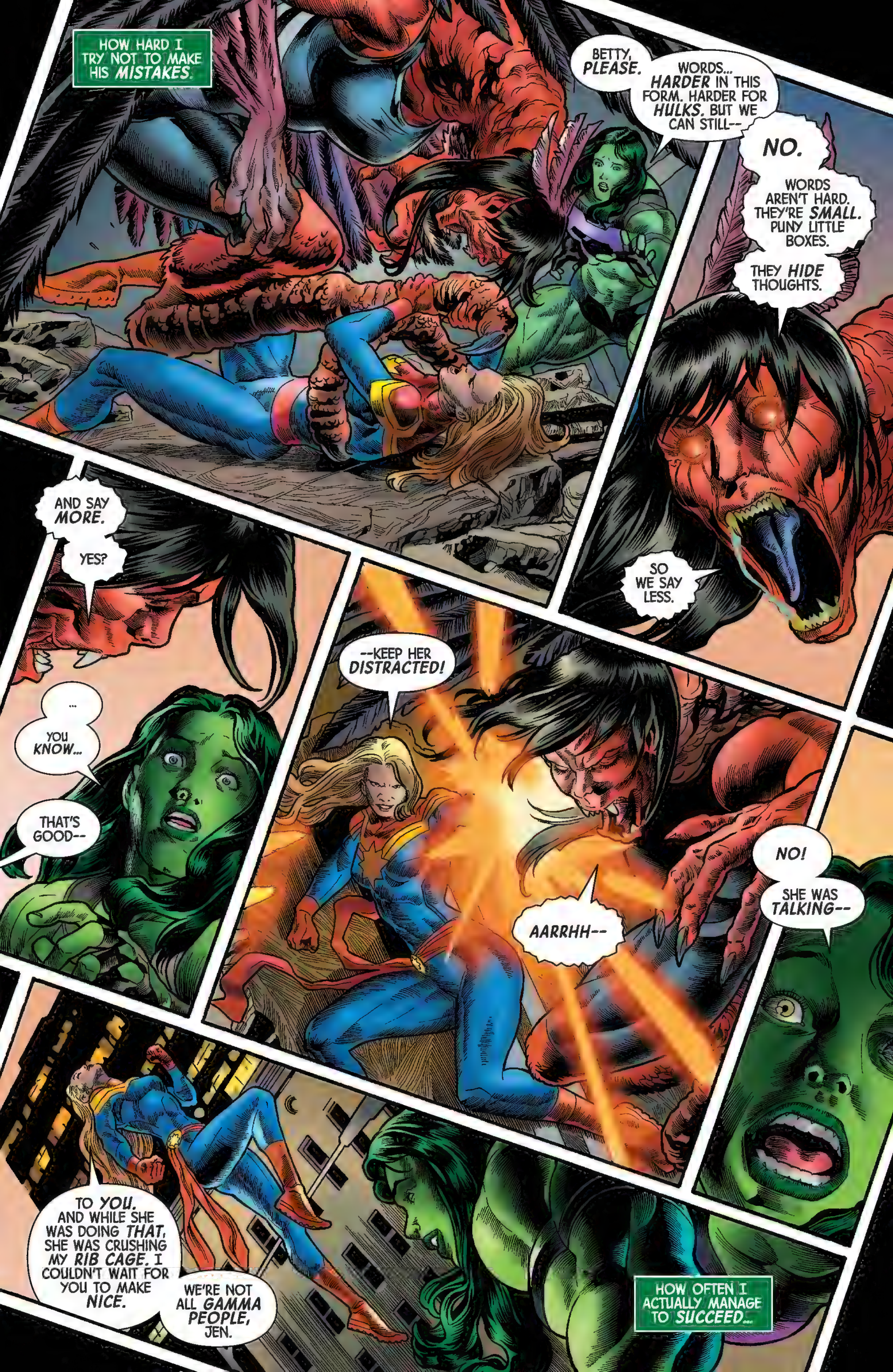
"I, LIKE THE ARCH-FIEND, BORE
A HELL WITHIN ME, AND FINDING
MYSELF UNSYMPATHISED WITH,
WISHED TO TEAR UP THE TREES,
SPREAD HAVOC AND DESTRUCTION
AROUND ME, AND THEN TO HAVE SAT
DOWN AND ENJOYED THE RUIN."

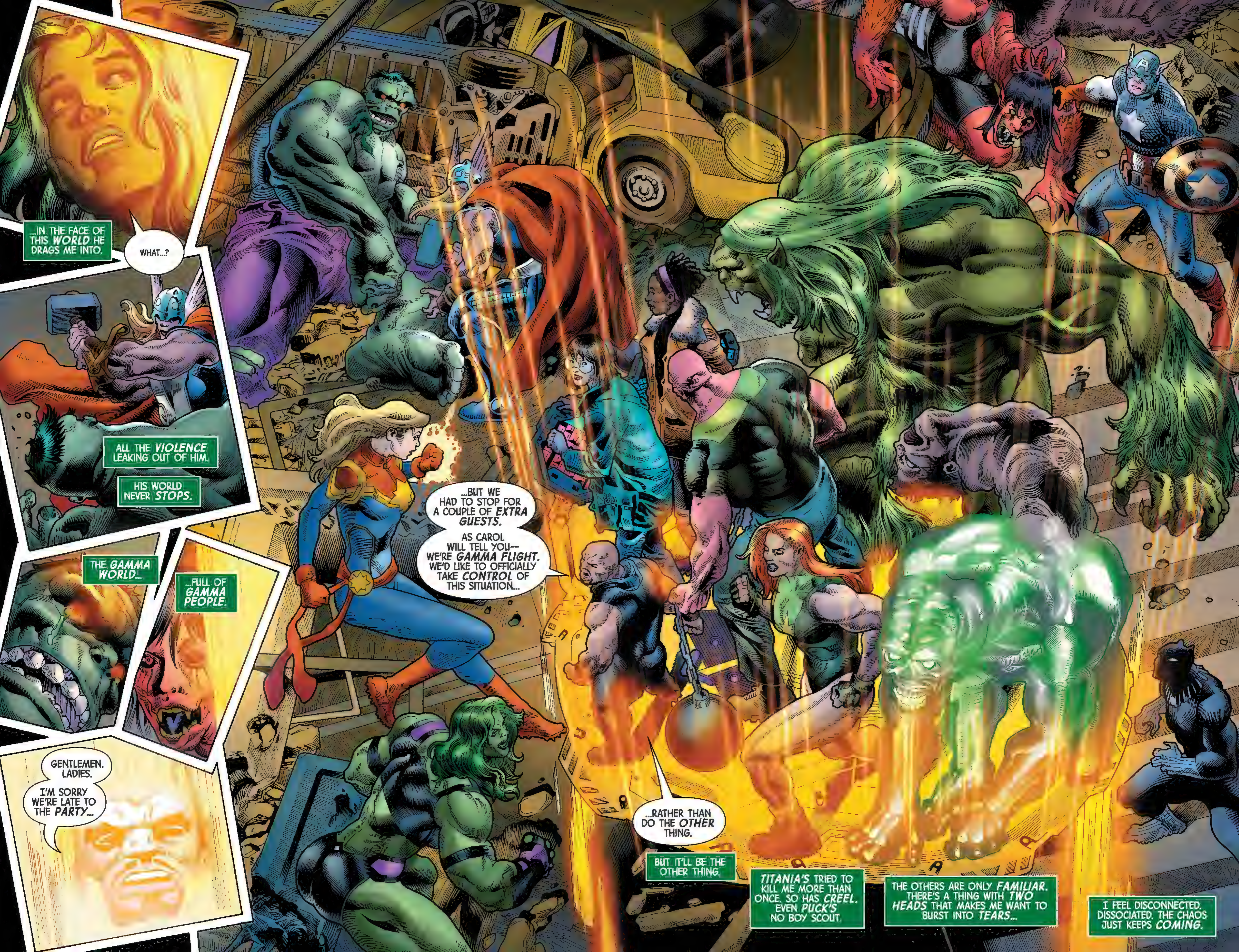
– MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY,
FRANKENSTEIN; OR, THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

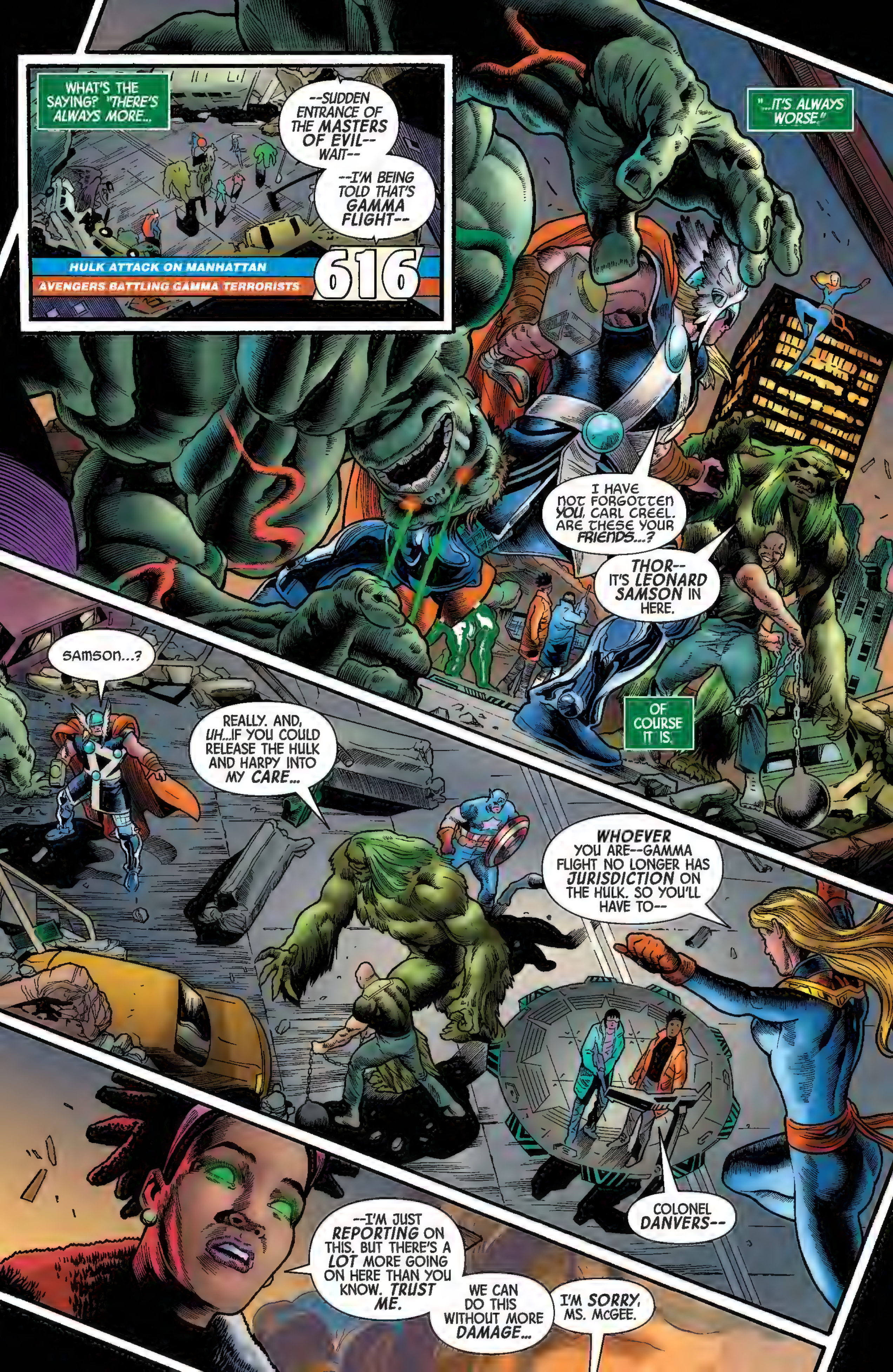

--CREATURE KNOWN AS THE HULK HAS BEEN SIGHTED IN YOUR AREA.
EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM
HULK WARNING
HAS BEEN SIGHTED IN OR NEAR THE FOLLOWING
IT HAPPENS OVER AND OVER.
--NEW ESCALATION OF HOSTILITIES BY THE MONSTER.
THE AVENGERS HAVE BEEN CALLED TO ASSIST--
MTN
I LOOK AROUND, AND MY LIFE HAS STRUCTURE AGAIN.
--PREVIOUSLY EMACIATED, AS WE SEE IN THIS FOOTAGE.
EYEWITNESSES NOW CLAIM HE MAY BE STRONGER THAN--
SO I LET MYSELF BREATHE.
LIVE
616NEWS
WE'RE GETTING WHAT GLIMPSES WE CAN--CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN EVACUATED, BUT THE DESTRUCTION IS--
AND THEN I SEE HIM.
DAMN MONSTER WRECKED MY BAR! LIED RIGHT TO MY FACE!
I HOPE THEY KILL THE--
LIVE
THE FACT CHANNEL
COUSIN BRUCE.
EVACUATE YOUR HOMES IMMEDIATELY. LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND.
THE CREATURE IS DRIVEN BY RAGE.
EMERGENCY A STEM
HULK WARNING
EN SIGHTED IN OR NEAR THE FOLLOWING AREAS
AND BEFORE I KNOW IT...

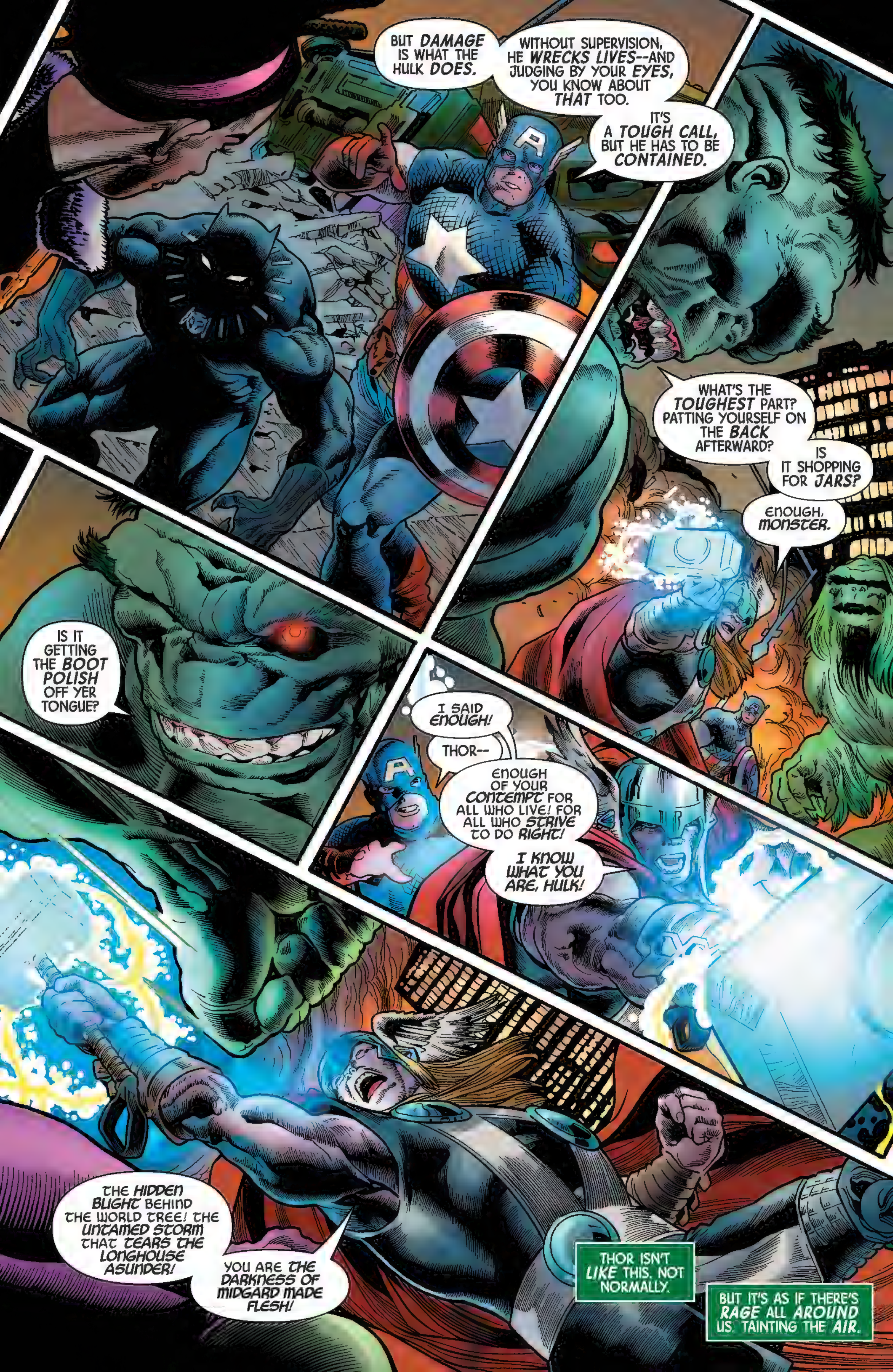

MANHATTAN.
...THE CHAOS IS BACK.
NO.
IT GATHERS AROUND HIM LIKE WEATHER. LEAKS OUT LIKE RADIATION. ALL YOU CAN DO IS SURVIVE IT.
THE FIRST TIME HE BROUGHT IT TO ME, IT CAME WITH A BULLET IN THE BACK AND A BLOOD TRANSFUSION. A NEW SELF--THE SHE-HULK.
THE LAST TIME, HE WASN'T EVEN THERE--JUST A DREAM OF HIS ENEMIES, AND A GREEN DOOR THAT LEFT ME AFRAID TO SLEEP.
WE DON'T LIVE IN THE SAME WORLD. I'M AN AVENGER-- WE HAVE RULES AND REGULATIONS, A ROSTER AND A HEADQUARTERS.
EVEN ON THE STRANGEST DAYS I'VE EVER KNOWN, I HAVE STRUCTURE.
THEN AGAIN... BRUCE WAS A FOUNDING AVENGER.
A HULK THAT'S STRONGER AT NIGHT? THAT RISES FROM THE DEAD?
YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW THE SIGNS?
ARRGH--
YOU GOT BIT, HULK! ADMIT IT!
YOU'RE A STINKIN' VAMP!
HULK, PUT HIM DOWN--
BLADE, RIGHT? QUICK QUESTION.
CAN YOU TURN INTO A BAT?
...NO.
NOW'S A GOOD TIME TO LEARN.
AND SOMETIMES THAT WORRIES ME.

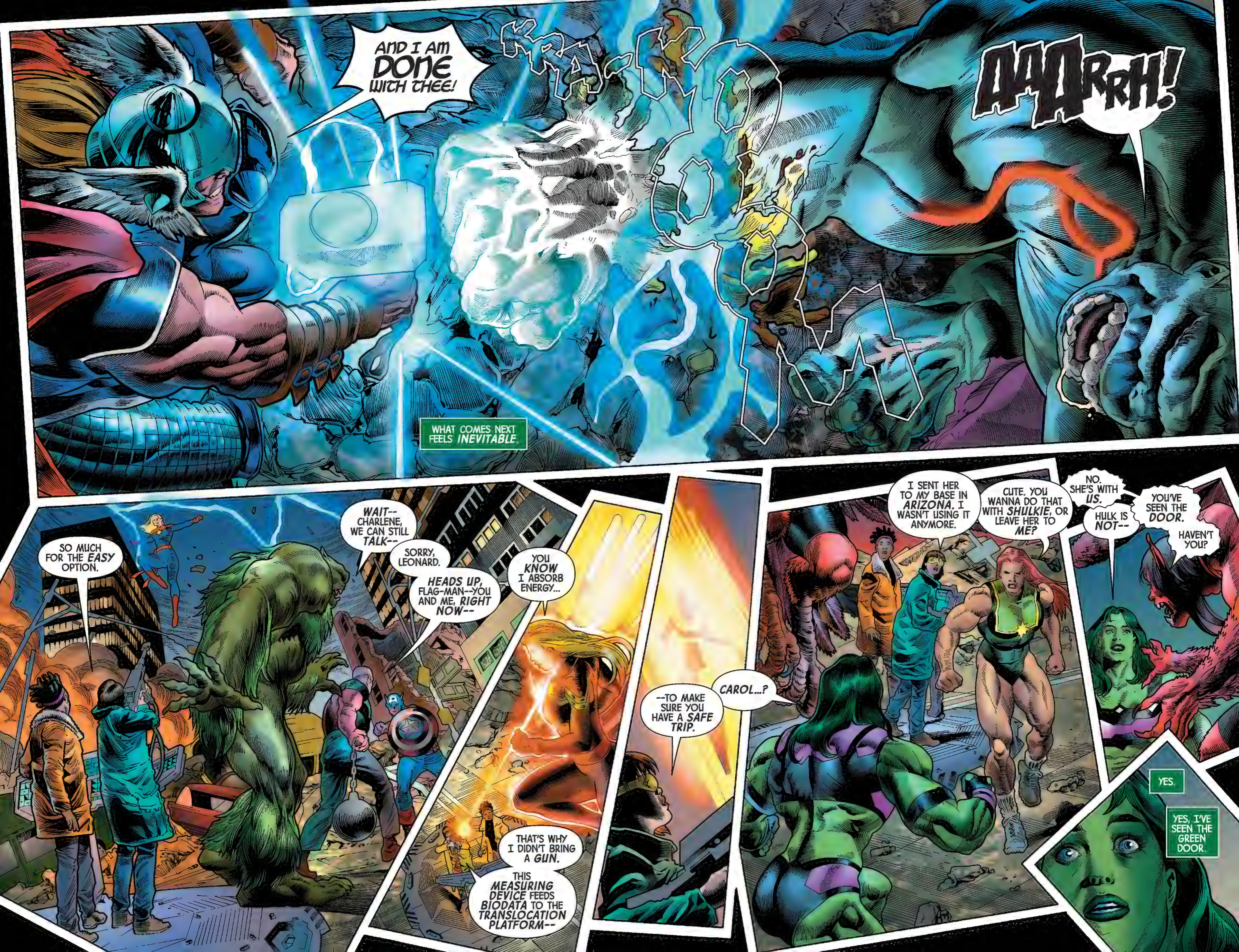

IRON MAN!
BLADE'S TOUGH ENOUGH TO SURVIVE THE FALL, CAP--
LET'S MAKE CERTAIN OF IT! GO!
FINE-- BUT HE WON'T LIKE IT.
AND THIS IS WHAT THE HULK WANTS-- TO DIVIDE OUR FORCES--
WE RETAIN THE ADVANTAGE OF NUMBERS, MY FRIEND. AND A SINGLE DISCIPLINED WARRIOR IS ENOUGH--
--AGAINST A RAGING BEAST.
KIMOYO-- ENERGY DAGGERS TO MAXIMUM.
DISCIPLINED, HUH?
HOW'D THAT WORK OUT FOR YOU LAST TIME, YOUR HIGHNESS?
THEN? I OFFERED MERCY.
I ATTEMPTED DIALOGUE.
AND THE HULK TAUGHT ME MY LESSON.
NAARRH!
JUST HOW DEEP HIS INFLUENCE ON MY LIFE RUNS.

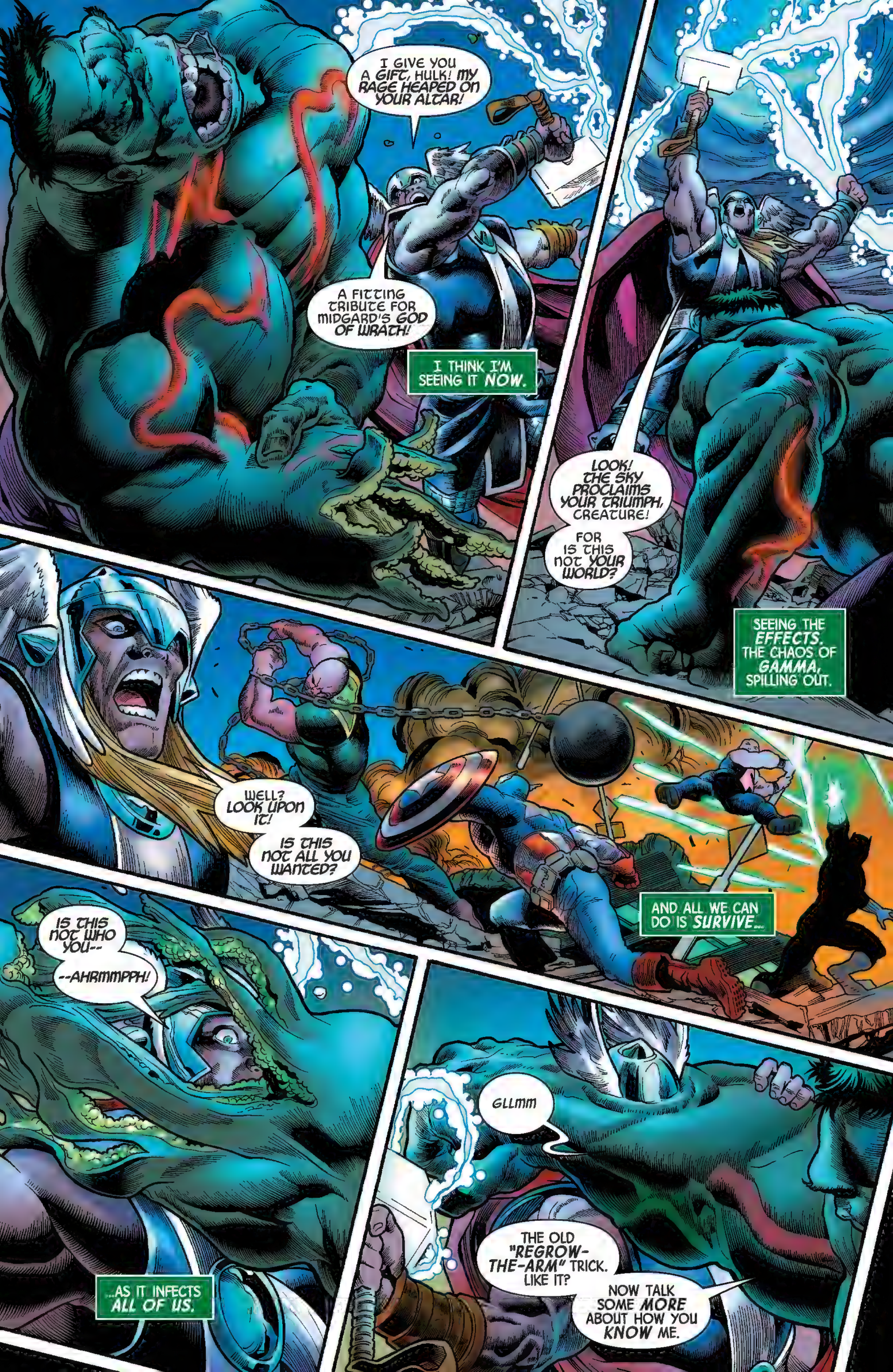

HOW HARD I TRY NOT TO MAKE HIS *MISTAKES*.
BETTY, *PLEASE*.
WORDS... *HARDER* IN THIS FORM. HARDER FOR *HULKS*. BUT WE CAN STILL--
NO.
WORDS AREN'T HARD. THEY'RE *SMALL*. PUNY LITTLE BOXES.
THEY *HIDE* THOUGHTS.
SO WE SAY LESS.
AND SAY *MORE*.
YES?
...
YOU *KNOW*...
THAT'S GOOD--
--KEEP HER *DISTRACTED!*
AARRHH--
NO!
SHE WAS *TALKING*--
TO *YOU*. AND WHILE SHE WAS DOING *THAT*, SHE WAS CRUSHING MY *RIB CAGE*. I COULDN'T WAIT FOR YOU TO MAKE *NICE*.
WE'RE NOT ALL *GAMMA PEOPLE*, JEN.
HOW OFTEN I ACTUALLY MANAGE TO *SUCCEED*...

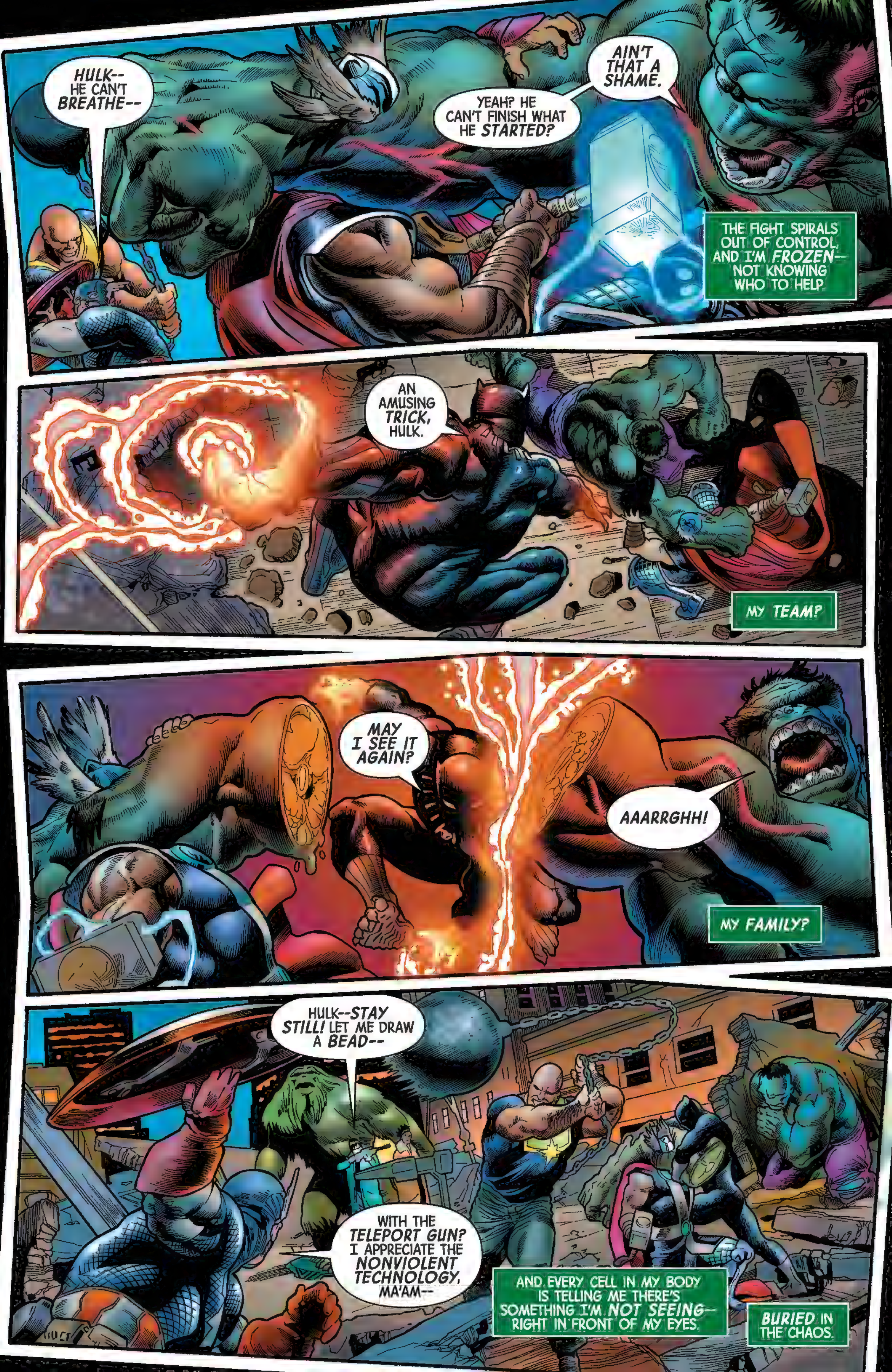

...IN THE FACE OF THIS *WORLD* HE DRAGS ME INTO.
WHAT...?
ALL THE *VIOLENCE* LEAKING OUT OF HIM.
HIS WORLD NEVER *STOPS.*
THE *GAMMA WORLD...*
...FULL OF *GAMMA PEOPLE.*
GENTLEMEN. LADIES.
I'M SORRY WE'RE LATE TO THE *PARTY...*
...BUT WE HAD TO STOP FOR A COUPLE OF *EXTRA GUESTS.*
AS CAROL WILL TELL YOU-- WE'RE *GAMMA FLIGHT.* WE'D LIKE TO OFFICIALLY TAKE *CONTROL* OF THIS SITUATION...
...RATHER THAN DO THE *OTHER* THING.
BUT IT'LL BE THE OTHER THING.
TITANIA'S TRIED TO KILL ME MORE THAN ONCE. SO HAS *CREEL.* EVEN *PUCK'S* NO BOY SCOUT.
THE OTHERS ARE ONLY *FAMILIAR.* THERE'S A THING WITH *TWO HEADS* THAT MAKES ME WANT TO BURST INTO *TEARS...*
I FEEL DISCONNECTED. DISSOCIATED. THE CHAOS JUST KEEPS *COMING.*

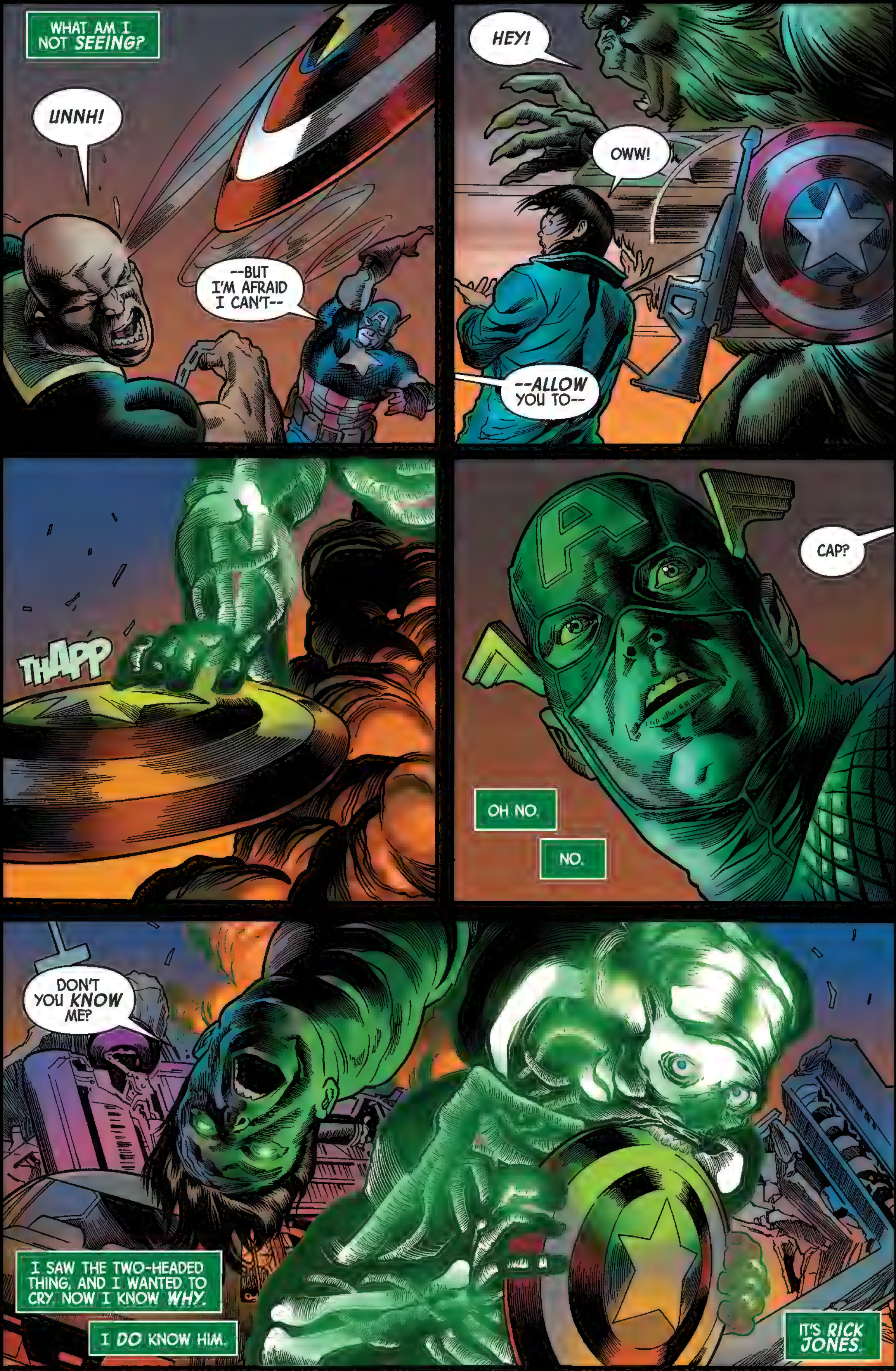

WHAT'S THE SAYING? "THERE'S ALWAYS MORE...
--SUDDEN ENTRANCE OF THE MASTERS OF EVIL-- WAIT--
--I'M BEING TOLD THAT'S GAMMA FLIGHT--
HULK ATTACK ON MANHATTAN
AVENGERS BATTLING GAMMA TERRORISTS
616
"...IT'S ALWAYS WORSE."
I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN YOU, CARL CREEL. ARE THESE YOUR FRIENDS...?
THOR-- IT'S LEONARD SAMSON IN HERE.
OF COURSE IT IS.
SAMSON...?
REALLY. AND, UH...IF YOU COULD RELEASE THE HULK AND HARPY INTO MY CARE...
WHOEVER YOU ARE--GAMMA FLIGHT NO LONGER HAS JURISDICTION ON THE HULK. SO YOU'LL HAVE TO--
COLONEL DANVERS--
--I'M JUST REPORTING ON THIS. BUT THERE'S A LOT MORE GOING ON HERE THAN YOU KNOW. TRUST ME.
WE CAN DO THIS WITHOUT MORE DAMAGE...
I'M SORRY, MS. McGEE.

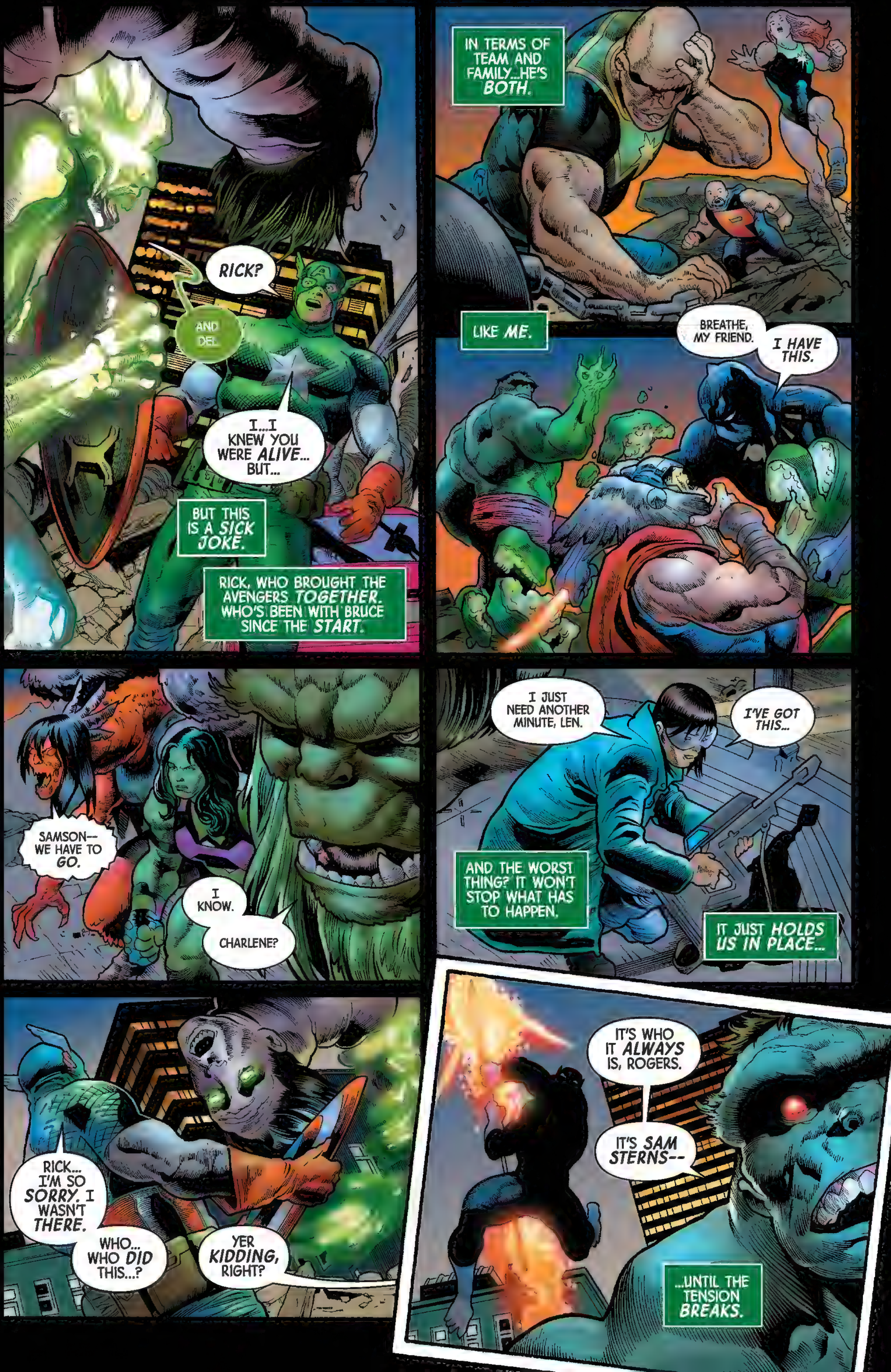

BUT DAMAGE IS WHAT THE HULK DOES.
WITHOUT SUPERVISION, HE WRECKS LIVES--AND JUDGING BY YOUR EYES, YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT TOO.
IT'S A TOUGH CALL, BUT HE HAS TO BE CONTAINED.
WHAT'S THE TOUGHEST PART? PATTING YOURSELF ON THE BACK AFTERWARD?
IS IT SHOPPING FOR JARS?
ENOUGH, MONSTER.
IS IT GETTING THE BOOT POLISH OFF YER TONGUE?
I SAID ENOUGH!
THOR--
ENOUGH OF YOUR CONTEMPT FOR ALL WHO LIVE! FOR ALL WHO STRIVE TO DO RIGHT!
I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, HULK!
THE HIDDEN BLIGHT BEHIND THE WORLD TREE! THE UNTAMED STORM THAT TEARS THE LONGHOUSE ASUNDER!
YOU ARE THE DARKNESS OF MIDGARD MADE FLESH!
THOR ISN'T LIKE THIS. NOT NORMALLY.
BUT IT'S AS IF THERE'S RAGE ALL AROUND US. TAINTING THE AIR.

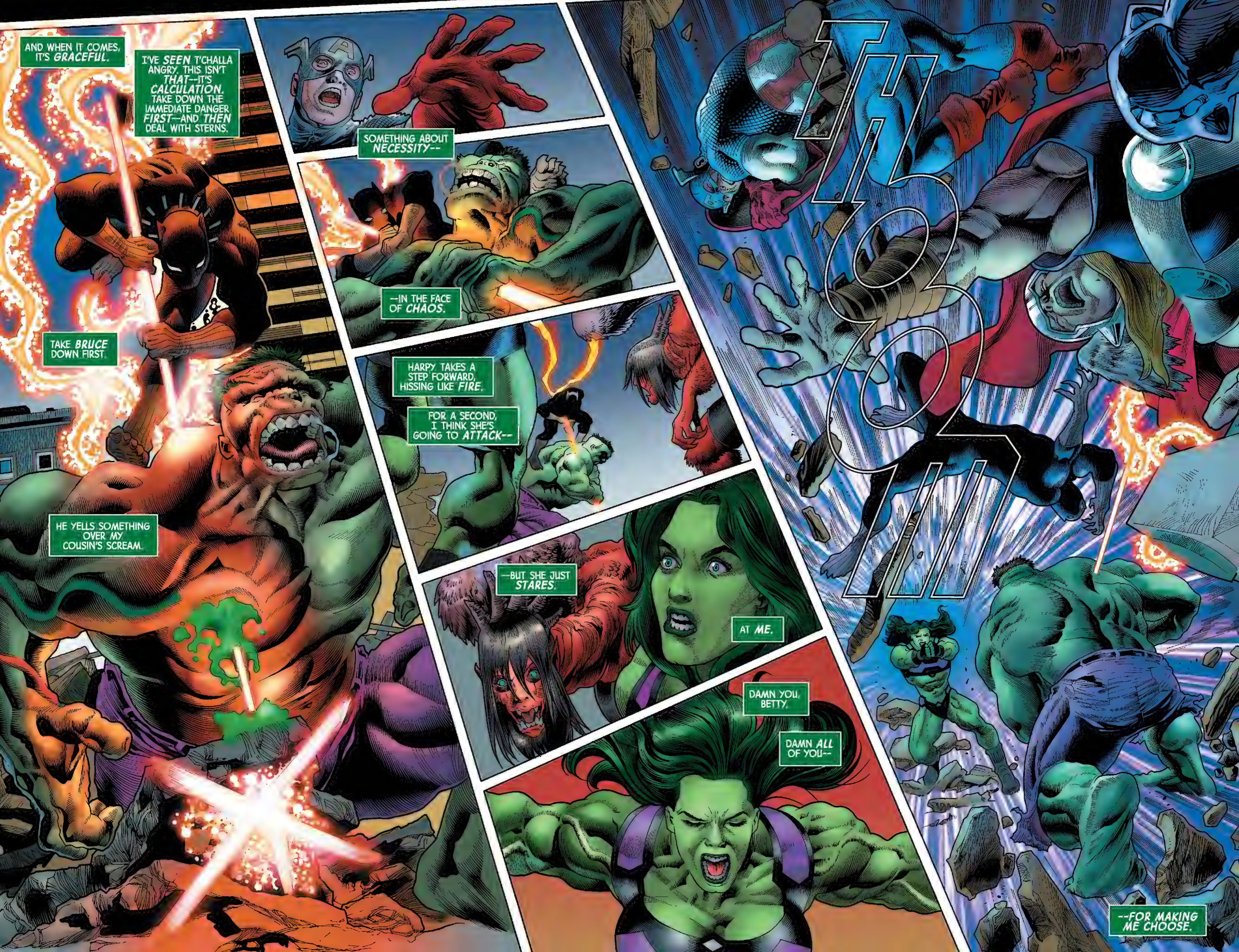

AND I AM DONE WITH THEE!
KRA-KOOOM
AAARRRH!
WHAT COMES NEXT FEELS INEVITABLE.
SO MUCH FOR THE EASY OPTION.
WAIT-- CHARLENE, WE CAN STILL TALK--
SORRY, LEONARD.
HEADS UP, FLAG-MAN--YOU AND ME, RIGHT NOW--
YOU KNOW I ABSORB ENERGY...
THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T BRING A GUN.
THIS MEASURING DEVICE FEEDS BIODATA TO THE TRANSLOCATION PLATFORM--
--TO MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A SAFE TRIP.
CAROL...?
I SENT HER TO MY BASE IN ARIZONA. I WASN'T USING IT ANYMORE.
CUTE. YOU WANNA DO THAT WITH SHULKIE, OR LEAVE HER TO ME?
NO. SHE'S WITH US.
HULK IS NOT--
YOU'VE SEEN THE DOOR.
HAVEN'T YOU?
YES.
YES, I'VE SEEN THE GREEN DOOR.

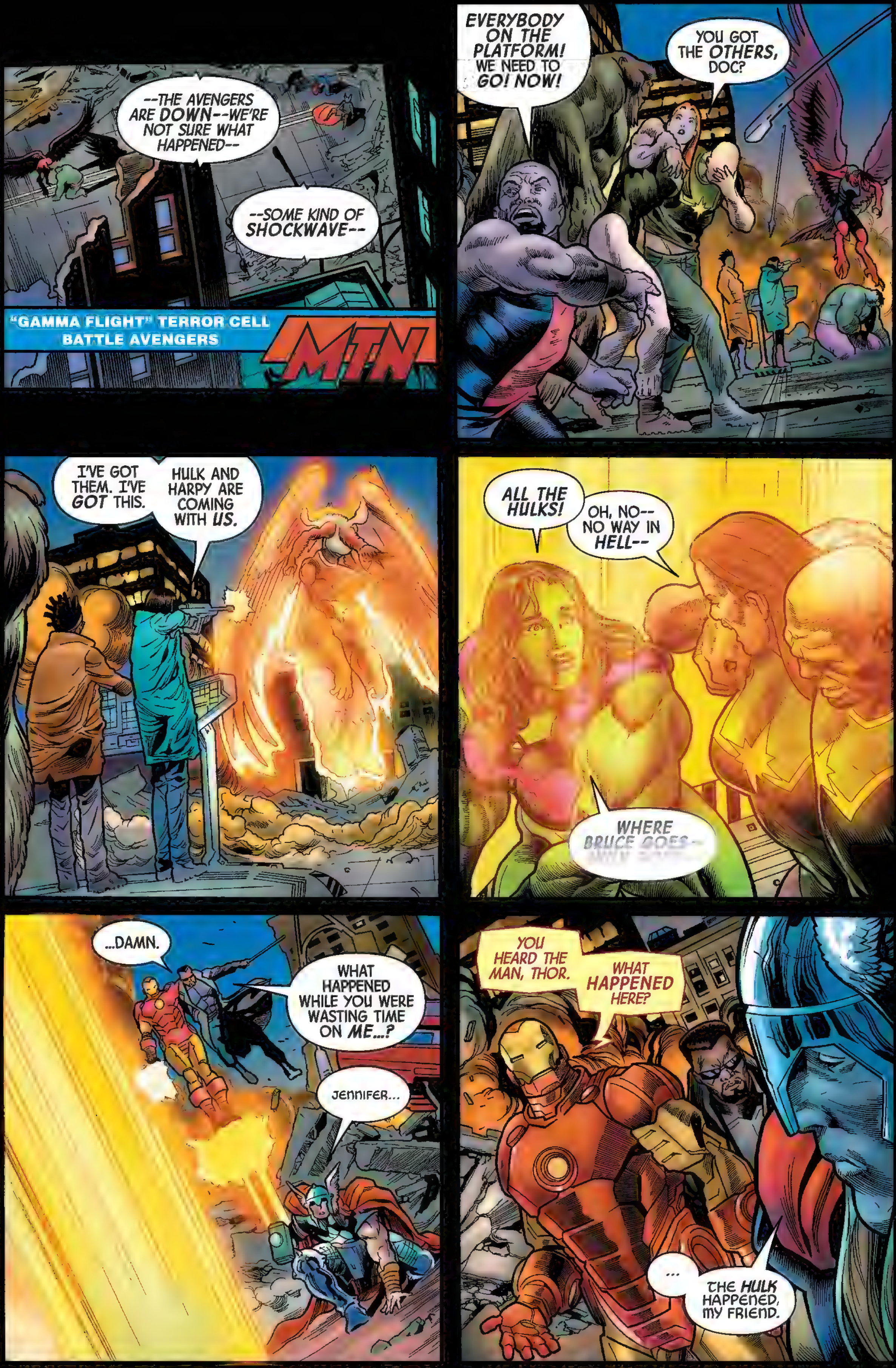

I GIVE YOU A *GIFT*, HULK! MY *RAGE HEAPED ON YOUR ALTAR!*
A FITTING TRIBUTE FOR MIDGARD'S *GOD OF WRATH!*
I THINK I'M SEEING IT *NOW*.
LOOK! THE SKY PROCLAIMS YOUR TRIUMPH, CREATURE!
FOR IS THIS NOT *YOUR WORLD?*
SEEING THE *EFFECTS*. THE CHAOS OF *GAMMA*, SPILLING OUT.
WELL? LOOK UPON IT!
IS THIS NOT ALL YOU WANTED?
AND ALL WE CAN DO IS *SURVIVE*...
IS THIS NOT WHO YOU--
--AHRMMPPH!
...AS IT INFECTS *ALL OF US*.
GLLMM
THE OLD *"REGROW-THE-ARM"* TRICK. LIKE IT?
NOW TALK SOME *MORE* ABOUT HOW YOU *KNOW* ME.

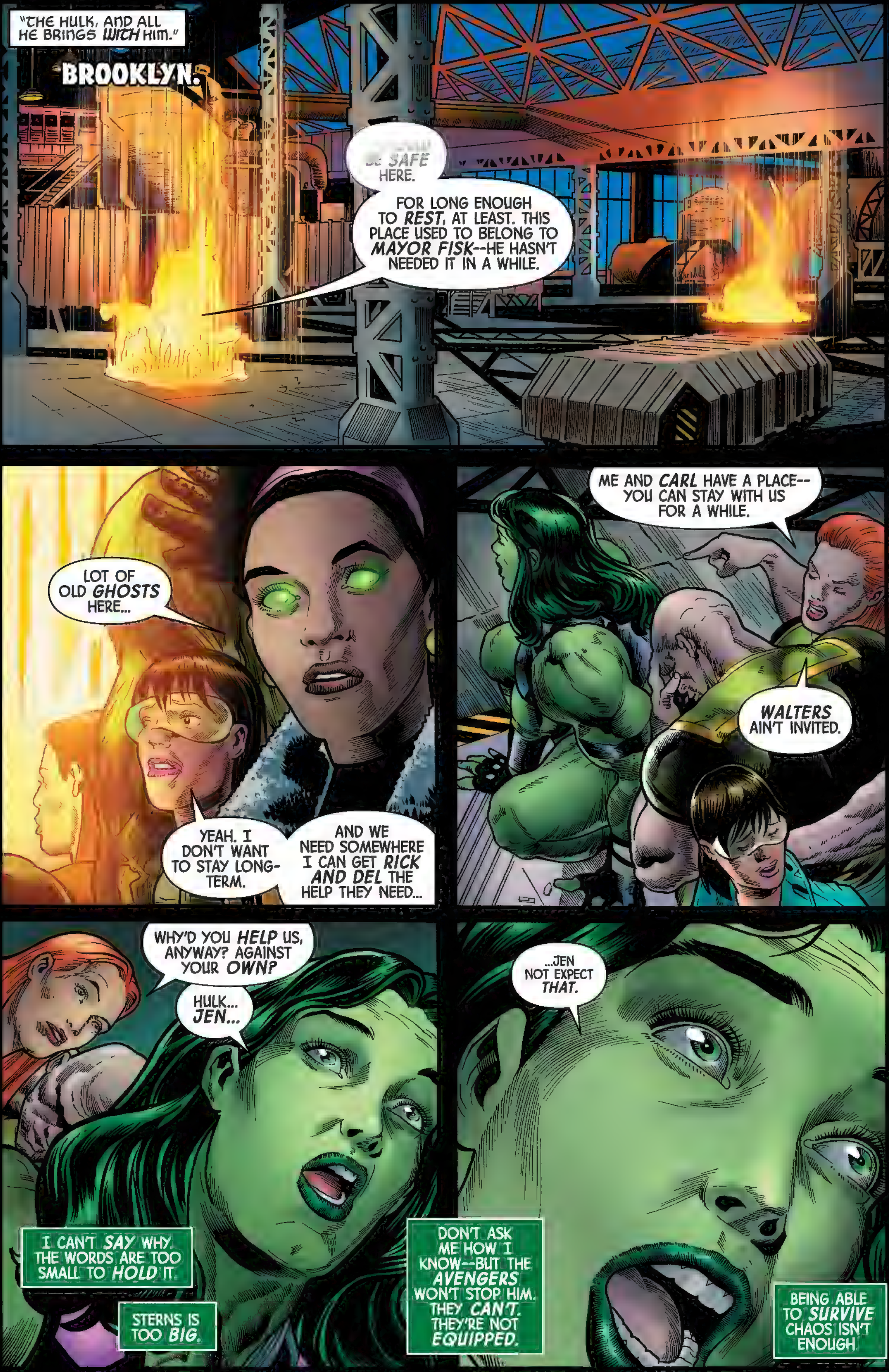

HULK-- HE CAN'T BREATHE--
YEAH? HE CAN'T FINISH WHAT HE STARTED?
AIN'T THAT A SHAME.
THE FIGHT SPIRALS OUT OF CONTROL, AND I'M FROZEN-- NOT KNOWING WHO TO HELP.
AN AMUSING TRICK, HULK.
MY TEAM?
MAY I SEE IT AGAIN?
AAARRGHH!
MY FAMILY?
HULK--STAY STILL! LET ME DRAW A BEAD--
WITH THE TELEPORT GUN? I APPRECIATE THE NONVIOLENT TECHNOLOGY, MA'AM--
AND EVERY CELL IN MY BODY IS TELLING ME THERE'S SOMETHING I'M NOT SEEING-- RIGHT IN FRONT OF MY EYES.
BURIED IN THE CHAOS.

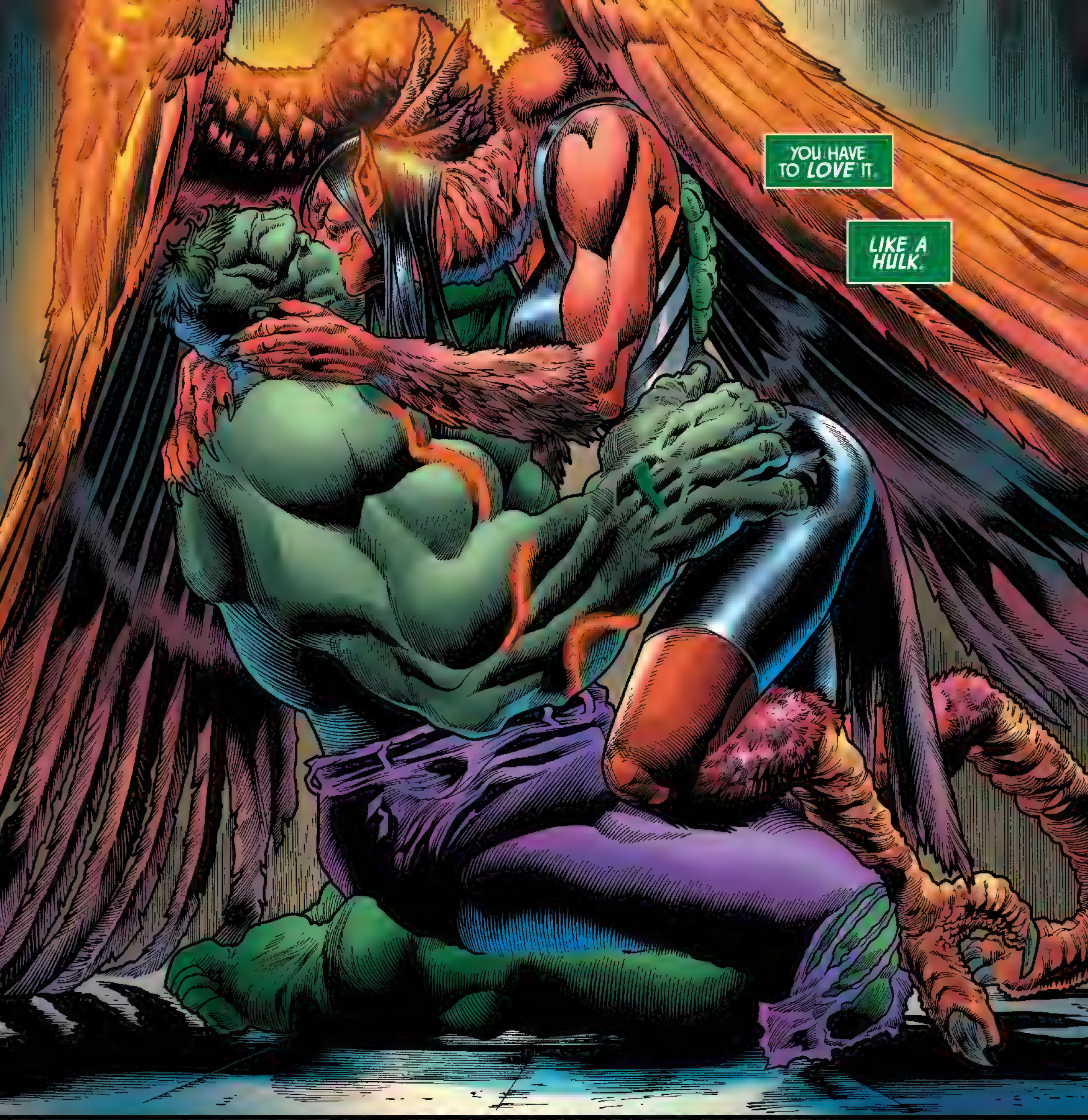

WHAT AM I NOT SEEING?
UNNH!
--BUT I'M AFRAID I CAN'T--
HEY!
OWW!
--ALLOW YOU TO--
THAPP
CAP?
OH NO.
NO.
DON'T YOU KNOW ME?
I SAW THE TWO-HEADED THING, AND I WANTED TO CRY. NOW I KNOW WHY.
I DO KNOW HIM.
IT'S RICK JONES.


RICK?
AND DEL
I...I KNEW YOU WERE *ALIVE*... BUT...
BUT THIS IS A *SICK JOKE.*
RICK, WHO BROUGHT THE AVENGERS *TOGETHER.* WHO'S BEEN WITH BRUCE SINCE THE *START.*
IN TERMS OF TEAM AND FAMILY...HE'S *BOTH.*
LIKE *ME.*
BREATHE, MY FRIEND.
I HAVE THIS.
SAMSON-- WE HAVE TO *GO.*
I KNOW.
CHARLENE?
I JUST NEED ANOTHER MINUTE, LEN.
I'VE GOT THIS...
AND THE WORST THING? IT WON'T STOP WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN.
IT JUST *HOLDS US IN PLACE...*
RICK... I'M SO *SORRY.* I WASN'T *THERE.*
WHO... WHO *DID* THIS...?
YER *KIDDING,* RIGHT?
IT'S WHO IT *ALWAYS* IS, ROGERS.
IT'S *SAM STERNS--*
...UNTIL THE TENSION *BREAKS.*


AND WHEN IT COMES, IT'S GRACEFUL.
I'VE SEEN T'CHALLA ANGRY. THIS ISN'T THAT--IT'S CALCULATION. TAKE DOWN THE IMMEDIATE DANGER FIRST--AND THEN DEAL WITH STERNS.
TAKE BRUCE DOWN FIRST.
HE YELLS SOMETHING OVER MY COUSIN'S SCREAM.
SOMETHING ABOUT NECESSITY--
--IN THE FACE OF CHAOS.
HARPY TAKES A STEP FORWARD, HISSING LIKE FIRE.
FOR A SECOND, I THINK SHE'S GOING TO ATTACK--
--BUT SHE JUST STARES.
AT ME.
DAMN YOU, BETTY.
DAMN ALL OF YOU--
THOOM
--FOR MAKING ME CHOOSE.


--THE AVENGERS ARE DOWN--WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT HAPPENED--
--SOME KIND OF SHOCKWAVE--
"GAMMA FLIGHT" TERROR CELL BATTLE AVENGERS
MTN
EVERYBODY ON THE PLATFORM! WE NEED TO GO! NOW!
YOU GOT THE OTHERS, DOC?
I'VE GOT THEM. I'VE GOT THIS.
HULK AND HARPY ARE COMING WITH US.
ALL THE HULKS!
OH, NO--NO WAY IN HELL--
WHERE BRUCE GOES--
...DAMN.
WHAT HAPPENED WHILE YOU WERE WASTING TIME ON ME...?
JENNIFER...
YOU HEARD THE MAN, THOR.
WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
...
THE HULK HAPPENED, MY FRIEND.


"THE HULK, AND ALL HE BRINGS *WITH* HIM."
BROOKLYN.
[illegible] BE *SAFE* HERE.
FOR LONG ENOUGH TO *REST*, AT LEAST. THIS PLACE USED TO BELONG TO *MAYOR FISK*--HE HASN'T NEEDED IT IN A WHILE.
LOT OF OLD *GHOSTS* HERE...
YEAH. I DON'T WANT TO STAY LONG-TERM.
AND WE NEED SOMEWHERE I CAN GET *RICK AND DEL* THE HELP THEY NEED...
ME AND *CARL* HAVE A PLACE--YOU CAN STAY WITH US FOR A WHILE.
WALTERS AIN'T INVITED.
WHY'D YOU *HELP* US, ANYWAY? AGAINST YOUR *OWN?*
HULK... *JEN...*
I CAN'T *SAY* WHY. THE WORDS ARE TOO SMALL TO *HOLD* IT.
STERNS IS TOO *BIG*.
...JEN NOT EXPECT *THAT*.
DON'T ASK ME HOW I KNOW--BUT THE *AVENGERS* WON'T STOP HIM. THEY *CAN'T*. THEY'RE NOT *EQUIPPED*.
BEING ABLE TO *SURVIVE* CHAOS ISN'T ENOUGH.

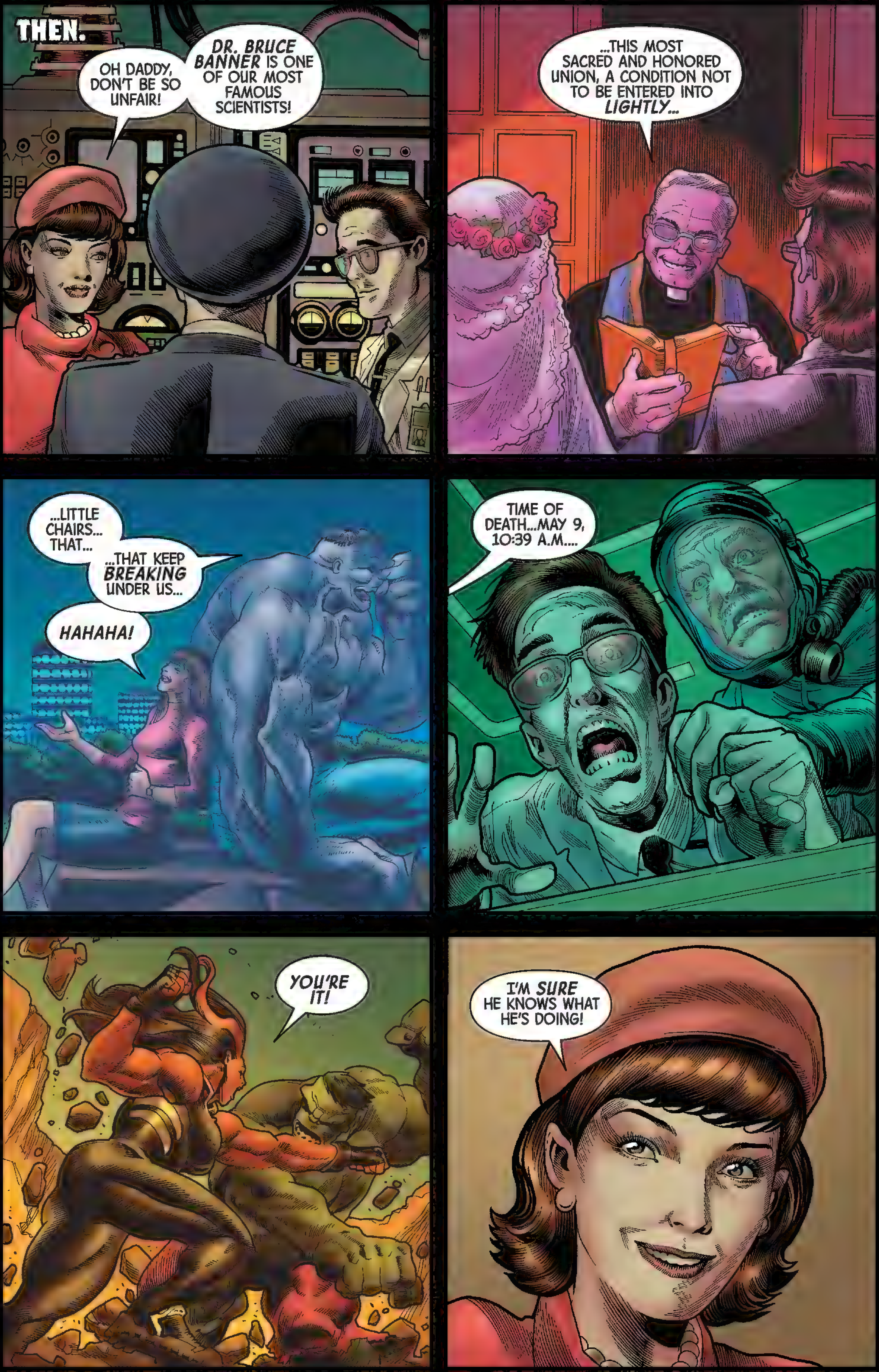

YOU HAVE TO *LOVE* IT.
LIKE A HULK.

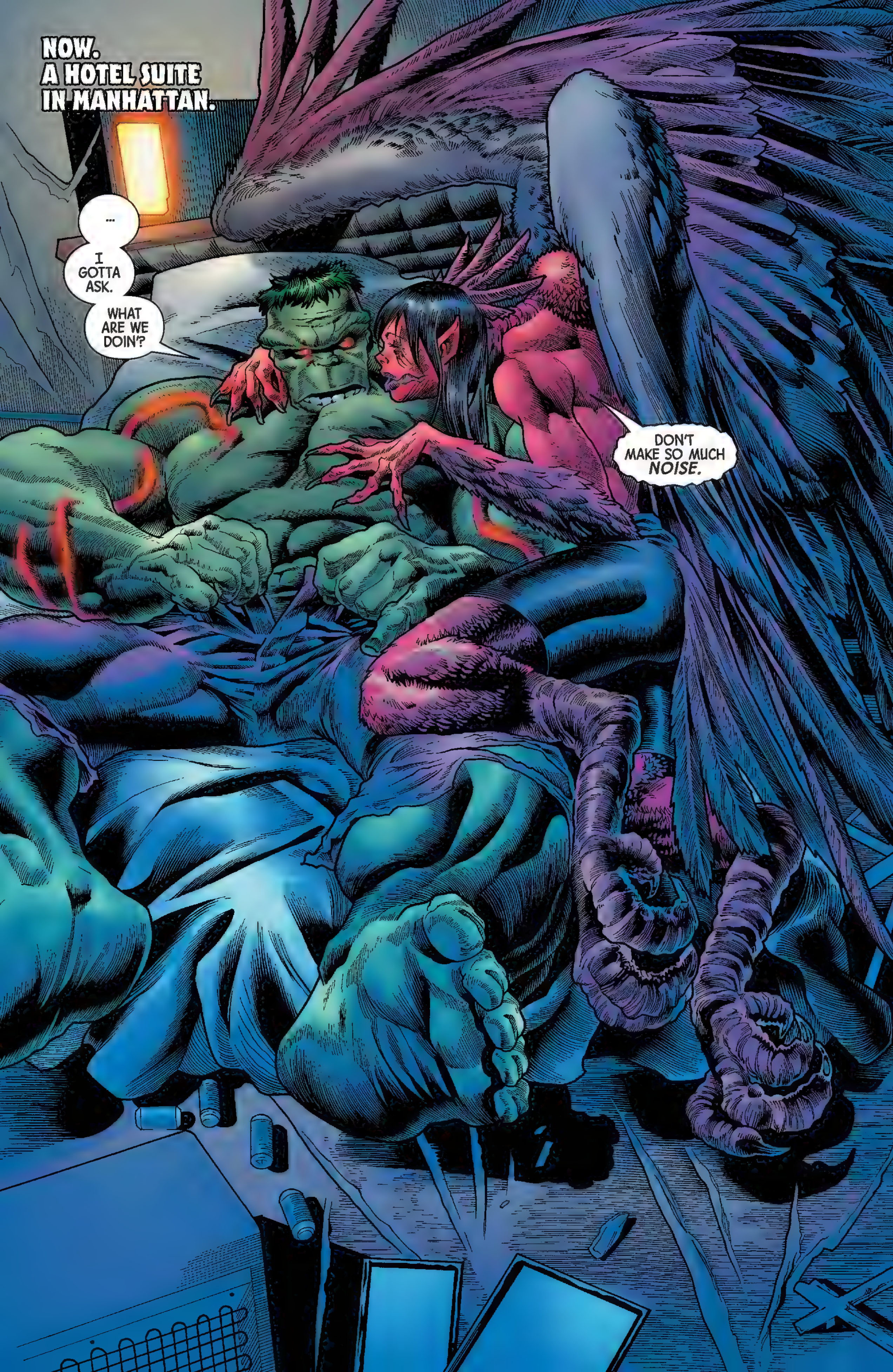
CHAOTIC TERRAIN

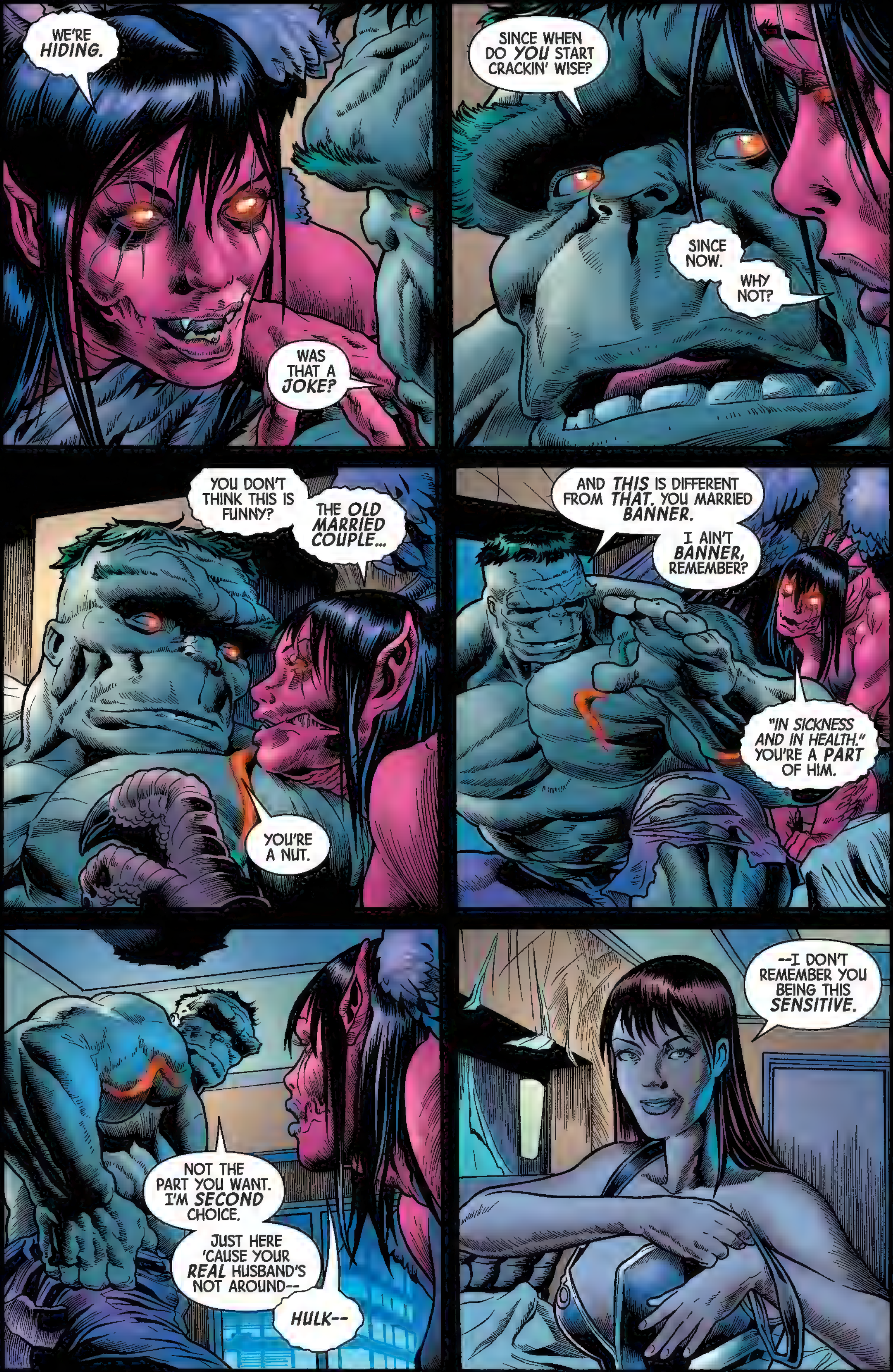
48

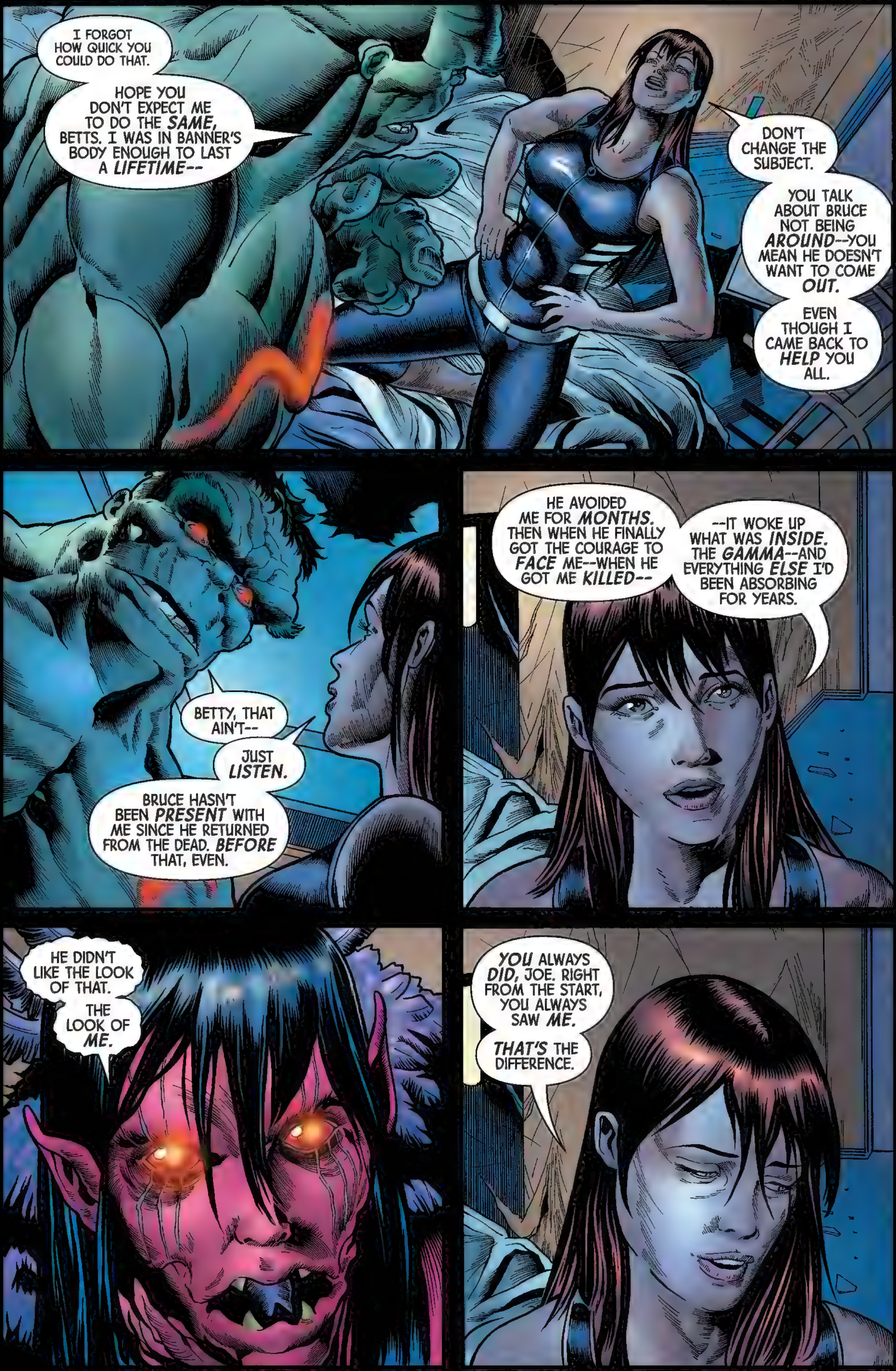
“AND I DREAM OF A GRAVE, DEEP AND NARROW, WHERE WE COULD CLASP EACH OTHER IN OUR ARMS AS WITH IRON BARS, AND I WOULD HIDE MY FACE IN YOU AND YOU WOULD HIDE YOUR FACE IN ME, AND NOBODY WOULD EVER SEE US ANY MORE.”

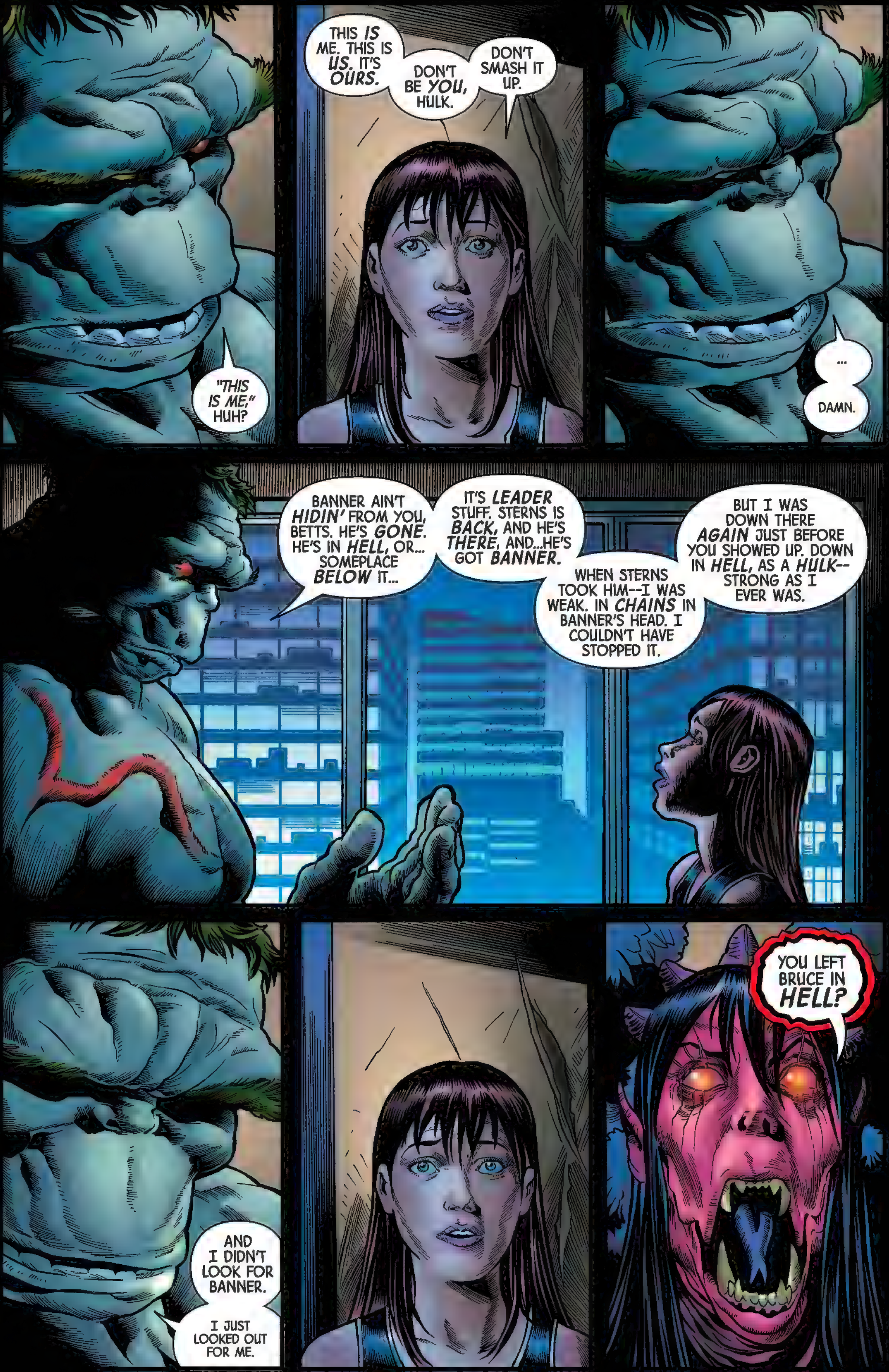
– FRANZ KAFKA,
THE CASTLE

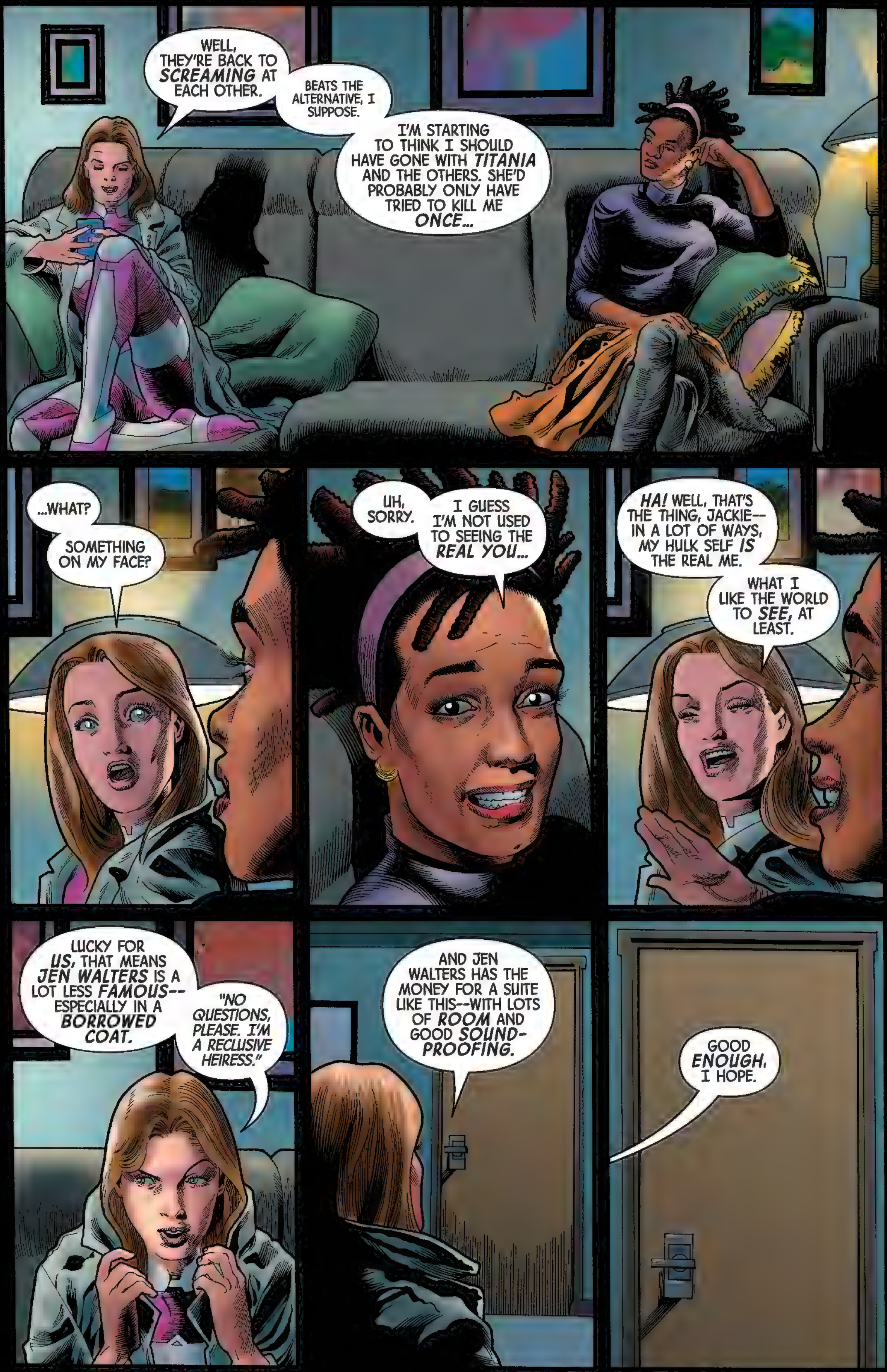

THEN.
OH DADDY, DON'T BE SO UNFAIR!
DR. BRUCE BANNER IS ONE OF OUR MOST FAMOUS SCIENTISTS!
...THIS MOST SACRED AND HONORED UNION, A CONDITION NOT TO BE ENTERED INTO LIGHTLY...
...LITTLE CHAIRS... THAT...
...THAT KEEP BREAKING UNDER US...
HAHAHA!
TIME OF DEATH...MAY 9, 10:39 A.M....
YOU'RE IT!
I'M SURE HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!

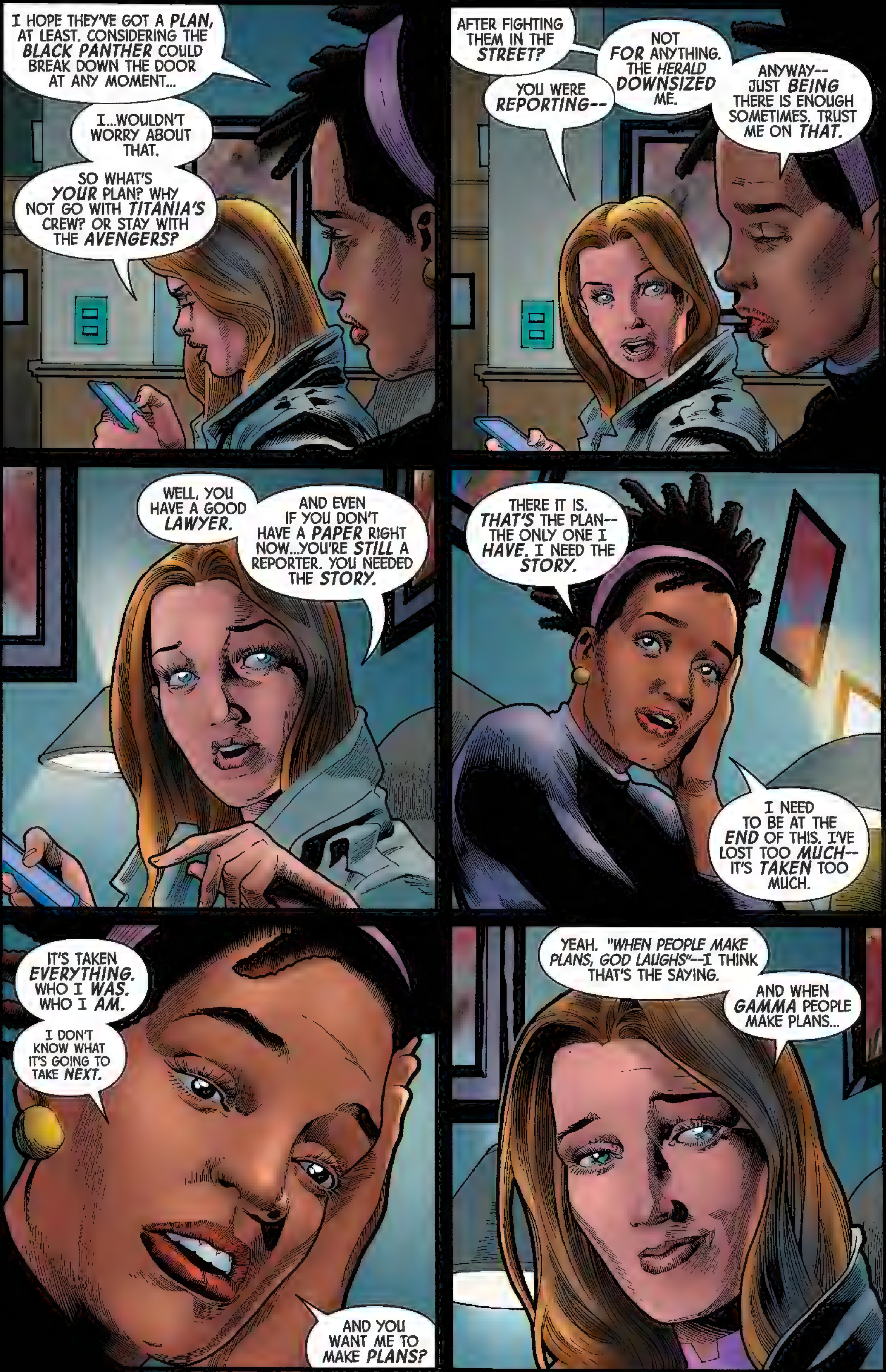

NOW.
A HOTEL SUITE
IN MANHATTAN.
...
I GOTTA ASK.
WHAT ARE WE DOIN'?
DON'T MAKE SO MUCH *NOISE.*

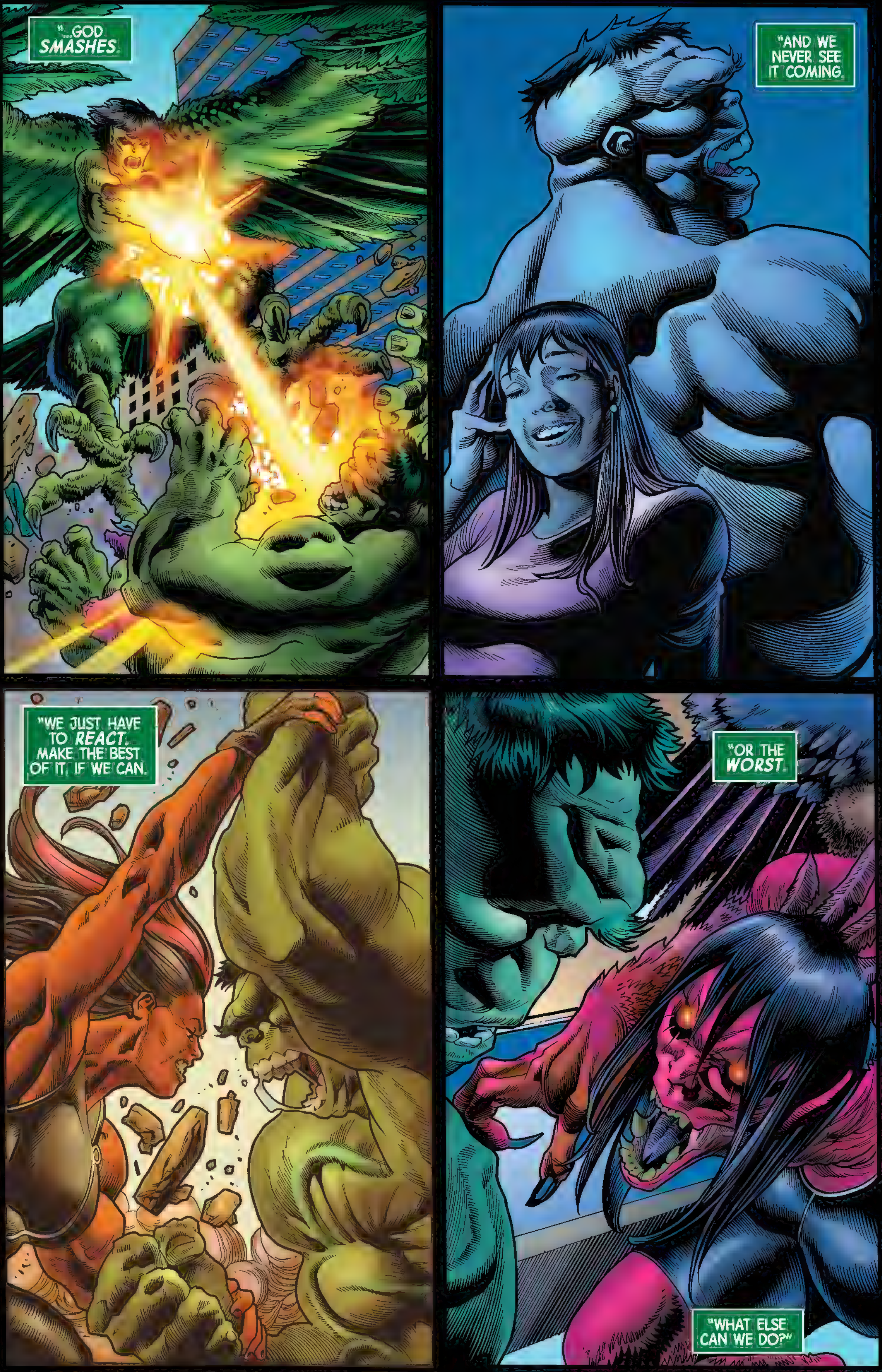

WE'RE *HIDING.*
WAS THAT A *JOKE?*
SINCE WHEN DO *YOU* START CRACKIN' WISE?
SINCE NOW.
WHY NOT?
YOU DON'T THINK THIS IS FUNNY?
THE *OLD MARRIED COUPLE...*
YOU'RE A NUT.
AND *THIS* IS DIFFERENT FROM *THAT.* YOU MARRIED *BANNER.*
I AIN'T *BANNER,* REMEMBER?
"IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH." YOU'RE A *PART* OF HIM.
NOT THE PART YOU WANT. I'M *SECOND* CHOICE.
JUST HERE 'CAUSE YOUR *REAL* HUSBAND'S NOT AROUND--
HULK--
--I DON'T REMEMBER YOU BEING THIS *SENSITIVE.*

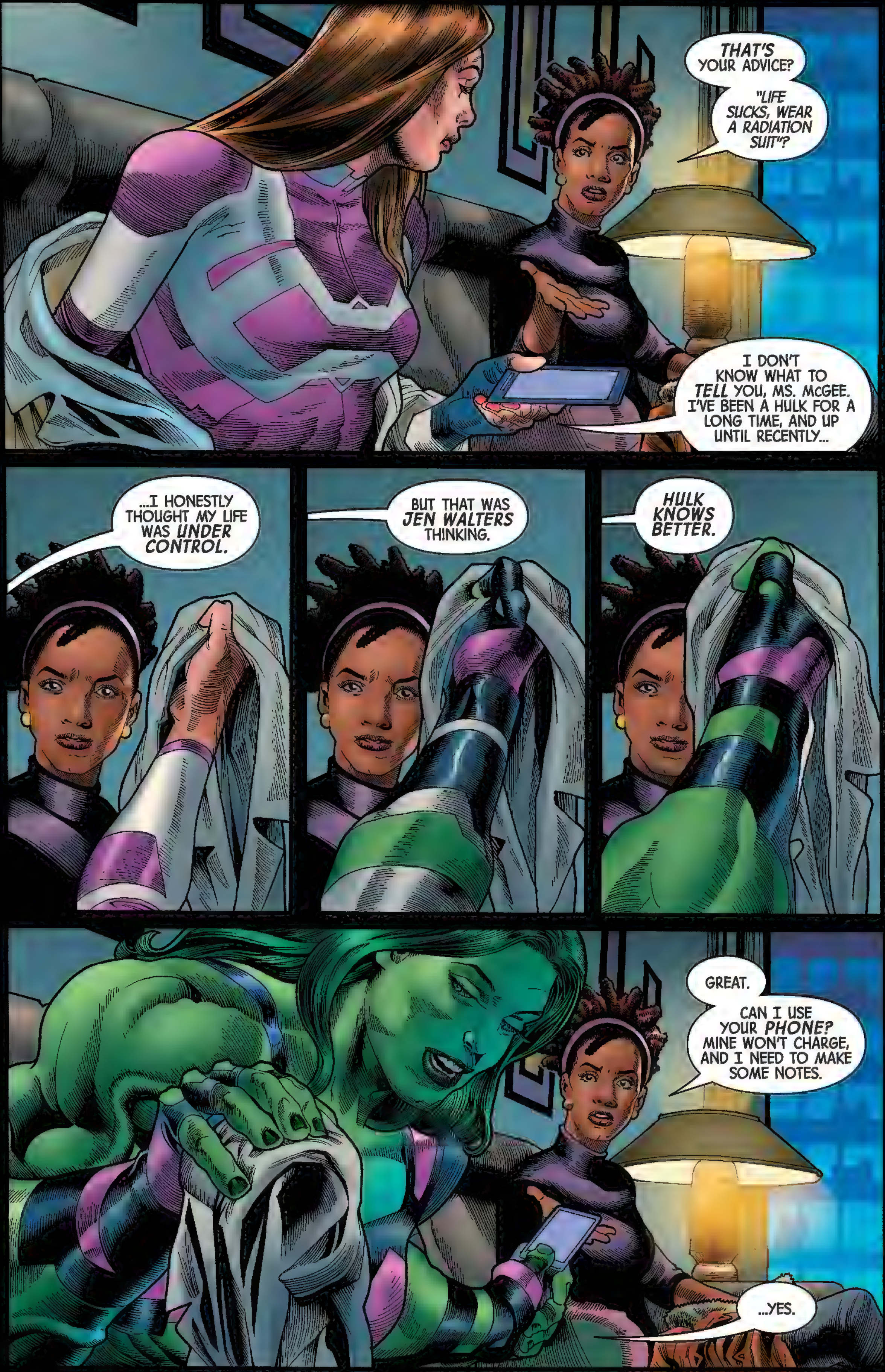

I FORGOT HOW QUICK YOU COULD DO THAT.
HOPE YOU DON'T EXPECT ME TO DO THE *SAME,* BETTS. I WAS IN BANNER'S BODY ENOUGH TO LAST A *LIFETIME*--
DON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT.
YOU TALK ABOUT BRUCE NOT BEING *AROUND*--YOU MEAN HE DOESN'T WANT TO COME *OUT.*
EVEN THOUGH I CAME BACK TO *HELP* YOU ALL.
BETTY, THAT AIN'T--
JUST *LISTEN.*
BRUCE HASN'T BEEN *PRESENT* WITH ME SINCE HE RETURNED FROM THE DEAD. *BEFORE* THAT, EVEN.
HE AVOIDED ME FOR *MONTHS.* THEN WHEN HE FINALLY GOT THE COURAGE TO *FACE* ME--WHEN HE GOT ME *KILLED*--
--IT WOKE UP WHAT WAS *INSIDE.* THE *GAMMA*--AND EVERYTHING *ELSE* I'D BEEN ABSORBING FOR YEARS.
HE DIDN'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THAT.
THE LOOK OF *ME.*
YOU ALWAYS *DID,* JOE. RIGHT FROM THE START, YOU ALWAYS SAW *ME.*
THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE.

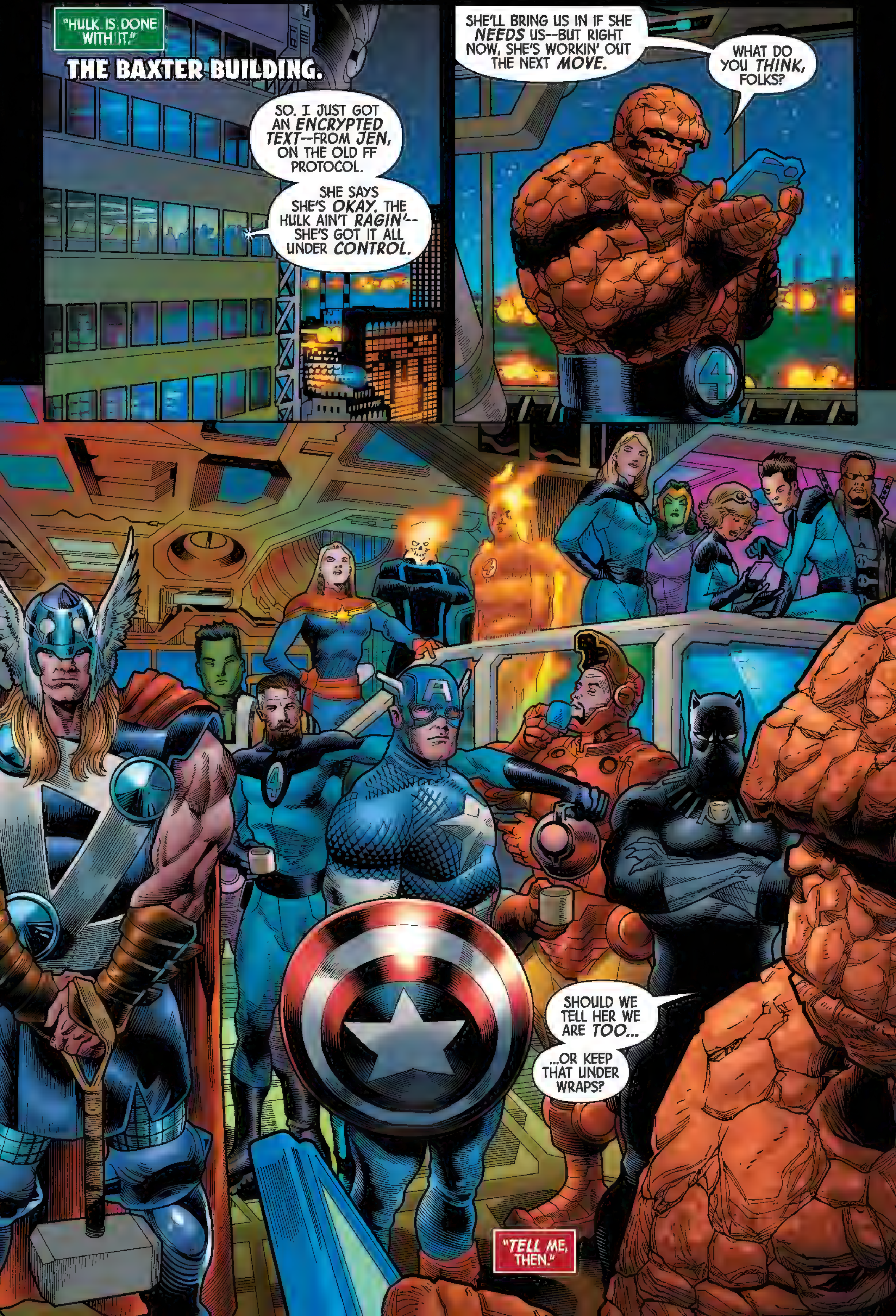

"THIS IS ME," HUH?
THIS IS ME. THIS IS US. IT'S OURS.
DON'T BE YOU, HULK.
DON'T SMASH IT UP.
...
DAMN.
BANNER AIN'T HIDIN' FROM YOU, BETTS. HE'S GONE. HE'S IN HELL, OR... SOMEPLACE BELOW IT...
IT'S LEADER STUFF. STERNS IS BACK, AND HE'S THERE, AND...HE'S GOT BANNER.
WHEN STERNS TOOK HIM--I WAS WEAK. IN CHAINS IN BANNER'S HEAD. I COULDN'T HAVE STOPPED IT.
BUT I WAS DOWN THERE AGAIN JUST BEFORE YOU SHOWED UP. DOWN IN HELL, AS A HULK-- STRONG AS I EVER WAS.
AND I DIDN'T LOOK FOR BANNER.
I JUST LOOKED OUT FOR ME.
YOU LEFT BRUCE IN HELL?

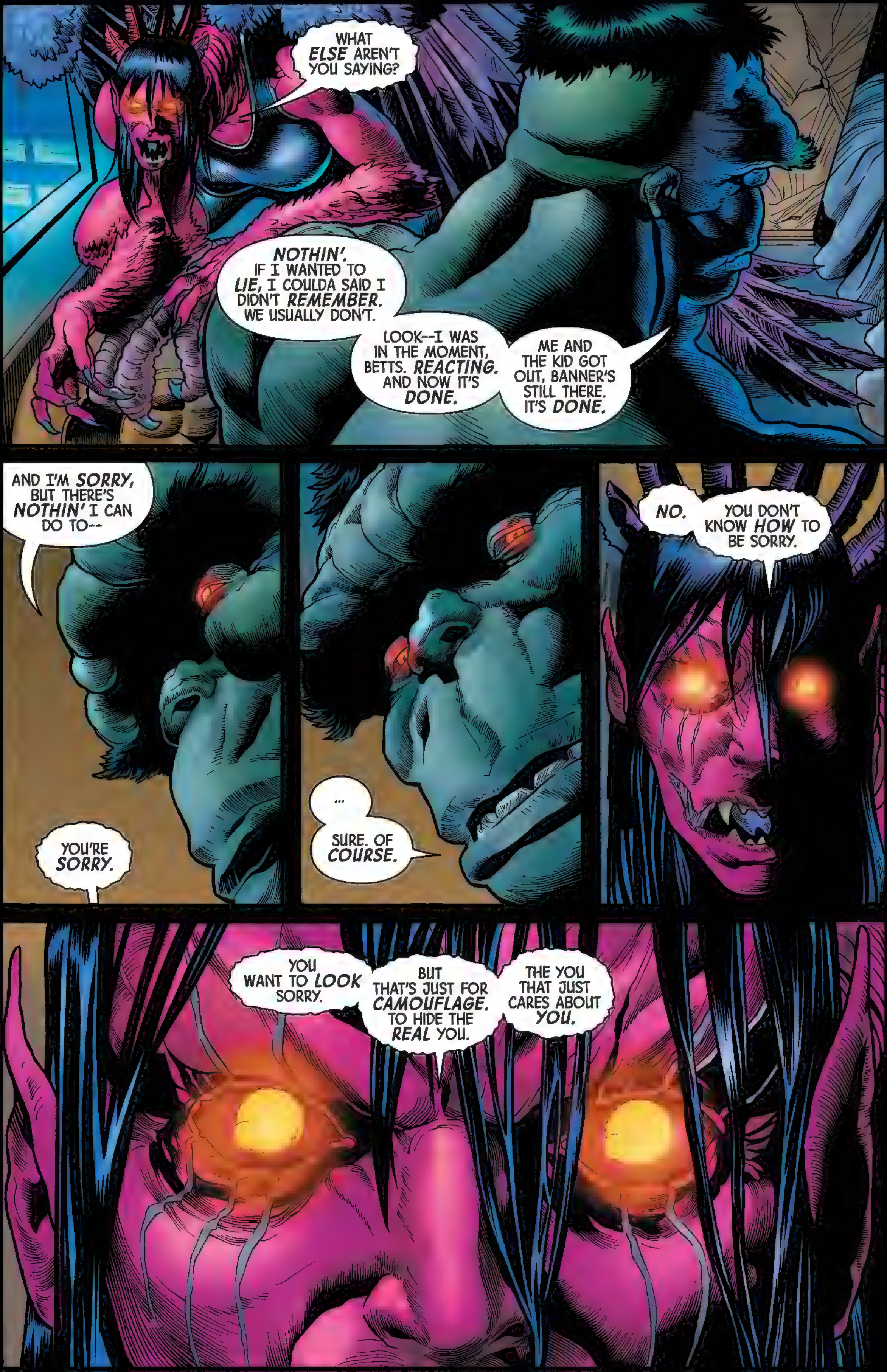

WELL, THEY'RE BACK TO *SCREAMING* AT EACH OTHER.
BEATS THE ALTERNATIVE, I SUPPOSE.
I'M STARTING TO THINK I SHOULD HAVE GONE WITH *TITANIA* AND THE OTHERS. SHE'D PROBABLY ONLY HAVE TRIED TO KILL ME *ONCE*...
...WHAT?
SOMETHING ON MY FACE?
UH, SORRY.
I GUESS I'M NOT USED TO SEEING THE *REAL YOU*...
HA! WELL, THAT'S THE THING, JACKIE-- IN A LOT OF WAYS, MY HULK SELF *IS* THE REAL ME.
WHAT I LIKE THE WORLD TO *SEE*, AT LEAST.
LUCKY FOR *US*, THAT MEANS *JEN WALTERS* IS A LOT LESS *FAMOUS*-- ESPECIALLY IN A *BORROWED COAT*.
"NO QUESTIONS, PLEASE. I'M A RECLUSIVE HEIRESS."
AND JEN WALTERS HAS THE MONEY FOR A SUITE LIKE THIS--WITH LOTS OF *ROOM* AND GOOD *SOUND-PROOFING*.
GOOD *ENOUGH*, I HOPE.

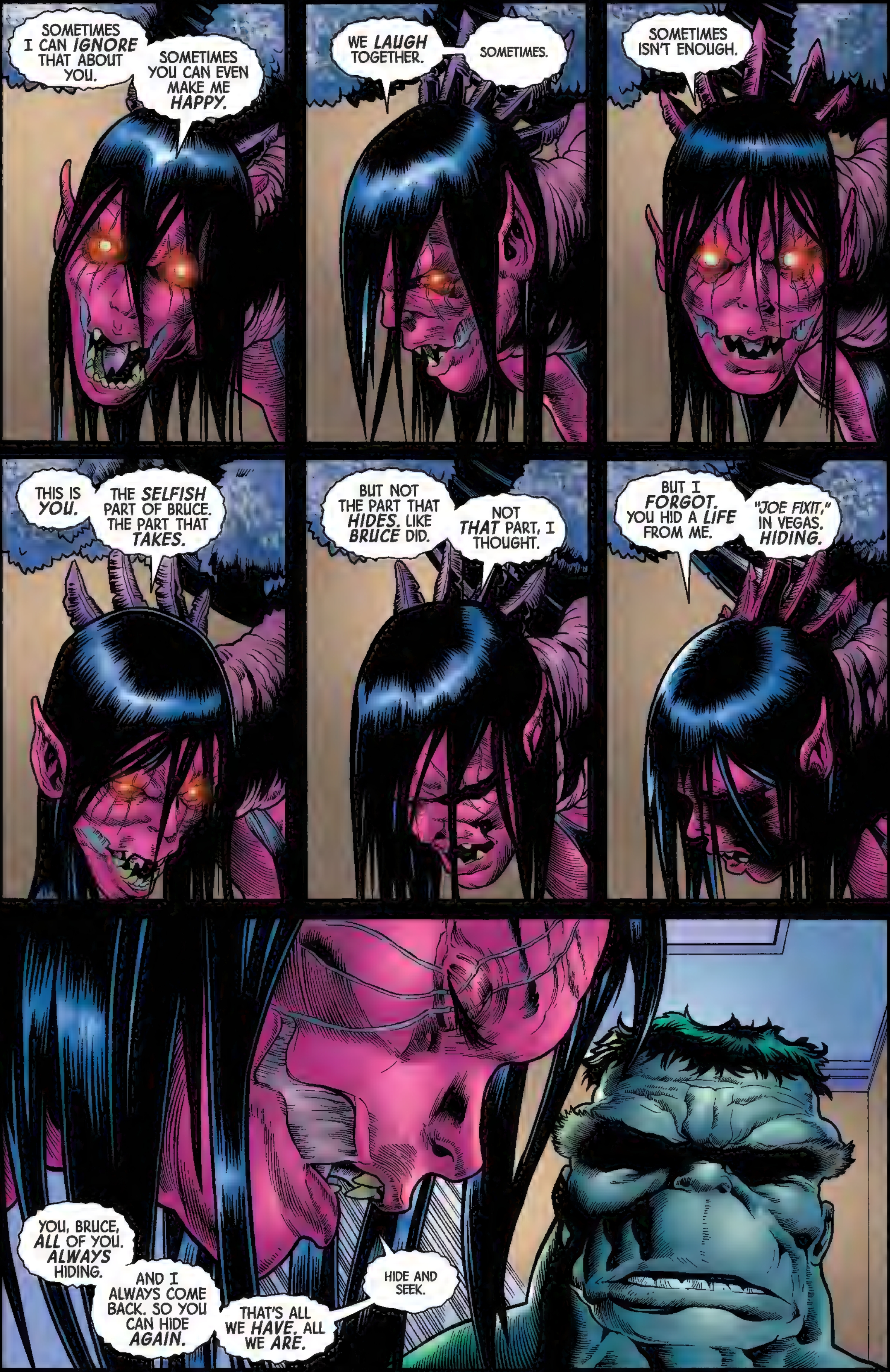

I HOPE THEY'VE GOT A *PLAN*, AT LEAST. CONSIDERING THE *BLACK PANTHER* COULD BREAK DOWN THE DOOR AT ANY MOMENT...
I...WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
SO WHAT'S *YOUR* PLAN? WHY NOT GO WITH *TITANIA'S* CREW? OR STAY WITH THE *AVENGERS?*
AFTER FIGHTING THEM IN THE *STREET?*
YOU WERE *REPORTING--*
NOT *FOR* ANYTHING. THE *HERALD* *DOWNSIZED* ME.
ANYWAY-- JUST *BEING* THERE IS ENOUGH SOMETIMES. TRUST ME ON *THAT.*
WELL, YOU HAVE A GOOD *LAWYER.*
AND EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE A *PAPER* RIGHT NOW...YOU'RE *STILL* A REPORTER. YOU NEEDED THE *STORY.*
THERE IT IS. *THAT'S* THE PLAN-- THE ONLY ONE I *HAVE.* I NEED THE *STORY.*
I NEED TO BE AT THE *END* OF THIS. I'VE LOST TOO *MUCH*-- IT'S *TAKEN* TOO MUCH.
IT'S TAKEN *EVERYTHING.* WHO I *WAS.* WHO I *AM.*
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S GOING TO TAKE *NEXT.*
AND YOU WANT ME TO MAKE *PLANS?*
YEAH. *"WHEN PEOPLE MAKE PLANS, GOD LAUGHS"*--I THINK THAT'S THE SAYING.
AND WHEN *GAMMA* PEOPLE MAKE PLANS...

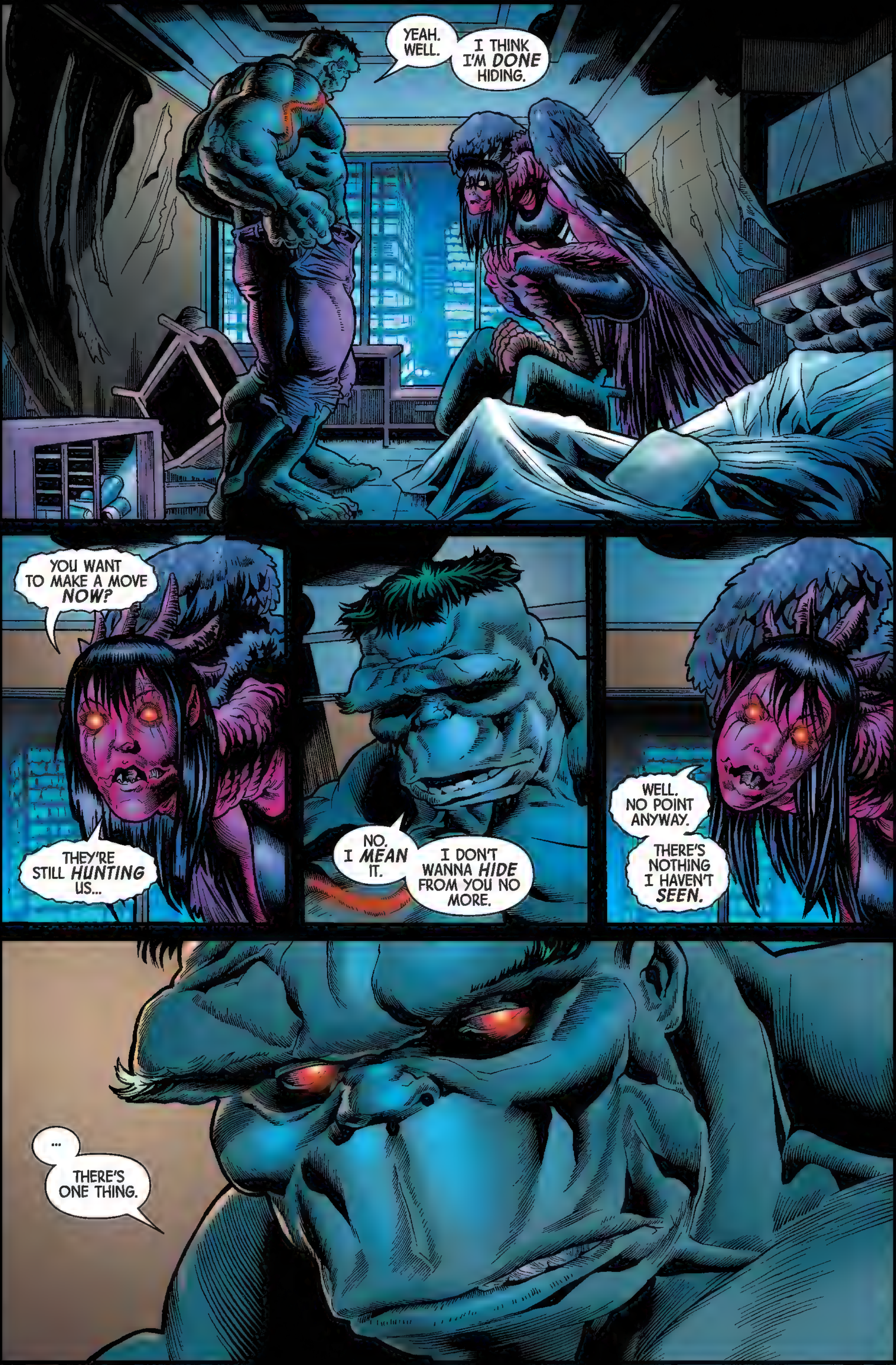

"...GOD *SMASHES*.
"AND WE NEVER SEE IT COMING.
"WE JUST HAVE TO *REACT*. MAKE THE BEST OF IT, IF WE CAN.
"OR THE *WORST*.
"WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?"

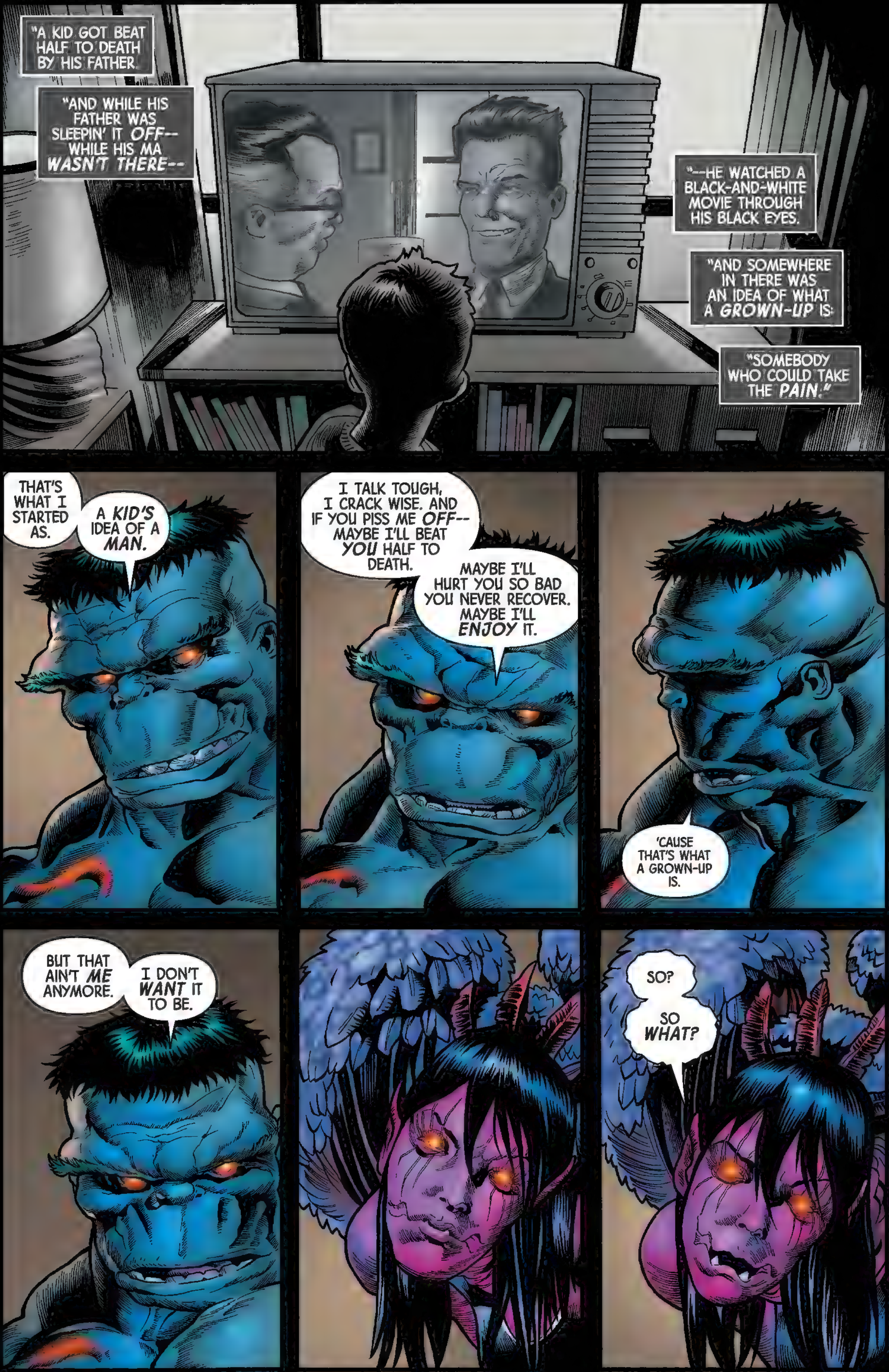

THAT'S YOUR ADVICE?
"LIFE SUCKS, WEAR A RADIATION SUIT"?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU, MS. McGEE. I'VE BEEN A HULK FOR A LONG TIME, AND UP UNTIL RECENTLY...
...I HONESTLY THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS UNDER CONTROL.
BUT THAT WAS JEN WALTERS THINKING.
HULK KNOWS BETTER.
GREAT.
CAN I USE YOUR PHONE? MINE WON'T CHARGE, AND I NEED TO MAKE SOME NOTES.
...YES.

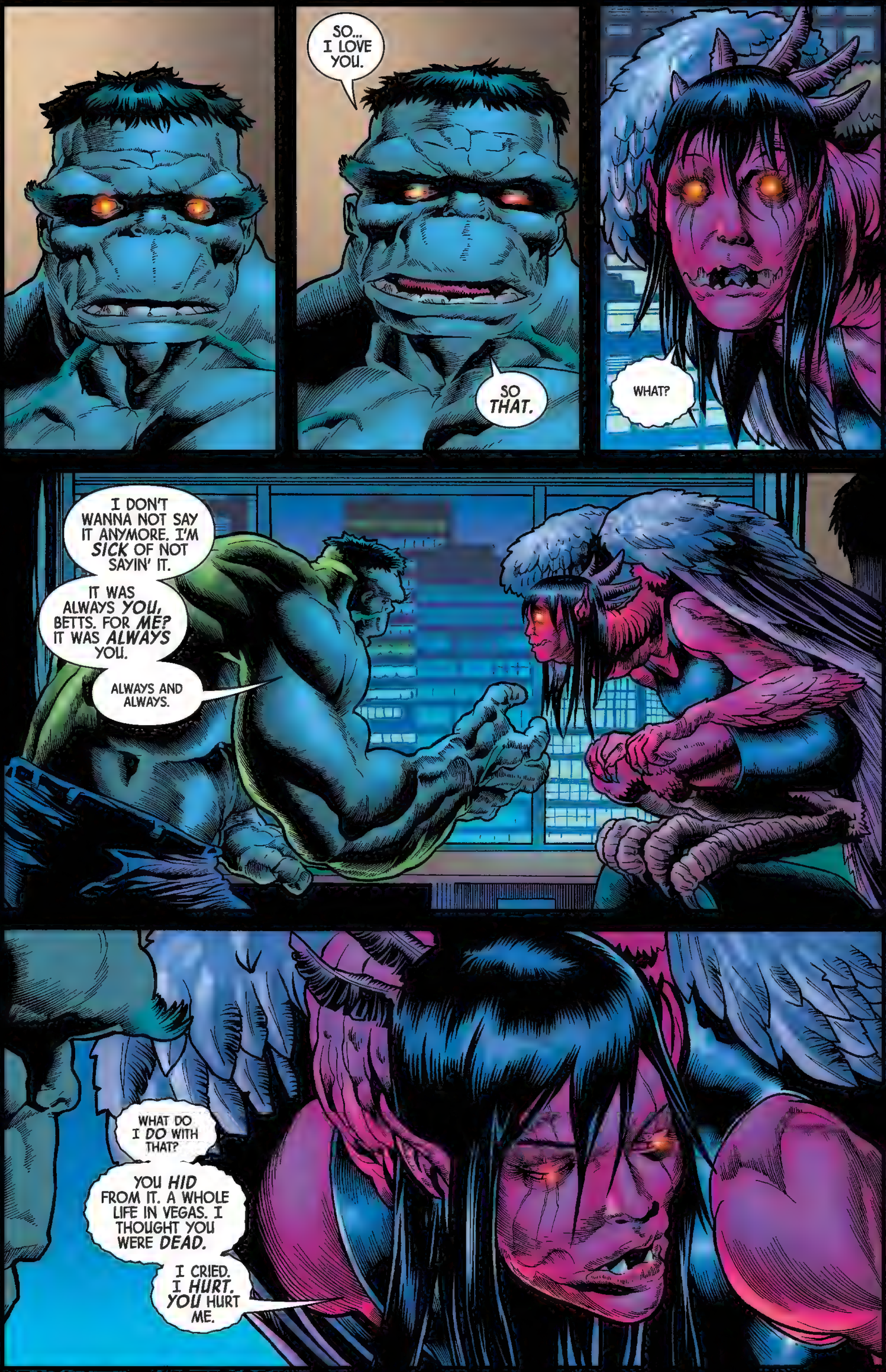

"HULK IS DONE WITH IT."
THE BAXTER BUILDING.
SO. I JUST GOT AN ENCRYPTED TEXT--FROM JEN, ON THE OLD FF PROTOCOL.
SHE SAYS SHE'S OKAY. THE HULK AIN'T RAGIN'-- SHE'S GOT IT ALL UNDER CONTROL.
SHE'LL BRING US IN IF SHE NEEDS US--BUT RIGHT NOW, SHE'S WORKIN' OUT THE NEXT MOVE.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, FOLKS?
SHOULD WE TELL HER WE ARE TOO...
...OR KEEP THAT UNDER WRAPS?
"TELL ME, THEN."

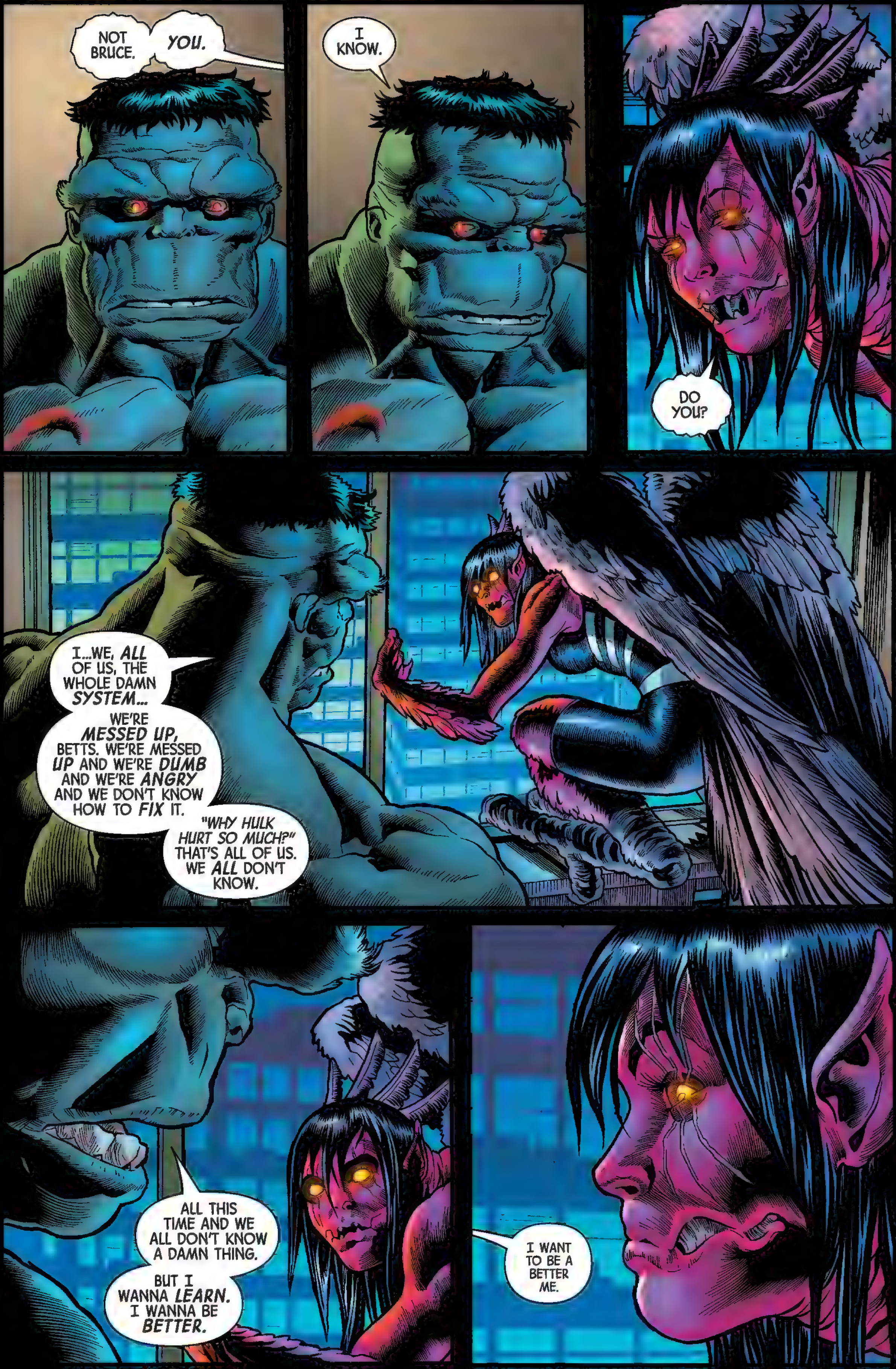

WHAT *ELSE* AREN'T YOU SAYING?
NOTHIN'. IF I WANTED TO *LIE,* I COULDA SAID I DIDN'T *REMEMBER.* WE USUALLY DON'T.
LOOK--I WAS IN THE MOMENT, BETTS. *REACTING.* AND NOW IT'S *DONE.*
ME AND THE KID GOT OUT, BANNER'S STILL THERE. IT'S *DONE.*
AND I'M *SORRY,* BUT THERE'S *NOTHIN'* I CAN DO TO--
YOU'RE *SORRY.*
...
SURE. OF *COURSE.*
NO.
YOU DON'T KNOW *HOW* TO BE SORRY.
YOU WANT TO *LOOK* SORRY.
BUT THAT'S JUST FOR *CAMOUFLAGE.* TO HIDE THE *REAL* YOU.
THE YOU THAT JUST CARES ABOUT *YOU.*

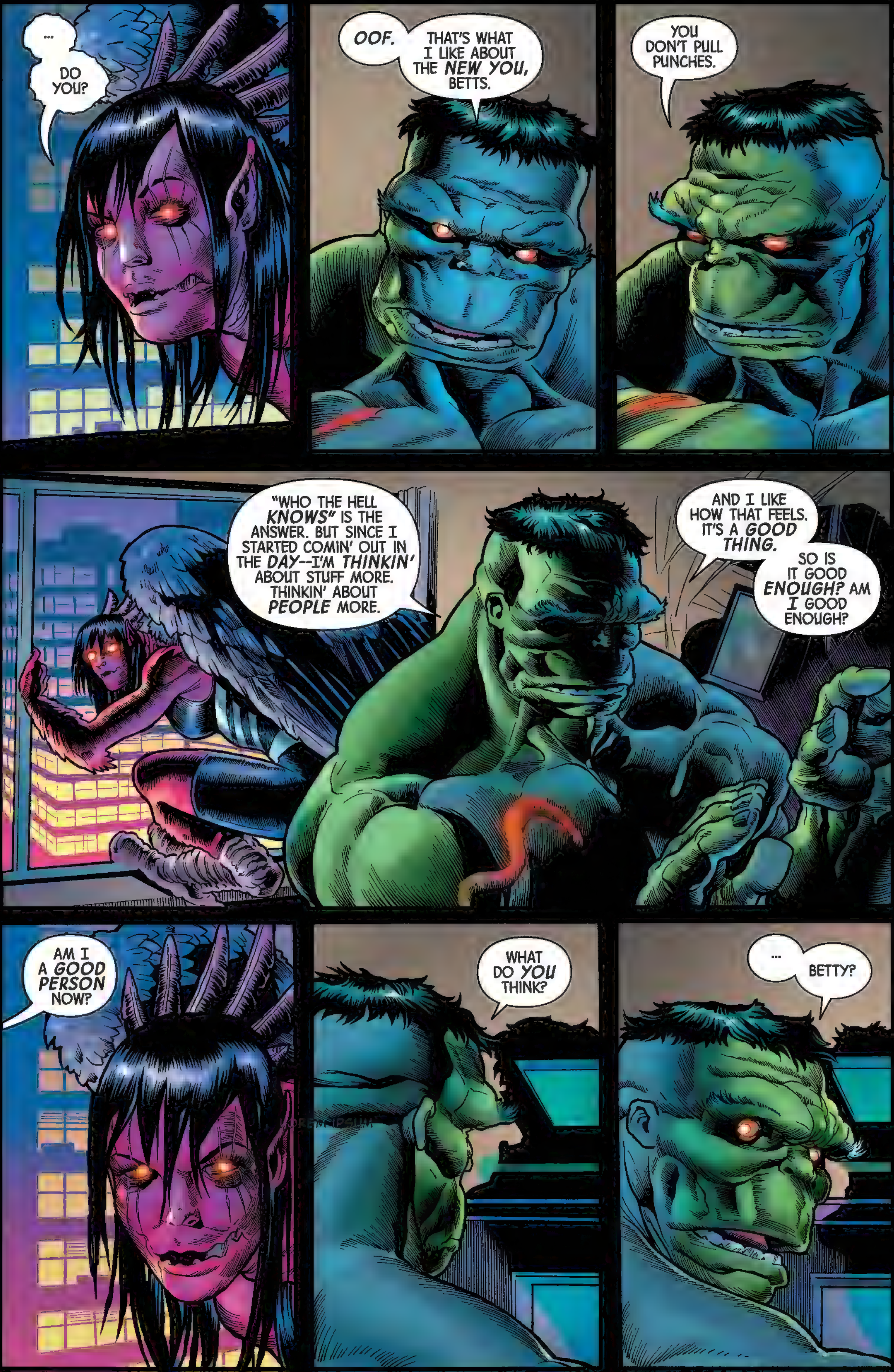

SOMETIMES I CAN IGNORE THAT ABOUT YOU.
SOMETIMES YOU CAN EVEN MAKE ME HAPPY.
WE LAUGH TOGETHER.
SOMETIMES.
SOMETIMES ISN'T ENOUGH.
THIS IS YOU.
THE SELFISH PART OF BRUCE. THE PART THAT TAKES.
BUT NOT THE PART THAT HIDES. LIKE BRUCE DID.
NOT THAT PART, I THOUGHT.
BUT I FORGOT. YOU HID A LIFE FROM ME.
"JOE FIXIT," IN VEGAS. HIDING.
YOU, BRUCE, ALL OF YOU. ALWAYS HIDING.
AND I ALWAYS COME BACK. SO YOU CAN HIDE AGAIN.
THAT'S ALL WE HAVE. ALL WE ARE.
HIDE AND SEEK.

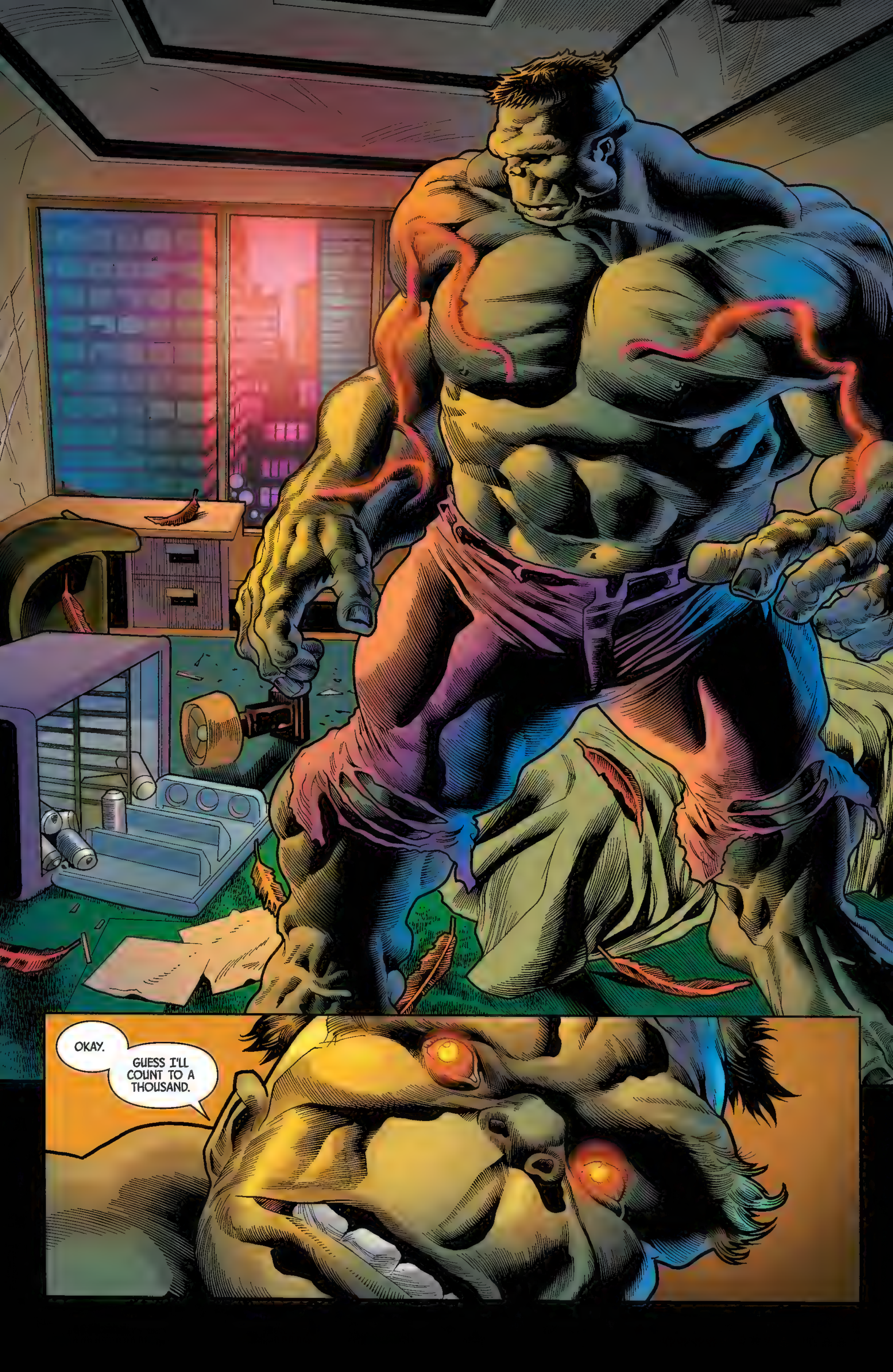

YEAH. WELL.
I THINK I'M *DONE* HIDING.
YOU WANT TO MAKE A MOVE *NOW?*
THEY'RE STILL *HUNTING* US...
NO. I *MEAN* IT.
I DON'T WANNA *HIDE* FROM YOU NO MORE.
WELL. NO POINT ANYWAY.
THERE'S NOTHING I HAVEN'T *SEEN.*
...
THERE'S ONE THING.

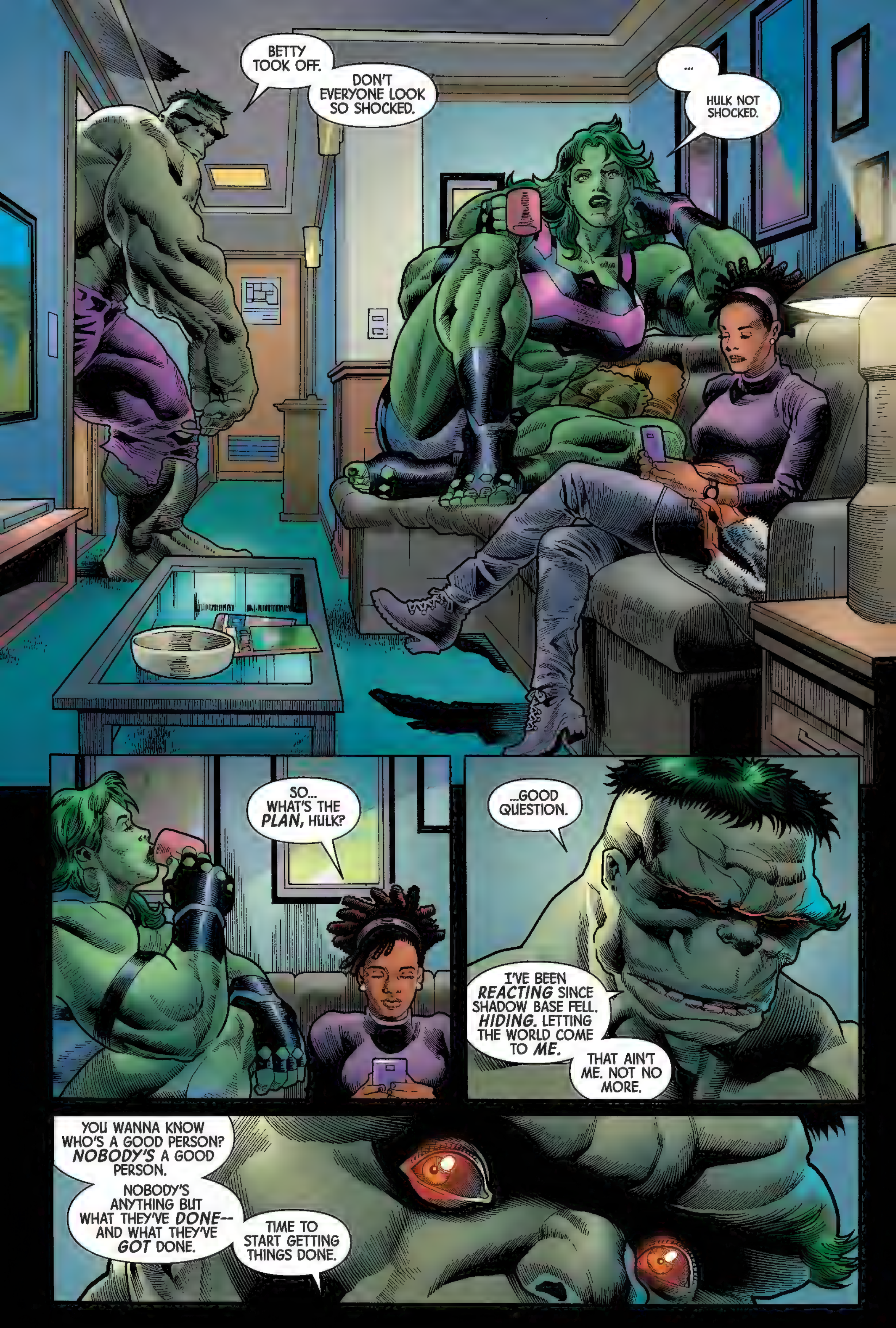

"A KID GOT BEAT HALF TO DEATH BY HIS FATHER.
"AND WHILE HIS FATHER WAS SLEEPIN' IT *OFF*-- WHILE HIS MA *WASN'T THERE*--
"--HE WATCHED A BLACK-AND-WHITE MOVIE THROUGH HIS BLACK EYES.
"AND SOMEWHERE IN THERE WAS AN IDEA OF WHAT A *GROWN-UP* IS:
"SOMEBODY WHO COULD TAKE THE *PAIN*."
THAT'S WHAT I STARTED AS.
A *KID'S* IDEA OF A *MAN*.
I TALK TOUGH, I CRACK WISE. AND IF YOU PISS ME *OFF*-- MAYBE I'LL BEAT *YOU* HALF TO DEATH.
MAYBE I'LL HURT YOU SO BAD YOU NEVER RECOVER. MAYBE I'LL *ENJOY* IT.
'CAUSE THAT'S WHAT A GROWN-UP IS.
BUT THAT AIN'T *ME* ANYMORE.
I DON'T *WANT* IT TO BE.
SO?
SO *WHAT?*

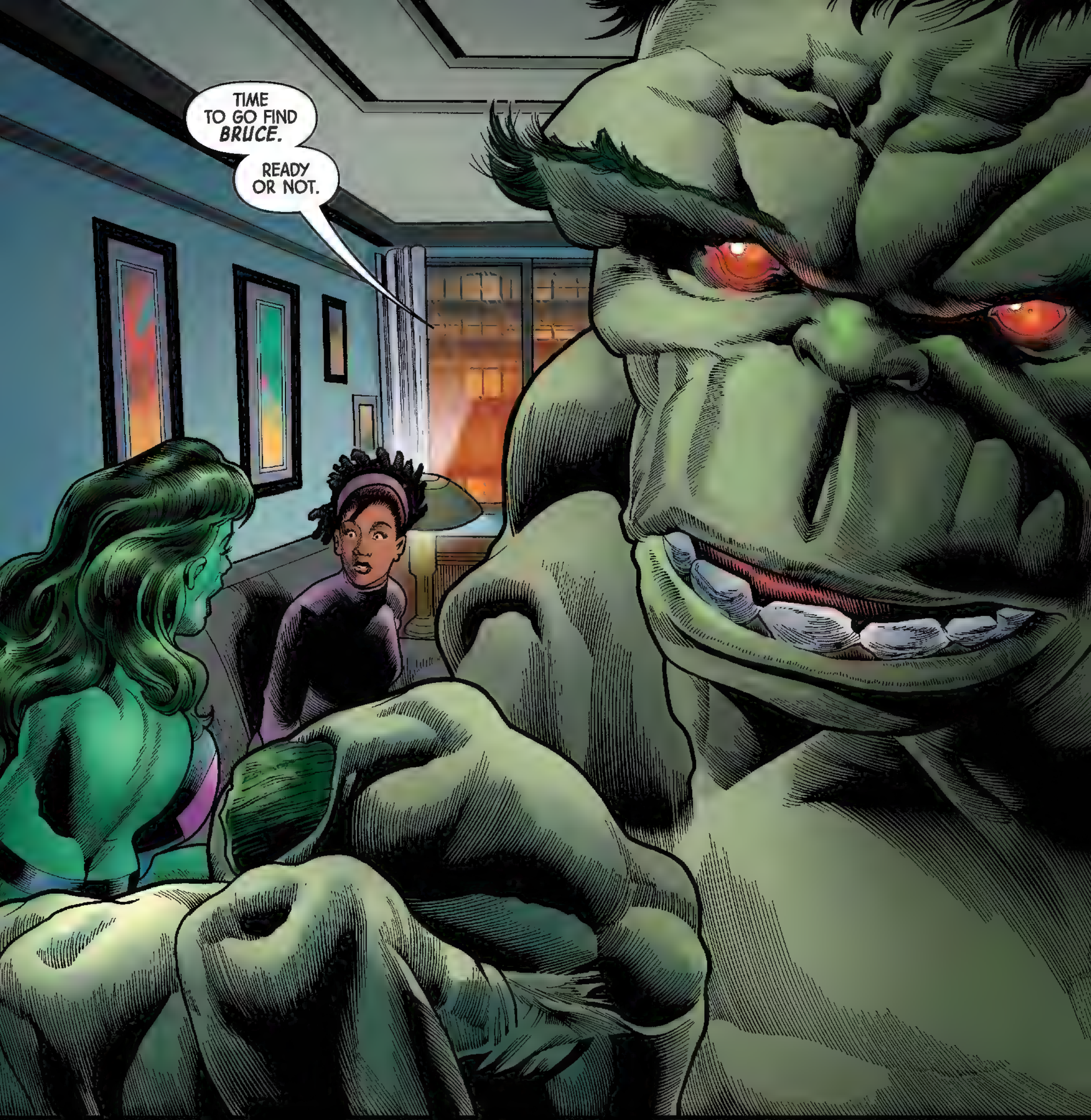

SO... I LOVE YOU.
SO *THAT.*
WHAT?
I DON'T WANNA NOT SAY IT ANYMORE. I'M *SICK* OF NOT SAYIN' IT.
IT WAS ALWAYS *YOU,* BETTS. FOR *ME?* IT WAS *ALWAYS* YOU.
ALWAYS AND ALWAYS.
WHAT DO I *DO* WITH THAT?
YOU *HID* FROM IT. A WHOLE LIFE IN VEGAS. I THOUGHT YOU WERE *DEAD.*
I CRIED. I *HURT.* *YOU* HURT ME.


NOT BRUCE.
YOU.
I KNOW.
DO YOU?
I...WE, ALL OF US, THE WHOLE DAMN SYSTEM...
WE'RE MESSED UP, BETTS. WE'RE MESSED UP AND WE'RE DUMB AND WE'RE ANGRY AND WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIX IT.
"WHY HULK HURT SO MUCH?" THAT'S ALL OF US. WE ALL DON'T KNOW.
ALL THIS TIME AND WE ALL DON'T KNOW A DAMN THING.
BUT I WANNA LEARN. I WANNA BE BETTER.
I WANT TO BE A BETTER ME.


...
DO YOU?
OOF.
THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THE *NEW YOU,* BETTS.
YOU DON'T PULL PUNCHES.
"WHO THE HELL *KNOWS"* IS THE ANSWER. BUT SINCE I STARTED COMIN' OUT IN THE *DAY*--I'M *THINKIN'* ABOUT STUFF MORE. THINKIN' ABOUT *PEOPLE* MORE.
AND I LIKE HOW THAT FEELS. IT'S A *GOOD THING.*
SO IS IT GOOD *ENOUGH?* AM *I* GOOD ENOUGH?
AM I A *GOOD PERSON* NOW?
WHAT DO *YOU* THINK?
...
BETTY?


OKAY.
GUESS I'LL COUNT TO A THOUSAND.


BETTY TOOK OFF.
DON'T EVERYONE LOOK SO SHOCKED.
...
HULK NOT SHOCKED.
SO... WHAT'S THE *PLAN,* HULK?
...GOOD QUESTION.
I'VE BEEN *REACTING* SINCE SHADOW BASE FELL. *HIDING.* LETTING THE WORLD COME TO *ME.*
THAT AIN'T ME. NOT NO MORE.
YOU WANNA KNOW WHO'S A GOOD PERSON? *NOBODY'S* A GOOD PERSON.
NOBODY'S ANYTHING BUT WHAT THEY'VE *DONE*-- AND WHAT THEY'VE *GOT* DONE.
TIME TO START GETTING THINGS DONE.


TIME TO GO FIND *BRUCE.*
READY OR NOT.

HIDING PLACES

49

“THROUGH ME YOU PASS INTO THE CITY OF WOE:
THROUGH ME YOU PASS INTO ETERNAL PAIN:
THROUGH ME AMONG THE PEOPLE LOST FOR AYE.
JUSTICE THE FOUNDER OF MY FABRIC MOV’D:
TO REAR ME WAS THE TASK OF POWER DIVINE,
SUPREMEST WISDOM, AND PRIMEVAL LOVE.
BEFORE ME THINGS CREATE WERE NONE, SAVE THINGS
ETERNAL, AND ETERNAL I ENDURE.”

– DANTE ALIGHIERI,
THE VISION OF HELL

THE ROCKET WASN'T A BOMB.

THE COUNTDOWN WASN'T A MURDER ATTEMPT.

THE SCIENTIST HADN'T KILLED HIS OWN FATHER.

HE HID NO SECRETS FROM THE WOMAN HE LOVED.

THE TEENAGER HAD NO SUBLIMATED DEATH WISH.

AND THE MAN WHO BECAME A MONSTER WAS THE FIRST TO SUGGEST HELPING HUMANKIND.

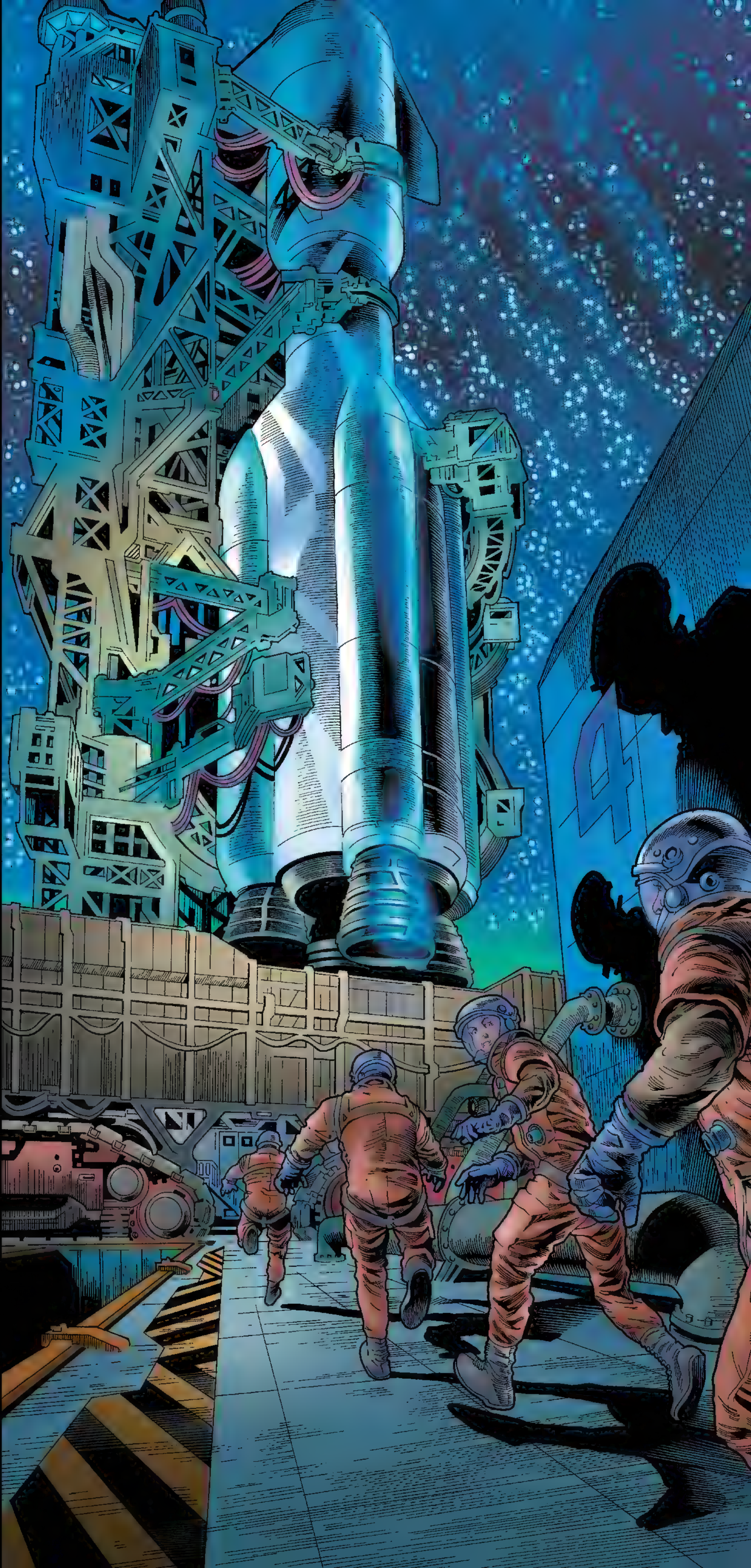
IN A LOT OF WAYS, THE STORY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR IS AN ODDLY AMERICAN FAIRYTALE. FOUR PIONEERS, BREAKING THE RULES FOR A JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN.

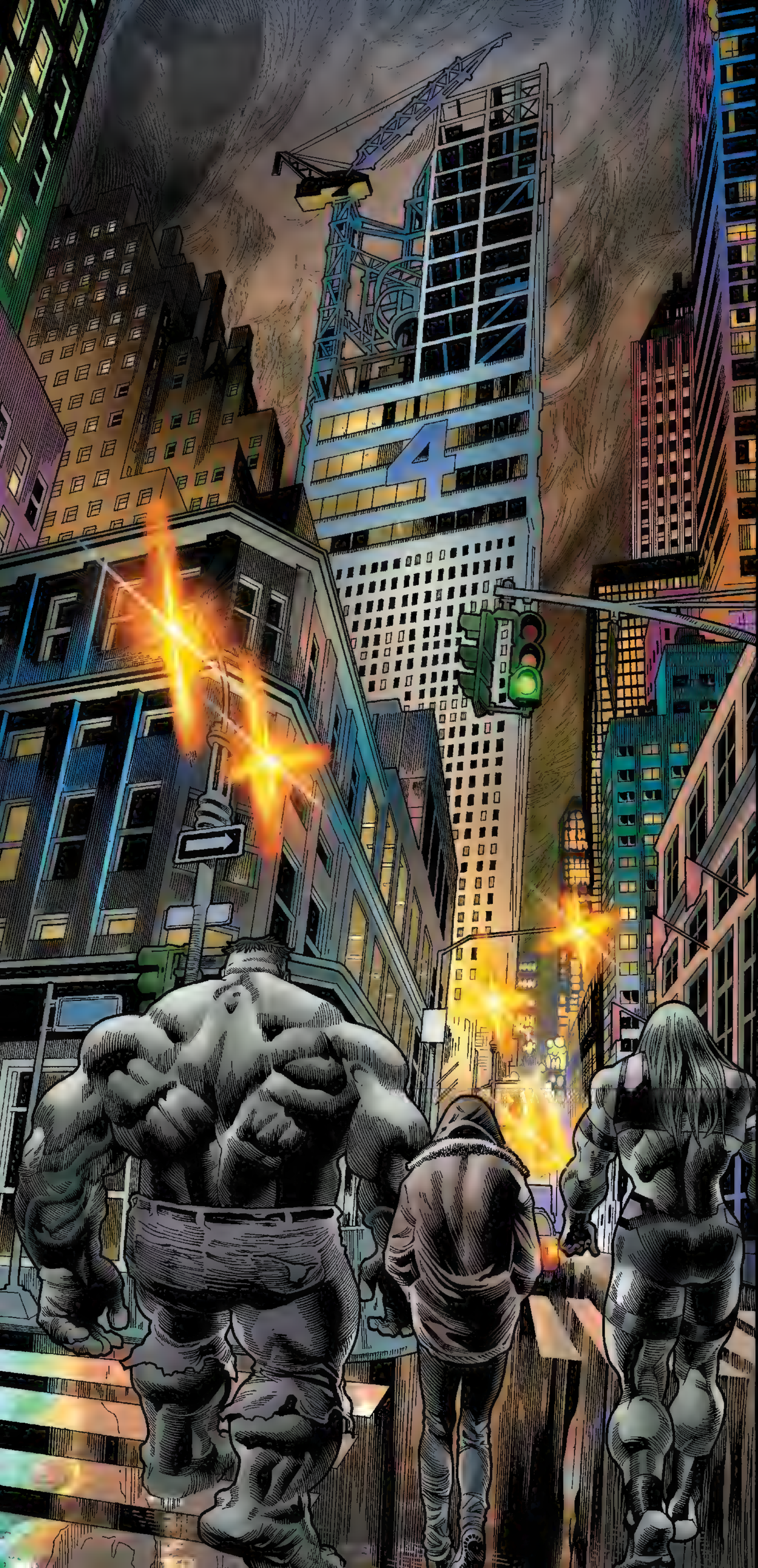
WHEN THEY CAME BACK, THEY WERE AVATARS OF SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS, OF THE FAMILY UNIT, OF COURAGE AGAINST THE ODDS. AND IF ANY PART OF THEM LOOKED MONSTROUS FROM THE OUTSIDE, THAT WAS ONLY BECAUSE WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.

THEY WERE AMERICA AS IT LIKES TO SEE ITSELF--AS SYMBOLIC AS THE ROCKET THAT TOOK THEM TO THE STARS.

WHICH WASN'T A BOMB.

BUT AS ABOVE, NOT SO BELOW.





THE HULK WALKED, AND WE WALKED WITH HIM, THROUGH RAIN-SLICK STREETS SO EMPTY THEY FELT LIKE A DREAM.

I WAS THERE TO GET THE STORY, I TOLD MYSELF. AS IF THE STORY WAS SOMETHING I COULD FIND AND PACKAGE AND LET GO, INSTEAD OF SOMETHING INSIDE ME, PART OF ME, DRIVING ME ON.

THE OTHER HULK--JEN WALTERS, BRUCE BANNER'S COUSIN--HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH HER OLD FRIEND BEN GRIMM EVER SINCE THE FIGHT WITH THE AVENGERS. IF WE WANTED TO RESCUE BRUCE FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION, BEN HAD A WAY TO DO IT.

I WAS ANGRY. WHAT IF IT WAS A TRAP? DIDN'T SHE KNOW THE RISKS?

BUT SHE KNEW. SHE WAS OUR AMBASSADOR FROM THE RAREFIED WORLD OF THE SUPER HEROES, WHERE EVERY FIGHT IS A MISUNDERSTANDING, WHERE IT CAN ALL BE SMOOTHED OVER WITH A LITTLE TIME OR THE RIGHT WORD IN THE RIGHT EAR.

I'VE NEVER SEEN THAT WORLD. BUT IT EXISTS.

THE HULK JUST NODDED. HE KNEW WHERE HE WAS GOING, NO MATTER WHAT. WITH BETTY GONE, I DON'T THINK HE CARED HOW.

SO HE JUST WALKED, AND SO DID WE.

IN THE WORLD OF THE SUPER HEROES, WHEN SOMETHING SMASHES YOUR HOME TO RUBBLE, THEY JUST BUILD IT BACK AGAIN, BETTER THAN NEW.

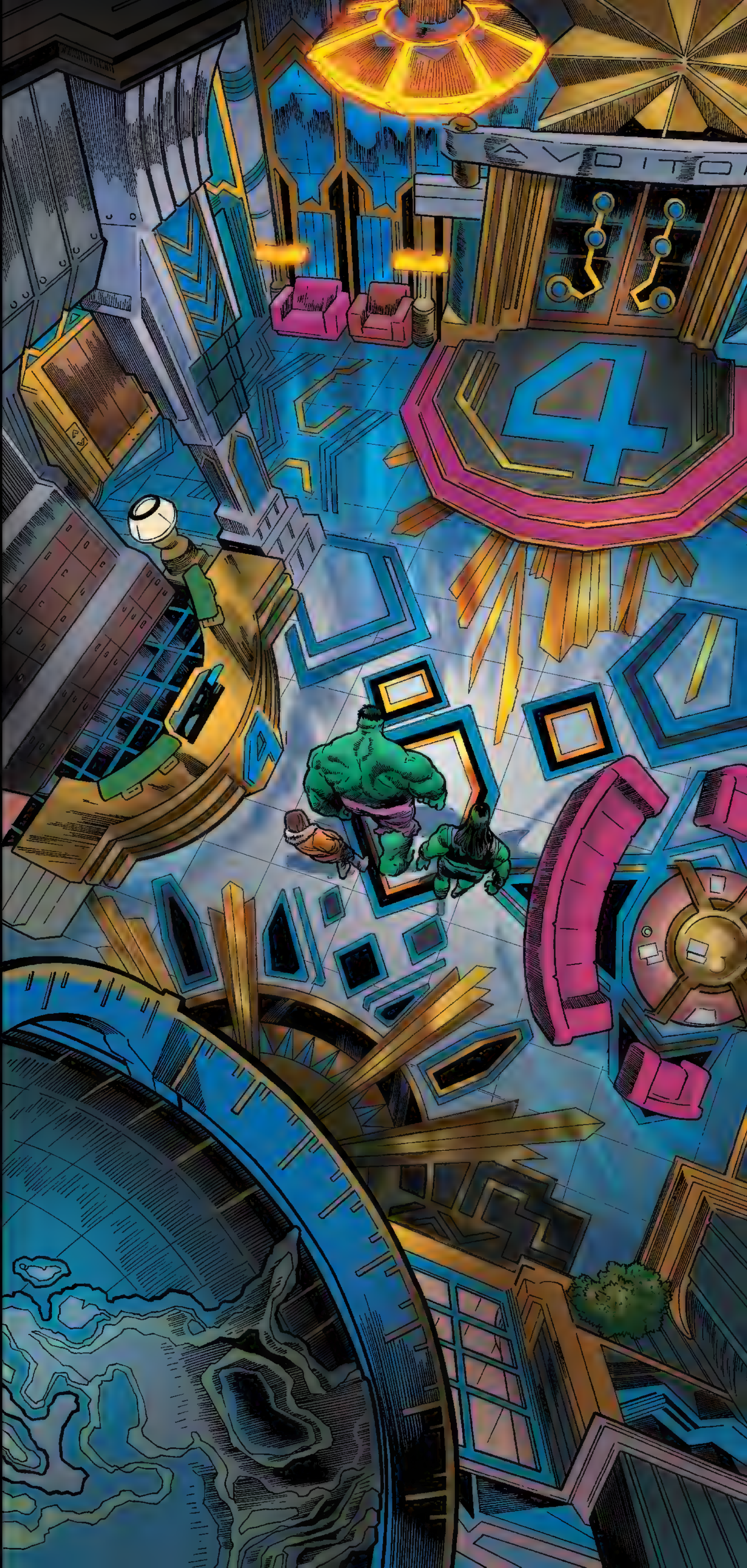
NOTHING EVER REALLY CHANGES.

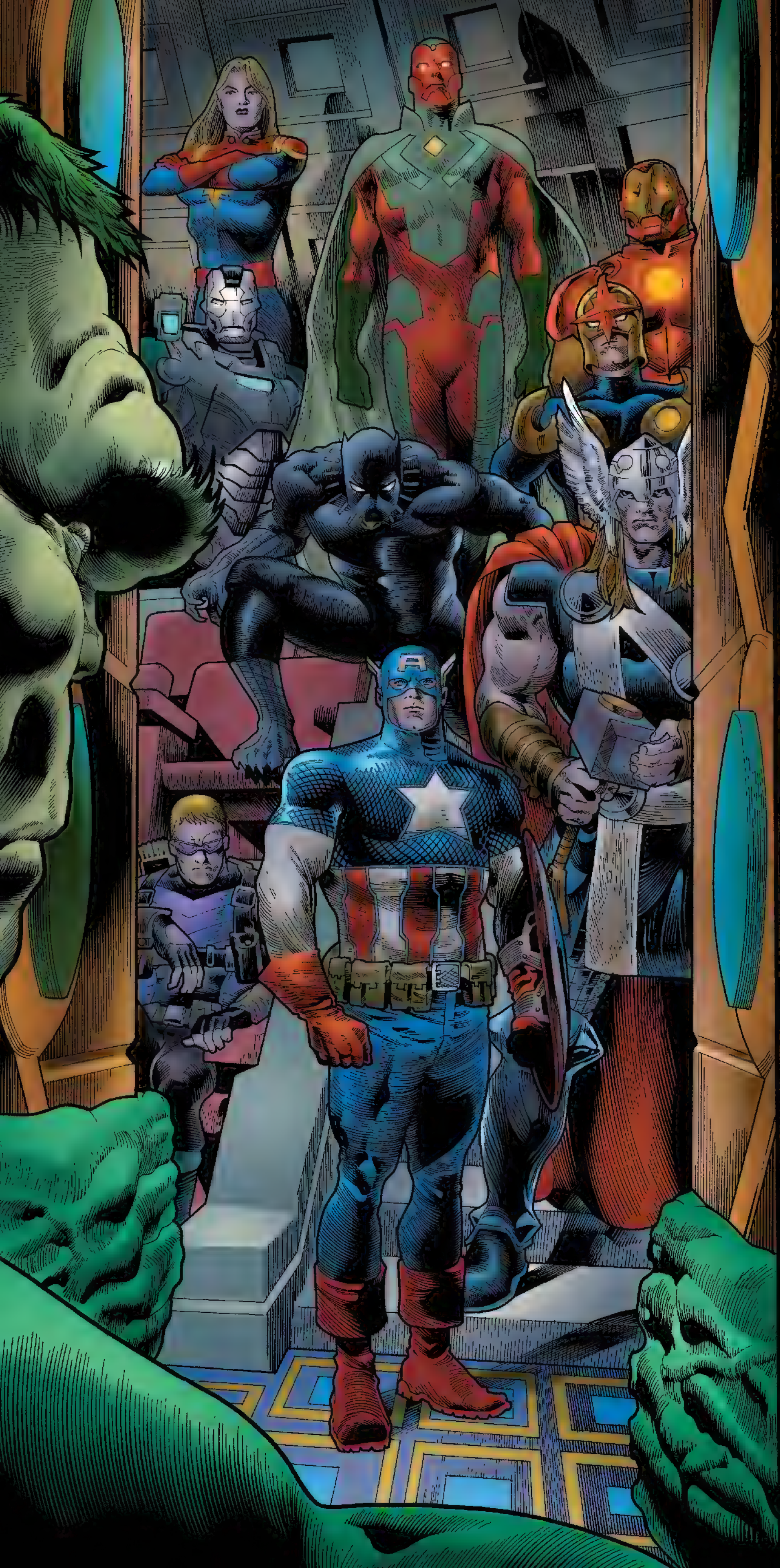
THE LOBBY WAS BEAUTIFUL, AS QUIET AND SERENE AS A CHURCH. IT WAS A PLACE FOR PEOPLE TO WAIT IN COMFORT--AND A LITTLE AWE--FOR THE ATTENTIONS OF THE MIGHTY. TO PRAY FOR THEIR AID.

AS WE ENTERED, JEN EXHALED, AND I COULDN'T TELL IF THAT WAS RELIEF OR SOME DEEP SADNESS. SHE WAS IN HER PLACE OF POWER, BUT SHE DIDN'T QUITE FIT THERE ANYMORE.

THE HULK DIDN'T FIT AT ALL. HE LOOKED *WRONG* HERE--SOMETHING PROFANE, AN UNHOLY THING IN A HOLY PLACE.

HE KEPT WALKING.





AND THEN--
THERE THEY
WERE. WAITING
FOR US, FACES
WREATHED IN
JUDGMENT.

THE
SUPER HEROES.

JEN PUT HER ARM UP--A GREEN STEEL BAR, PADDED WITH MUSCLE. FOR A MOMENT, I FELT LIKE I WAS ON A ROLLER-COASTER, READYING FOR THE DROP.

THE HULK STEPPED FORWARD.

THE ROOM BRISTLED. HE MADE THEM ANGRY JUST BY STANDING THERE, NOT SAYING A WORD-- AS IF THE ANGER WAS FLOWING OUT OF HIM AND INTO THEM.

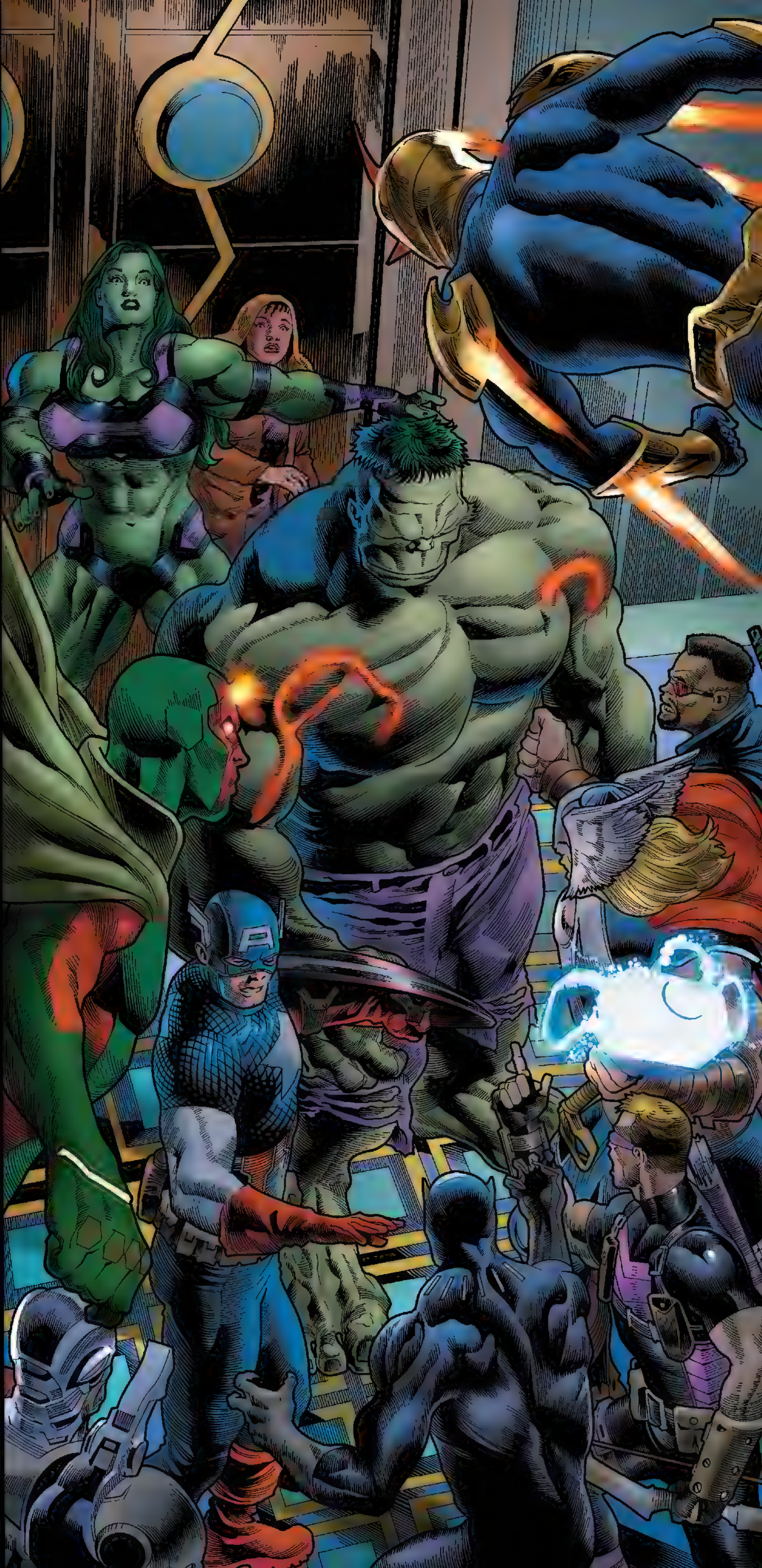
HE DIDN'T SPEAK.

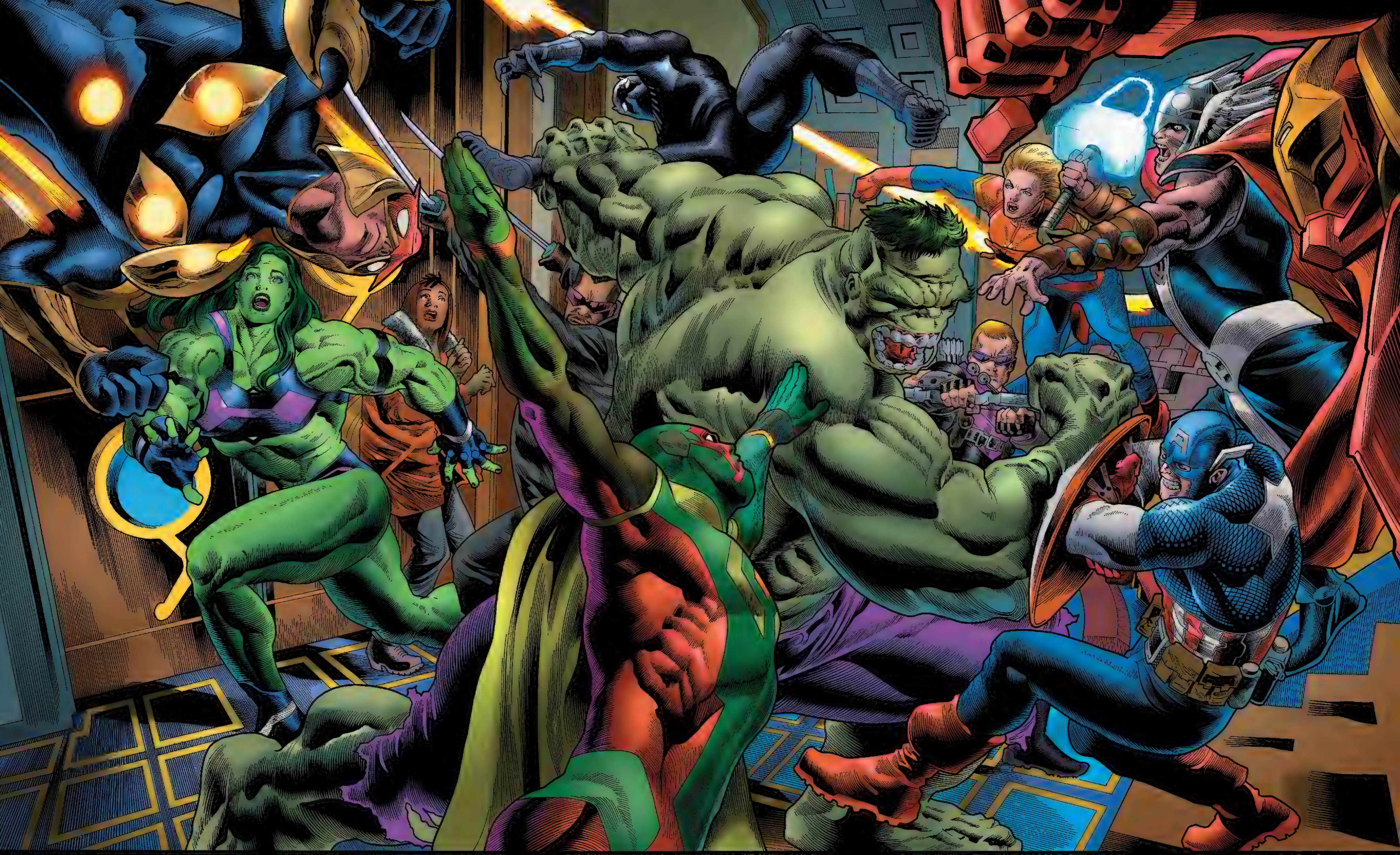
HE ONLY SMILED.

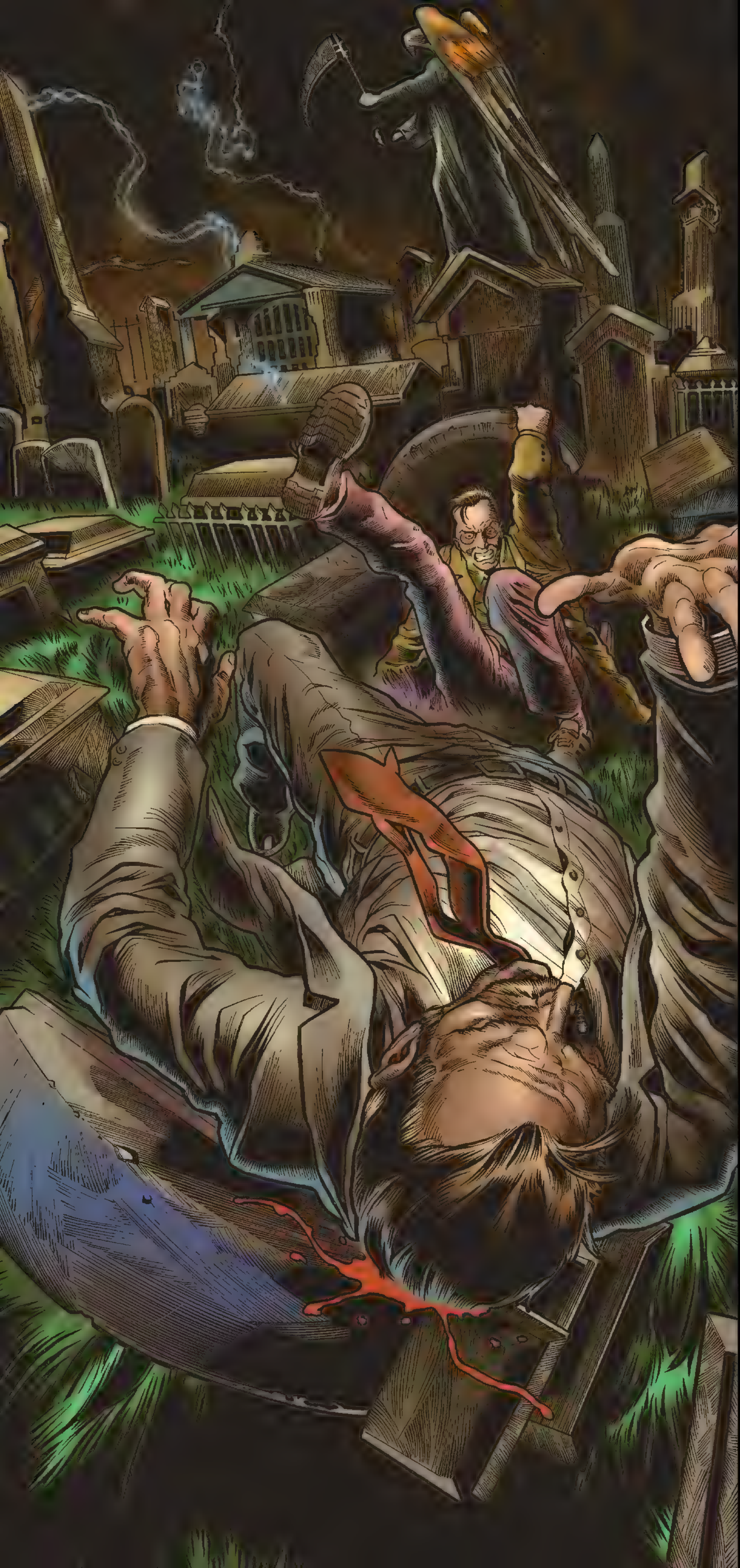
THE ROOM ERUPTED.

STEVE ROGERS TRIED TO CALM THINGS, BUT THE ANGER WAS FLOWING NOW-- A FLOOD TIDE HEADING FOR US. THOR LAUNCHED INTO A SPEECH, BUT I COULDN'T HEAR HIM ABOVE ALL THE OTHER SPEECHES, ALL THE OTHER PROCLAMATIONS AND PRONOUNCEMENTS.

THE HULK KEPT SMILING.




I DIDN'T SEE WHO THREW THE FIRST PUNCH. SOMEONE MUST HAVE.
BUT THE FIGHT WAS ON.
MAYBE IT ALWAYS HAD BEEN. MAYBE IT ALWAYS WILL BE.
MAYBE EVERY FIGHT THE HULK HAS IS THE SAME FIGHT...



...EVER SINCE THE BEGINNING.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE FIRST GAMMA BOMB TEST, BRIAN BANNER DIED FROM A VIOLENT ASSAULT IN THE GRAVEYARD WHERE HIS WIFE REBECCA WAS BURIED. IT WAS THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DAY SHE HAD DIED.

BRIAN MURDERED HER.

HE FORCED HIS SON BRUCE TO LIE ABOUT IT IN COURT--TO BE COMPLICIT IN HIS OWN MOTHER'S KILLING--BUT THE TRUTH CAME OUT. SOMETIMES IT WORKS THAT WAY. BUT HE PLED INSANITY AND WAS COMMITTED, RATHER THAN JAILED, AND RELEASED INTO BRUCE'S CARE.

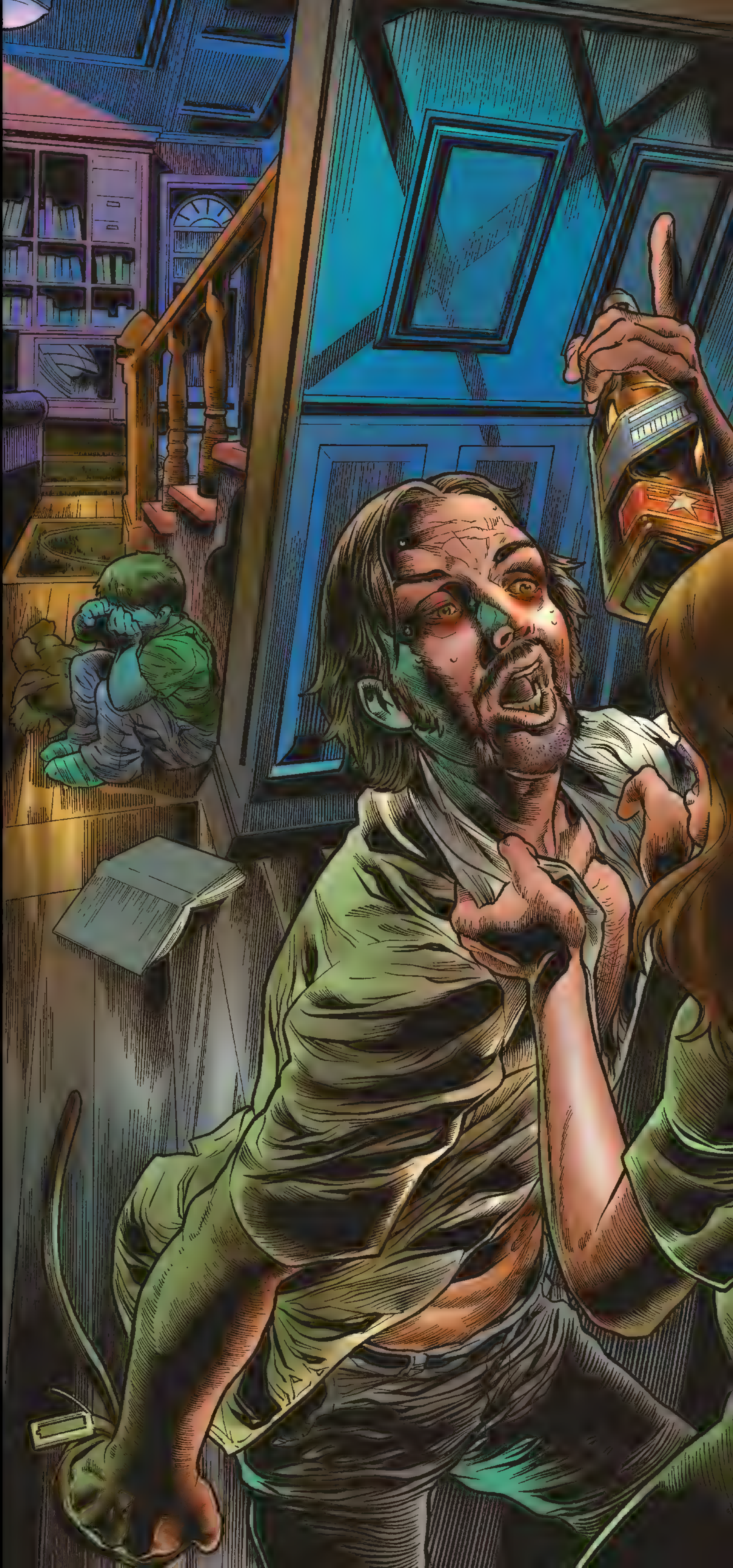
THE OFFICIAL STORY OF HIS DEATH WAS THAT HE WAS THE VICTIM OF A MUGGING--BUT FOOTPRINTS ON THE GRAVES MATCHED BRUCE'S SHOE SIZE, AND A PLASTIC STAR LEFT AT THE SCENE CAN ALSO BE SPOTTED HANGING ABOVE BRUCE'S CRIB IN FAMILY PHOTOS.

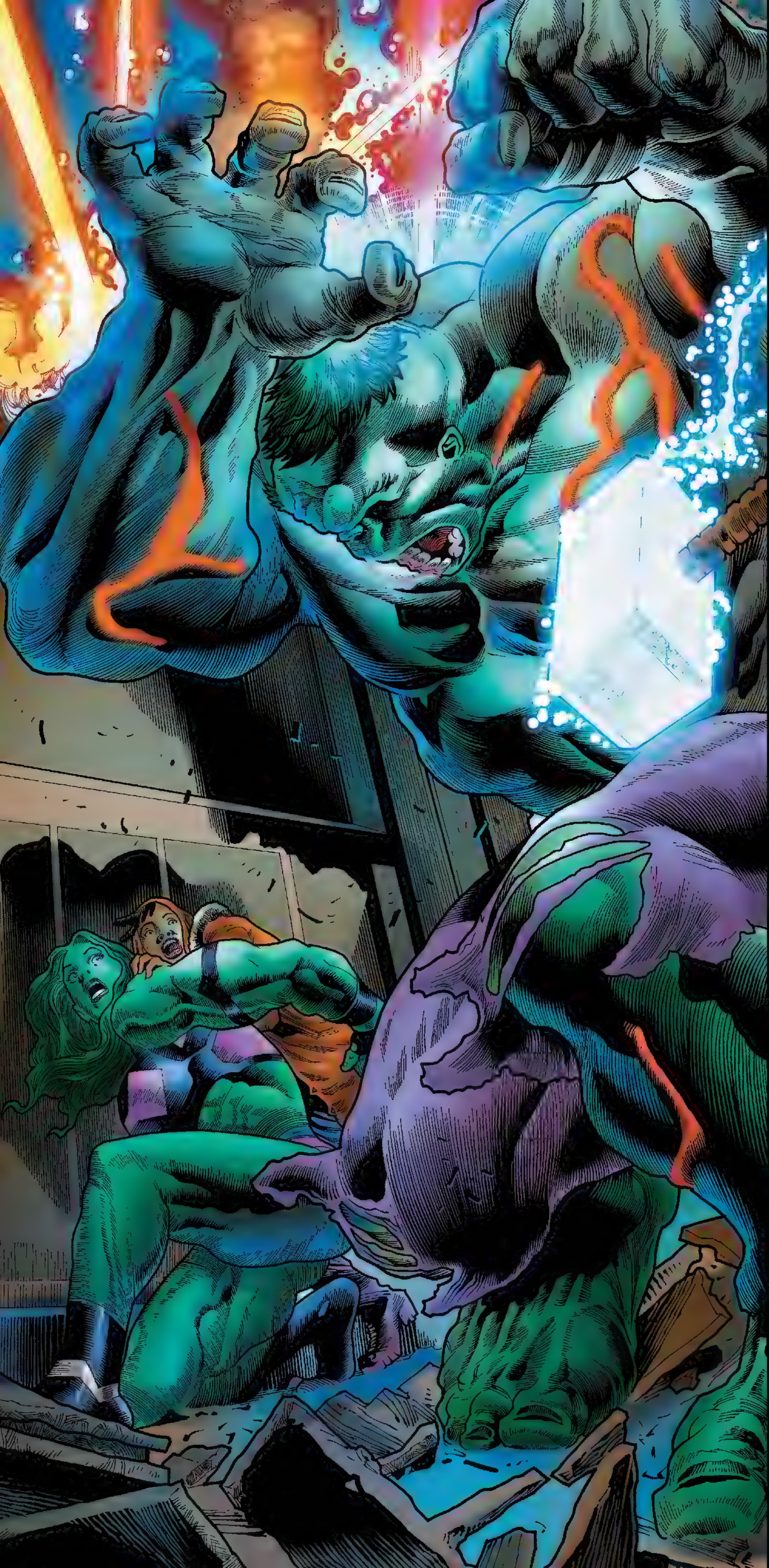
THIS EVIDENCE WAS IGNORED BY THE DAYTON POLICE--WHO WOULD HAVE KNOWN REBECCA, AND PERHAPS EVEN KNOWN HER BROTHER-IN-LAW, SHERIFF MORRIS WALTERS.

SOMETIMES IT WORKS THAT WAY TOO.

SOMETIMES
IT DOESN'T
WORK AT ALL.

MAYBE EVERY
FIGHT THE
HULK HAS IS
THE SAME FIGHT.





MAYBE EVERY FIGHT THE HULK *LOSES* IS THE SAME FIGHT TOO.

JEN WAS SHIELDING ME, YELLING AT THEM ALL-- HER COMRADES IN ARMS, HER FRIENDS--TO STOP. TELLING THEM I WAS A CIVILIAN, THAT THEY WERE PUTTING ME IN DANGER.

I DON'T KNOW IF THEY HEARD HER OVER THE NOISE. THE SOUND OF THEIR FISTS AND THEIR ENDLESS WEAPONS. THE SOUND OF THE HULK'S BONES BREAKING AND KNITTING BACK TOGETHER.

IT WAS A CACOPHONY. IT FELT LIKE THE END OF EVERYTHING, AND IT FELT LIKE IT'D NEVER END. MAYBE IT NEVER WILL.

BUT HE NEVER FELL.

SOMETHING IN HIM WOULDN'T LET HIM GIVE IN. I THINK THAT WOULD'VE BEEN TRUE EVEN IF THEY'D KNOCKED HIM COLD, KILLED HIM, SAWED HIM IN PIECES, PUT HIM INTO JARS... HE'D STILL NEVER FALL.

BECAUSE IF HE DID, HE'D NEVER GET UP AGAIN.

I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE IT IN ME TO FORGIVE HIM. BUT I KNOW HIM NOW BETTER THAN I DID.

AND *THAT* PIECE OF HIM, I RECOGNIZE.

DID THEY SEE THEMSELVES IN HIM AS WELL?

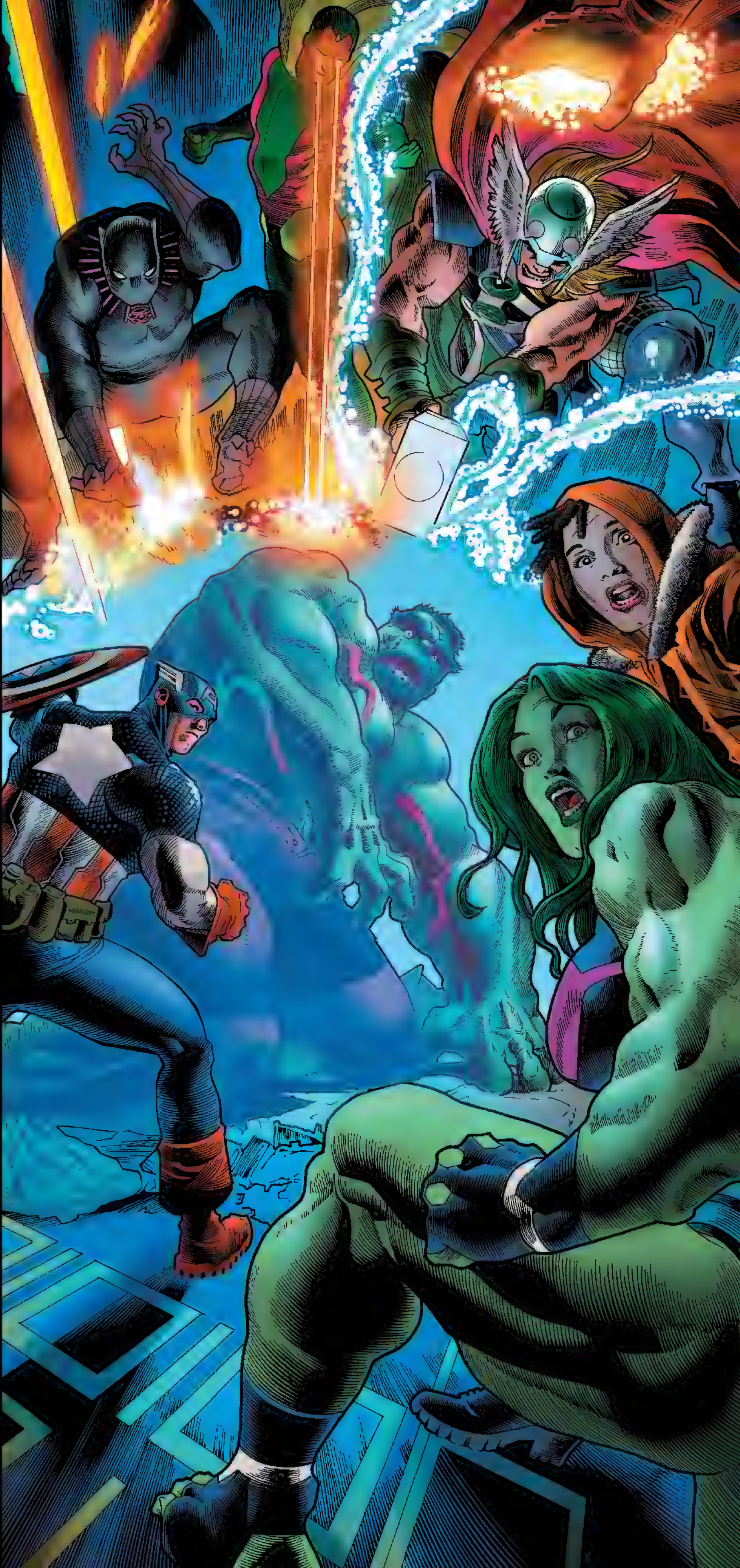
WAS THAT WHY THEY COULDN'T HELP ATTACKING? BANNER SAW THE HULK IN MIRRORS, BUT THE HULK IS A MIRROR TOO-- A REFLECTION THAT REFLECTS BACK AT YOU. AND THESE WEREN'T GAMMA PEOPLE--DID THE HULK SEEM LIKE A CONTAGION TO THEM? WAS HE UNCLEAN?

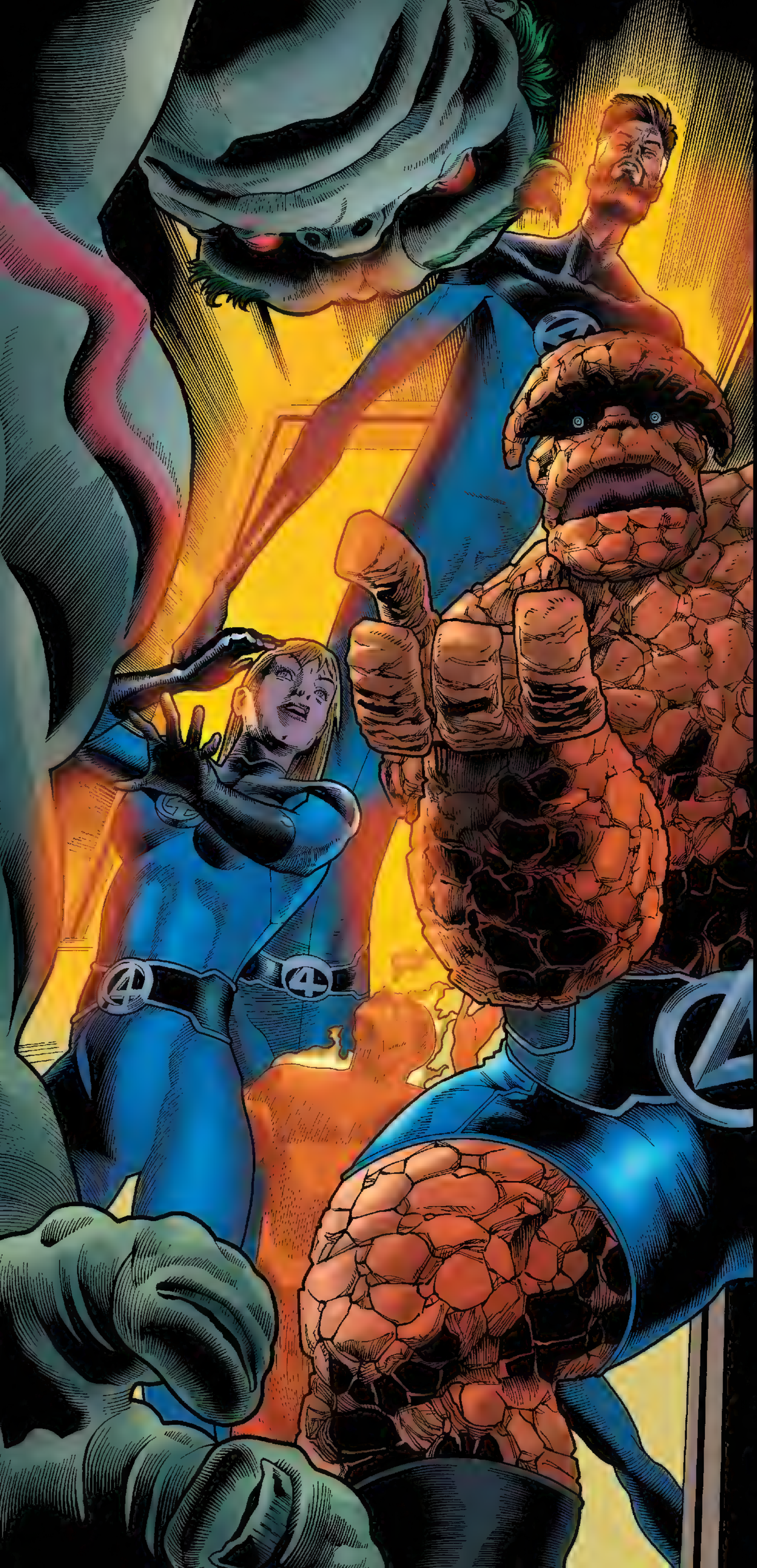
WE'LL NEVER KNOW.

THE NOISE STOPPED. THOR'S HAMMER KEPT FALLING, BUT IT ONLY HIT SILENCE. AN INVISIBLE SPACE AROUND THE HULK TOOK SHAPE, AND WIDENED.

THE SHOUTING AND YELLING FELL TO GRUMBLING, THEN TO NOTHING. MAYBE THE FORCE-FIELD WAS BLOCKING WHATEVER EFFECT THE HULK WAS HAVING. OR MAYBE IT WAS JUST DOING WHAT THEY ALL WANTED--KEEPING THE HORROR AWAY FROM THOSE UNTOUCHED BY IT.

THE DOORS OPENED BEHIND US.





I'D ONLY SEEN THE FANTASTIC FOUR ON TV. UP CLOSE...THEY WERE DIFFERENT.

REED RICHARDS' BODY MADE LITTLE ALIEN SOUNDS AS HE STRETCHED INTO THE ROOM.

JOHNNY STORM'S FACE WAS HIDDEN IN FLAME. HE COULDN'T SEEM TO TURN IT DOWN, OR OFF.

AND SUE RICHARDS STARED AT AND THROUGH EVERYTHING, SEEING SHAPES IN THE AIR NOBODY ELSE COULD GUESS AT--AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I FELT WE MUST HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON.

MAYBE THE HULK WAS RUBBING OFF ON THEM TOO. MAKING THE FAIRYTALE AMERICAN FAMILY SEEM STRANGE AND UNKNOWABLE. OR MAYBE THEY'D BEEN LIKE HIM ALL ALONG.

MAYBE THERE WAS SOMETHING PRIMAL IN THEM, FROM SOME *OTHER PLACE.*

IT WAS BEN GRIMM--THE THING--WHO LOOKED THE MOST HUMAN. *"WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YA ALL?"* HE SAID, GENUINELY AGGRIEVED. *"DID THEY HURT YA, PAL?"*

THE HULK LOOKED ALMOST SAD WHEN BEN SAID THAT.

BUT HE DIDN'T TAKE BEN'S HAND.

HE NEVER SAID A WORD AS WE LEFT THE WORLD OF THE SUPER HEROES BEHIND US. HE HADN'T BEATEN IT, IN THE END.

BUT IT HADN'T BEATEN HIM, EITHER.

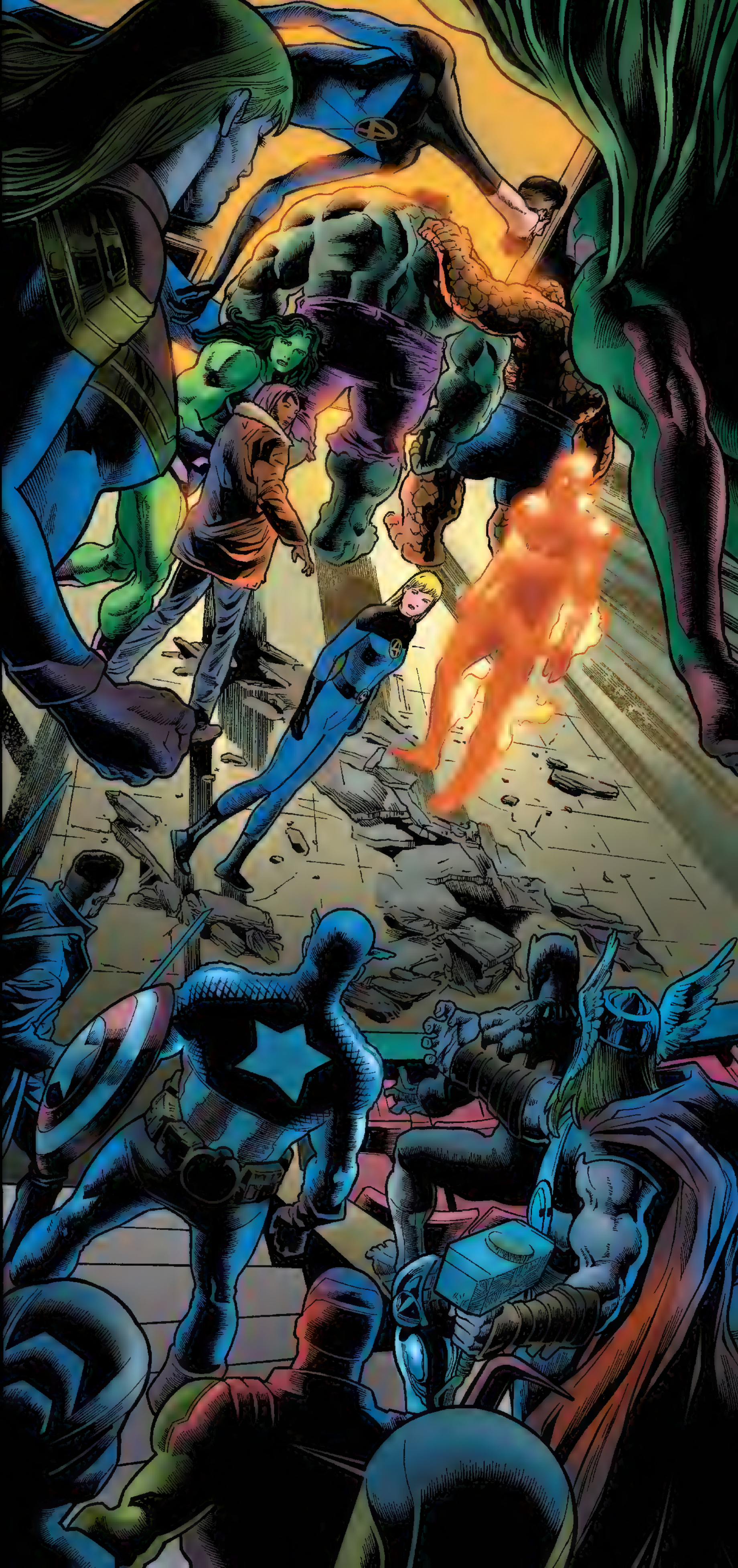
BEN GRIMM'S VOICE SEEMED TO COME FROM FAR AWAY. *"YER OKAY, PAL. YER OKAY."*

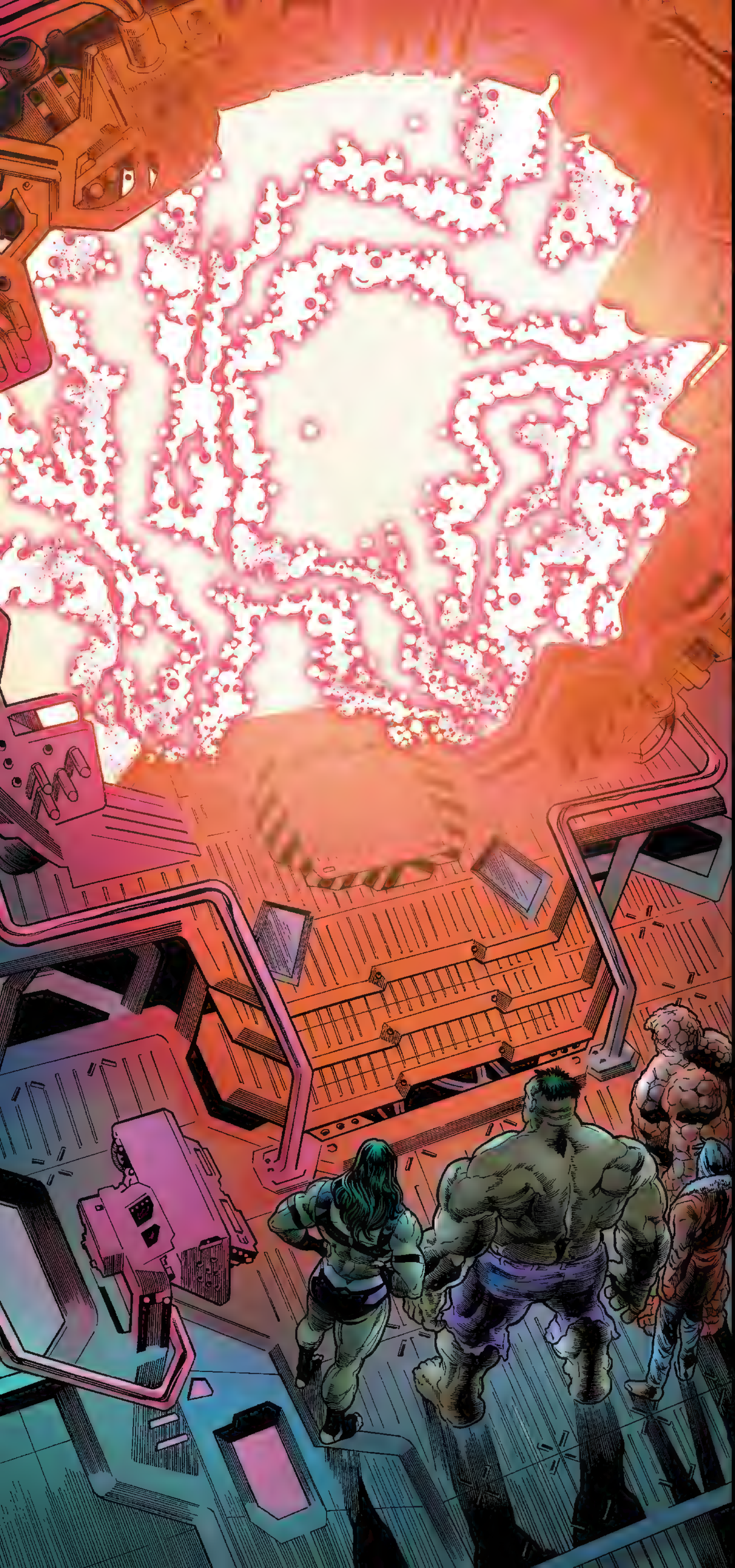
IT WAS A VOICE WITH ALL THE DEEP GRAVEL OF THE HULK'S AND MORE--BUT WARMER SOMEHOW. I THOUGHT OF MY GRANDFATHER, AT MY MOTHER'S FUNERAL. HE'D SPOKEN OF THE LAST DAY, WHEN GOD WOULD CALL THE SOULS OF THE DEAD. CALL THEM AND JUDGE THEM.

"YER OKAY, PAL. YER OKAY."

WE WALKED DEEPER INTO THE BUILDING, PASSING THROUGH CORRIDORS OF FLASHING LIGHT AND SOUND. SECURITY SYSTEMS AND STRANGE EXPERIMENTS. WONDERS AND PORTENTS.

UNTIL FINALLY, WE CAME TO THE GATE.





THE FOREVER GATE.

IT WAS A PORTAL TO WHEREVER YOU WANTED TO GO, BEN SAID. A JUNCTION TO ANYWHERE. THE KIND OF CASUAL MIRACLE THE FANTASTIC FOUR DEALT WITH EVERY DAY.

DR. RICHARDS TRIED TO EXPLAIN IT. HIS VOICE FALTERED AS HE SPOKE OF PARTICLES, WAVES, FREQUENCIES, GAMMA AND COSMIC RADIATION--AS IF HE WAS TRYING TO SPEAK, IN THE ONLY LANGUAGE HE KNEW, OF THINGS EVEN HE HAD NO WORDS FOR. EVENTUALLY, HE FALTERED, SHOOK HIS HEAD AND LET BEN TALK FOR HIM.

IT WAS SIMPLE, BEN SAID. THE GATE WOULD SCAN THE HULK, EVERY CELL OF HIM, AND USE WHAT IT FOUND IN HIM TO FIND WHERE WE WERE GOING. IT MIGHT NOT BRING THE HULK TO THE LEADER'S DOOR, BUT IT'D AT LEAST TAKE HIM TO THE LEADER'S BACKYARD--AND MAYBE THAT WAY, HULK COULD SURPRISE HIM. IT WAS A FAIR CHANCE--NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS.

WHEN HE SAID IT, IT MADE SENSE. WE WAITED FOR THE HULK TO SAY SOMETHING BACK.

THE MACHINE BEGAN TO HUM.

THE HULK LOOKED INTO THE GATE.

AND THE GATE LOOKED INTO THE HULK.

AS THE MACHINE ANALYZED THE DATA, SEARCHING THROUGH POSSIBILITIES, IMAGES FLICKERED AND FLOWED IN THE CRACKLING RED PLASMA.

FOR A MOMENT, I SAW FOUR FIGURES TAKE SHAPE--A BIG-HEARTED SCIENTIST AND HIS LOVING WIFE, A GRUFF EX-MILITARY MAN, A CAREFREE TEENAGER. A FAMILY OF FOUR. YOU COULD SEE THE LOVE BETWEEN THEM ALL.

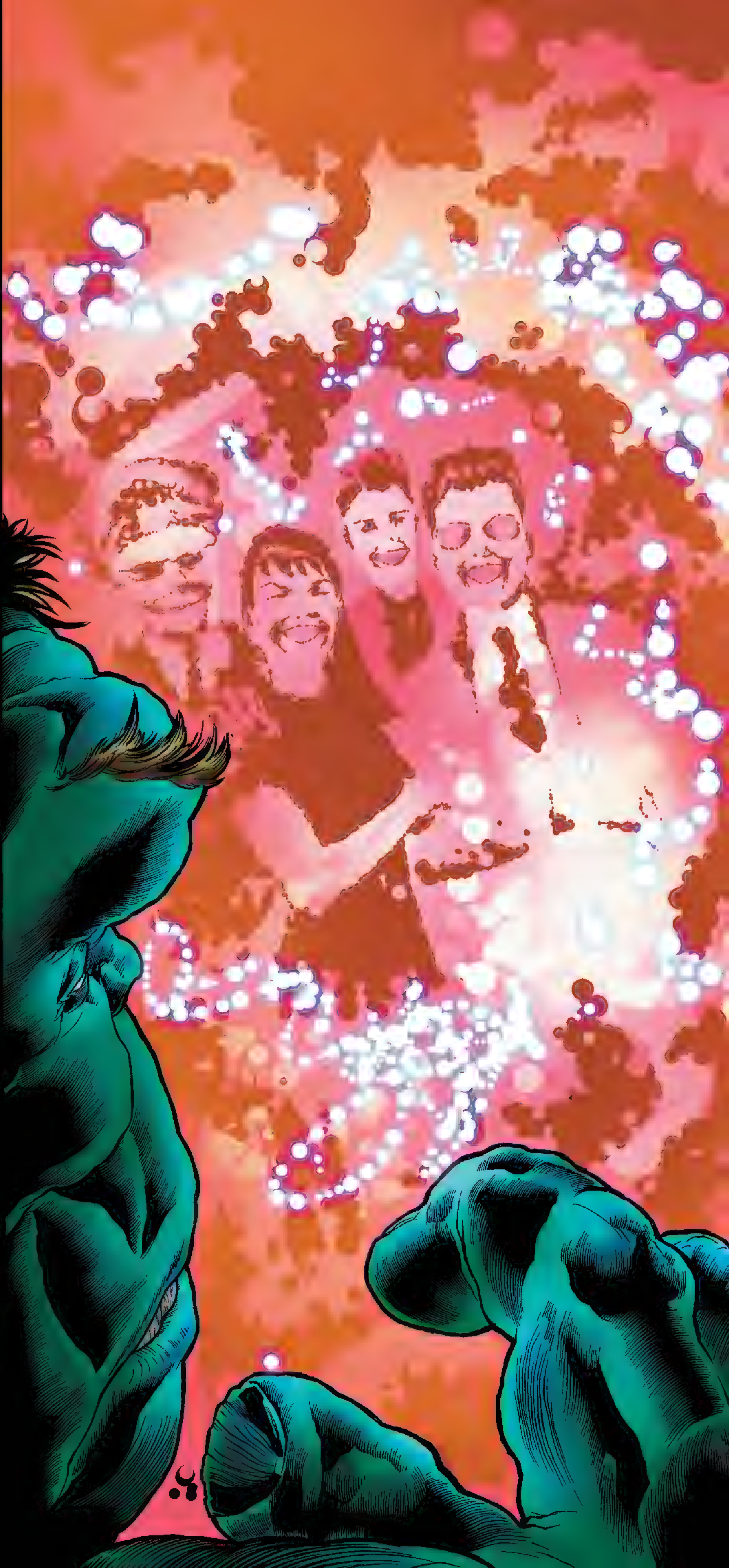
THEY'D NEVER TRIED TO KILL EACH OTHER.

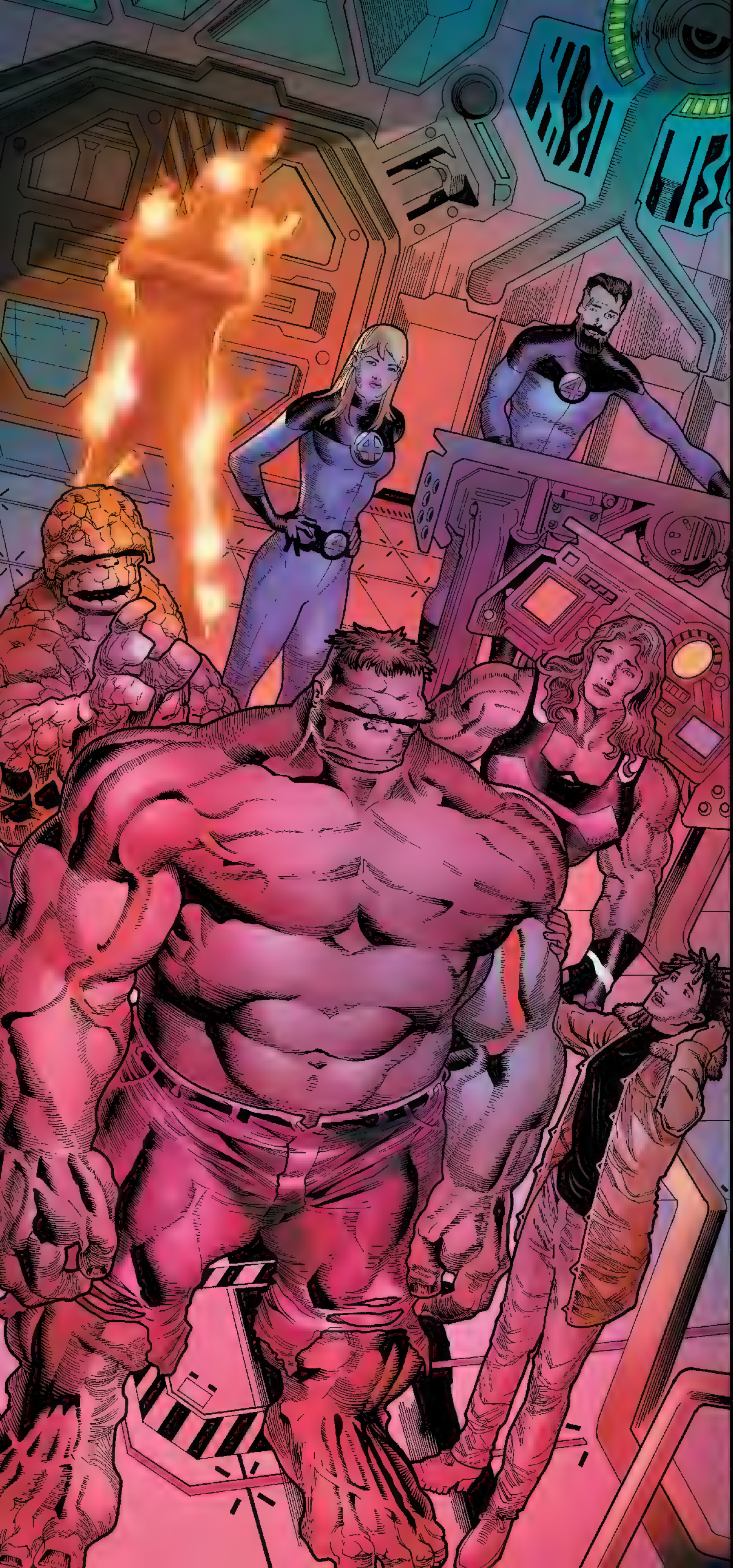
THEY WERE WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN, IF THE ORDER OF EVENTS HAD BEEN JUST A LITTLE DIFFERENT, IF THE COIN HAD LANDED THE OTHER WAY UP.

SOMEONE HAD TO FLY THE ROCKET.

SOMEONE HAD TO BUILD THE BOMB.

THE HULK SAW THEM TOO.





HE KEPT STARING, AS THE IMAGES MERGED BACK INTO STATIC. HE DIDN'T SPEAK.

BEFORE, HIS SILENCE FELT STUBBORN, SINGLE-MINDED--BLOODY-MINDED, EVEN. NOW, AS THE GATE OF HELL YAWNED IN FRONT OF HIM...IT WAS SOMETHING ELSE.

SOMETHING LIKE *FEAR*.

BEN SPOKE, GENTLY. THE FOUR WOULD BACK THE HULK UP WHEN THEY COULD, HE SAID--BUT THIS GATE, RIGHT HERE AND NOW, WAS JUST FOR HIM. HE'D OPEN IT WHEN HE WENT THROUGH, AND HE'D CLOSE IT BEHIND HIM.

DR. RICHARDS LOOKED QUIETLY APOLOGETIC. HE'D DONE HIS BEST.

RED PLASMA BOILED IN FRONT OF US. BRUCE BANNER WAS WAITING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF IT. SO WAS THE LEADER.

SO WAS THE STORY.

THE STORY THAT WAS PART OF ME. THAT HAD BROUGHT ME FROM ARIZONA TO THE EDGE OF SPACE, THAT HAD BROKEN MY LIFE AND BECOME IT. THE ANSWER TO ALL THE QUESTIONS I COULDN'T WALK AWAY FROM.

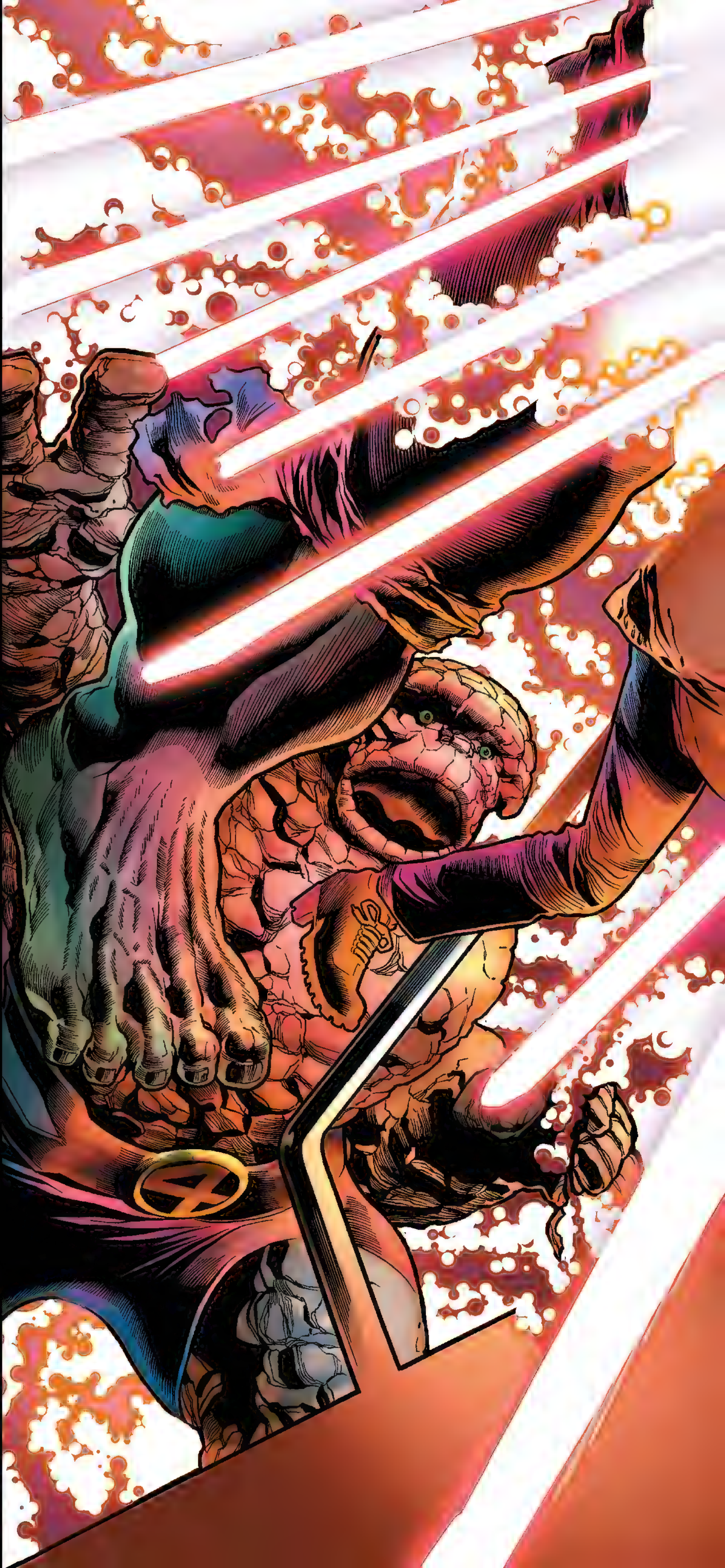
SO I REACHED OUT...

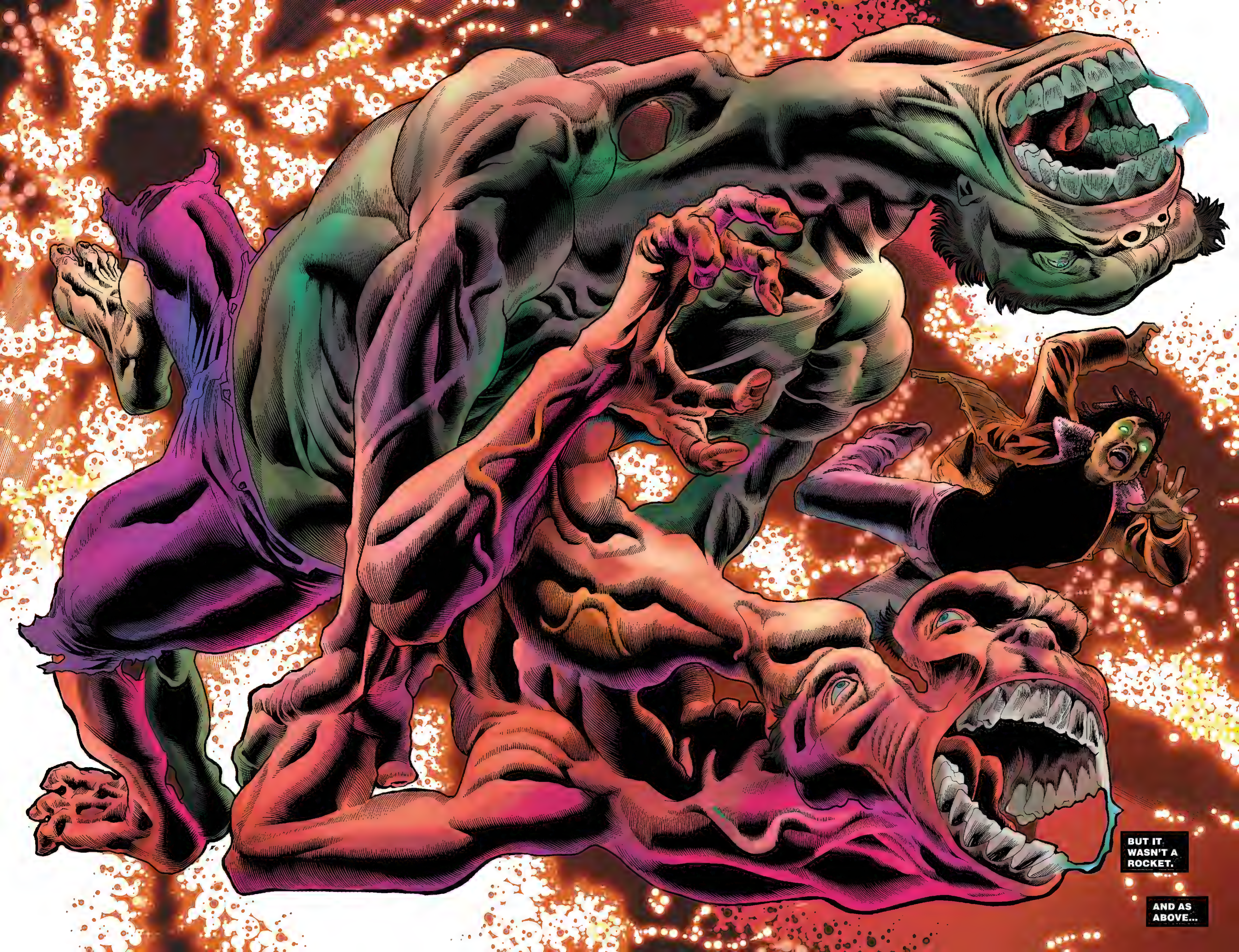
...AND THEN
I STEPPED
THROUGH
WITH HIM.

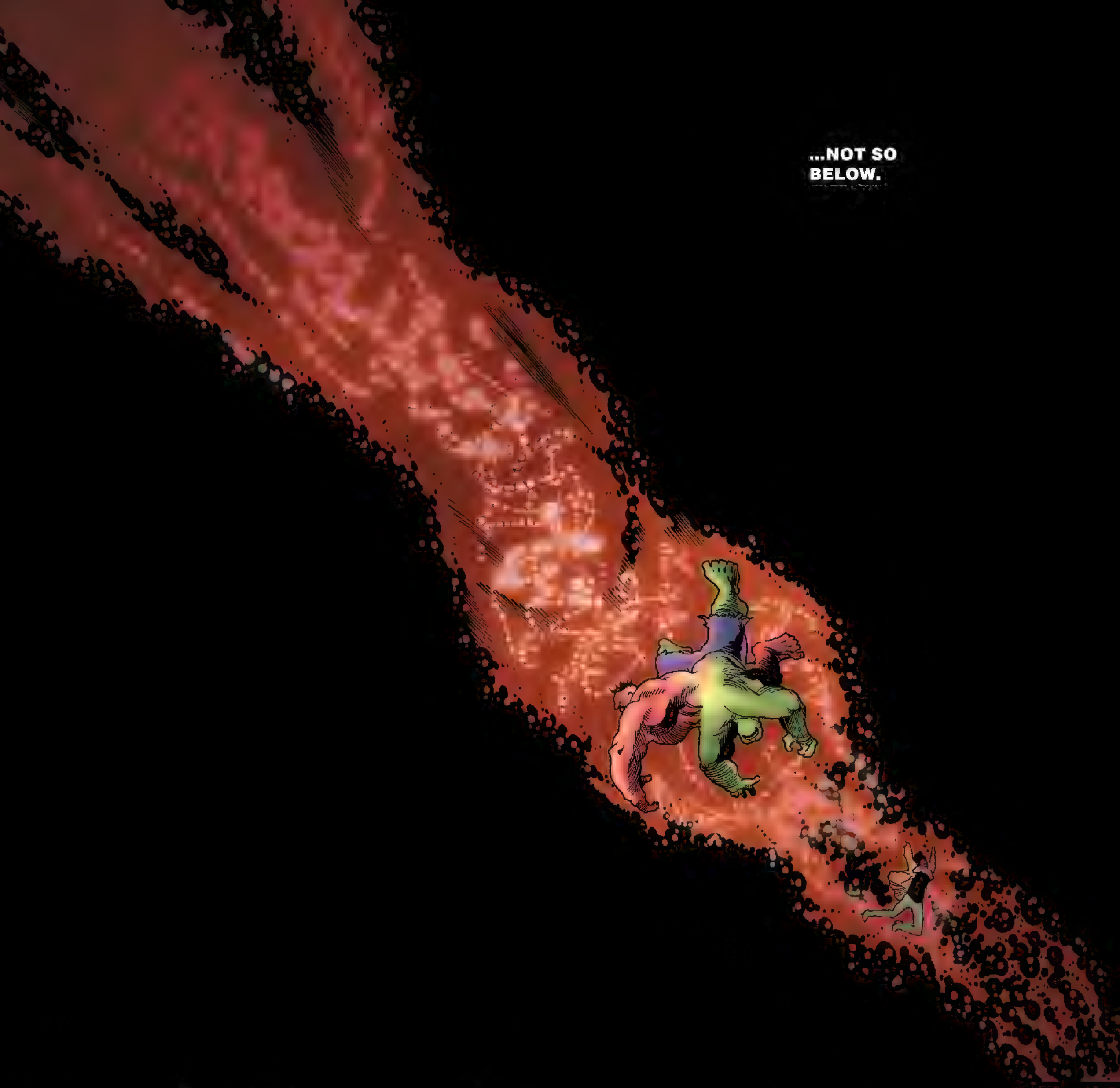
IT WAS BREAKING
THE RULES. AND...
I CAN'T LIE.

THAT MOMENT--
THE SPLIT-SECOND
DECISION TO MAKE
THAT JOURNEY INTO
THE UNKNOWN--IT
WAS *EXHILARATING*.
A RUSH OF
ADRENALINE AS I
TOOK MY LIFE IN
MY HANDS FOR
WHAT I COULDN'T
LIVE WITHOUT.

IT FELT
LIKE RIDING
A ROCKET.




BUT IT WASN'T A ROCKET.
AND AS ABOVE...

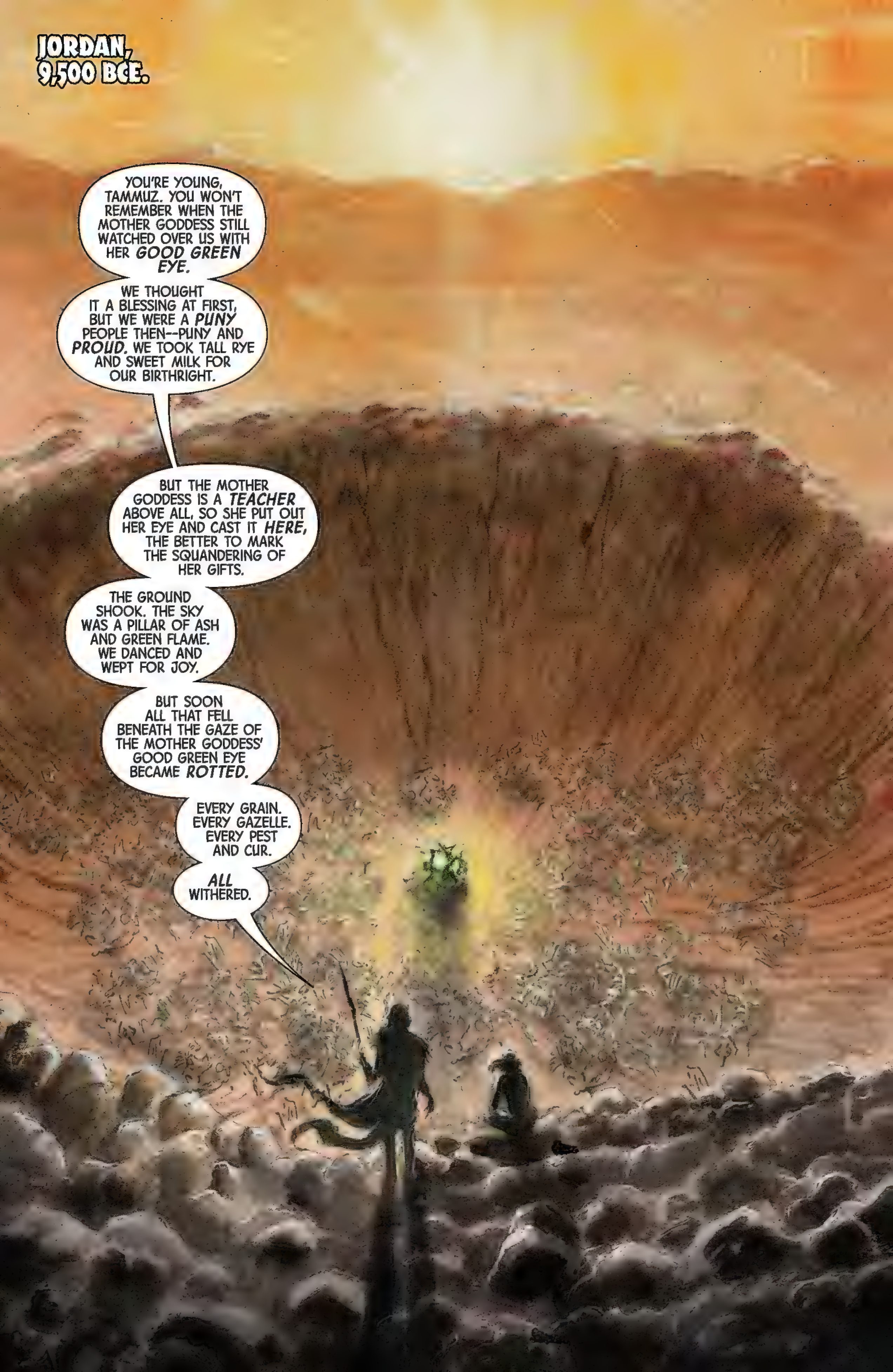

...NOT SO BELOW.

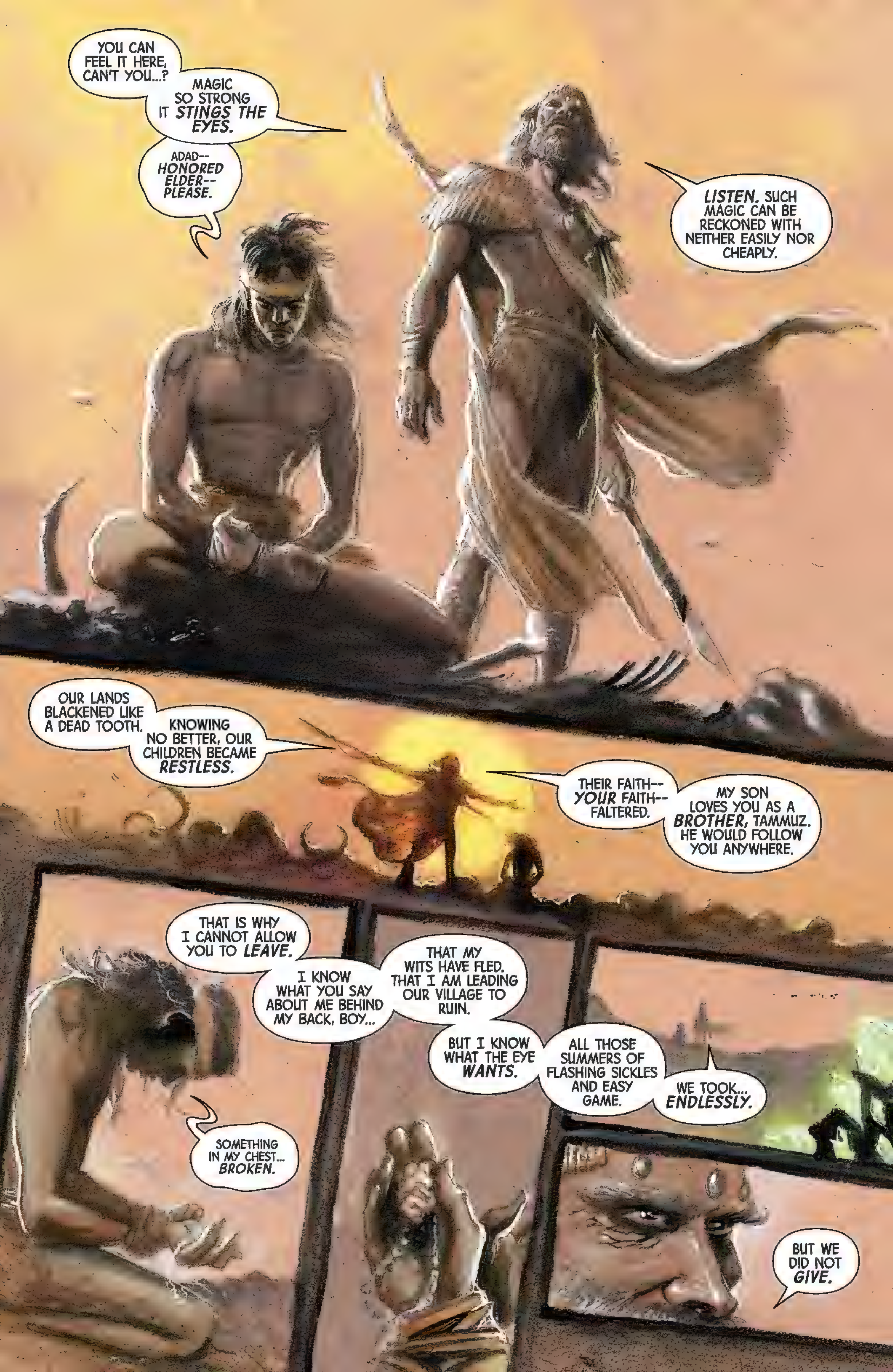
ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE

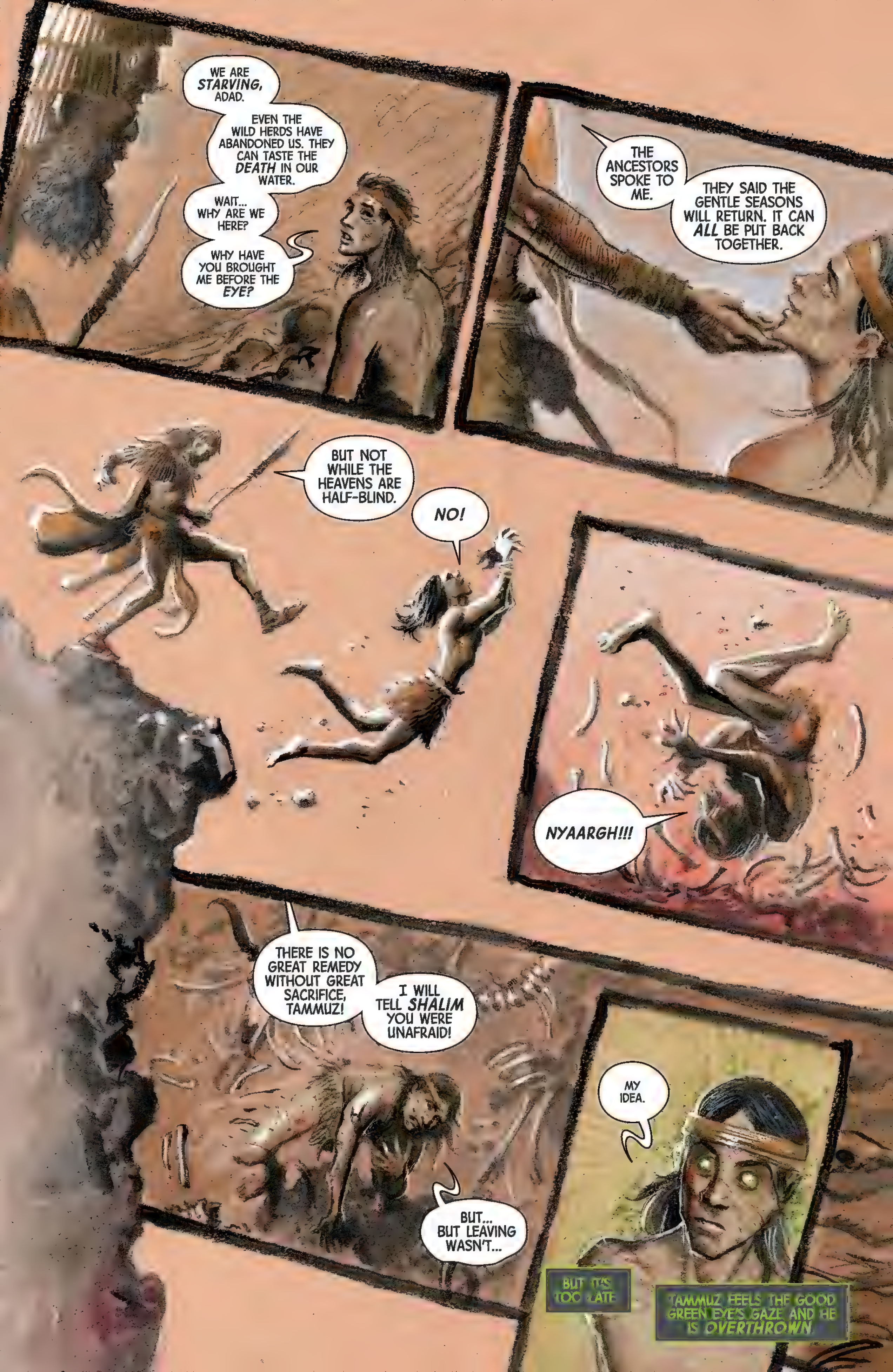
IMMORTAL HULK:
TIME OF MONSTERS

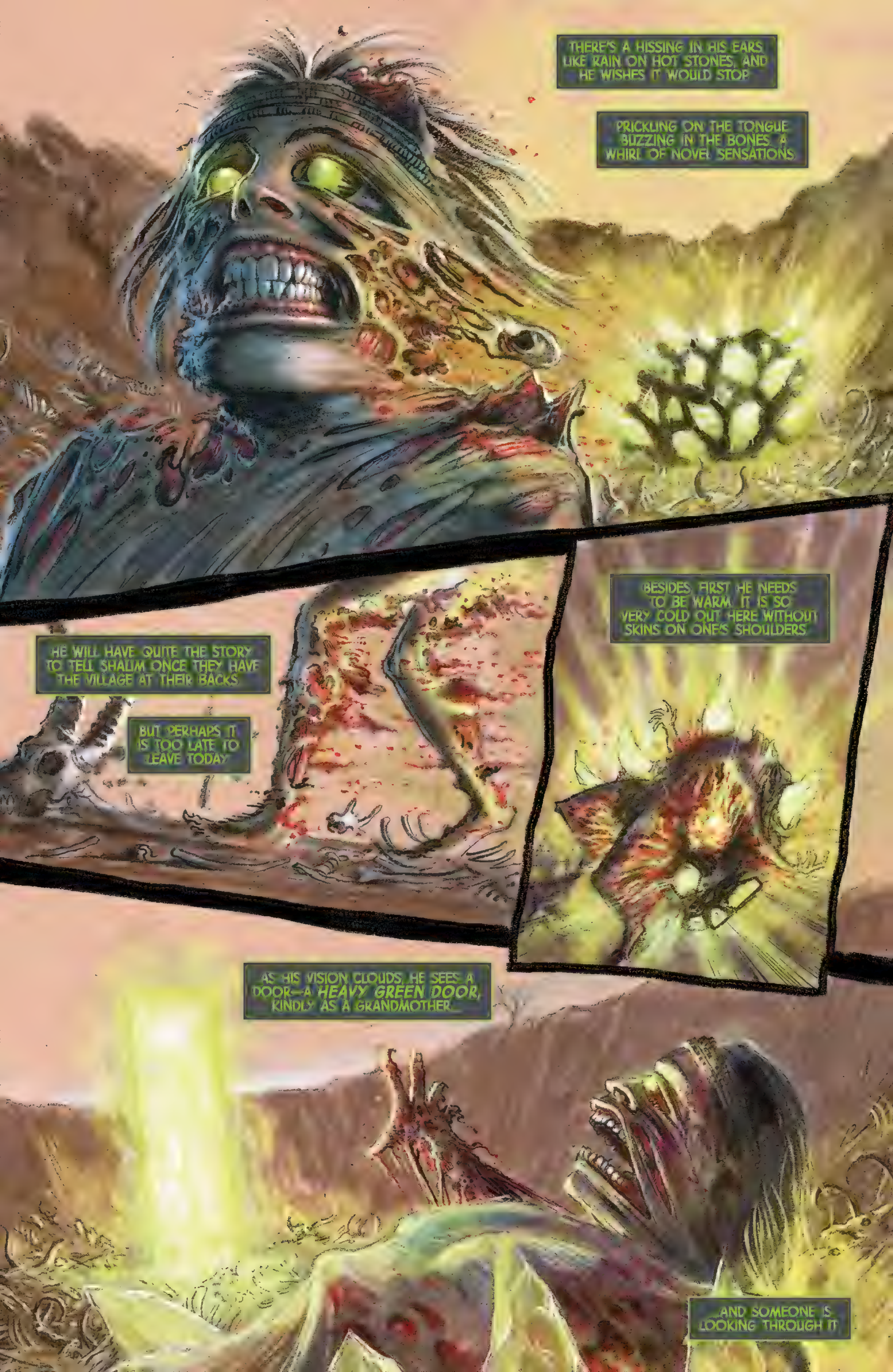
“I BEHOLD THEE ENKIDU; LIKE A GOD THOU ART.
WHY WITH THE ANIMALS
WANDEREST THOU ON THE PLAIN?”

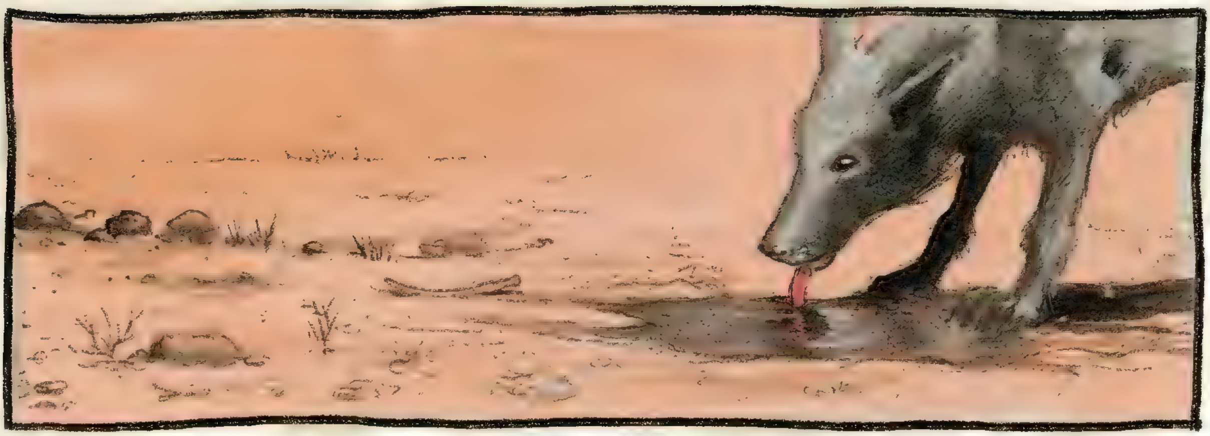
– *THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH*,
TRANSLATED BY STEPHEN HERBERT LANGDON

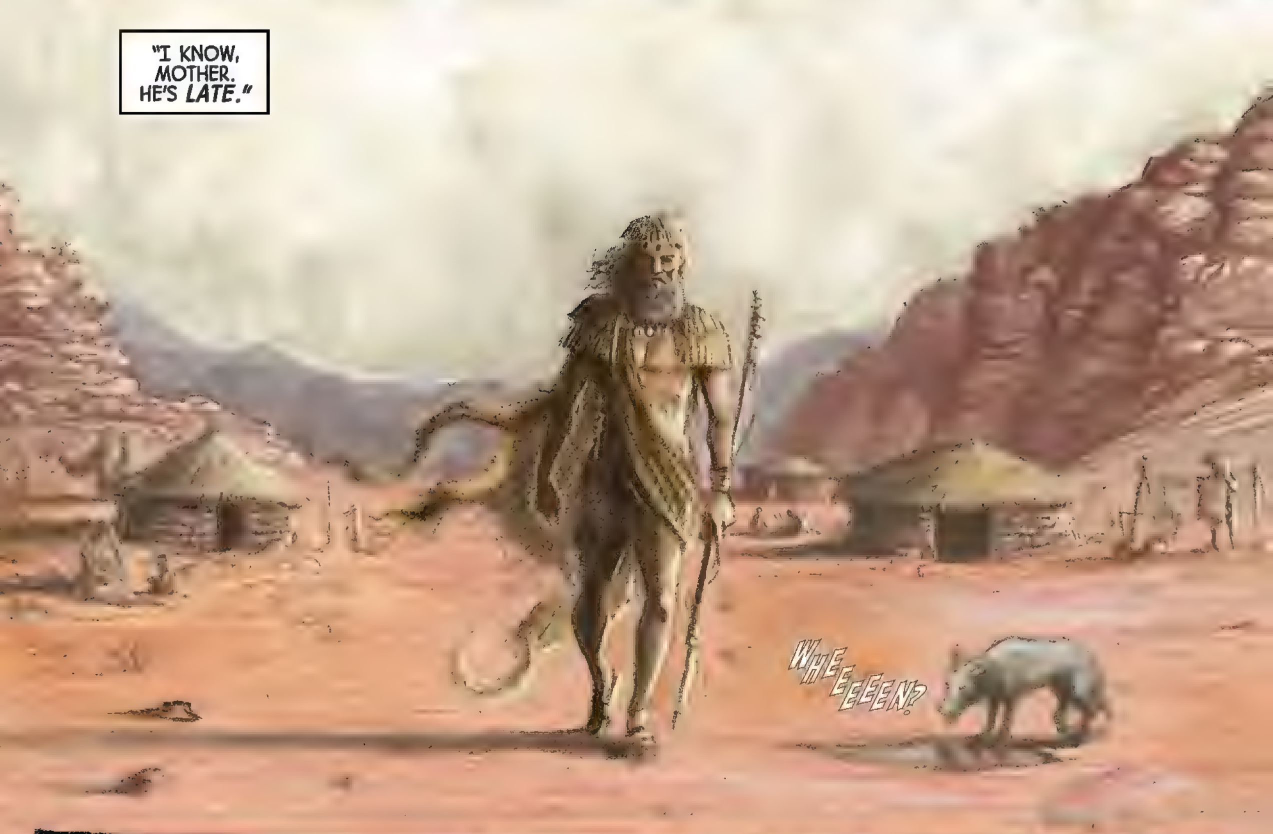

JORDAN, 9,500 BCE.
YOU'RE YOUNG, TAMMUZ. YOU WON'T REMEMBER WHEN THE MOTHER GODDESS STILL WATCHED OVER US WITH HER GOOD GREEN EYE.
WE THOUGHT IT A BLESSING AT FIRST, BUT WE WERE A PUNY PEOPLE THEN--PUNY AND PROUD. WE TOOK TALL RYE AND SWEET MILK FOR OUR BIRTHRIGHT.
BUT THE MOTHER GODDESS IS A TEACHER ABOVE ALL, SO SHE PUT OUT HER EYE AND CAST IT HERE, THE BETTER TO MARK THE SQUANDERING OF HER GIFTS.
THE GROUND SHOOK. THE SKY WAS A PILLAR OF ASH AND GREEN FLAME. WE DANCED AND WEPT FOR JOY.
BUT SOON ALL THAT FELL BENEATH THE GAZE OF THE MOTHER GODDESS' GOOD GREEN EYE BECAME ROTTED.
EVERY GRAIN. EVERY GAZELLE. EVERY PEST AND CUR.
ALL WITHERED.

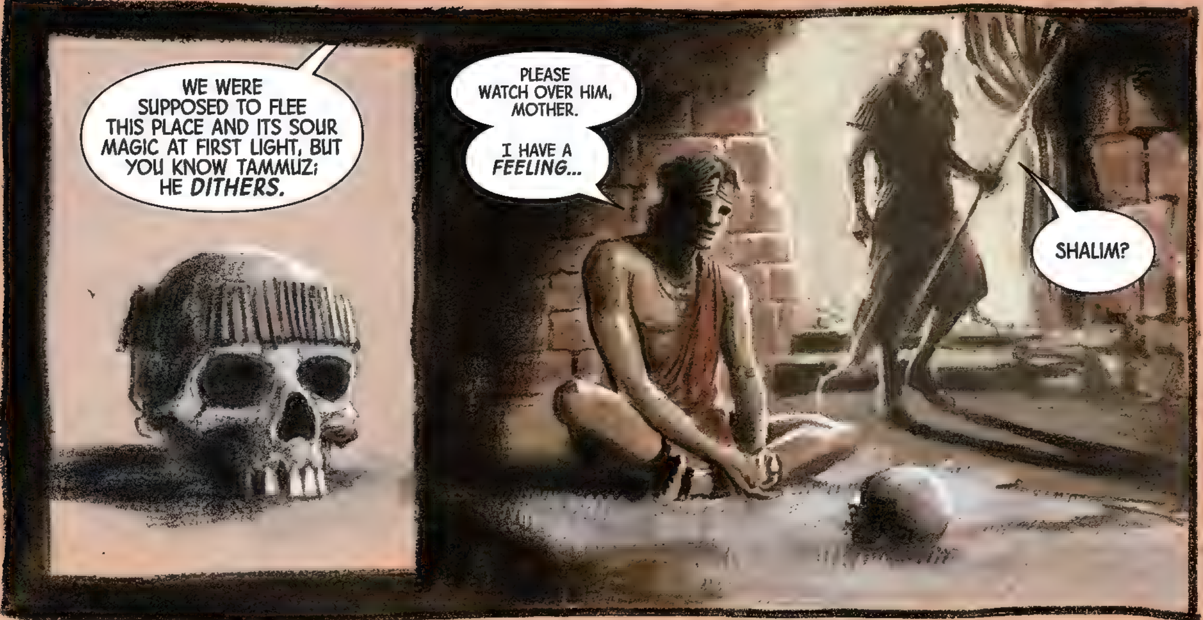

YOU CAN FEEL IT HERE, CAN'T YOU...?
MAGIC SO STRONG IT *STINGS THE EYES.*
ADAD-- *HONORED ELDER-- PLEASE.*
LISTEN. SUCH MAGIC CAN BE RECKONED WITH NEITHER EASILY NOR CHEAPLY.
OUR LANDS BLACKENED LIKE A DEAD TOOTH.
KNOWING NO BETTER, OUR CHILDREN BECAME *RESTLESS.*
THEIR FAITH-- *YOUR* FAITH-- FALTERED.
MY SON LOVES YOU AS A *BROTHER,* TAMMUZ. HE WOULD FOLLOW YOU ANYWHERE.
THAT IS WHY I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO *LEAVE.*
SOMETHING IN MY CHEST... *BROKEN.*
I KNOW WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT ME BEHIND MY BACK, BOY...
THAT MY WITS HAVE FLED. THAT I AM LEADING OUR VILLAGE TO RUIN.
BUT I KNOW WHAT THE EYE *WANTS.*
ALL THOSE SUMMERS OF FLASHING SICKLES AND EASY GAME.
WE TOOK... *ENDLESSLY.*
BUT WE DID NOT *GIVE.*

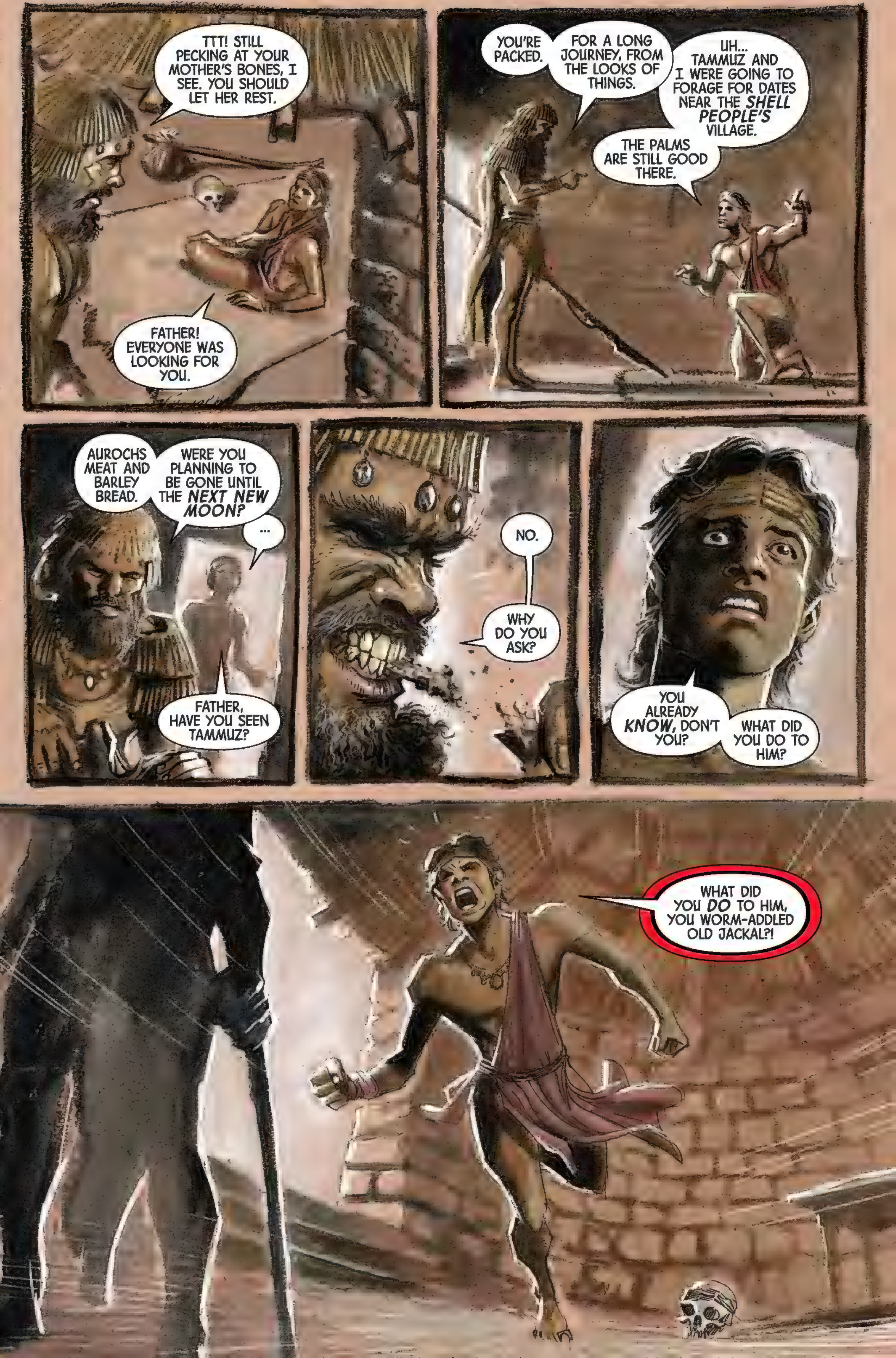

WE ARE *STARVING*, ADAD.
EVEN THE WILD HERDS HAVE ABANDONED US. THEY CAN TASTE THE *DEATH* IN OUR WATER.
WAIT... WHY ARE WE HERE?
WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME BEFORE THE *EYE?*
THE ANCESTORS SPOKE TO ME.
THEY SAID THE GENTLE SEASONS WILL RETURN. IT CAN *ALL* BE PUT BACK TOGETHER.
BUT NOT WHILE THE HEAVENS ARE HALF-BLIND.
NO!
NYAARGH!!!
THERE IS NO GREAT REMEDY WITHOUT GREAT SACRIFICE, TAMMUZ!
I WILL TELL *SHALIM* YOU WERE UNAFRAID!
BUT... BUT LEAVING WASN'T...
MY IDEA.
BUT IT'S TOO LATE
TAMMUZ FEELS THE GOOD GREEN EYE'S GAZE AND HE IS *OVERTHROWN*

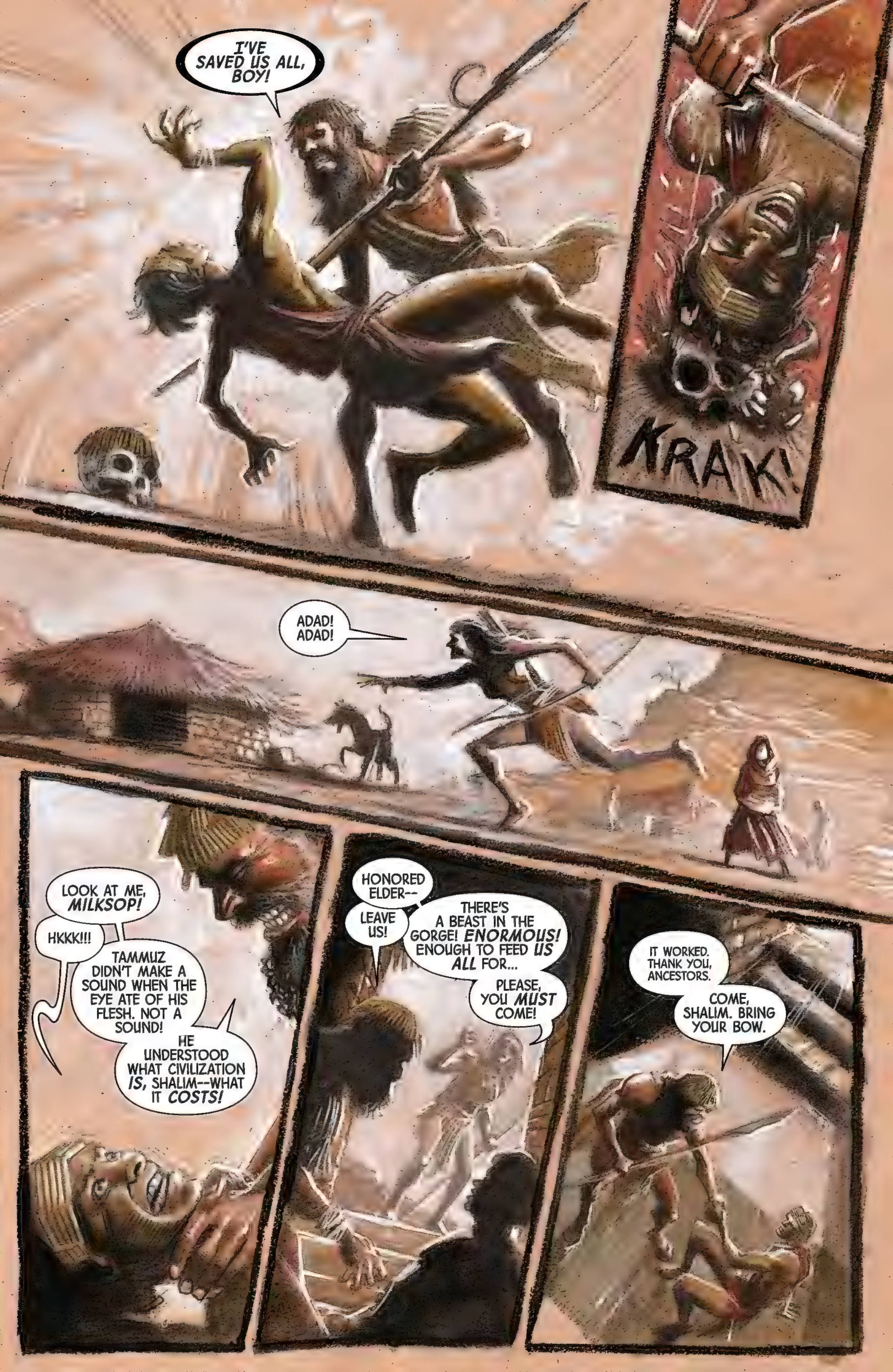

THERE'S A HISSING IN HIS EARS LIKE RAIN ON HOT STONES, AND HE WISHES IT WOULD STOP.
PRICKLING ON THE TONGUE. BUZZING IN THE BONES. A WHIRL OF NOVEL SENSATIONS.
HE WILL HAVE QUITE THE STORY TO TELL SHALIM ONCE THEY HAVE THE VILLAGE AT THEIR BACKS.
BUT PERHAPS IT IS TOO LATE TO LEAVE TODAY.
BESIDES, FIRST HE NEEDS TO BE WARM. IT IS SO VERY COLD OUT HERE WITHOUT SKINS ON ONE'S SHOULDERS.
AS HIS VISION CLOUDS, HE SEES A DOOR—A ***HEAVY GREEN DOOR,*** KINDLY AS A GRANDMOTHER...
...AND SOMEONE IS LOOKING THROUGH IT.

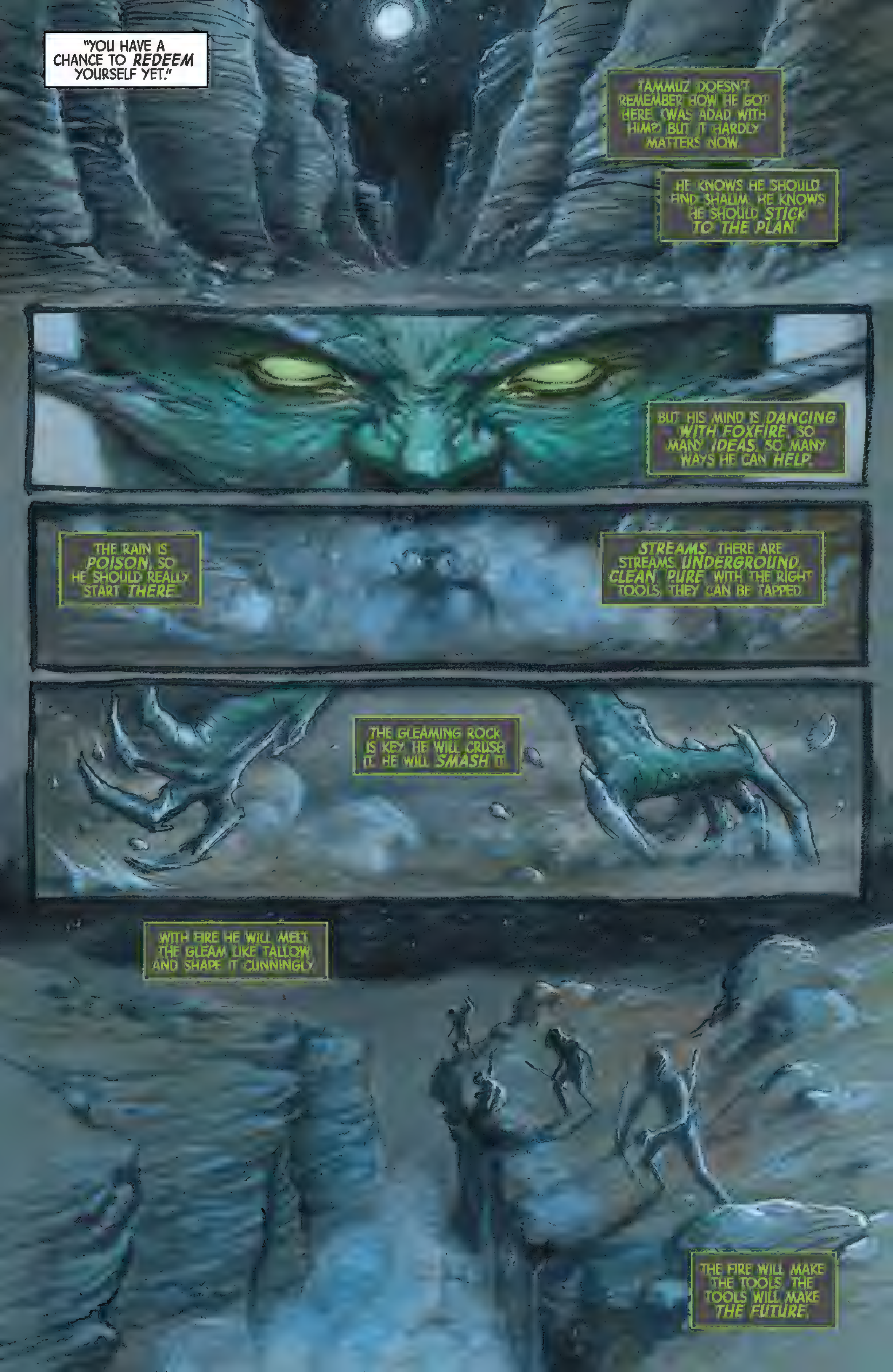


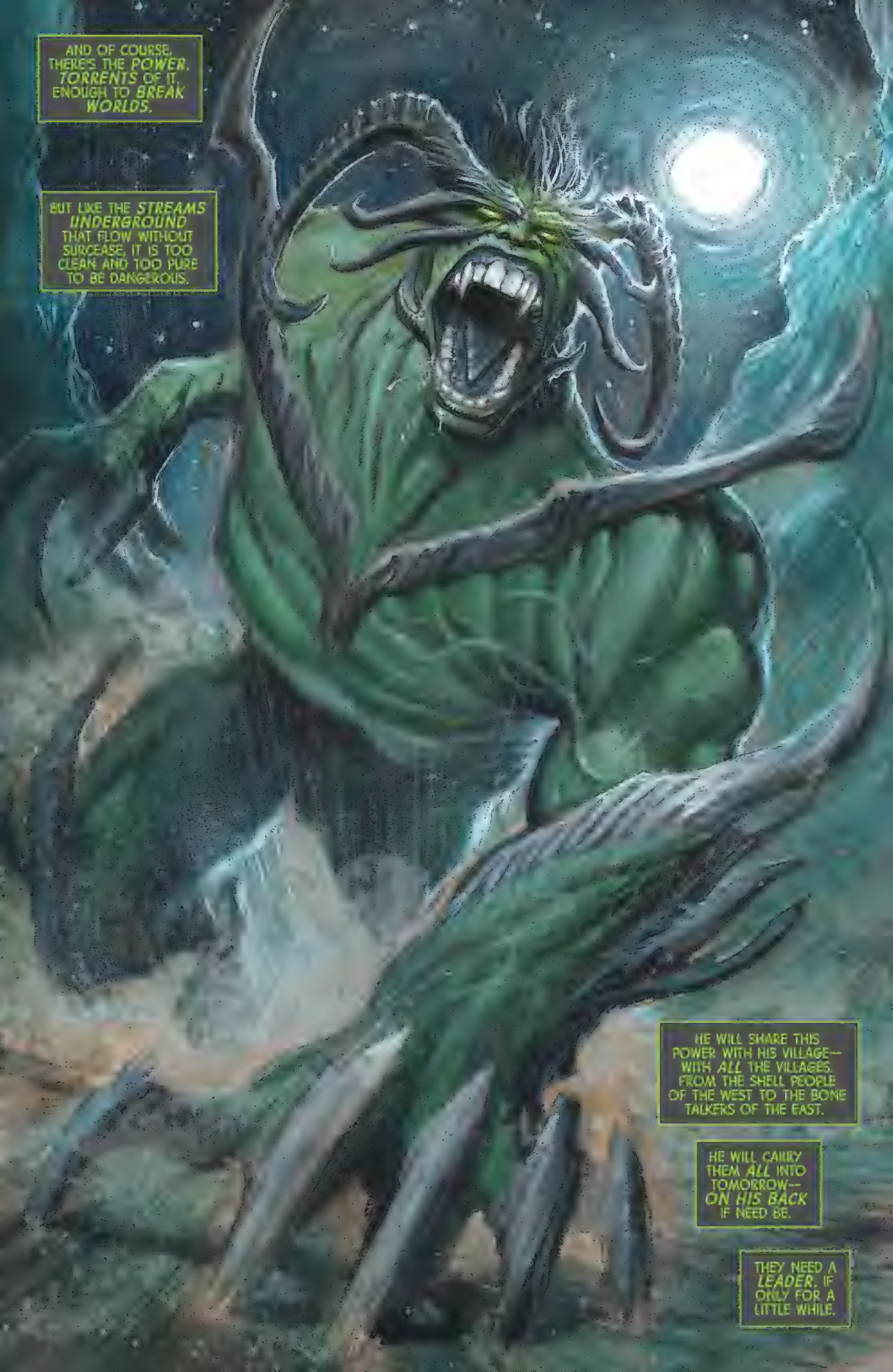

"I KNOW, MOTHER. HE'S *LATE.*"
WHEEEEEN?

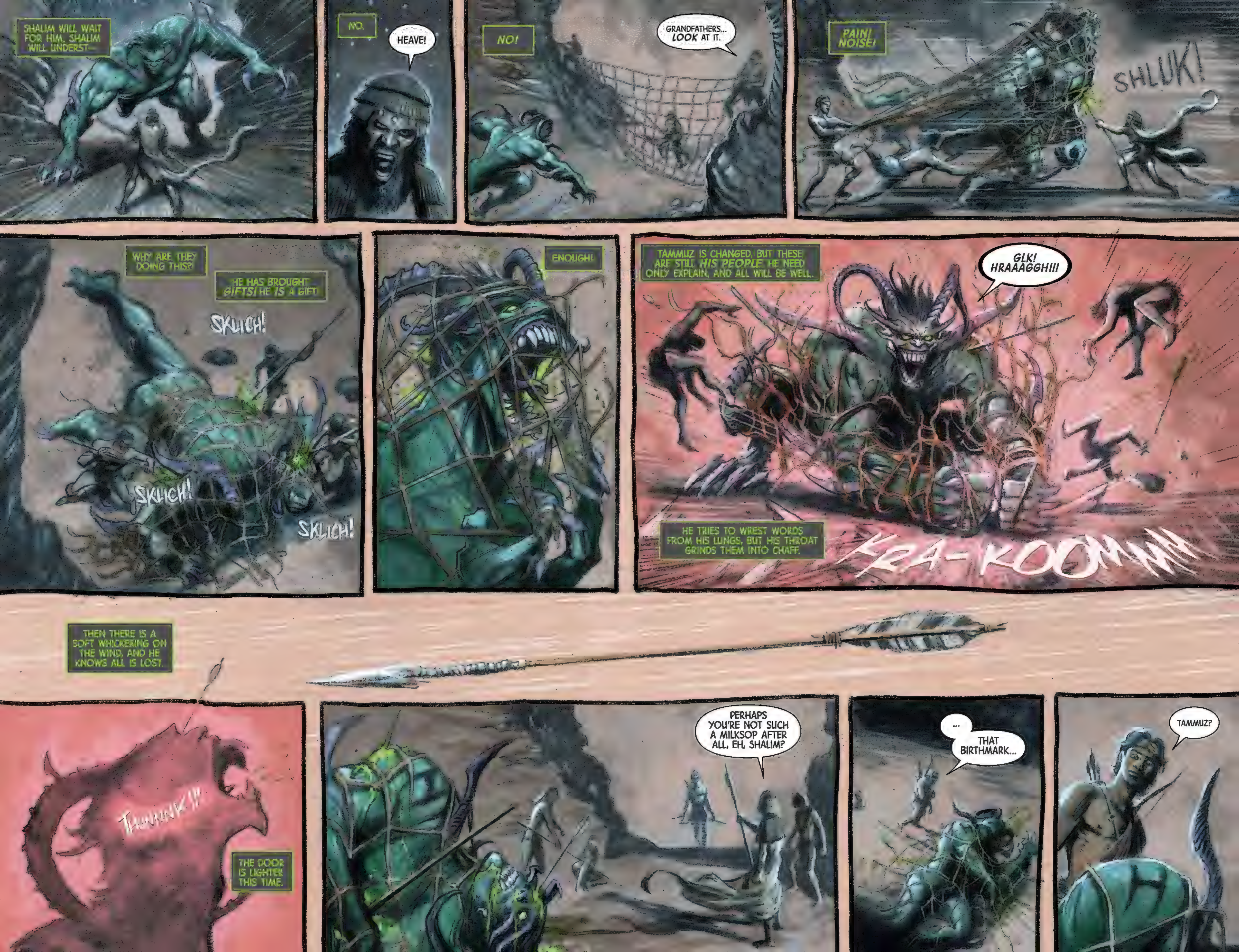

WE WERE SUPPOSED TO FLEE THIS PLACE AND ITS SOUR MAGIC AT FIRST LIGHT, BUT YOU KNOW TAMMUZ; HE *DITHERS.*
PLEASE WATCH OVER HIM, MOTHER.
I HAVE A *FEELING...*
SHALIM?

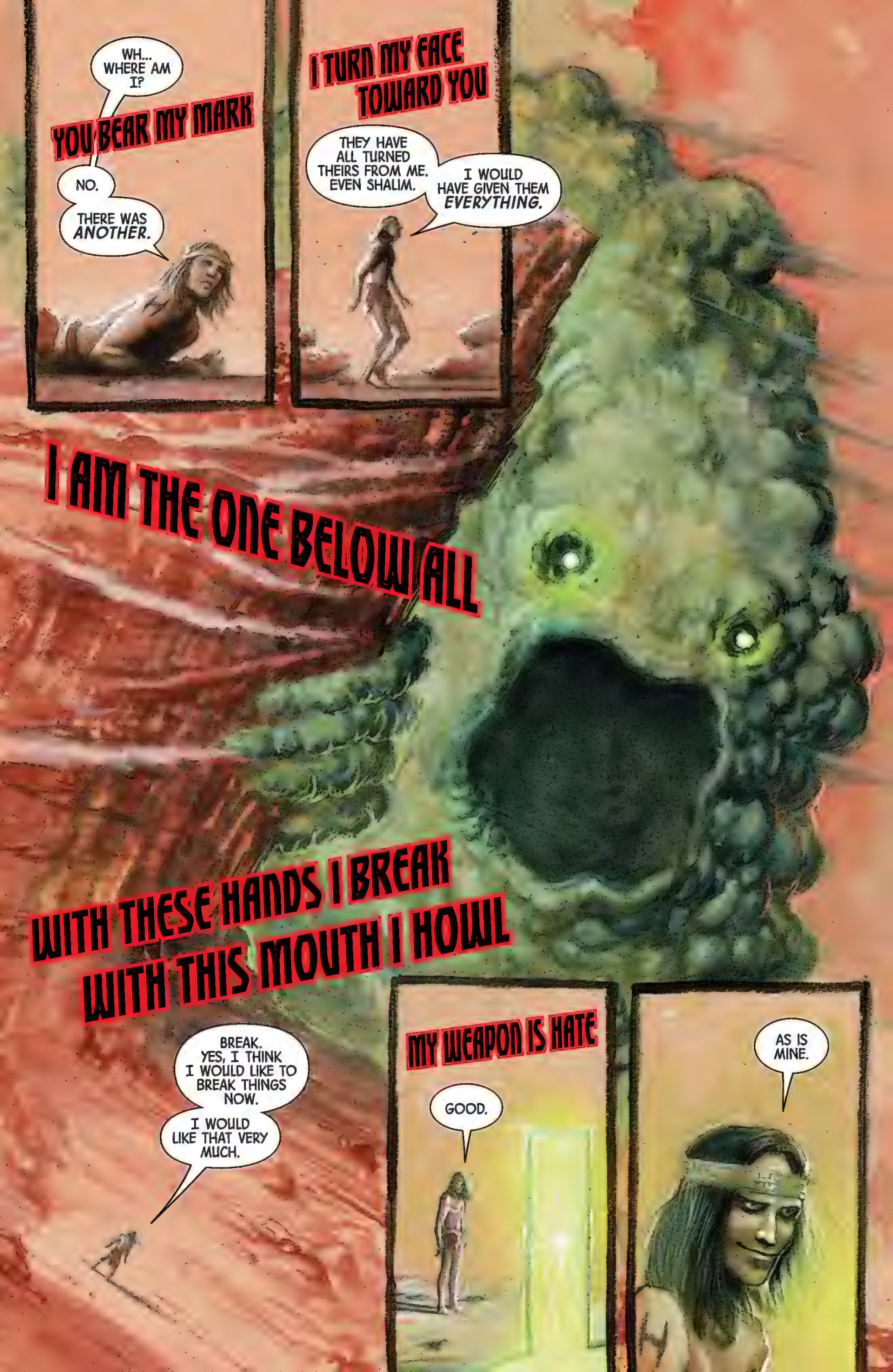

TTT! STILL PECKING AT YOUR MOTHER'S BONES, I SEE. YOU SHOULD LET HER REST.
FATHER! EVERYONE WAS LOOKING FOR YOU.
YOU'RE PACKED.
FOR A LONG JOURNEY, FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS.
UH... TAMMUZ AND I WERE GOING TO FORAGE FOR DATES NEAR THE *SHELL PEOPLE'S* VILLAGE.
THE PALMS ARE STILL GOOD THERE.
AUROCHS MEAT AND BARLEY BREAD.
WERE YOU PLANNING TO BE GONE UNTIL THE *NEXT NEW MOON?*
...
FATHER, HAVE YOU SEEN TAMMUZ?
NO.
WHY DO YOU ASK?
YOU ALREADY *KNOW,* DON'T YOU?
WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?
WHAT DID YOU *DO* TO HIM, YOU WORM-ADDLED OLD JACKAL?!

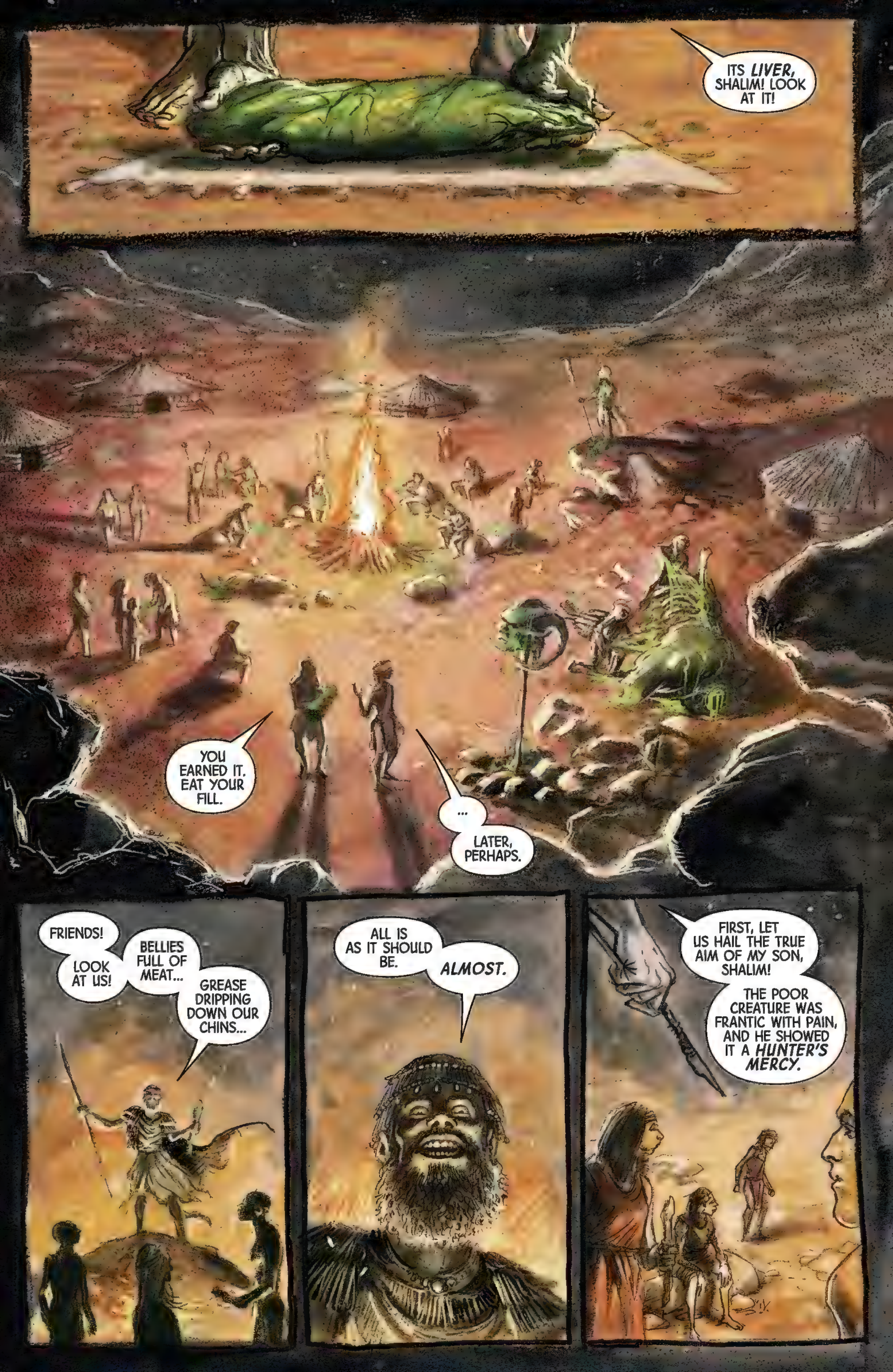

I'VE SAVED US ALL, BOY!
KRAK!
ADAD! ADAD!
LOOK AT ME, *MILKSOP!*
HKKK!!!
TAMMUZ DIDN'T MAKE A SOUND WHEN THE EYE ATE OF HIS FLESH. NOT A SOUND!
HE UNDERSTOOD WHAT CIVILIZATION *IS,* SHALIM--WHAT IT *COSTS!*
HONORED ELDER--
LEAVE US!
THERE'S A BEAST IN THE GORGE! *ENORMOUS!* ENOUGH TO FEED *US ALL* FOR...
PLEASE, YOU *MUST* COME!
IT WORKED. THANK YOU, ANCESTORS.
COME, SHALIM. BRING YOUR BOW.

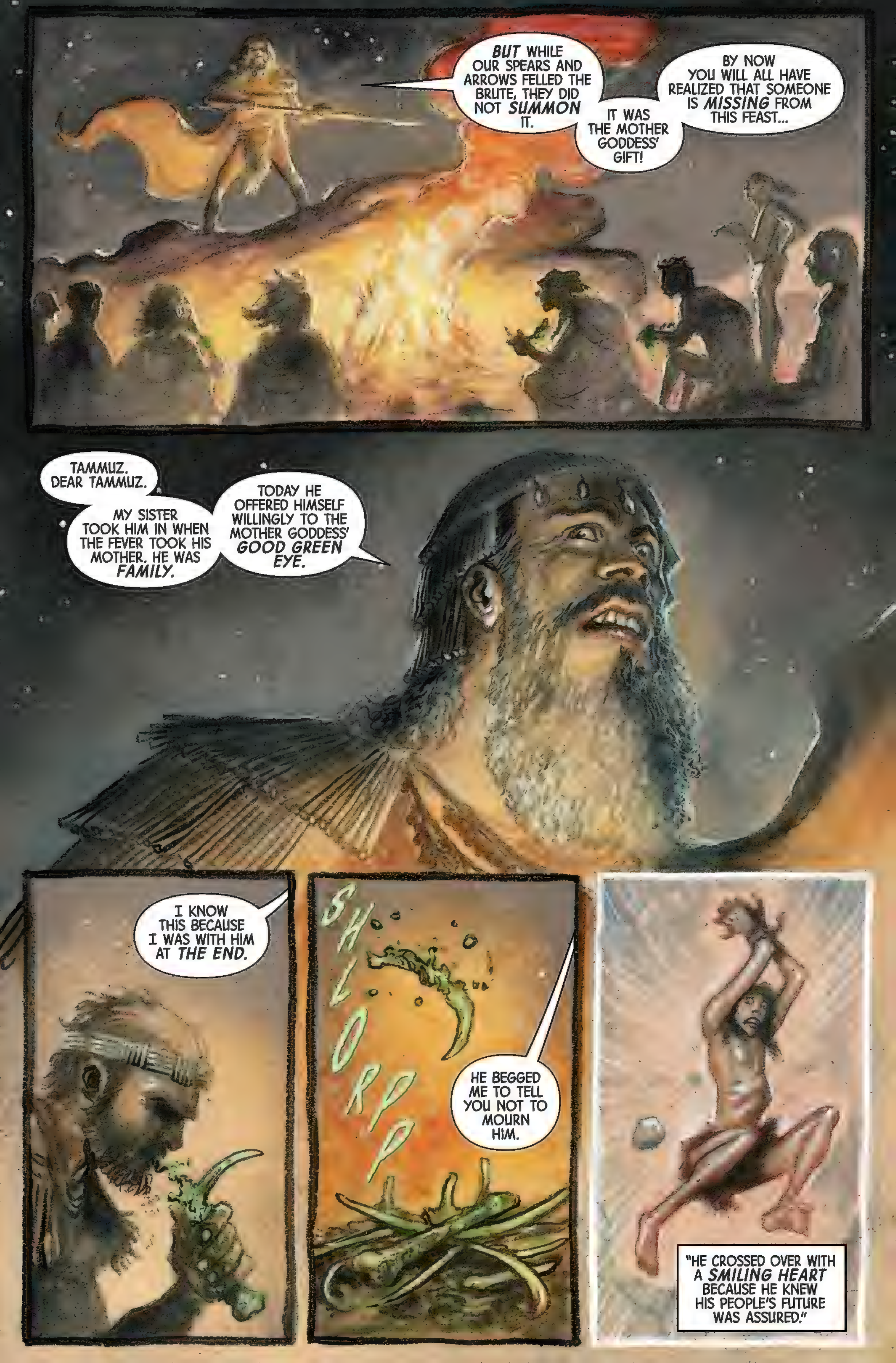

"YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO *REDEEM* YOURSELF YET."
TAMMUZ DOESN'T REMEMBER HOW HE GOT HERE (WAS ADAD WITH HIM?) BUT IT HARDLY MATTERS NOW.
HE KNOWS HE SHOULD FIND SHALIM. HE KNOWS HE SHOULD *STICK TO THE PLAN.*
BUT HIS MIND IS *DANCING WITH FOXFIRE*, SO MANY *IDEAS*, SO MANY WAYS HE CAN *HELP*.
THE RAIN IS *POISON*, SO HE SHOULD REALLY START *THERE*.
STREAMS. THERE ARE STREAMS *UNDERGROUND*. *CLEAN*. *PURE*. WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS, THEY CAN BE TAPPED.
THE GLEAMING ROCK IS KEY. HE WILL CRUSH IT. HE WILL *SMASH* IT.
WITH FIRE HE WILL MELT THE GLEAM LIKE TALLOW AND SHAPE IT CUNNINGLY.
THE FIRE WILL MAKE THE TOOLS. THE TOOLS WILL MAKE *THE FUTURE*.

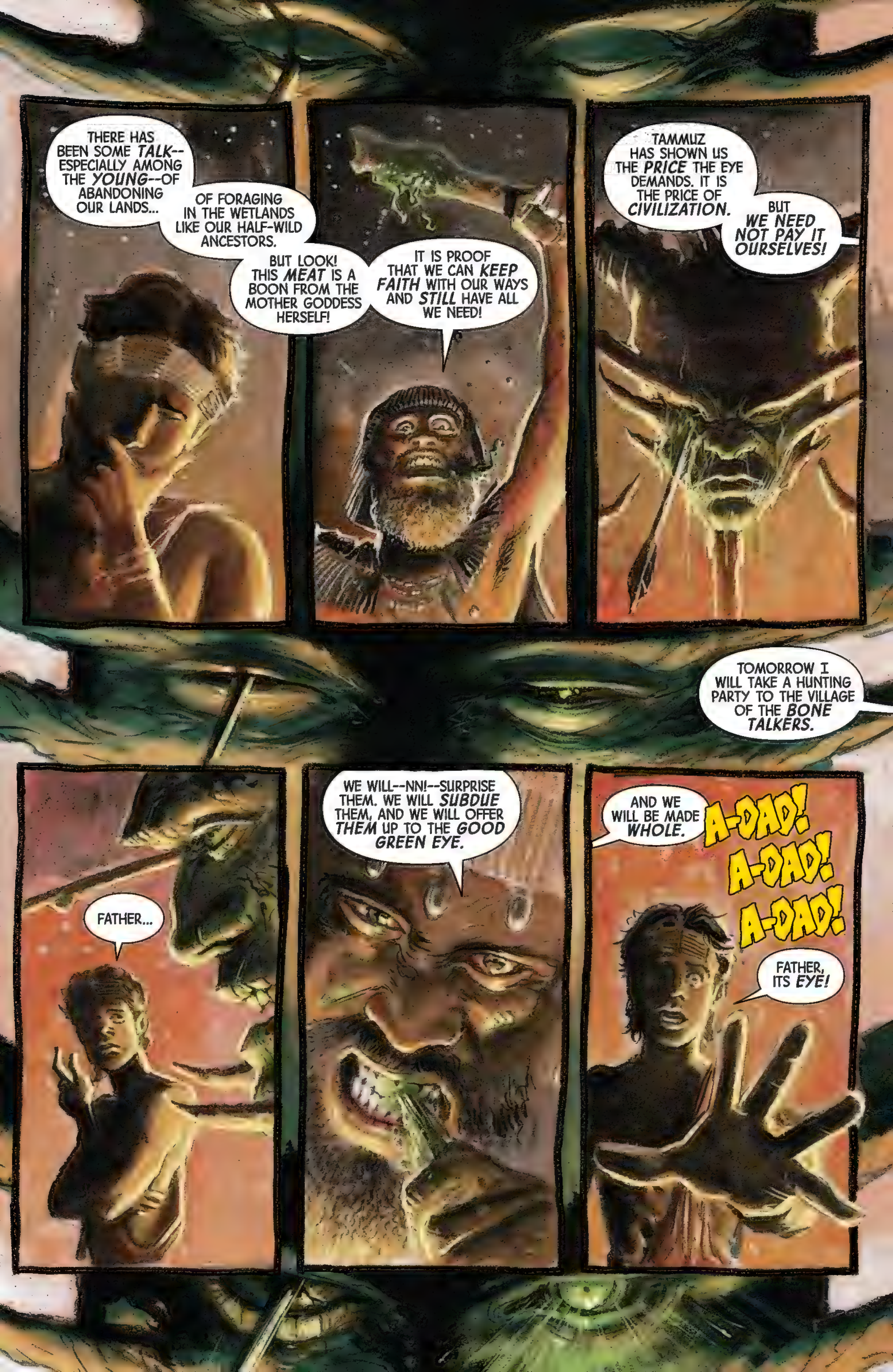

AND OF COURSE, THERE'S THE *POWER*. *TORRENTS* OF IT, ENOUGH TO *BREAK WORLDS*.
BUT LIKE THE *STREAMS UNDERGROUND* THAT FLOW WITHOUT SURCEASE, IT IS TOO CLEAN AND TOO PURE TO BE DANGEROUS.
HE WILL SHARE THIS POWER WITH HIS VILLAGE-- WITH *ALL* THE VILLAGES, FROM THE SHELL PEOPLE OF THE WEST TO THE BONE TALKERS OF THE EAST.
HE WILL CARRY THEM *ALL* INTO TOMORROW-- *ON HIS BACK* IF NEED BE.
THEY NEED A *LEADER*, IF ONLY FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

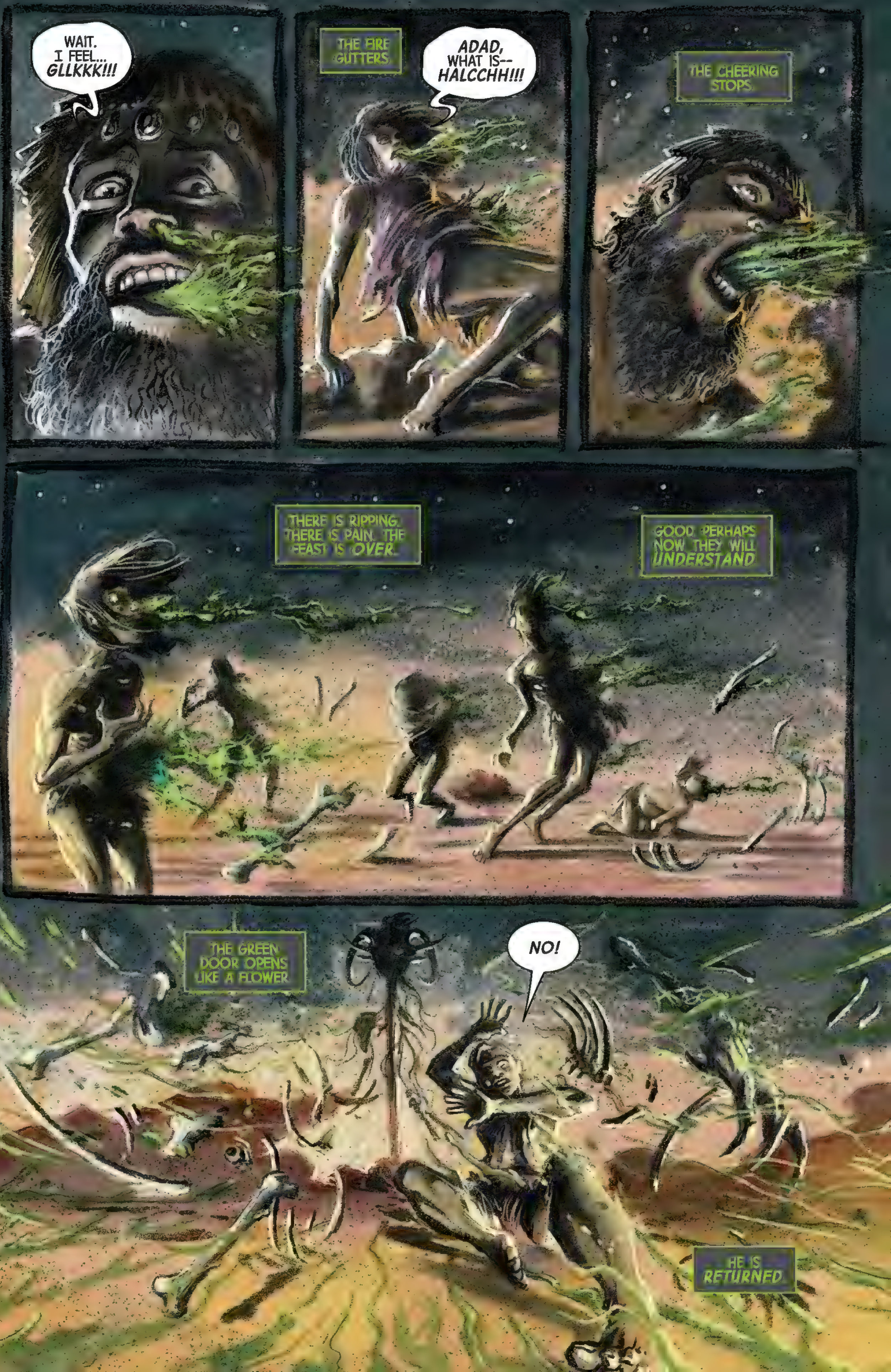

SHALIM WILL WAIT FOR HIM. SHALIM WILL UNDERST—
NO.
HEAVE!
NO!
GRANDFATHERS... LOOK AT IT.
PAIN! NOISE!
SHLUK!
WHY ARE THEY DOING THIS?
HE HAS BROUGHT GIFTS! HE IS A GIFT!
SKLICH!
SKLICH!
SKLICH!
ENOUGH!
TAMMUZ IS CHANGED, BUT THESE ARE STILL HIS PEOPLE. HE NEED ONLY EXPLAIN, AND ALL WILL BE WELL.
GLK! HRAAAGGH!!!
HE TRIES TO WREST WORDS FROM HIS LUNGS, BUT HIS THROAT GRINDS THEM INTO CHAFF.
KRA-KOOMMM
THEN THERE IS A SOFT WHICKERING ON THE WIND, AND HE KNOWS ALL IS LOST.
THUNNNK!!
THE DOOR IS LIGHTER THIS TIME.
PERHAPS YOU'RE NOT SUCH A MILKSOP AFTER ALL, EH, SHALIM?
...
THAT BIRTHMARK...
TAMMUZ?

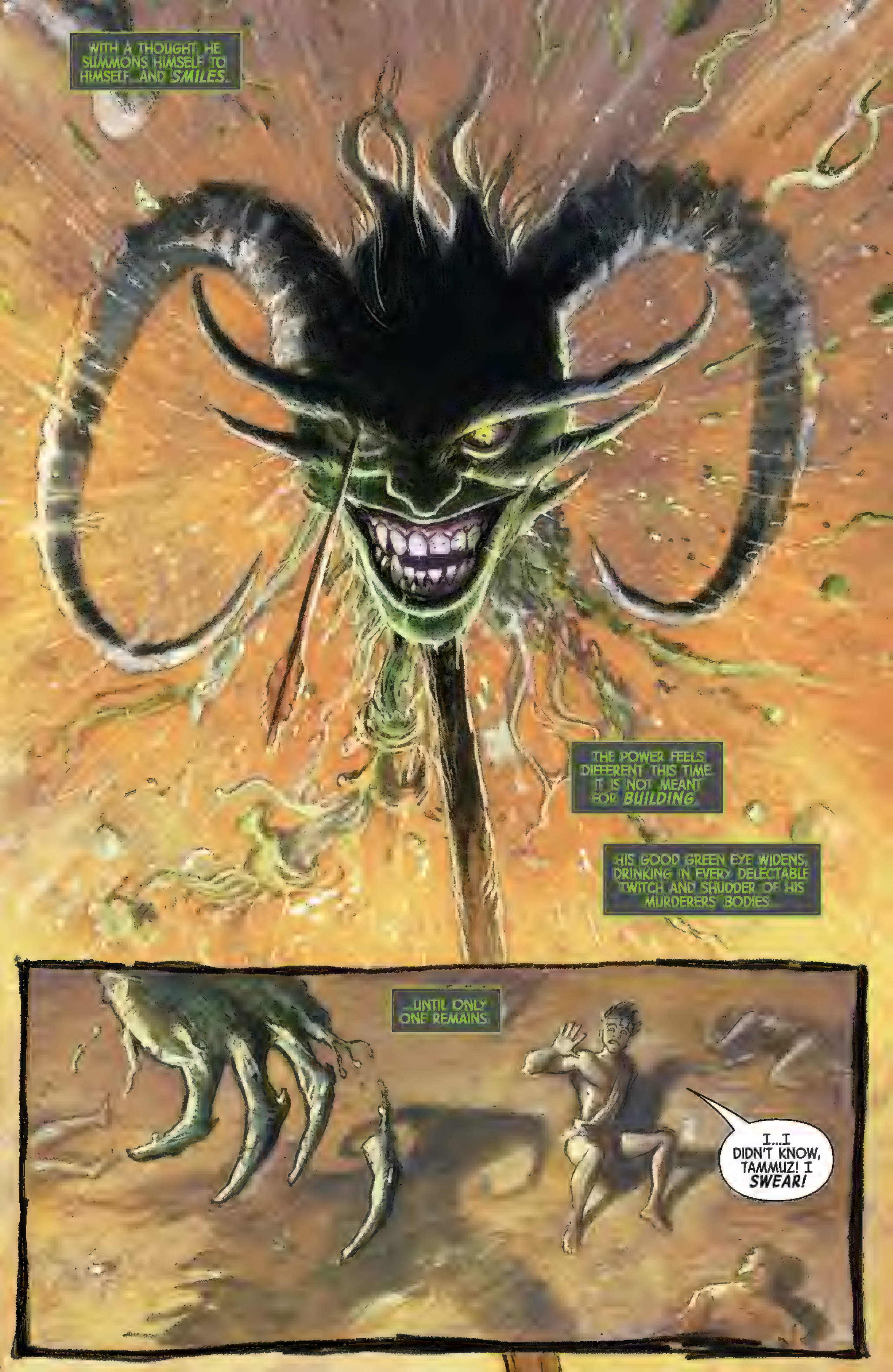

WH... WHERE AM I?
YOU BEAR MY MARK
NO.
THERE WAS *ANOTHER.*
I TURN MY FACE TOWARD YOU
THEY HAVE ALL TURNED THEIRS FROM ME. EVEN SHALIM.
I WOULD HAVE GIVEN THEM *EVERYTHING.*
I AM THE ONE BELOW ALL
WITH THESE HANDS I BREAK
WITH THIS MOUTH I HOWL
BREAK. YES, I THINK I WOULD LIKE TO BREAK THINGS NOW.
I WOULD LIKE THAT VERY MUCH.
MY WEAPON IS HATE
GOOD.
AS IS MINE.

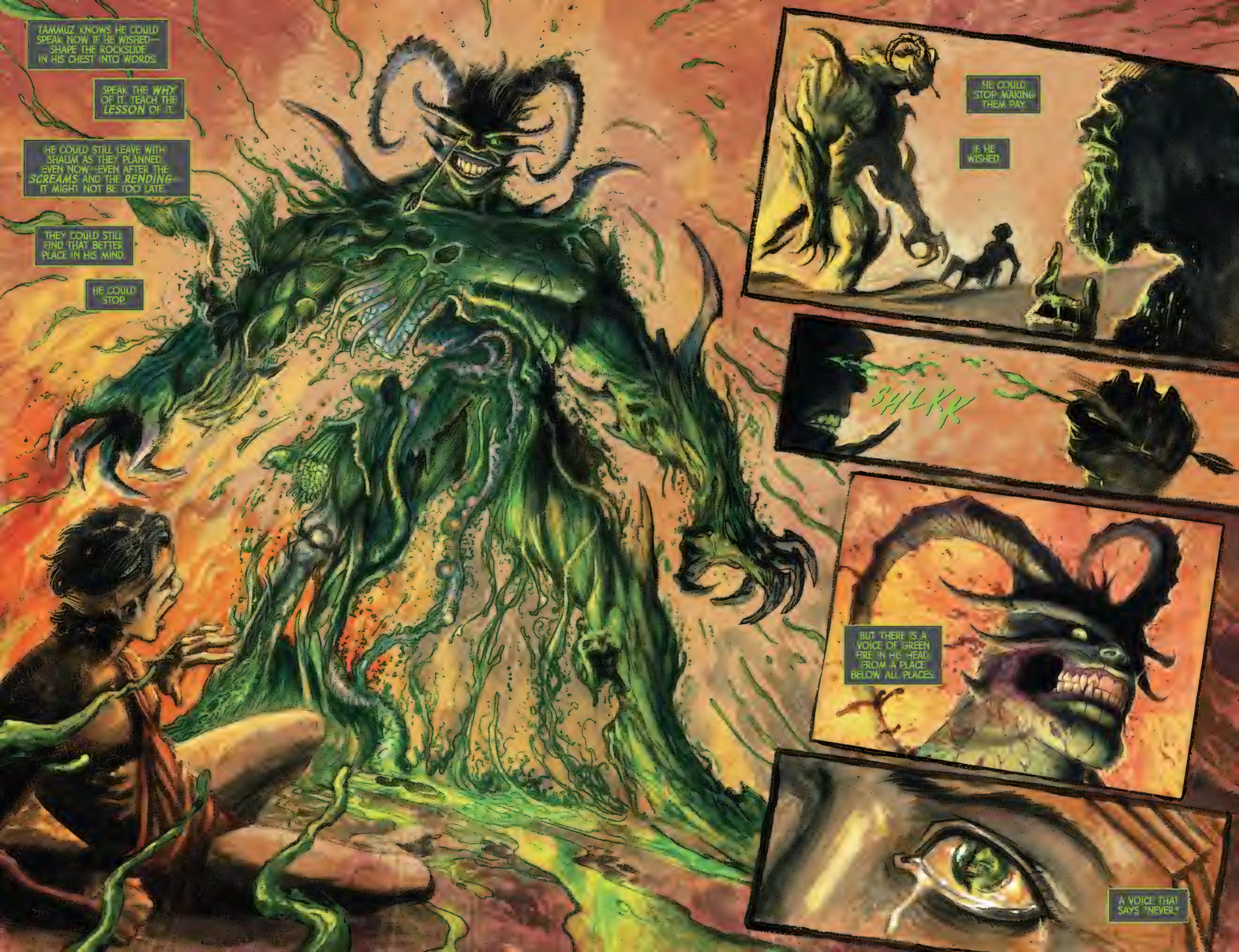

ITS *LIVER*, SHALIM! LOOK AT IT!
YOU EARNED IT. EAT YOUR FILL.
...
LATER, PERHAPS.
FRIENDS!
LOOK AT US!
BELLIES FULL OF MEAT...
GREASE DRIPPING DOWN OUR CHINS...
ALL IS AS IT SHOULD BE.
ALMOST.
FIRST, LET US HAIL THE TRUE AIM OF *MY* SON, SHALIM!
THE POOR CREATURE WAS FRANTIC WITH PAIN, AND HE SHOWED IT A *HUNTER'S MERCY.*

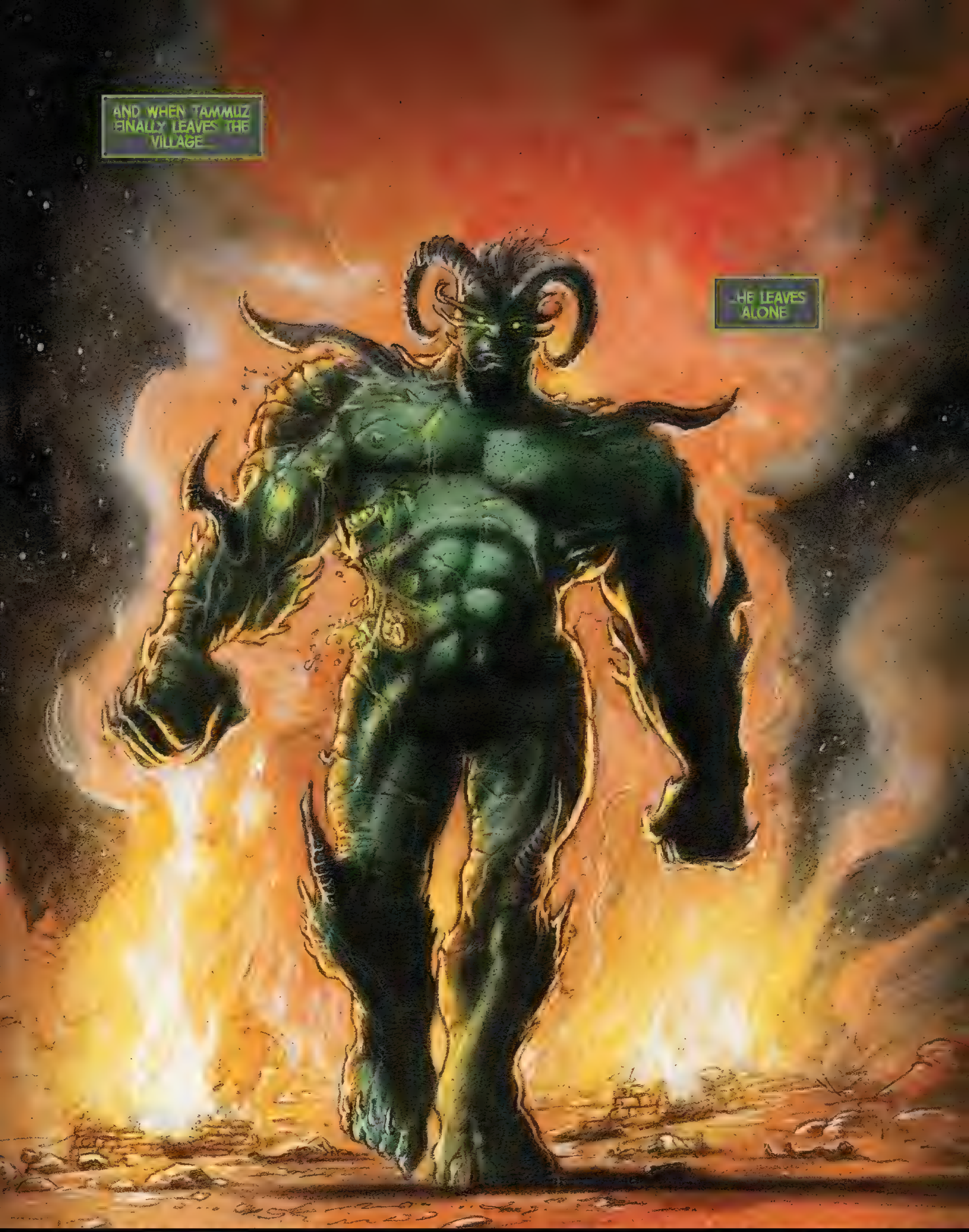

BUT WHILE OUR SPEARS AND ARROWS FELLED THE BRUTE, THEY DID NOT SUMMON IT.
IT WAS THE MOTHER GODDESS' GIFT!
BY NOW YOU WILL ALL HAVE REALIZED THAT SOMEONE IS MISSING FROM THIS FEAST...
TAMMUZ. DEAR TAMMUZ.
MY SISTER TOOK HIM IN WHEN THE FEVER TOOK HIS MOTHER. HE WAS FAMILY.
TODAY HE OFFERED HIMSELF WILLINGLY TO THE MOTHER GODDESS' GOOD GREEN EYE.
I KNOW THIS BECAUSE I WAS WITH HIM AT THE END.
SHLORPP
HE BEGGED ME TO TELL YOU NOT TO MOURN HIM.
"HE CROSSED OVER WITH A SMILING HEART BECAUSE HE KNEW HIS PEOPLE'S FUTURE WAS ASSURED."


THERE HAS BEEN SOME TALK--ESPECIALLY AMONG THE YOUNG--OF ABANDONING OUR LANDS...
OF FORAGING IN THE WETLANDS LIKE OUR HALF-WILD ANCESTORS.
BUT LOOK! THIS MEAT IS A BOON FROM THE MOTHER GODDESS HERSELF!
IT IS PROOF THAT WE CAN KEEP FAITH WITH OUR WAYS AND STILL HAVE ALL WE NEED!
TAMMUZ HAS SHOWN US THE PRICE THE EYE DEMANDS. IT IS THE PRICE OF CIVILIZATION.
BUT WE NEED NOT PAY IT OURSELVES!
TOMORROW I WILL TAKE A HUNTING PARTY TO THE VILLAGE OF THE BONE TALKERS.
FATHER...
WE WILL--NN!--SURPRISE THEM. WE WILL SUBDUE THEM, AND WE WILL OFFER THEM UP TO THE GOOD GREEN EYE.
AND WE WILL BE MADE WHOLE.
A-DAD! A-DAD! A-DAD!
FATHER, ITS EYE!

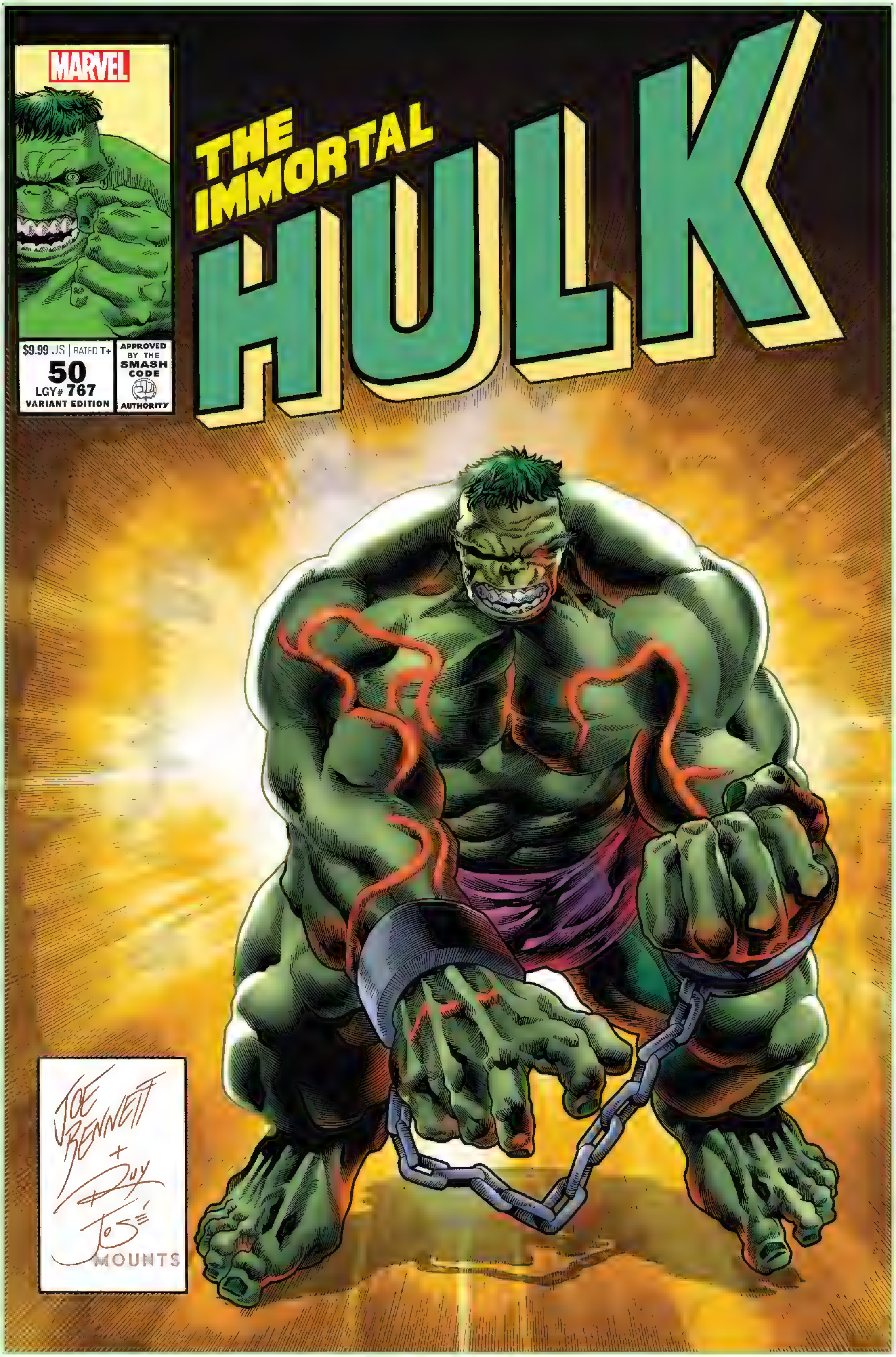

WAIT. I FEEL... GLLKKK!!!
THE FIRE GUTTERS.
ADAD, WHAT IS-- HALCCHH!!!
THE CHEERING STOPS.
THERE IS RIPPING. THERE IS PAIN. THE FEAST IS OVER.
GOOD. PERHAPS NOW THEY WILL UNDERSTAND.
THE GREEN DOOR OPENS LIKE A FLOWER.
NO!
HE IS RETURNED.


WITH A THOUGHT HE SUMMONS HIMSELF TO HIMSELF...AND *SMILES.*
THE POWER FEELS DIFFERENT THIS TIME. IT IS NOT MEANT FOR *BUILDING.*
HIS GOOD GREEN EYE WIDENS, DRINKING IN EVERY DELECTABLE TWITCH AND SHUDDER OF HIS MURDERERS' BODIES...
...UNTIL ONLY ONE REMAINS.
I...I DIDN'T KNOW, TAMMUZ! I *SWEAR!*


TAMMUZ KNOWS HE COULD SPEAK NOW IF HE WISHED— SHAPE THE ROCKSLIDE IN HIS CHEST INTO WORDS.
SPEAK THE *WHY* OF IT. TEACH THE *LESSON* OF IT.
HE COULD STILL LEAVE WITH SHALIM AS THEY PLANNED. EVEN NOW—EVEN AFTER THE *SCREAMS* AND THE *RENDING*—IT MIGHT NOT BE TOO LATE.
THEY COULD STILL FIND THAT BETTER PLACE IN HIS MIND.
HE COULD STOP.
HE COULD STOP MAKING THEM PAY.
IF HE WISHED.
SHLKK
BUT THERE IS A VOICE OF GREEN FIRE IN HIS HEAD FROM A PLACE BELOW ALL PLACES.
A VOICE THAT SAYS "NEVER."

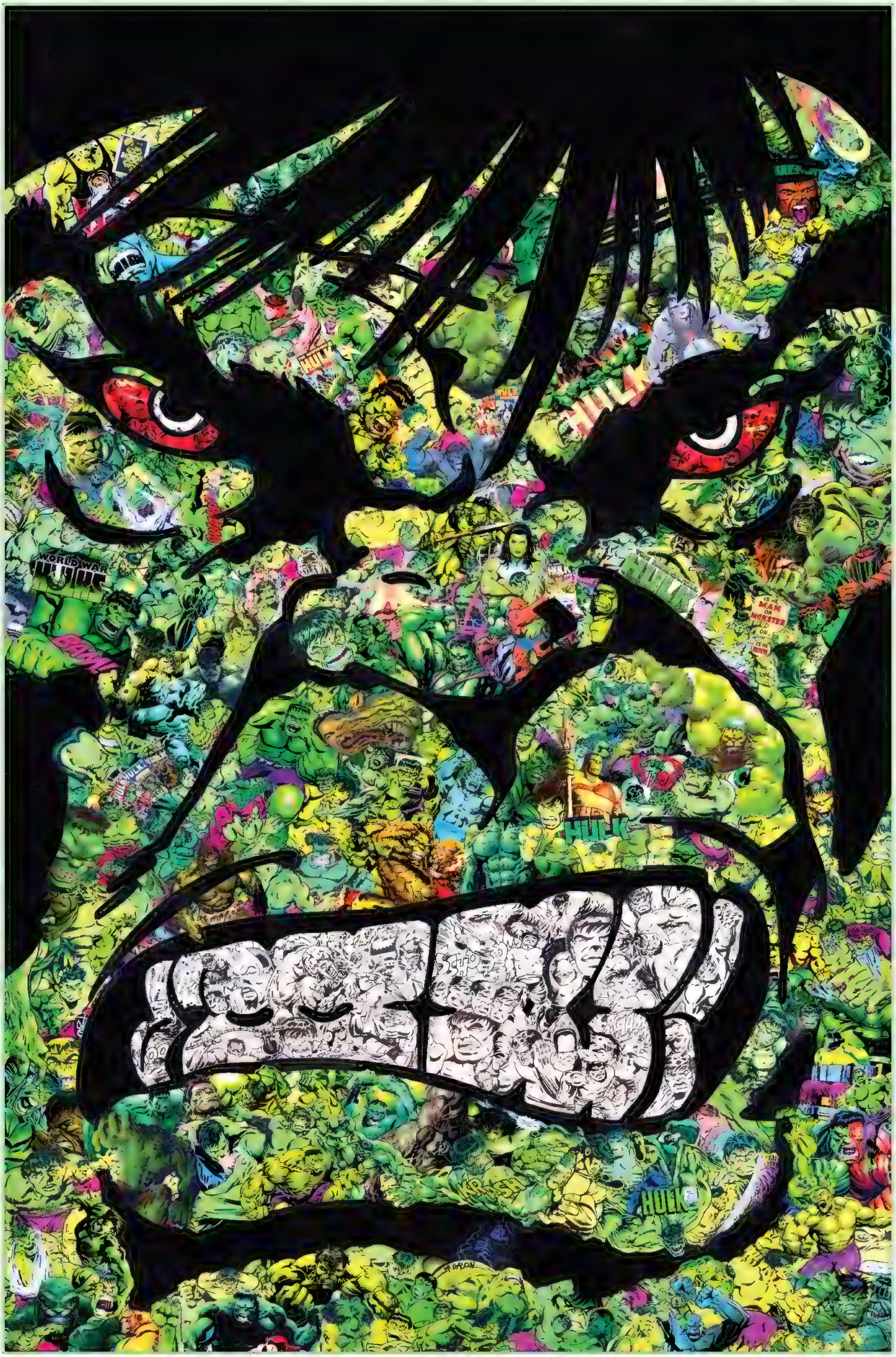

AND WHEN TAMMUZ FINALLY LEAVES THE VILLAGE...
...HE LEAVES ALONE

TIME OF MONSTERS


MARVEL
THE IMMORTAL HULK
$9.99 JS
RATED T+
50
LGY# 767
VARIANT EDITION
APPROVED BY THE SMASH CODE AUTHORITY
JOE BENNETT + RUY JOSÉ
MOUNTS

#50 HOMAGE VARIANT BY JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ **&** PAUL MOUNTS

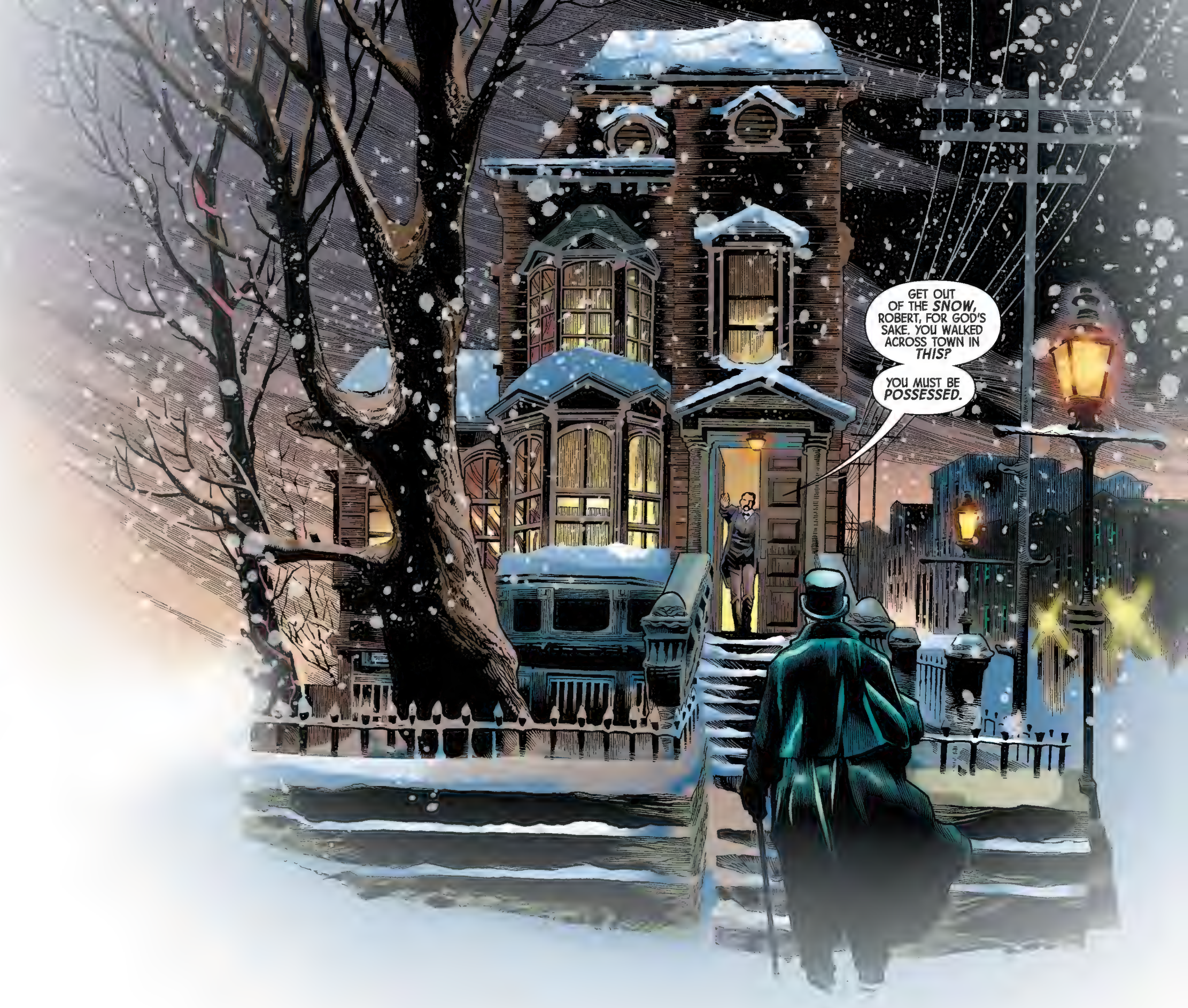
50

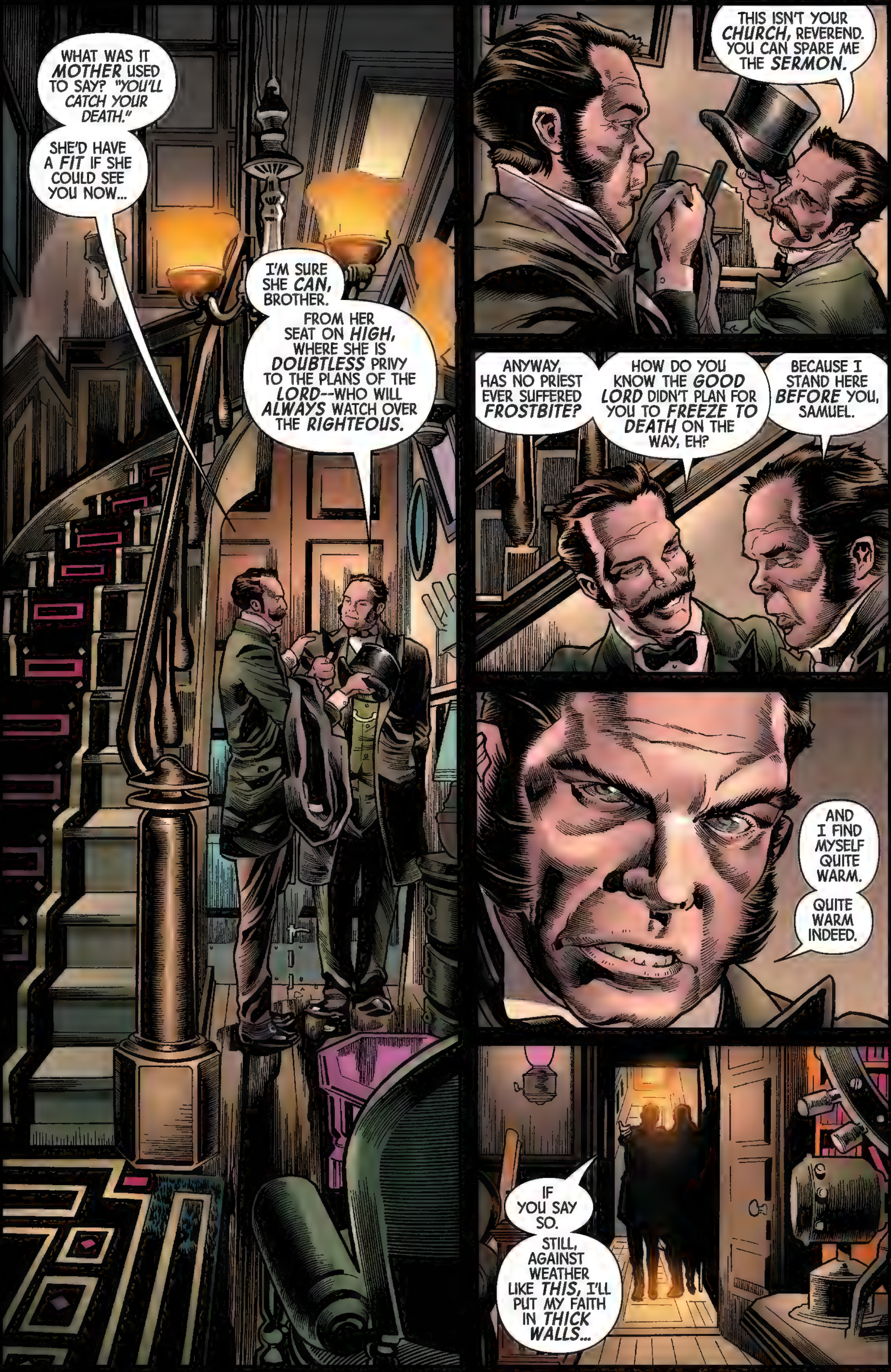

HULK
WORLD WAR
HULK
HULK
HULK

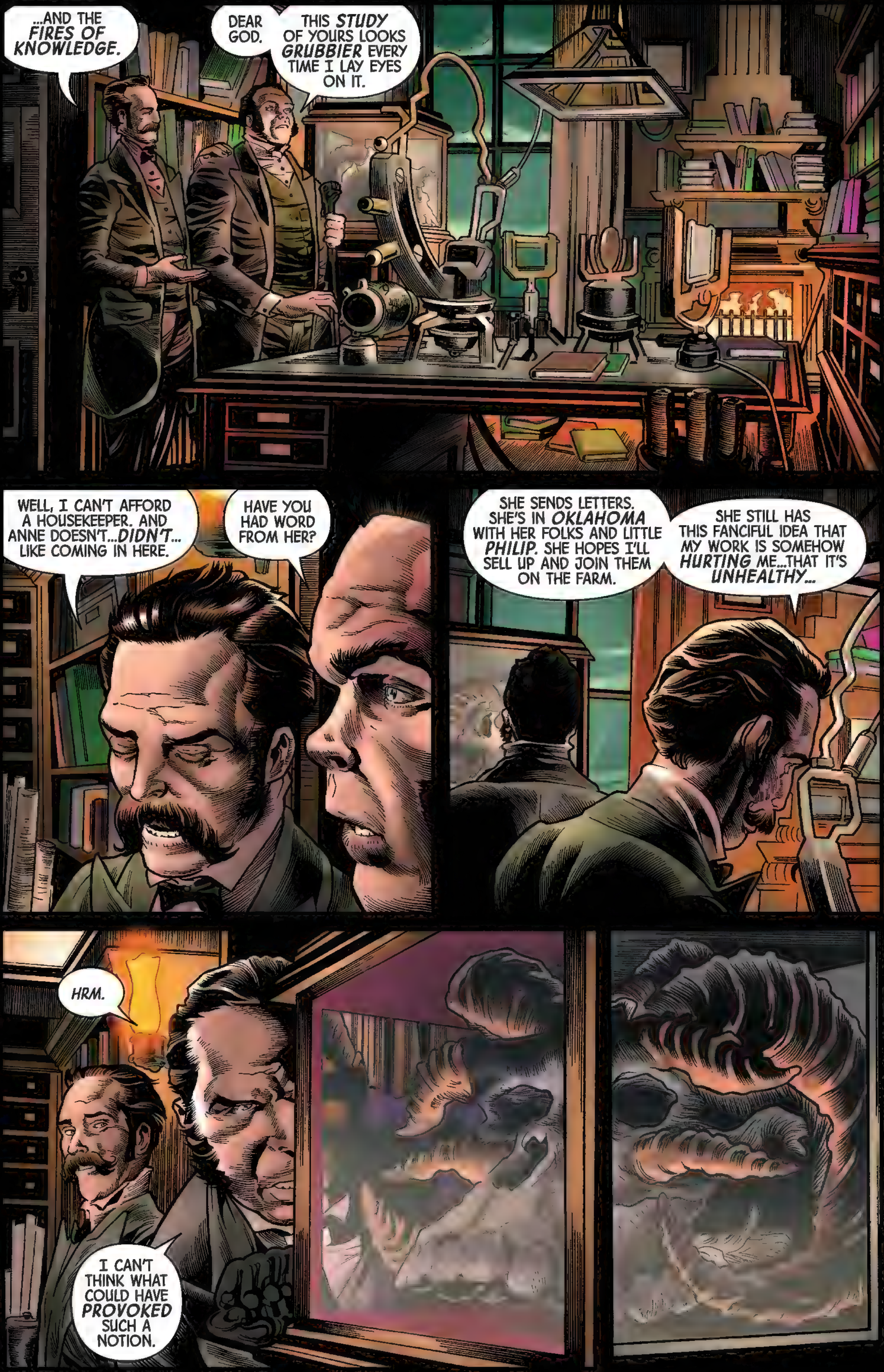
#50 VARIANT BY **MR GARCIN**

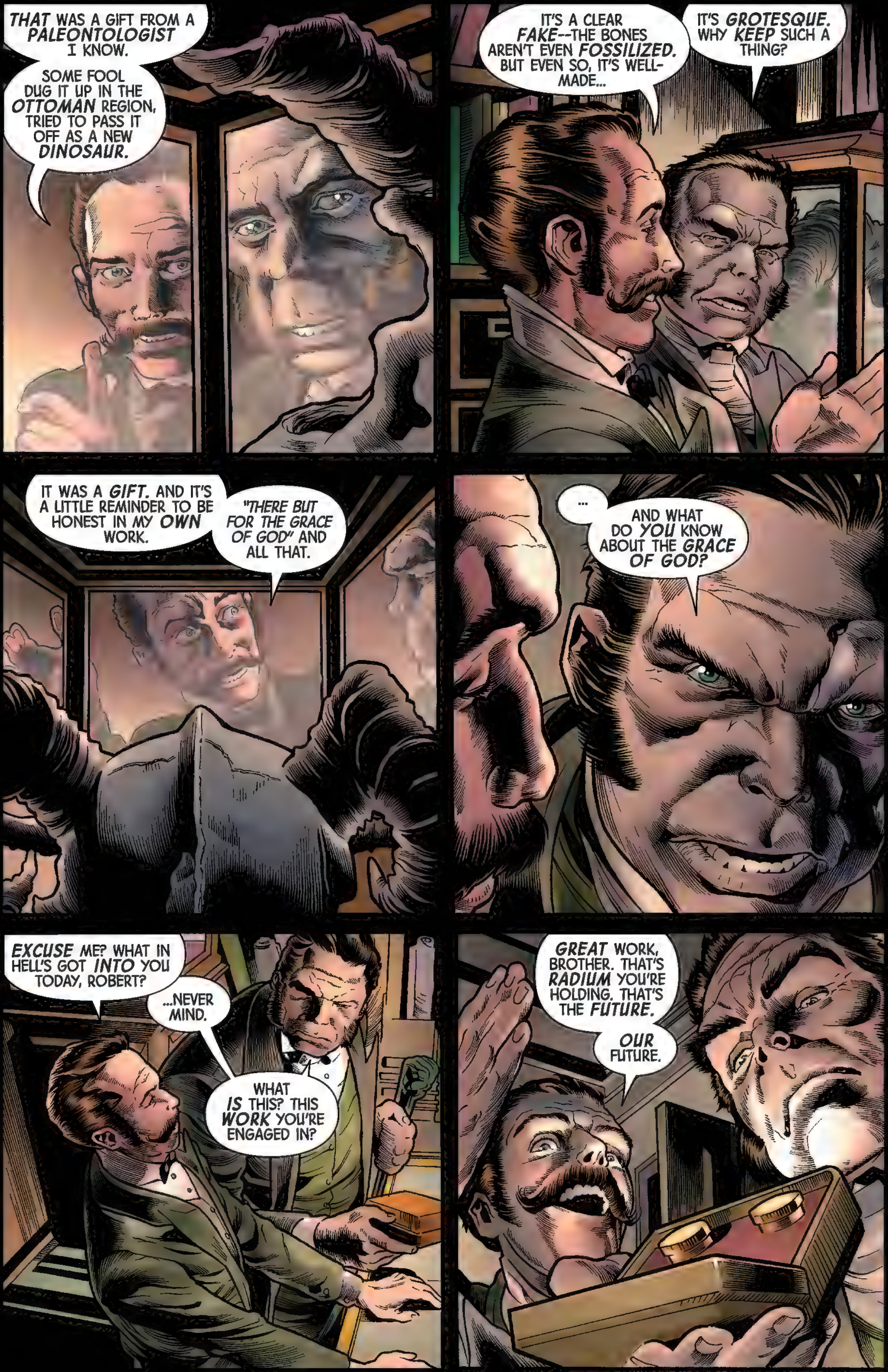
> “I AM HE THAT LIVETH, AND WAS DEAD; AND, BEHOLD, I AM ALIVE FOR EVERMORE, AMEN; AND HAVE THE KEYS OF HELL AND OF DEATH.”
>
> – REVELATION 1:18

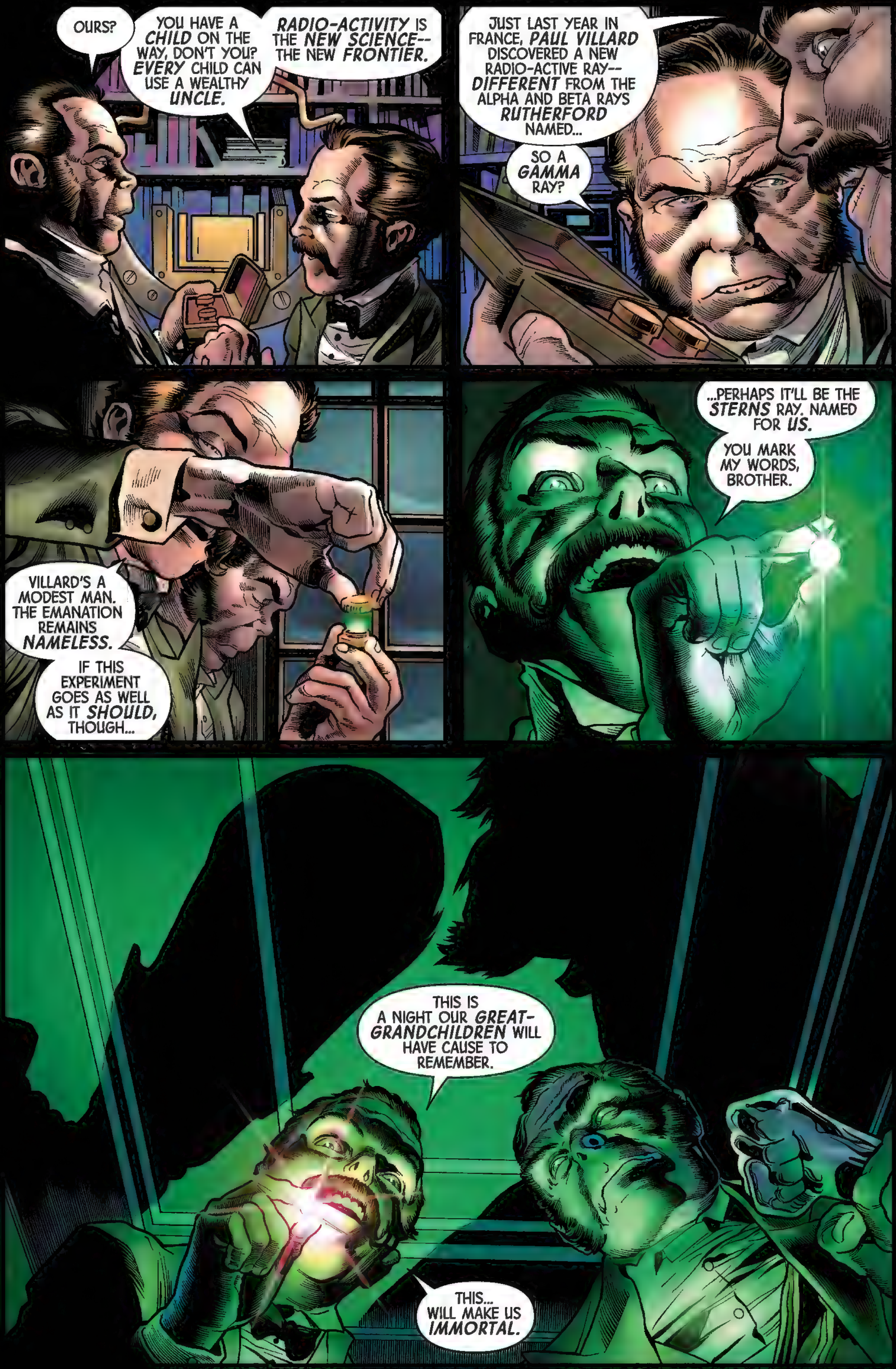
OHIO
1901


GET OUT OF THE *SNOW*, ROBERT, FOR GOD'S SAKE. YOU WALKED ACROSS TOWN IN *THIS?*
YOU MUST BE *POSSESSED.*

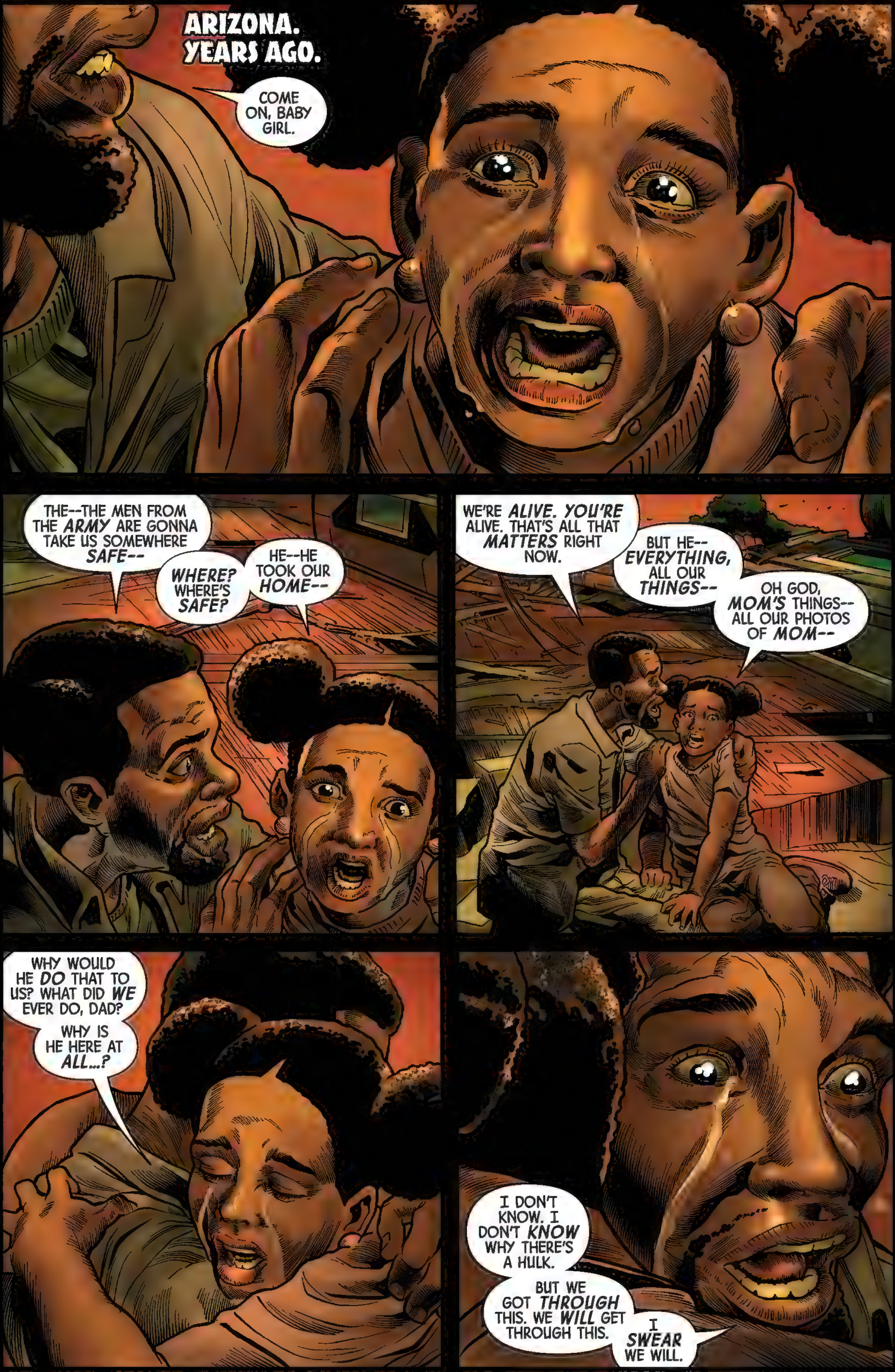

WHAT WAS IT *MOTHER* USED TO SAY? "*YOU'LL CATCH YOUR DEATH.*"
SHE'D HAVE A *FIT* IF SHE COULD SEE YOU NOW...
I'M SURE SHE *CAN,* BROTHER.
FROM HER SEAT ON *HIGH,* WHERE SHE IS *DOUBTLESS* PRIVY TO THE PLANS OF THE *LORD*--WHO WILL *ALWAYS* WATCH OVER THE *RIGHTEOUS.*
THIS ISN'T YOUR *CHURCH,* REVEREND. YOU CAN SPARE ME THE *SERMON.*
ANYWAY, HAS NO PRIEST EVER SUFFERED *FROSTBITE?*
HOW DO YOU KNOW THE *GOOD LORD* DIDN'T PLAN FOR YOU TO *FREEZE TO DEATH* ON THE WAY, EH?
BECAUSE I STAND HERE *BEFORE* YOU, SAMUEL.
AND I FIND MYSELF QUITE WARM.
QUITE WARM INDEED.
IF YOU SAY SO.
STILL, AGAINST WEATHER LIKE *THIS,* I'LL PUT MY FAITH IN *THICK WALLS...*

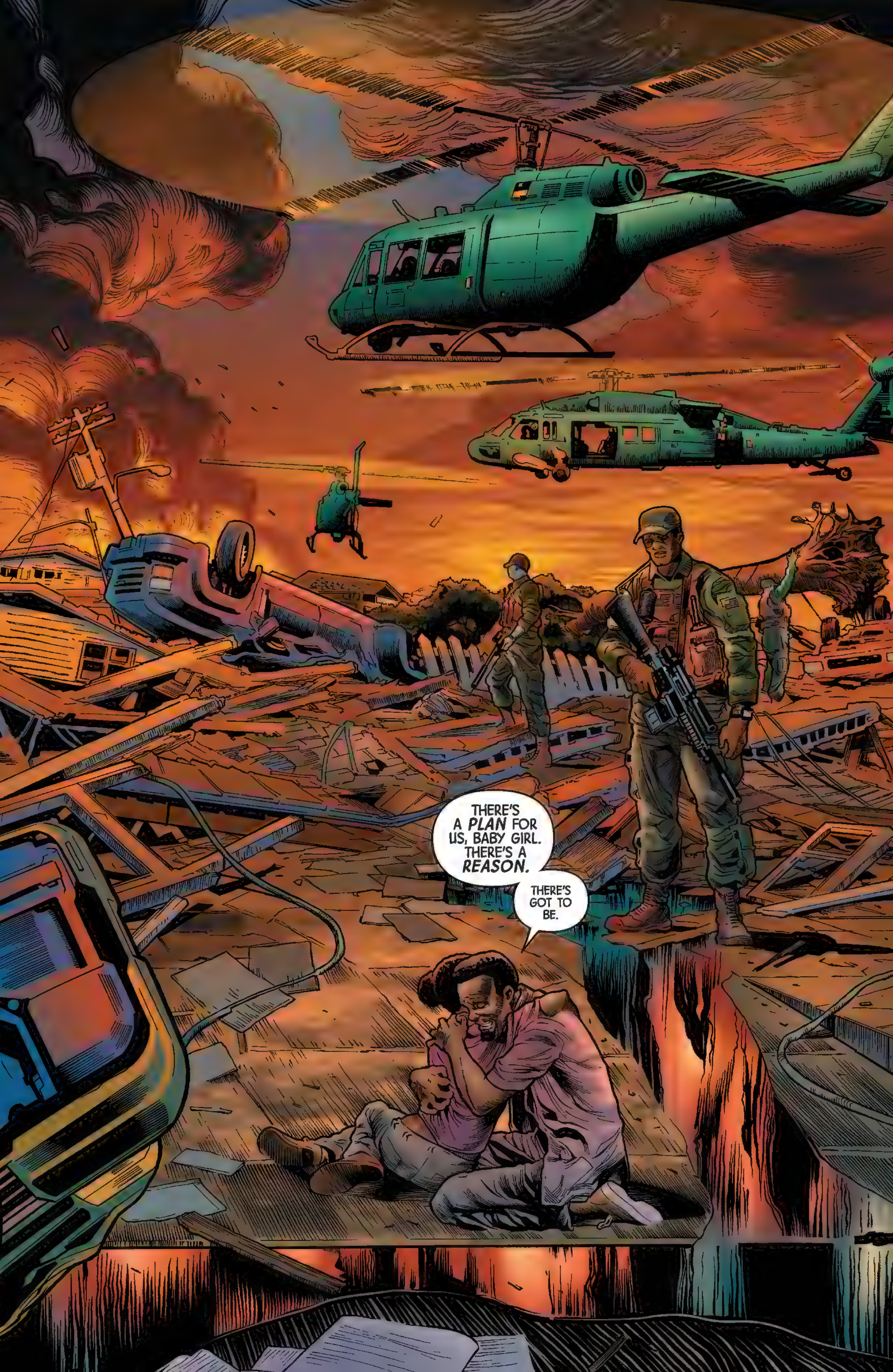

...AND THE *FIRES OF KNOWLEDGE.*
DEAR GOD.
THIS *STUDY* OF YOURS LOOKS *GRUBBIER* EVERY TIME I LAY EYES ON IT.
WELL, I CAN'T AFFORD A HOUSEKEEPER. AND ANNE DOESN'T...*DIDN'T*... LIKE COMING IN HERE.
HAVE YOU HAD WORD FROM HER?
SHE SENDS LETTERS. SHE'S IN *OKLAHOMA* WITH HER FOLKS AND LITTLE *PHILIP.* SHE HOPES I'LL SELL UP AND JOIN THEM ON THE FARM.
SHE STILL HAS THIS FANCIFUL IDEA THAT MY WORK IS SOMEHOW *HURTING* ME...THAT IT'S *UNHEALTHY...*
HRM.
I CAN'T THINK WHAT COULD HAVE *PROVOKED* SUCH A NOTION.

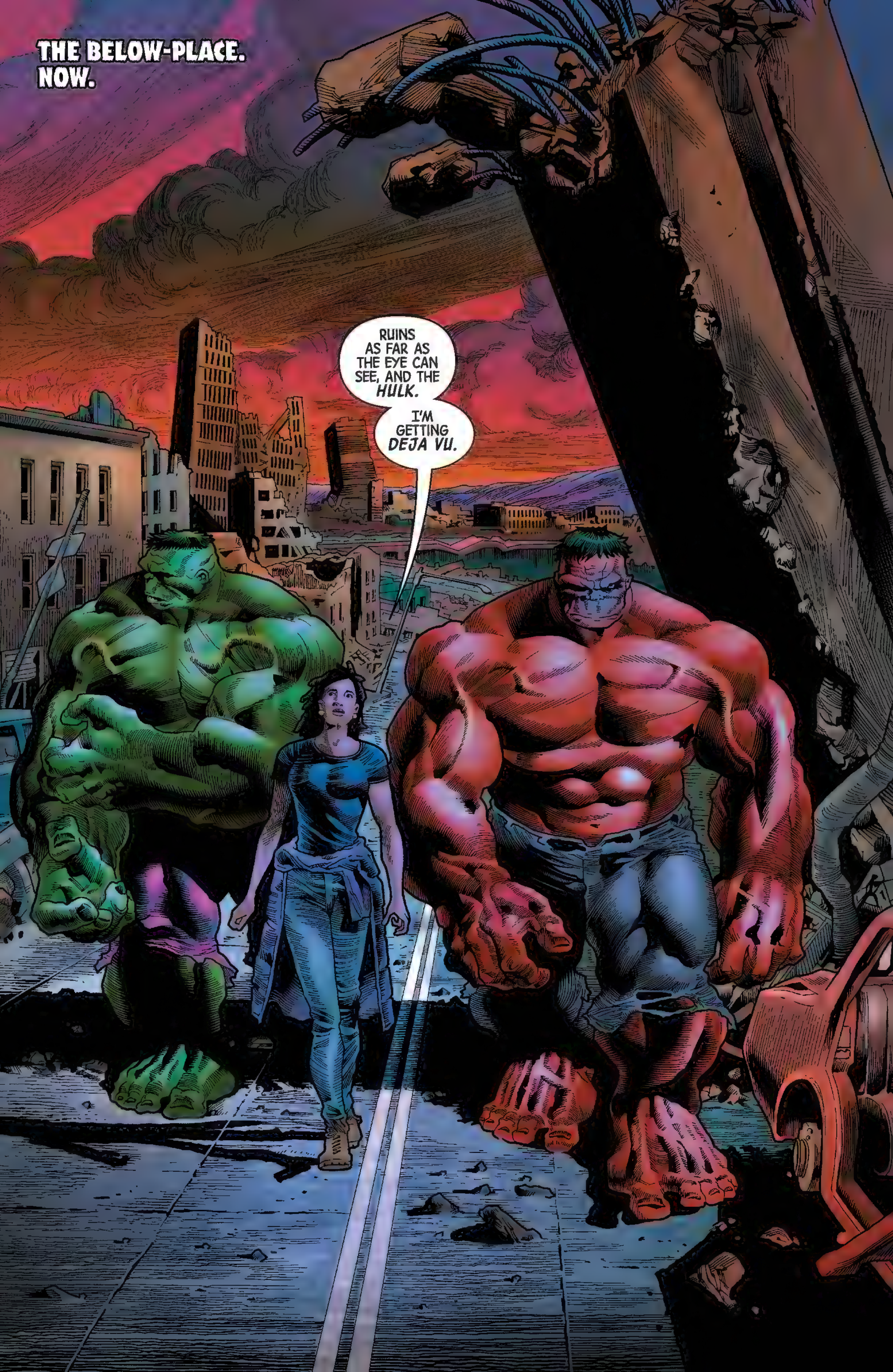

THAT WAS A GIFT FROM A PALEONTOLOGIST I KNOW.
SOME FOOL DUG IT UP IN THE OTTOMAN REGION, TRIED TO PASS IT OFF AS A NEW DINOSAUR.
IT'S A CLEAR FAKE--THE BONES AREN'T EVEN FOSSILIZED. BUT EVEN SO, IT'S WELL-MADE...
IT'S GROTESQUE. WHY KEEP SUCH A THING?
IT WAS A GIFT. AND IT'S A LITTLE REMINDER TO BE HONEST IN MY OWN WORK.
"THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD" AND ALL THAT.
...
AND WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE GRACE OF GOD?
EXCUSE ME? WHAT IN HELL'S GOT INTO YOU TODAY, ROBERT?
...NEVER MIND.
WHAT IS THIS? THIS WORK YOU'RE ENGAGED IN?
GREAT WORK, BROTHER. THAT'S RADIUM YOU'RE HOLDING. THAT'S THE FUTURE.
OUR FUTURE.

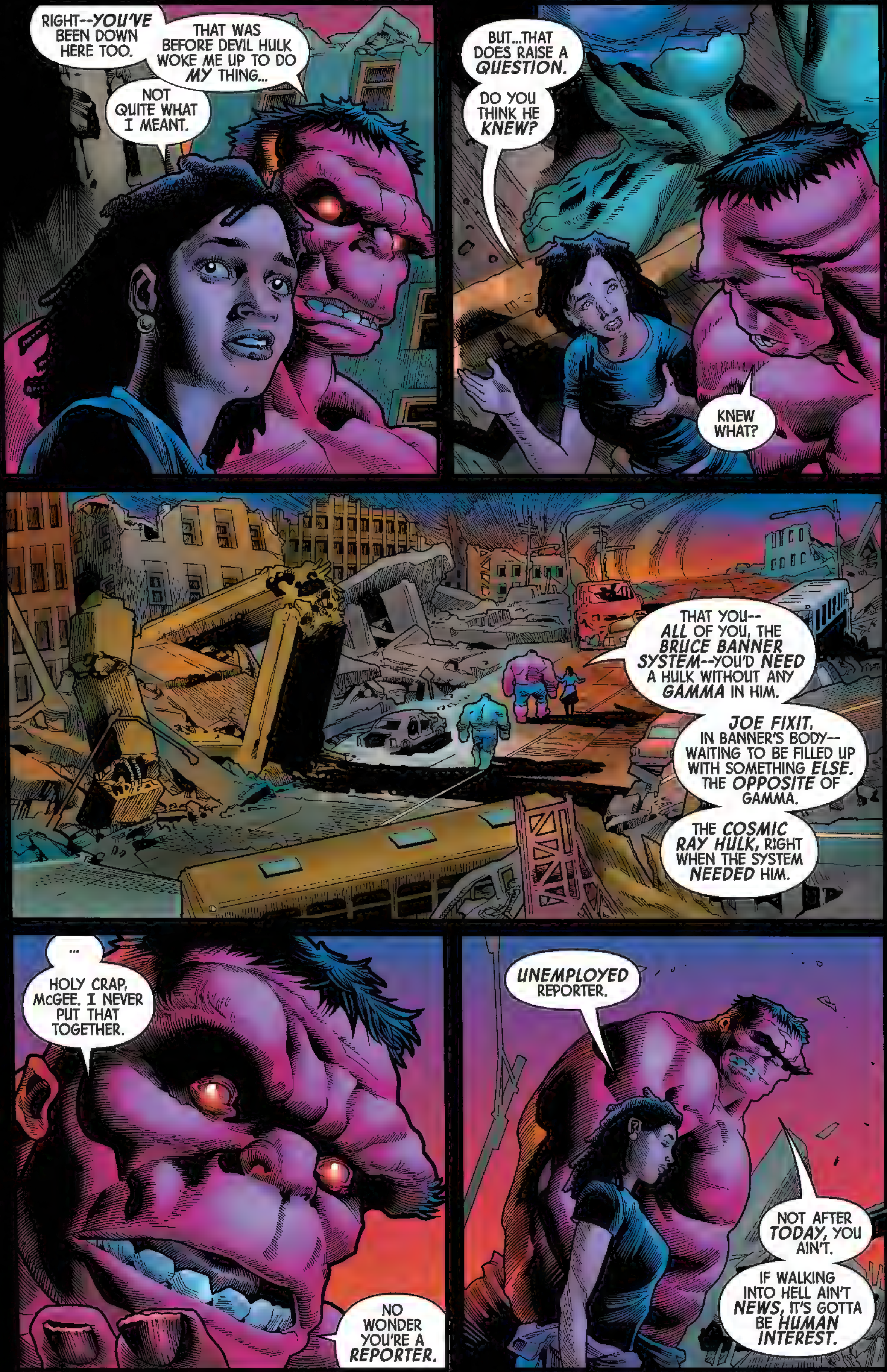

OURS?
YOU HAVE A *CHILD* ON THE WAY, DON'T YOU? *EVERY* CHILD CAN USE A WEALTHY *UNCLE.*
RADIO-ACTIVITY IS THE *NEW SCIENCE*-- THE NEW *FRONTIER.*
JUST LAST YEAR IN FRANCE, *PAUL VILLARD* DISCOVERED A NEW RADIO-ACTIVE RAY-- *DIFFERENT* FROM THE ALPHA AND BETA RAYS *RUTHERFORD* NAMED...
SO A *GAMMA* RAY?
VILLARD'S A MODEST MAN. THE EMANATION REMAINS *NAMELESS.*
IF THIS EXPERIMENT GOES AS WELL AS IT *SHOULD,* THOUGH...
...PERHAPS IT'LL BE THE *STERNS* RAY. NAMED FOR *US.*
YOU MARK MY WORDS, BROTHER.
THIS IS A NIGHT OUR *GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN* WILL HAVE CAUSE TO REMEMBER.
THIS... WILL MAKE US *IMMORTAL.*

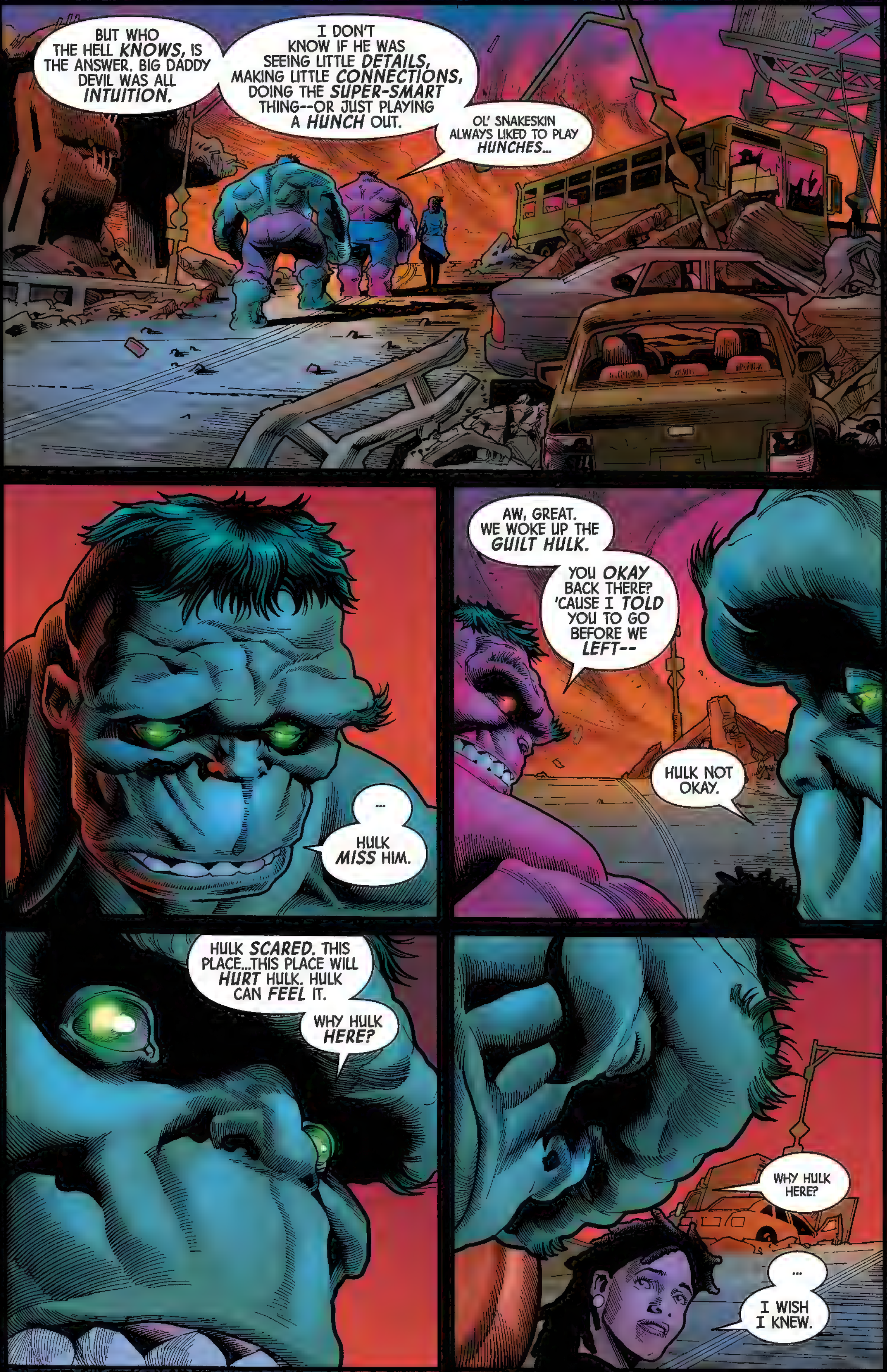
OF
HELL
AND OF
DEATH

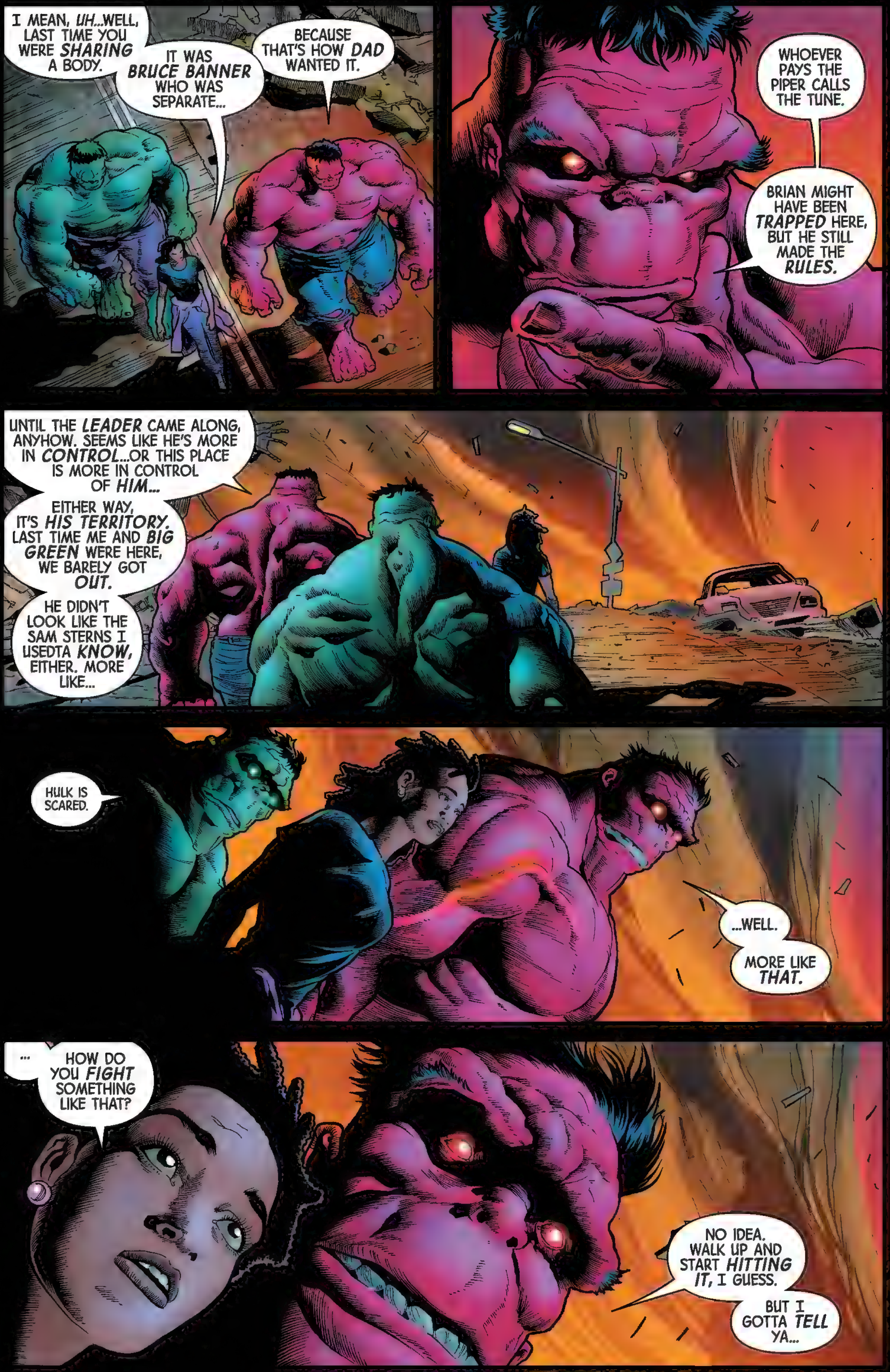

ARIZONA. YEARS AGO.
COME ON, BABY GIRL.
THE--THE MEN FROM THE *ARMY* ARE GONNA TAKE US SOMEWHERE *SAFE--*
WHERE? WHERE'S *SAFE?*
HE--HE TOOK OUR *HOME--*
WE'RE *ALIVE. YOU'RE* ALIVE. THAT'S ALL THAT *MATTERS* RIGHT NOW.
BUT HE-- *EVERYTHING,* ALL OUR *THINGS--*
OH GOD, *MOM'S* THINGS-- ALL OUR PHOTOS OF *MOM--*
WHY WOULD HE *DO* THAT TO US? WHAT DID *WE* EVER DO, DAD?
WHY IS HE HERE AT *ALL...?*
I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T *KNOW* WHY THERE'S A HULK.
BUT WE GOT *THROUGH* THIS. WE *WILL* GET THROUGH THIS.
I *SWEAR* WE WILL.

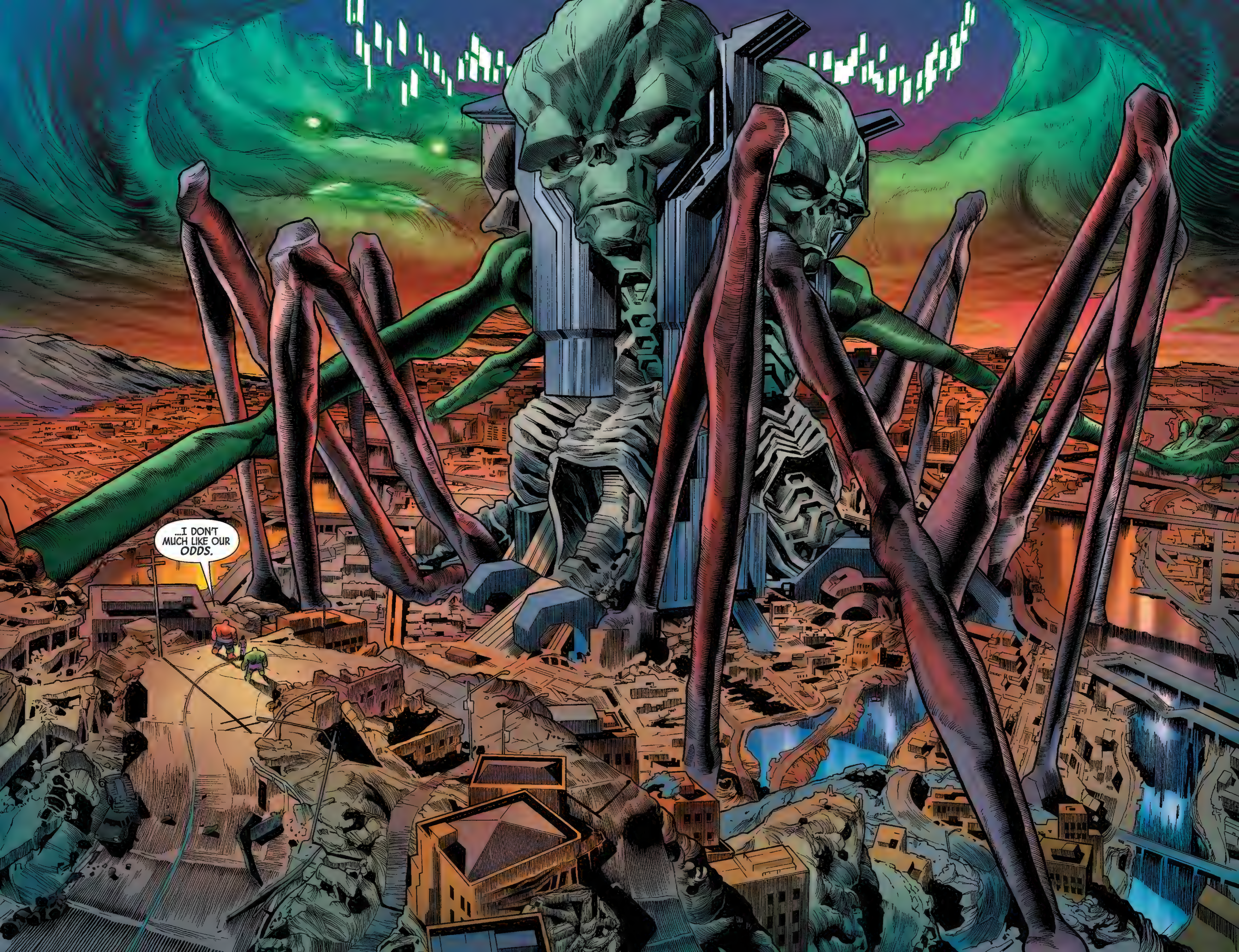

THERE'S A *PLAN* FOR US, BABY GIRL. THERE'S A *REASON*.
THERE'S GOT TO BE.

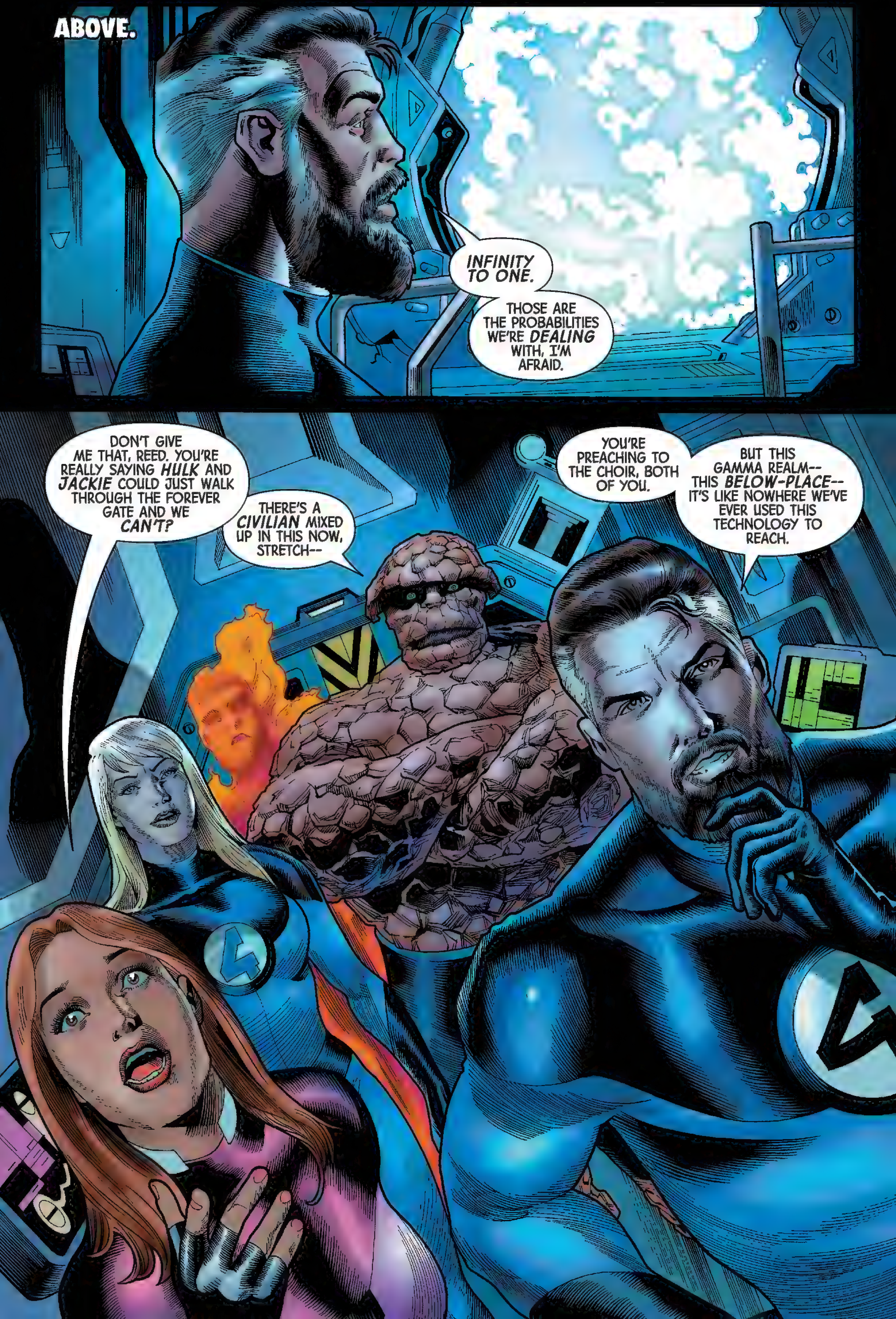

THE BELOW-PLACE.
NOW.
RUINS AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE, AND THE *HULK*.
I'M GETTING *DEJA VU*.

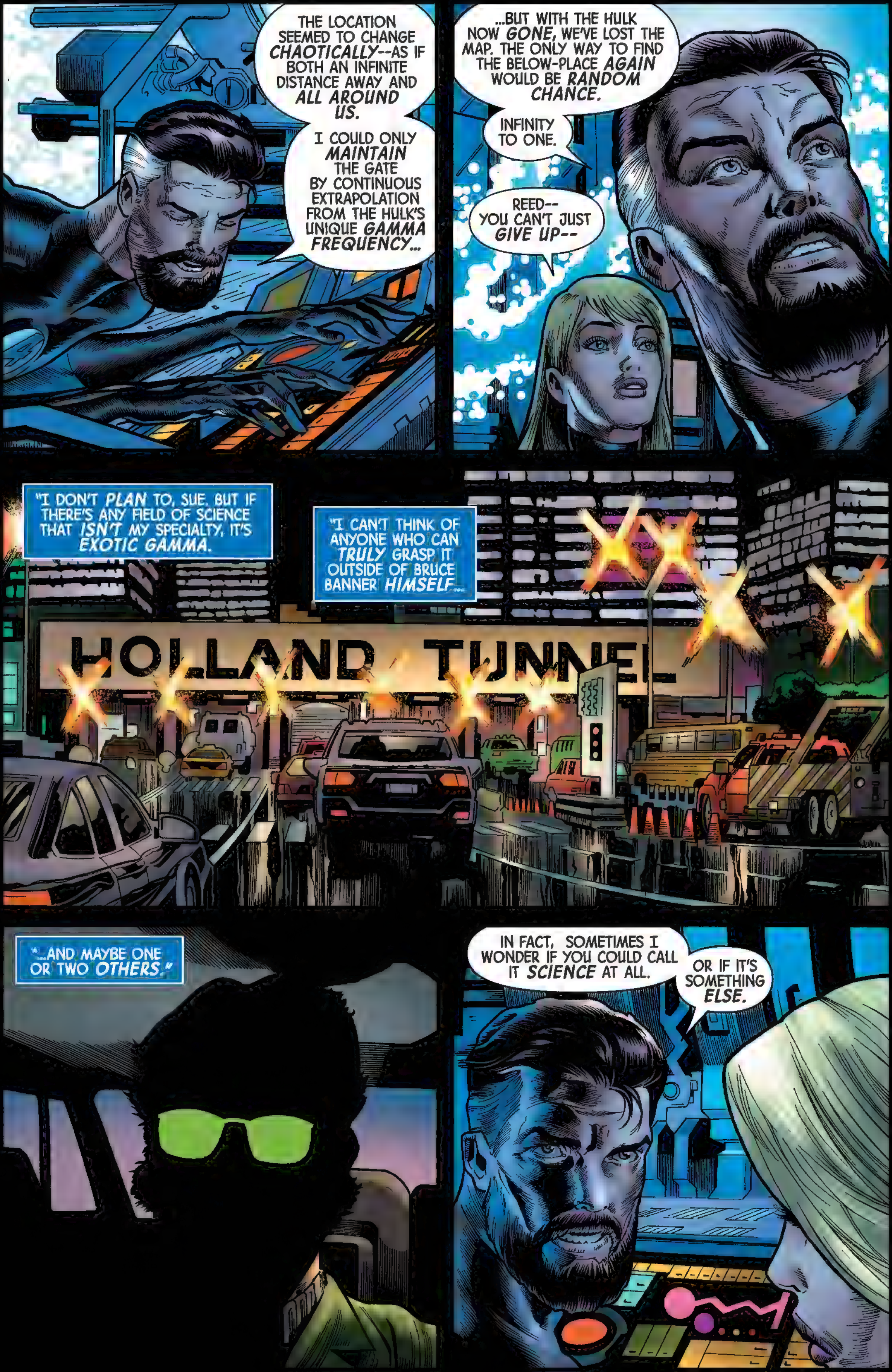

RIGHT--*YOU'VE* BEEN DOWN HERE TOO.
THAT WAS BEFORE DEVIL HULK WOKE ME UP TO DO *MY* THING...
NOT QUITE WHAT I MEANT.
BUT...THAT DOES RAISE A *QUESTION.*
DO YOU THINK HE *KNEW?*
KNEW WHAT?
THAT YOU-- *ALL* OF YOU, THE *BRUCE BANNER SYSTEM*--YOU'D *NEED* A HULK WITHOUT ANY *GAMMA* IN HIM.
JOE FIXIT, IN BANNER'S BODY-- WAITING TO BE FILLED UP WITH SOMETHING *ELSE.* THE *OPPOSITE* OF GAMMA.
THE *COSMIC RAY HULK,* RIGHT WHEN THE SYSTEM *NEEDED* HIM.
...
HOLY CRAP, McGEE. I NEVER PUT THAT TOGETHER.
NO WONDER YOU'RE A *REPORTER.*
UNEMPLOYED REPORTER.
NOT AFTER *TODAY,* YOU AIN'T.
IF WALKING INTO HELL AIN'T *NEWS,* IT'S GOTTA BE *HUMAN INTEREST.*

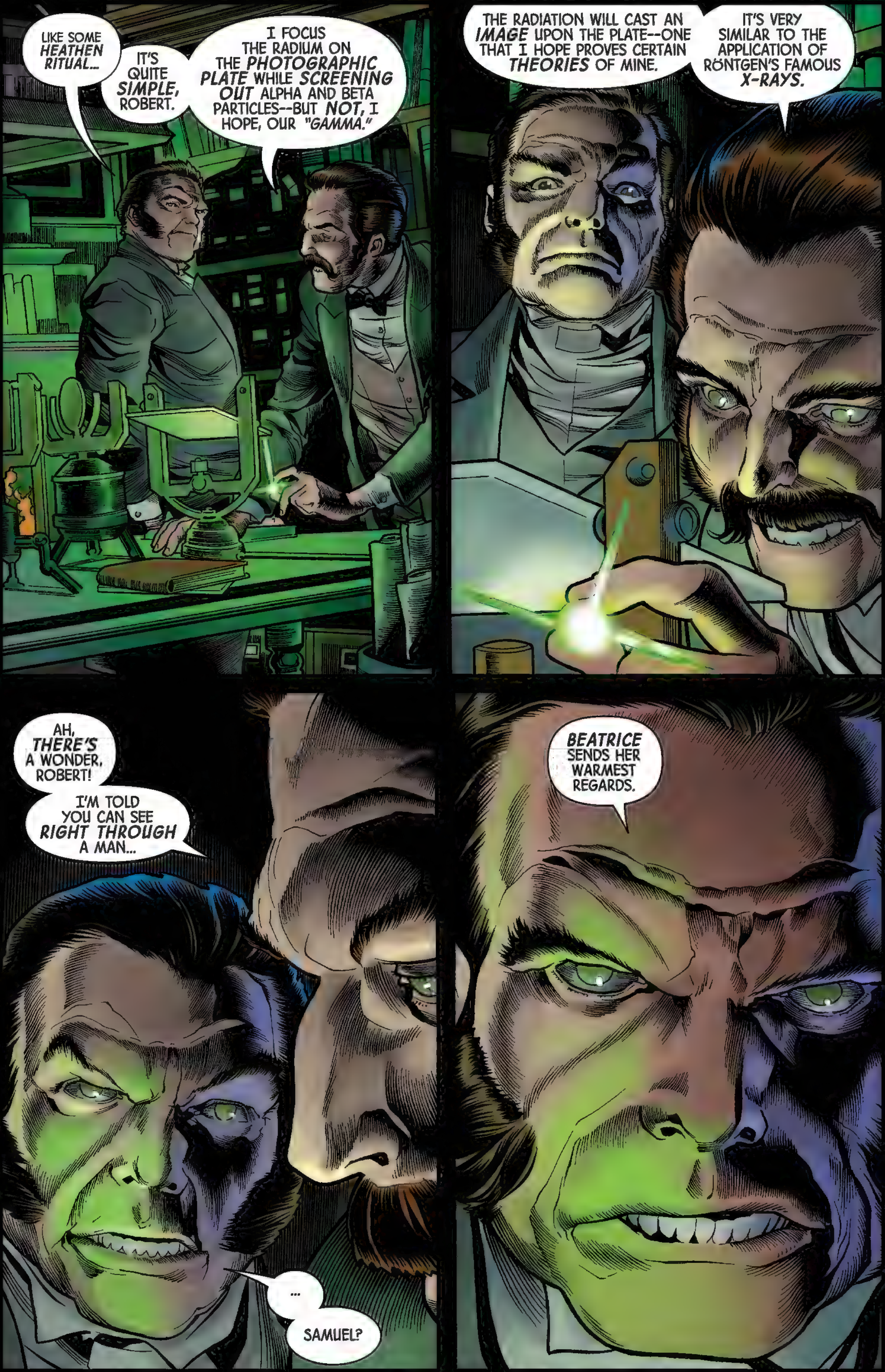

BUT WHO THE HELL KNOWS, IS THE ANSWER. BIG DADDY DEVIL WAS ALL INTUITION.
I DON'T KNOW IF HE WAS SEEING LITTLE DETAILS, MAKING LITTLE CONNECTIONS, DOING THE SUPER-SMART THING--OR JUST PLAYING A HUNCH OUT.
OL' SNAKESKIN ALWAYS LIKED TO PLAY HUNCHES...
...
HULK MISS HIM.
AW, GREAT. WE WOKE UP THE GUILT HULK.
YOU OKAY BACK THERE? 'CAUSE I TOLD YOU TO GO BEFORE WE LEFT--
HULK NOT OKAY.
HULK SCARED. THIS PLACE...THIS PLACE WILL HURT HULK. HULK CAN FEEL IT.
WHY HULK HERE?
WHY HULK HERE?
...
I WISH I KNEW.

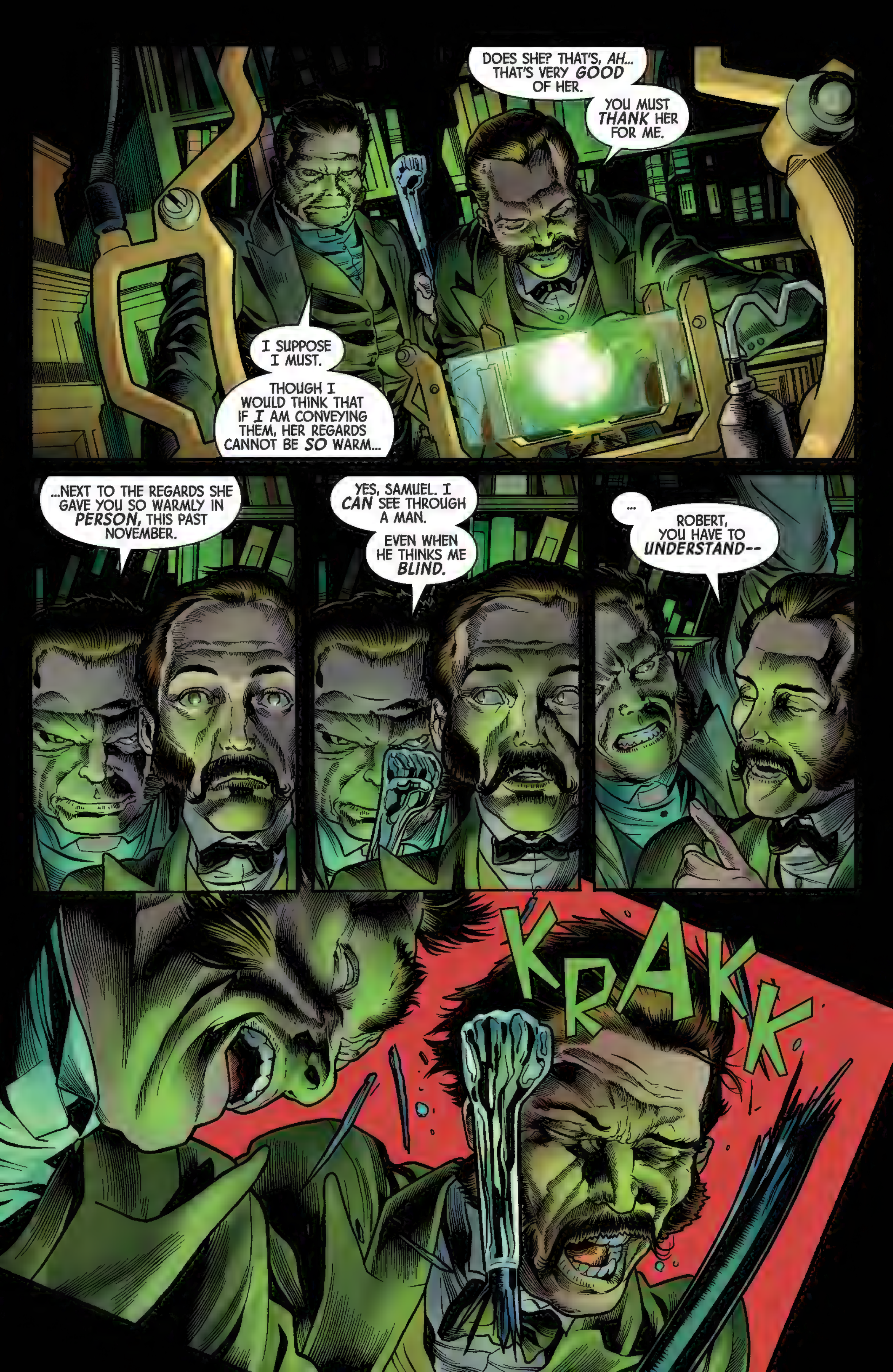

I MEAN, *UH*...WELL, LAST TIME YOU WERE *SHARING* A BODY.
IT WAS *BRUCE BANNER* WHO WAS SEPARATE...
BECAUSE THAT'S HOW *DAD* WANTED IT.
WHOEVER PAYS THE PIPER CALLS THE TUNE.
BRIAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN *TRAPPED* HERE, BUT HE STILL MADE THE *RULES.*
UNTIL THE *LEADER* CAME ALONG, ANYHOW. SEEMS LIKE HE'S MORE IN *CONTROL*...OR THIS PLACE IS MORE IN CONTROL OF *HIM*...
EITHER WAY, IT'S *HIS TERRITORY.* LAST TIME ME AND *BIG GREEN* WERE HERE, WE BARELY GOT *OUT.*
HE DIDN'T LOOK LIKE THE SAM STERNS I USEDTA *KNOW,* EITHER. MORE LIKE...
HULK IS SCARED.
...WELL.
MORE LIKE *THAT.*
...
HOW DO YOU *FIGHT* SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
NO IDEA. WALK UP AND START *HITTING IT,* I GUESS.
BUT I GOTTA *TELL* YA...

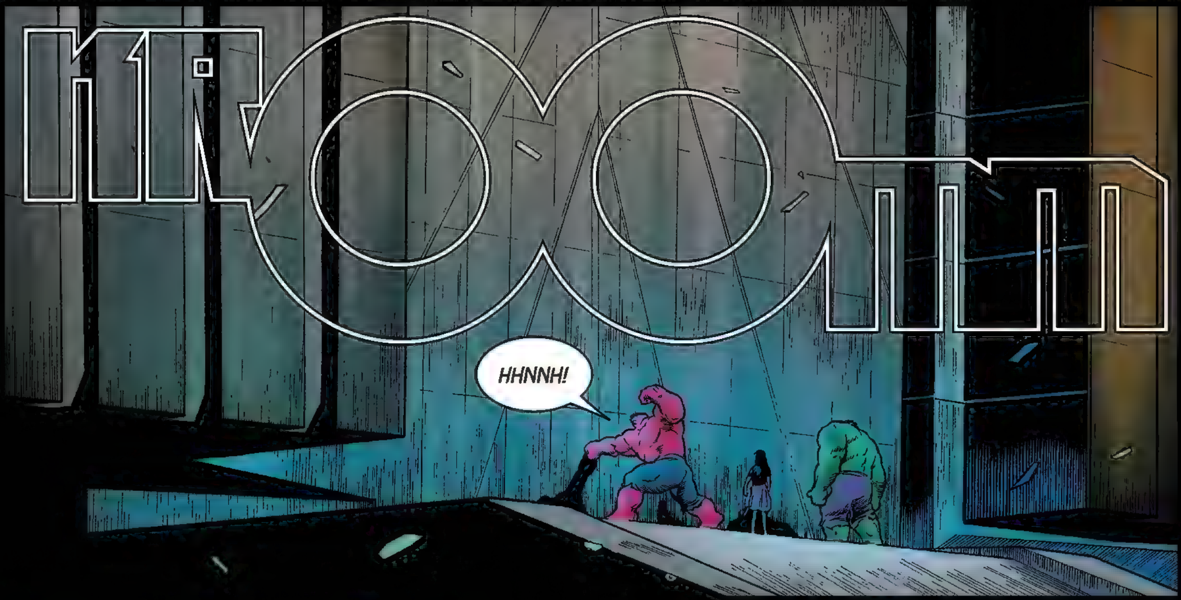

...I DON'T MUCH LIKE OUR *ODDS*.

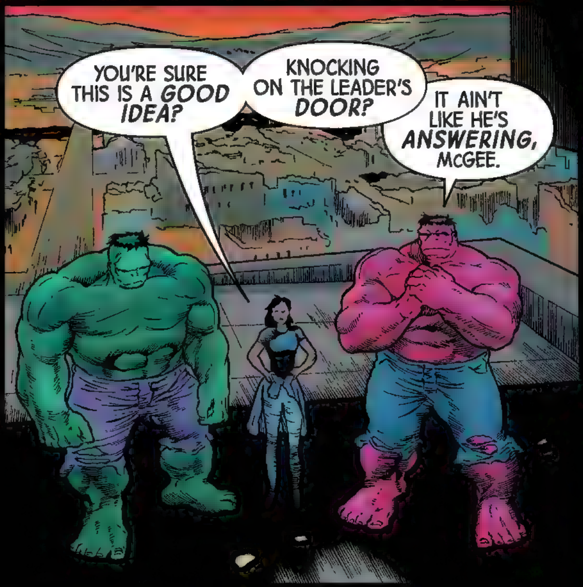

ABOVE.
INFINITY TO ONE.
THOSE ARE THE PROBABILITIES WE'RE *DEALING* WITH, I'M AFRAID.
DON'T GIVE ME THAT, REED. YOU'RE REALLY SAYING *HULK* AND *JACKIE* COULD JUST WALK THROUGH THE FOREVER GATE AND WE *CAN'T?*
THERE'S A *CIVILIAN* MIXED UP IN THIS NOW, STRETCH--
YOU'RE PREACHING TO THE CHOIR, BOTH OF YOU.
BUT THIS GAMMA REALM-- THIS *BELOW-PLACE*-- IT'S LIKE NOWHERE WE'VE EVER USED THIS TECHNOLOGY TO REACH.

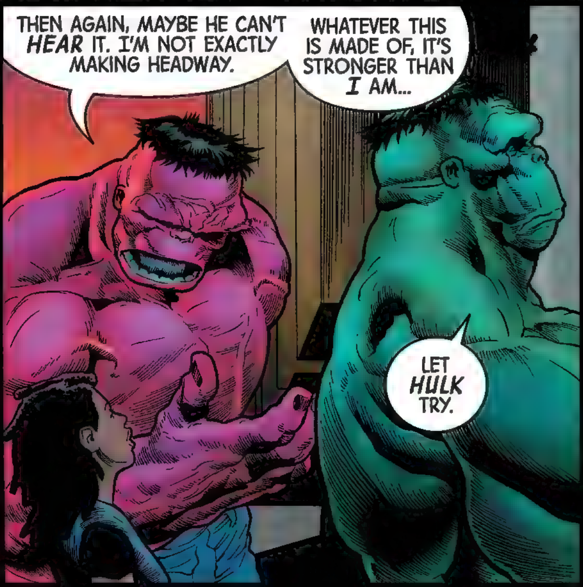

THE LOCATION SEEMED TO CHANGE *CHAOTICALLY*--AS IF BOTH AN INFINITE DISTANCE AWAY AND *ALL AROUND US.*
I COULD ONLY *MAINTAIN* THE GATE BY CONTINUOUS EXTRAPOLATION FROM THE HULK'S UNIQUE *GAMMA FREQUENCY*...
...BUT WITH THE HULK NOW *GONE,* WE'VE LOST THE MAP. THE ONLY WAY TO FIND THE BELOW-PLACE *AGAIN* WOULD BE *RANDOM CHANCE.*
INFINITY TO ONE.
REED-- YOU CAN'T JUST *GIVE UP*--
"I DON'T *PLAN* TO, SUE. BUT IF THERE'S ANY FIELD OF SCIENCE THAT *ISN'T* MY SPECIALTY, IT'S *EXOTIC GAMMA.*
"I CAN'T THINK OF ANYONE WHO CAN *TRULY* GRASP IT OUTSIDE OF BRUCE BANNER *HIMSELF*...
HOLLAND TUNNEL
"...AND MAYBE ONE OR TWO *OTHERS.*"
IN FACT, SOMETIMES I WONDER IF YOU COULD CALL IT *SCIENCE* AT ALL.
OR IF IT'S SOMETHING *ELSE.*

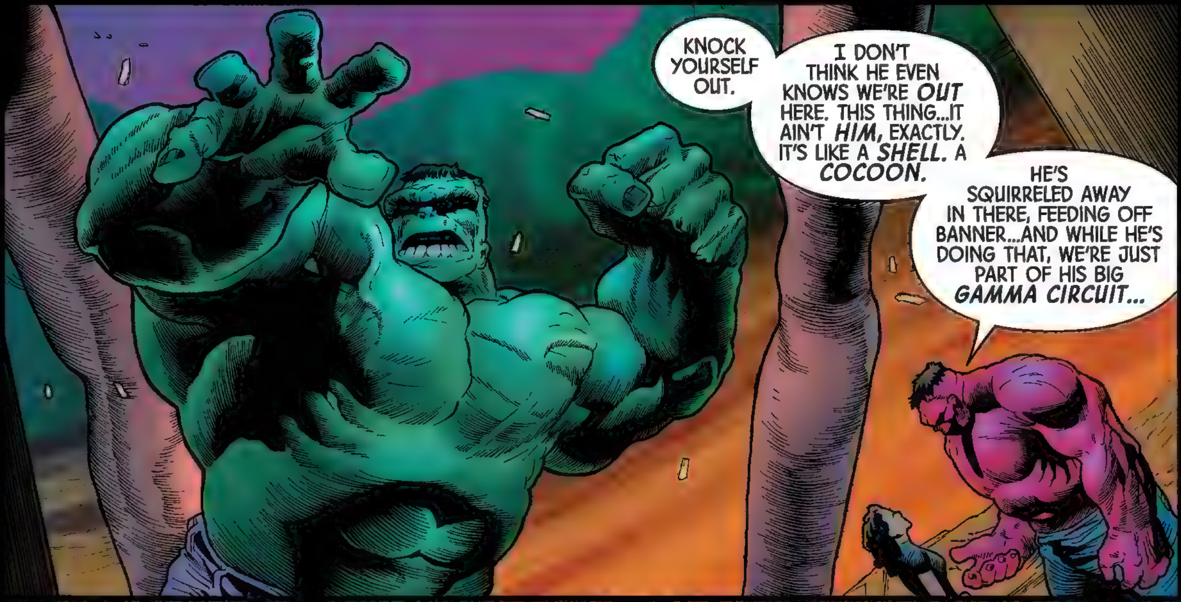

LIKE SOME HEATHEN RITUAL...
IT'S QUITE SIMPLE, ROBERT.
I FOCUS THE RADIUM ON THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATE WHILE SCREENING OUT ALPHA AND BETA PARTICLES--BUT NOT, I HOPE, OUR "GAMMA."
THE RADIATION WILL CAST AN IMAGE UPON THE PLATE--ONE THAT I HOPE PROVES CERTAIN THEORIES OF MINE.
IT'S VERY SIMILAR TO THE APPLICATION OF RÖNTGEN'S FAMOUS X-RAYS.
AH, THERE'S A WONDER, ROBERT!
I'M TOLD YOU CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH A MAN...
...
SAMUEL?
BEATRICE SENDS HER WARMEST REGARDS.

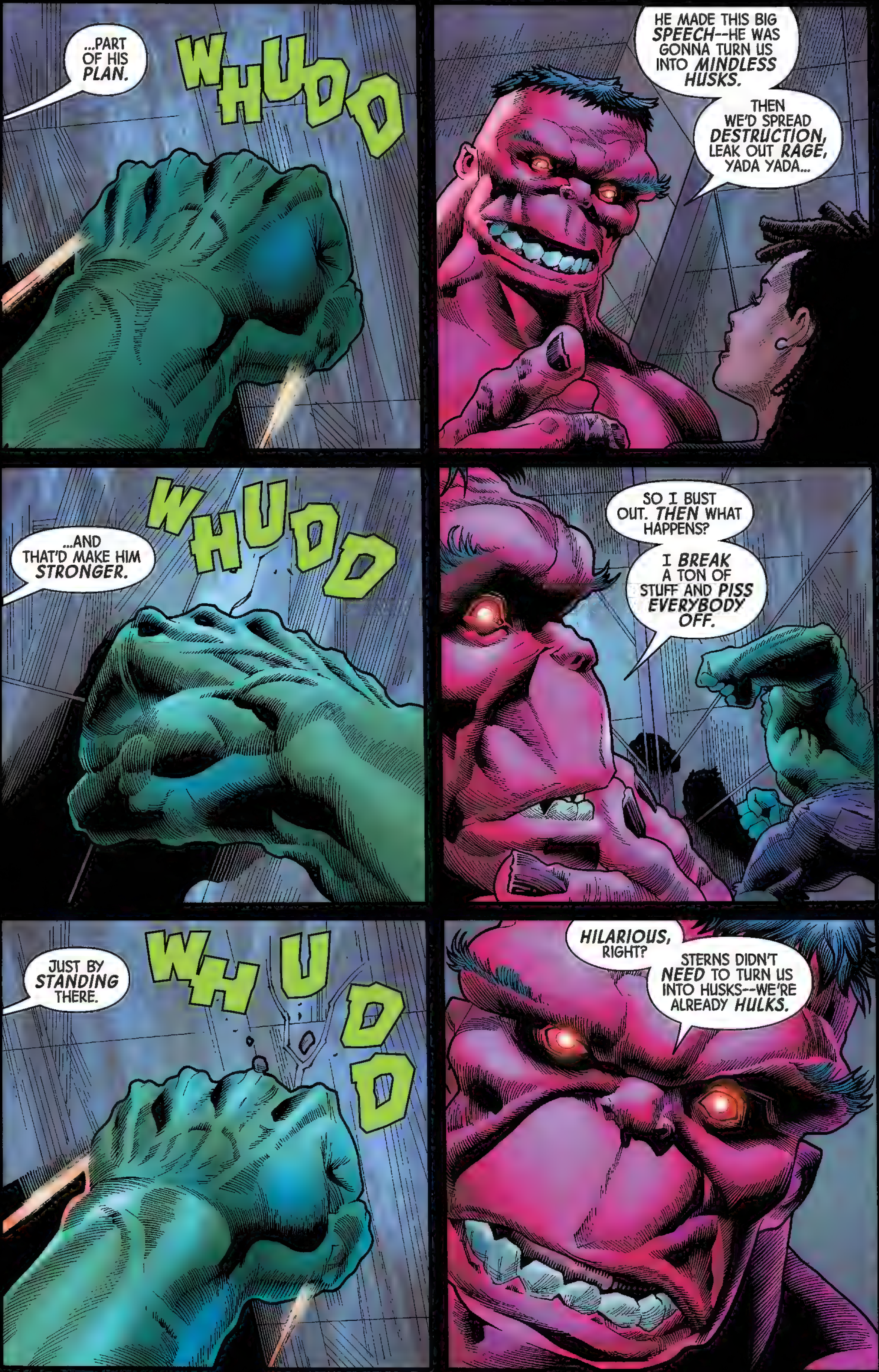

DOES SHE? THAT'S, *AH*... THAT'S VERY *GOOD* OF HER.
YOU MUST *THANK* HER FOR ME.
I SUPPOSE I MUST.
THOUGH I WOULD THINK THAT IF *I* AM CONVEYING THEM, HER REGARDS CANNOT BE *SO* WARM...
...NEXT TO THE REGARDS SHE GAVE YOU SO WARMLY IN *PERSON,* THIS PAST NOVEMBER.
YES, SAMUEL. I *CAN* SEE THROUGH A MAN.
EVEN WHEN HE THINKS ME *BLIND.*
...
ROBERT, YOU HAVE TO *UNDERSTAND--*
KRAKK

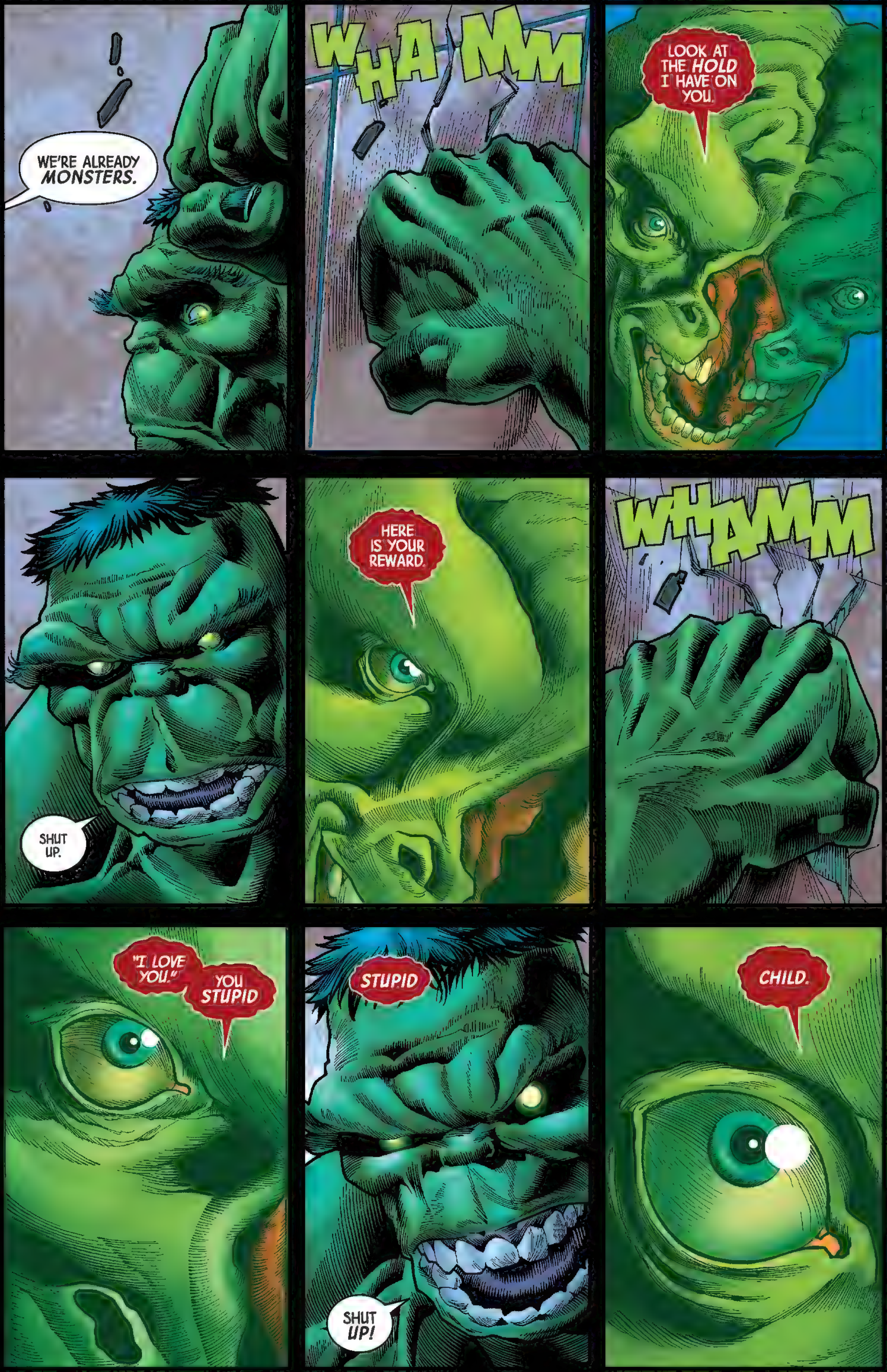

KROOM
HHNNH!

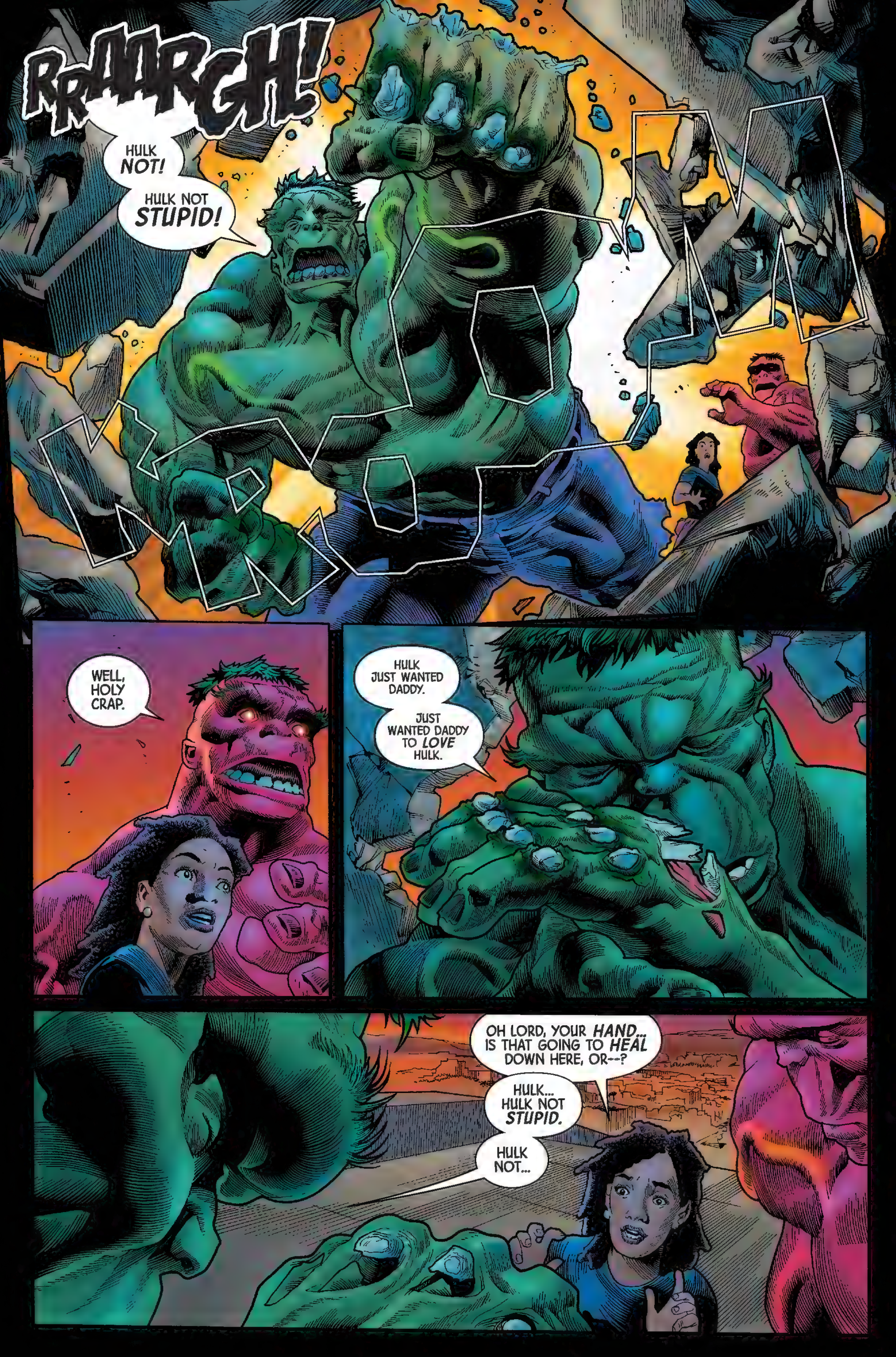

YOU'RE SURE THIS IS A *GOOD IDEA?*
KNOCKING ON THE LEADER'S *DOOR?*
IT AIN'T LIKE HE'S *ANSWERING,* McGEE.

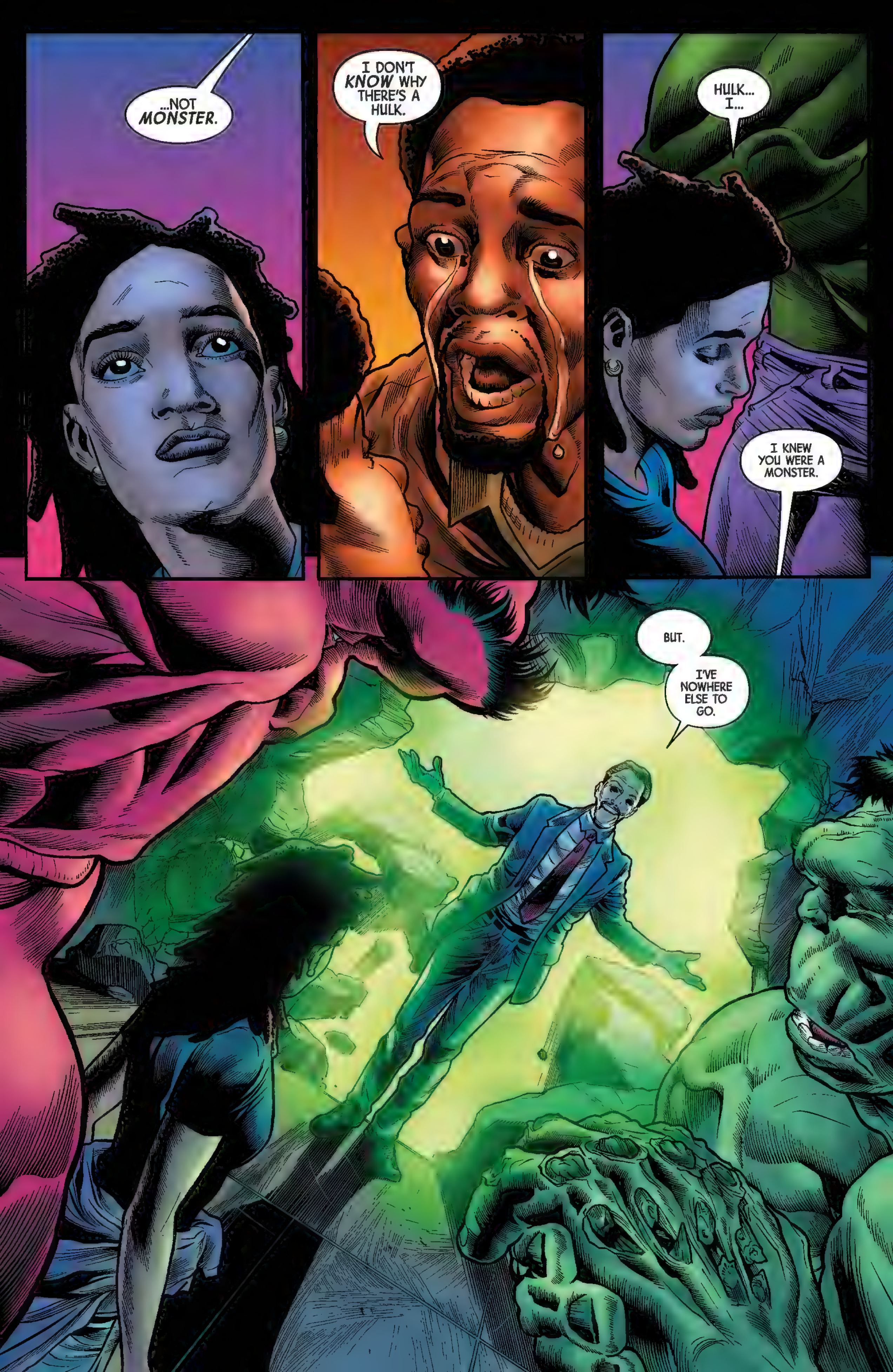

THEN AGAIN, MAYBE HE CAN'T *HEAR* IT. I'M NOT EXACTLY MAKING HEADWAY.
WHATEVER THIS IS MADE OF, IT'S STRONGER THAN *I* AM...
LET *HULK* TRY.

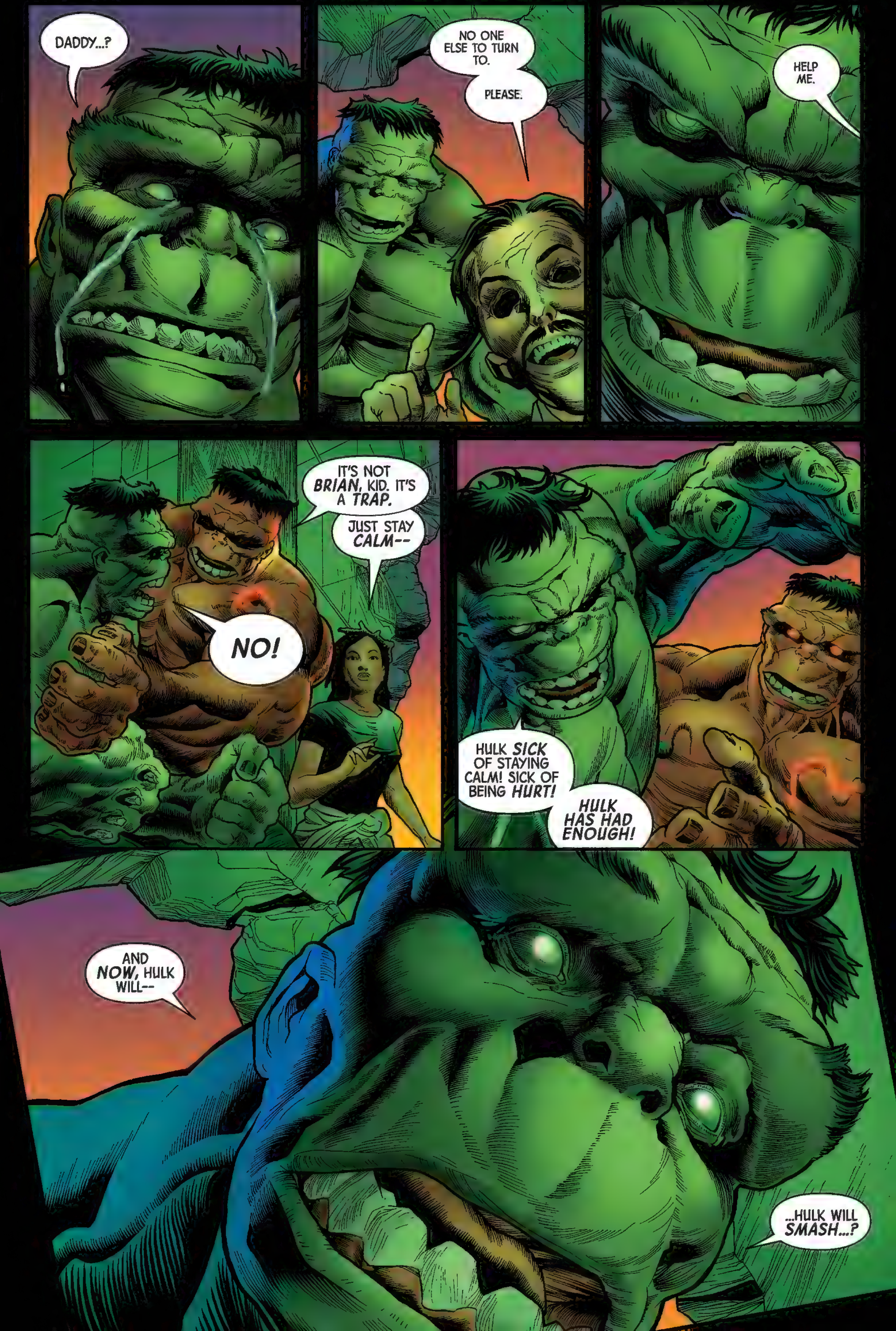

KNOCK YOURSELF OUT.
I DON'T THINK HE EVEN KNOWS WE'RE *OUT* HERE. THIS THING...IT AIN'T *HIM,* EXACTLY. IT'S LIKE A *SHELL.* A *COCOON.*
HE'S SQUIRRELED AWAY IN THERE, FEEDING OFF BANNER...AND WHILE HE'S DOING THAT, WE'RE JUST PART OF HIS BIG *GAMMA CIRCUIT...*

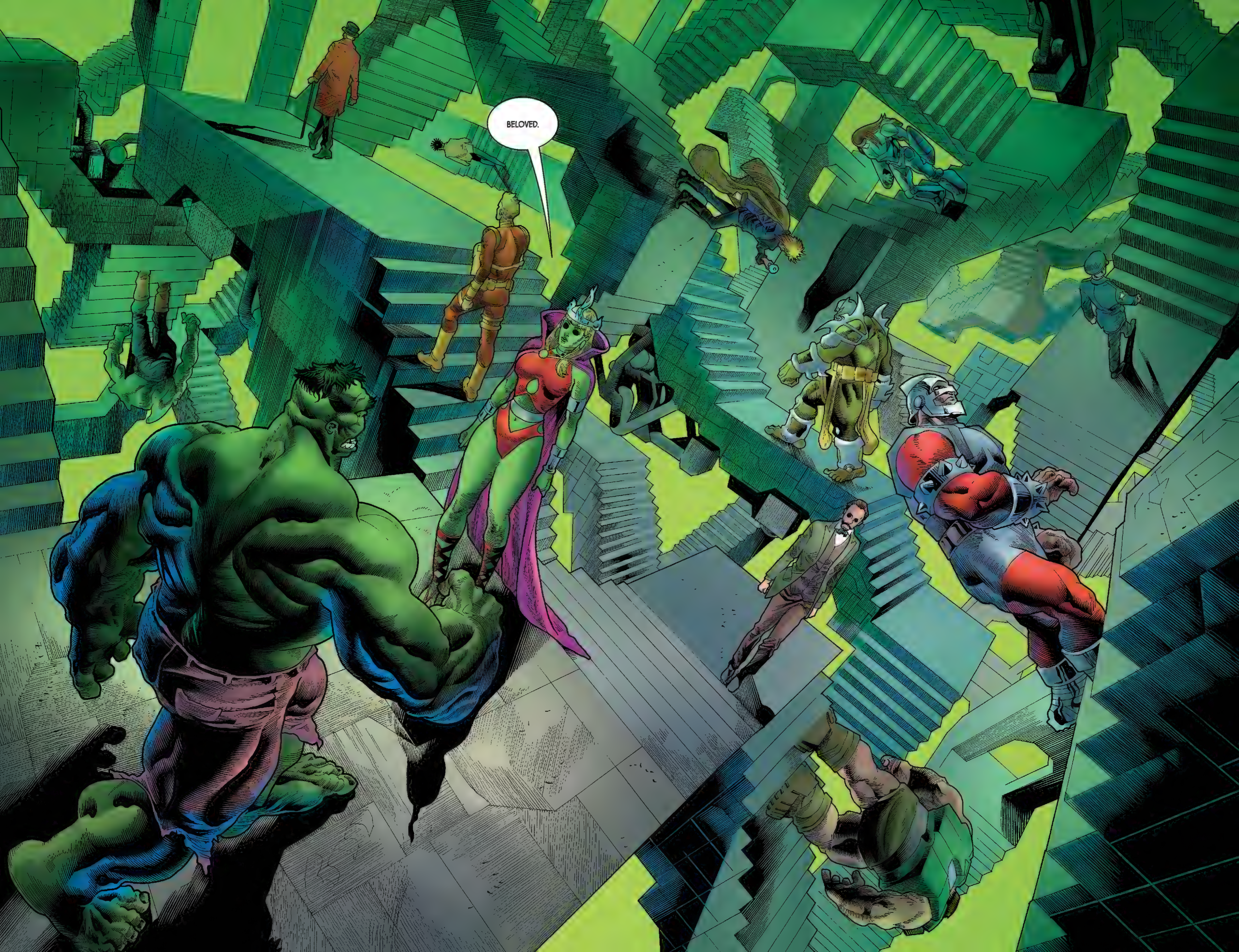

...PART OF HIS PLAN.
WHUDD
HE MADE THIS BIG SPEECH--HE WAS GONNA TURN US INTO MINDLESS HUSKS.
THEN WE'D SPREAD DESTRUCTION, LEAK OUT RAGE, YADA YADA...
...AND THAT'D MAKE HIM STRONGER.
WHUDD
SO I BUST OUT. THEN WHAT HAPPENS?
I BREAK A TON OF STUFF AND PISS EVERYBODY OFF.
JUST BY STANDING THERE.
WHUDD
HILARIOUS, RIGHT?
STERNS DIDN'T NEED TO TURN US INTO HUSKS--WE'RE ALREADY HULKS.

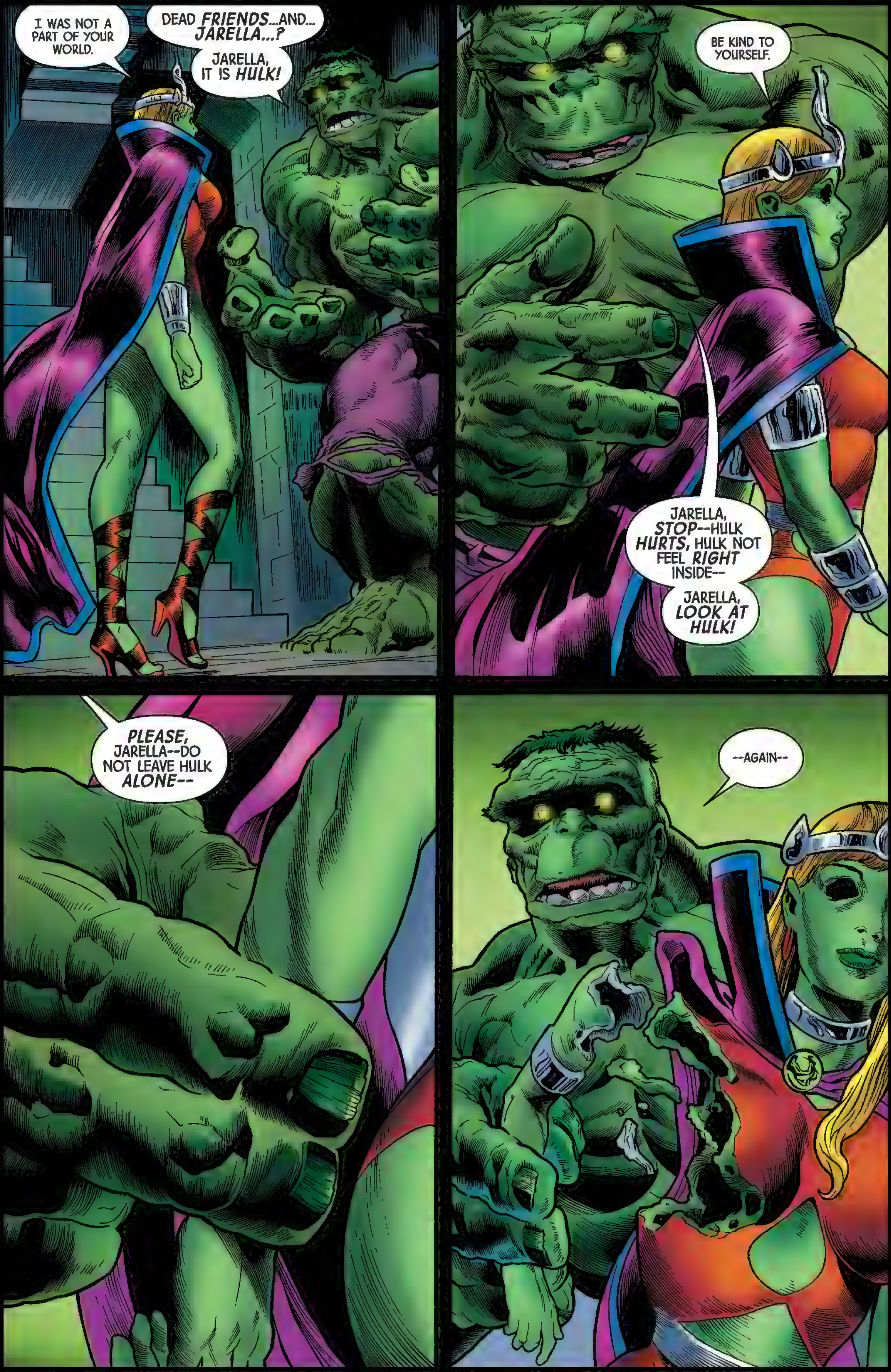

WE'RE ALREADY *MONSTERS.*
WHAMM
LOOK AT THE *HOLD* I HAVE ON YOU.
SHUT UP.
HERE IS YOUR REWARD.
WHAMM
"I LOVE YOU."
YOU *STUPID*
STUPID
SHUT *UP!*
CHILD.

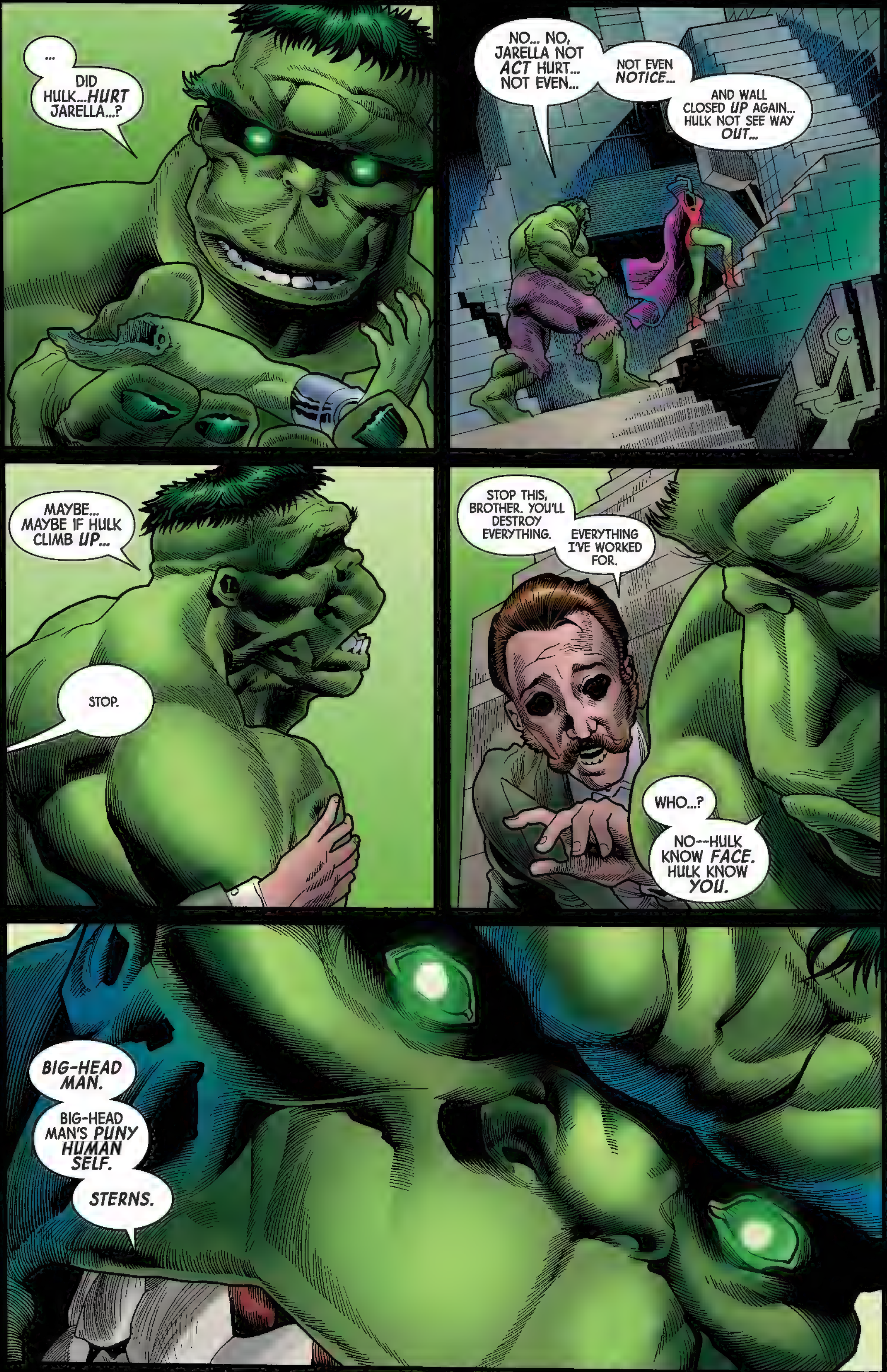

RRAARGH!
HULK NOT!
HULK NOT STUPID!
KROOM
WELL, HOLY CRAP.
HULK JUST WANTED DADDY.
JUST WANTED DADDY TO *LOVE* HULK.
OH LORD, YOUR *HAND*... IS THAT GOING TO *HEAL* DOWN HERE, OR--?
HULK... HULK NOT *STUPID.*
HULK NOT...

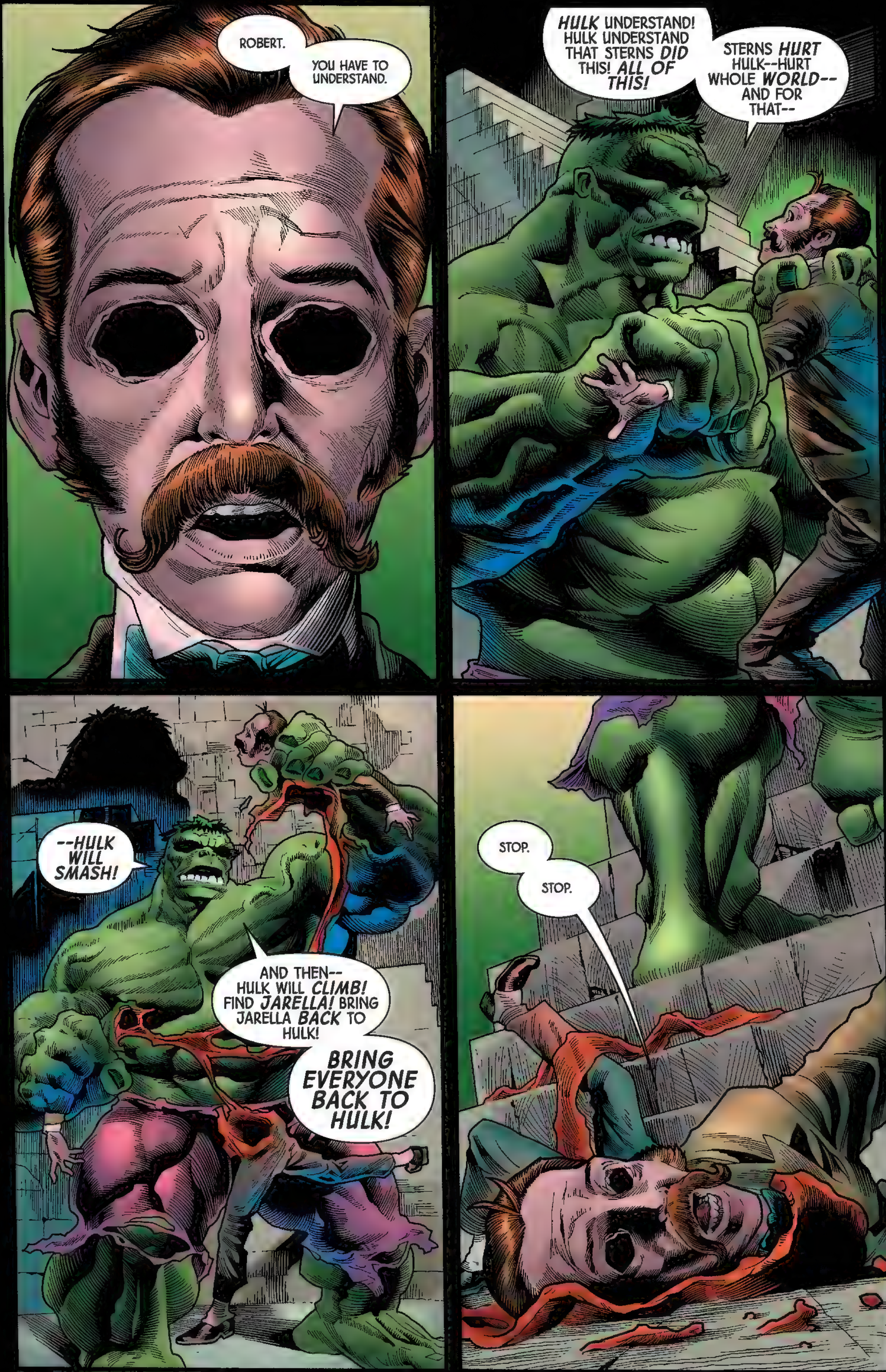

...NOT *MONSTER.*
I DON'T *KNOW* WHY THERE'S A HULK.
HULK... I...
I KNEW YOU WERE A MONSTER.
BUT.
I'VE NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

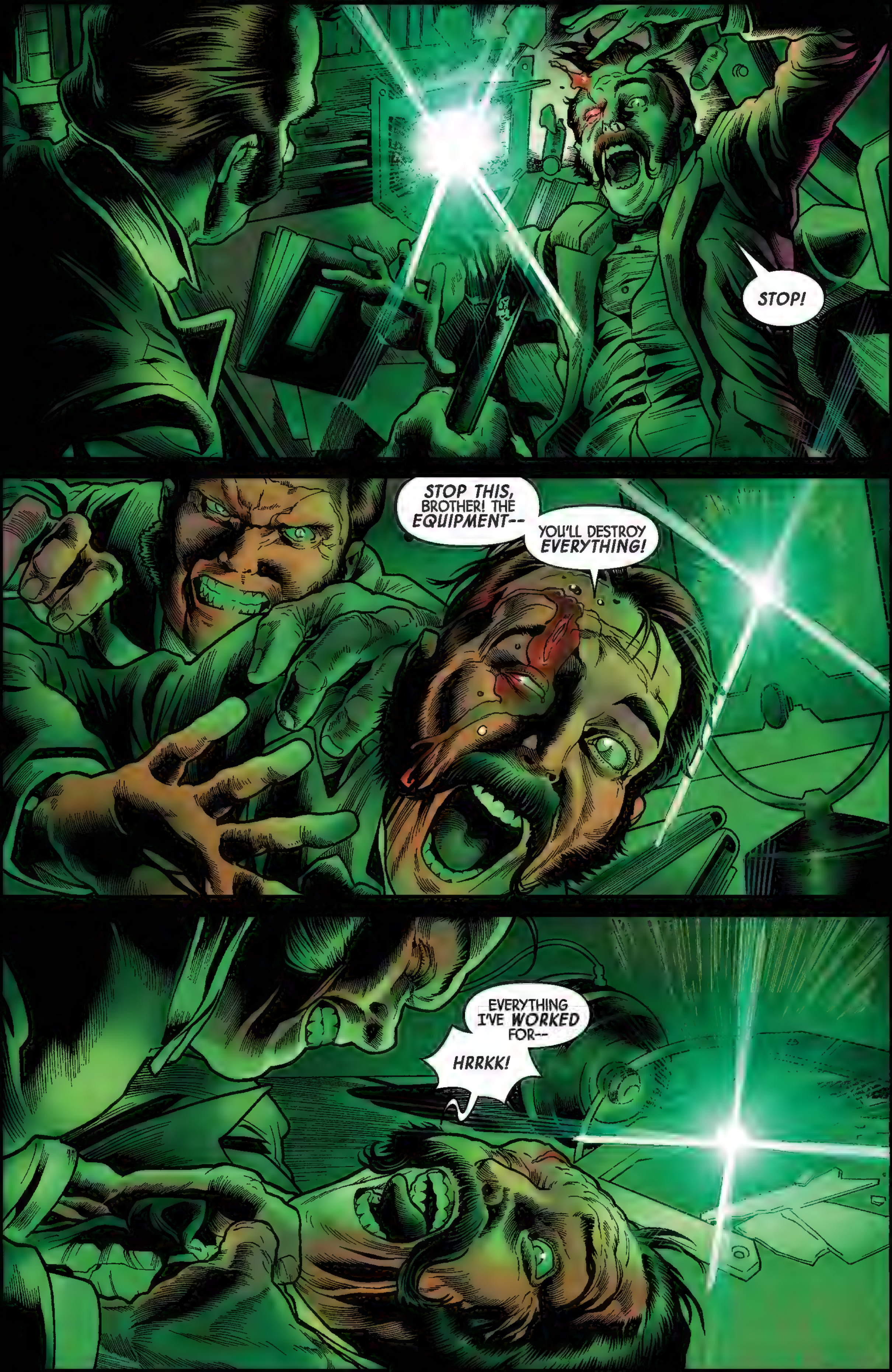

DADDY...?
NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO.
PLEASE.
HELP ME.
IT'S NOT *BRIAN*, KID. IT'S A *TRAP.*
JUST STAY *CALM--*
NO!
HULK *SICK* OF STAYING CALM! SICK OF BEING *HURT!*
HULK HAS HAD ENOUGH!
AND *NOW*, HULK WILL--
...HULK WILL *SMASH...?*

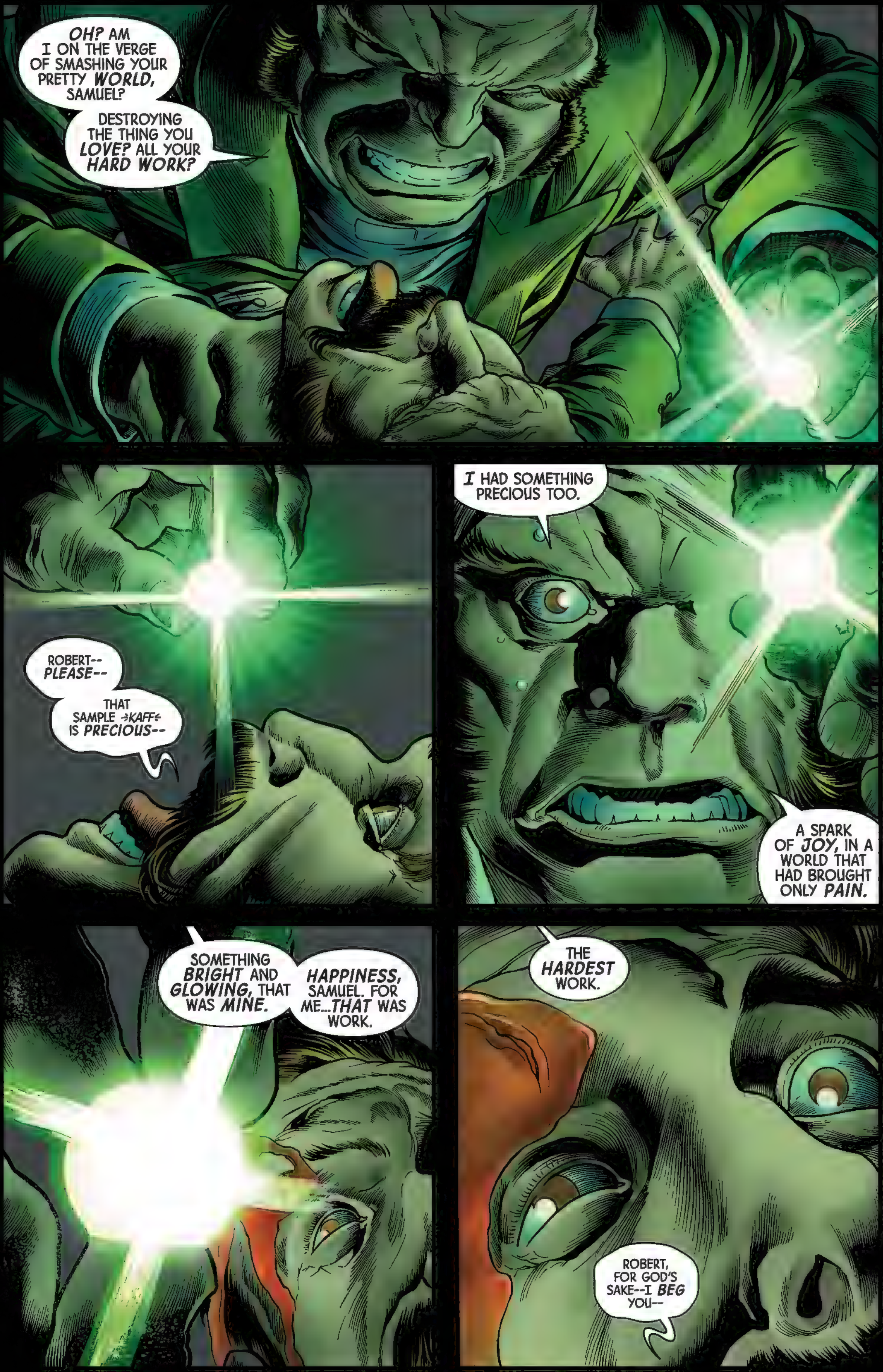

BELOVED.

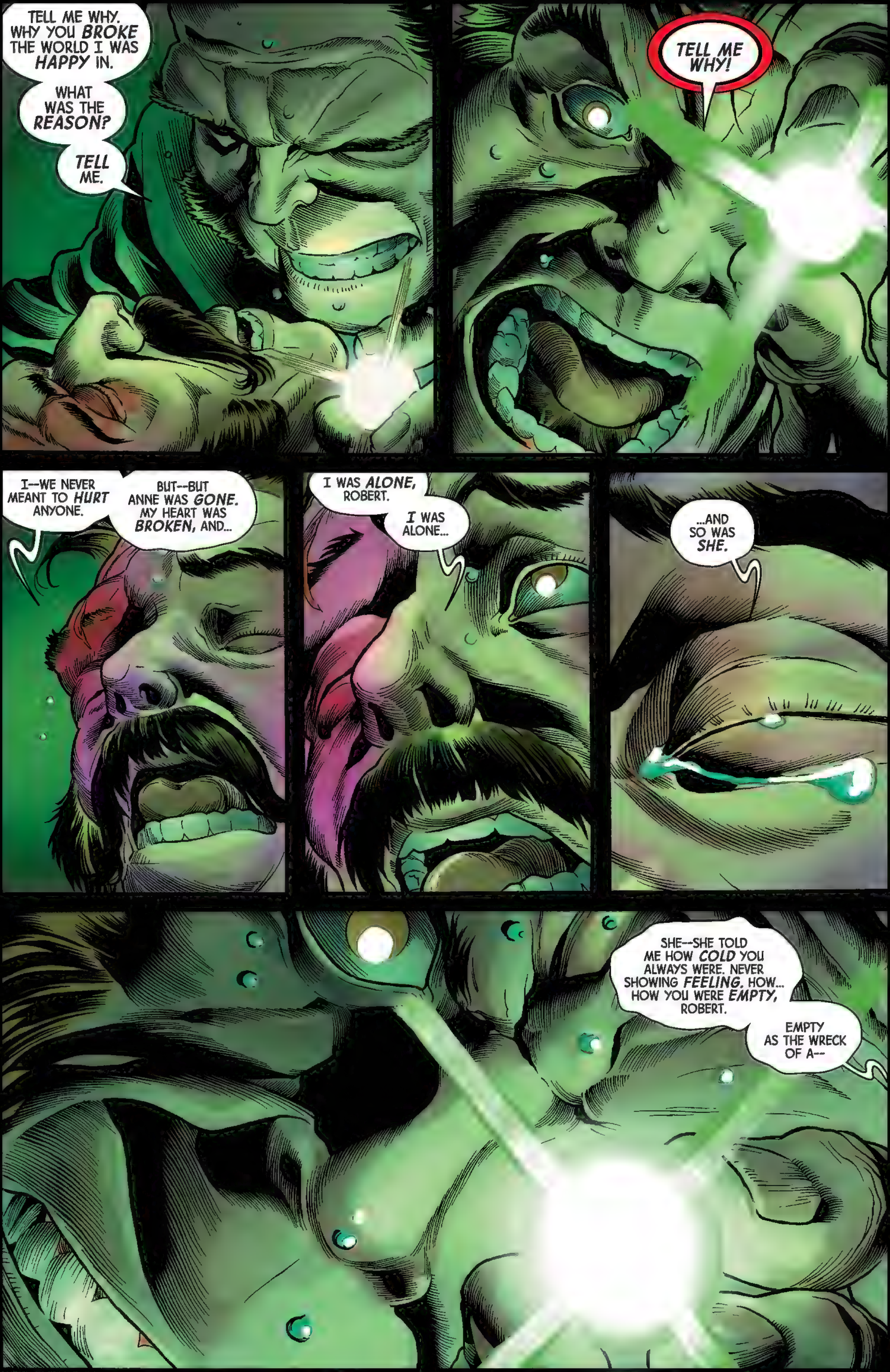

I WAS NOT A PART OF YOUR WORLD.
DEAD *FRIENDS*...AND... *JARELLA...?*
JARELLA, IT IS *HULK!*
BE KIND TO YOURSELF.
JARELLA, *STOP*--HULK *HURTS,* HULK NOT FEEL *RIGHT* INSIDE--
JARELLA, *LOOK AT HULK!*
PLEASE, JARELLA--DO NOT LEAVE HULK *ALONE*--
--AGAIN--

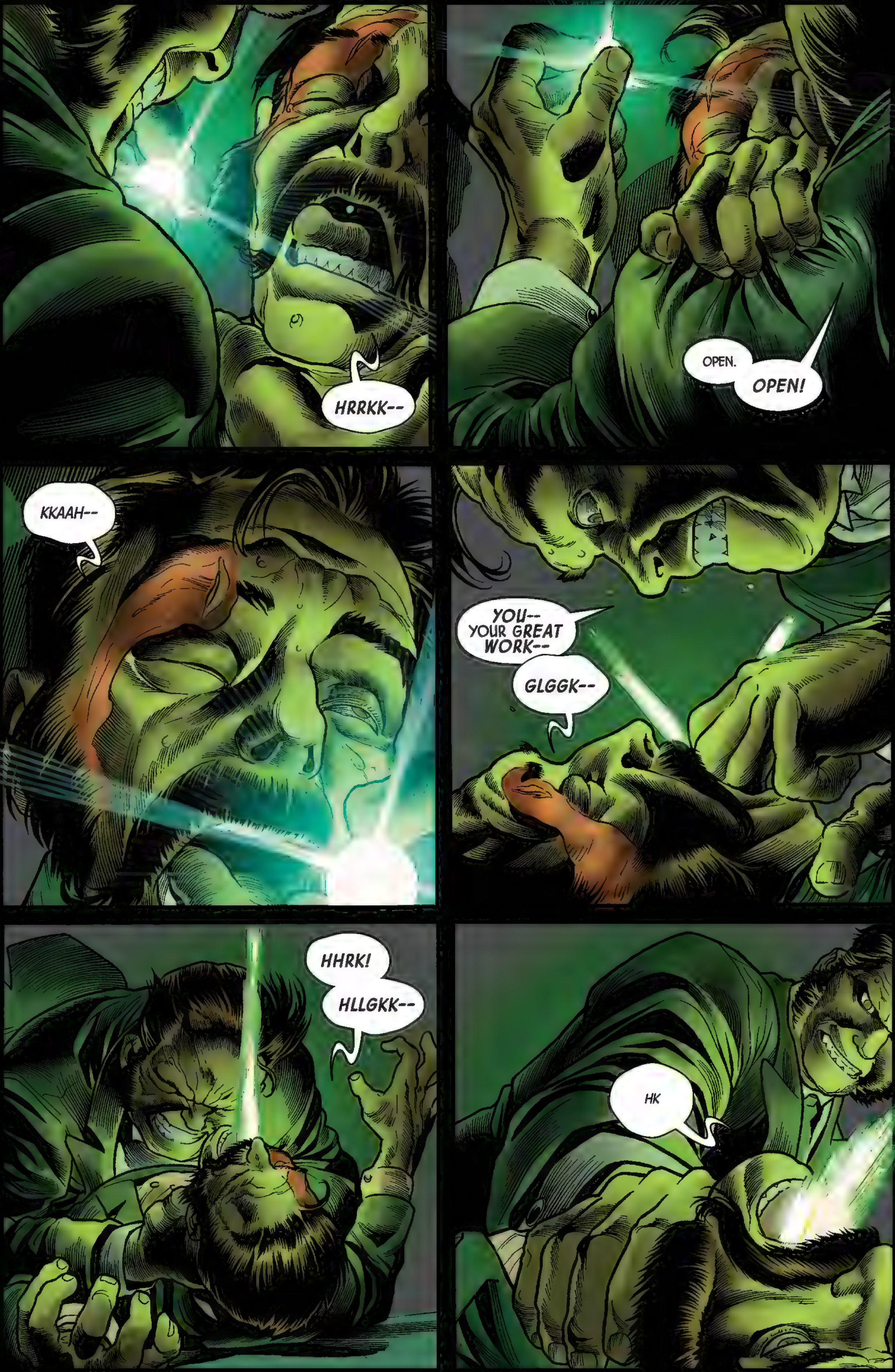

... DID HULK...*HURT* JARELLA...?
NO... NO, JARELLA NOT *ACT* HURT... NOT EVEN...
NOT EVEN *NOTICE*...
AND WALL CLOSED *UP* AGAIN... HULK NOT SEE WAY *OUT*...
MAYBE... MAYBE IF HULK CLIMB *UP*...
STOP.
STOP THIS, BROTHER. YOU'LL DESTROY EVERYTHING.
EVERYTHING I'VE WORKED FOR.
WHO...?
NO--HULK KNOW *FACE*. HULK KNOW *YOU*.
BIG-HEAD MAN.
BIG-HEAD MAN'S *PUNY HUMAN SELF.*
STERNS.

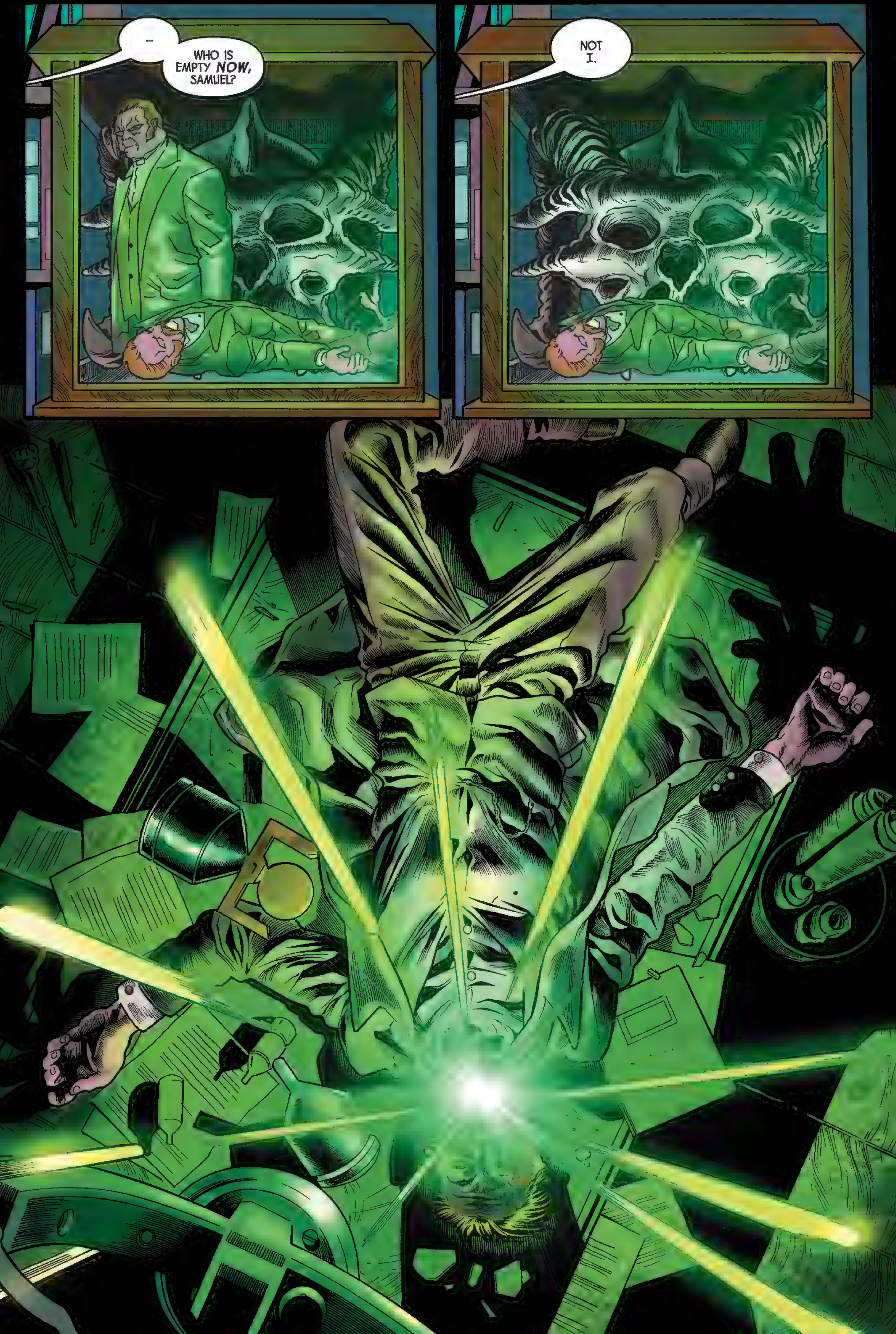

ROBERT.
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND.
HULK UNDERSTAND! HULK UNDERSTAND THAT STERNS *DID* THIS! *ALL OF THIS!*
STERNS *HURT* HULK--HURT WHOLE *WORLD*-- AND FOR THAT--
--*HULK WILL SMASH!*
AND THEN-- HULK WILL *CLIMB!* FIND *JARELLA!* BRING JARELLA *BACK* TO HULK!
BRING EVERYONE BACK TO HULK!
STOP.
STOP.

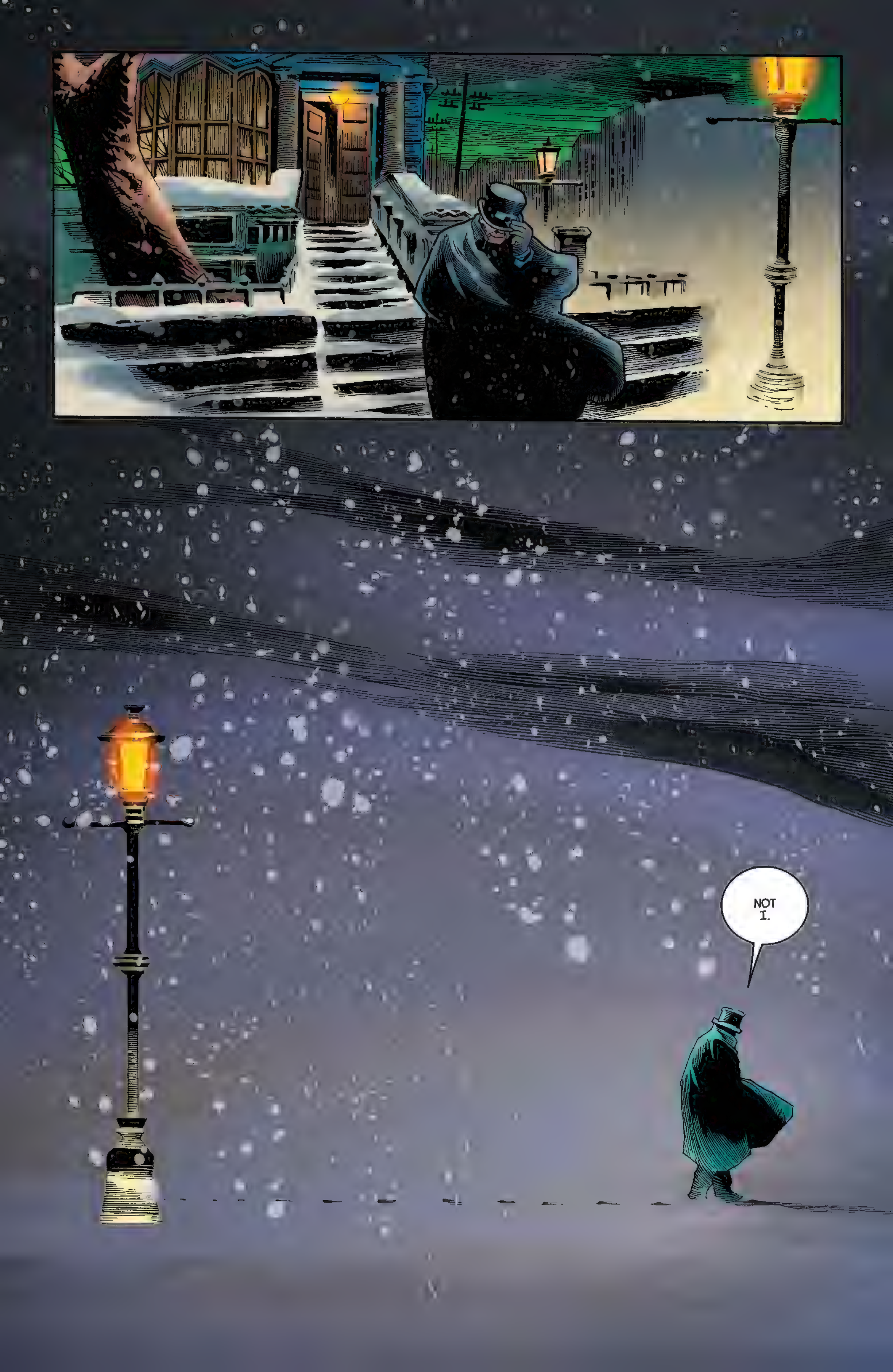

STOP!
STOP THIS, BROTHER! THE *EQUIPMENT*--
YOU'LL DESTROY *EVERYTHING!*
EVERYTHING I'VE *WORKED* FOR--
HRRKK!

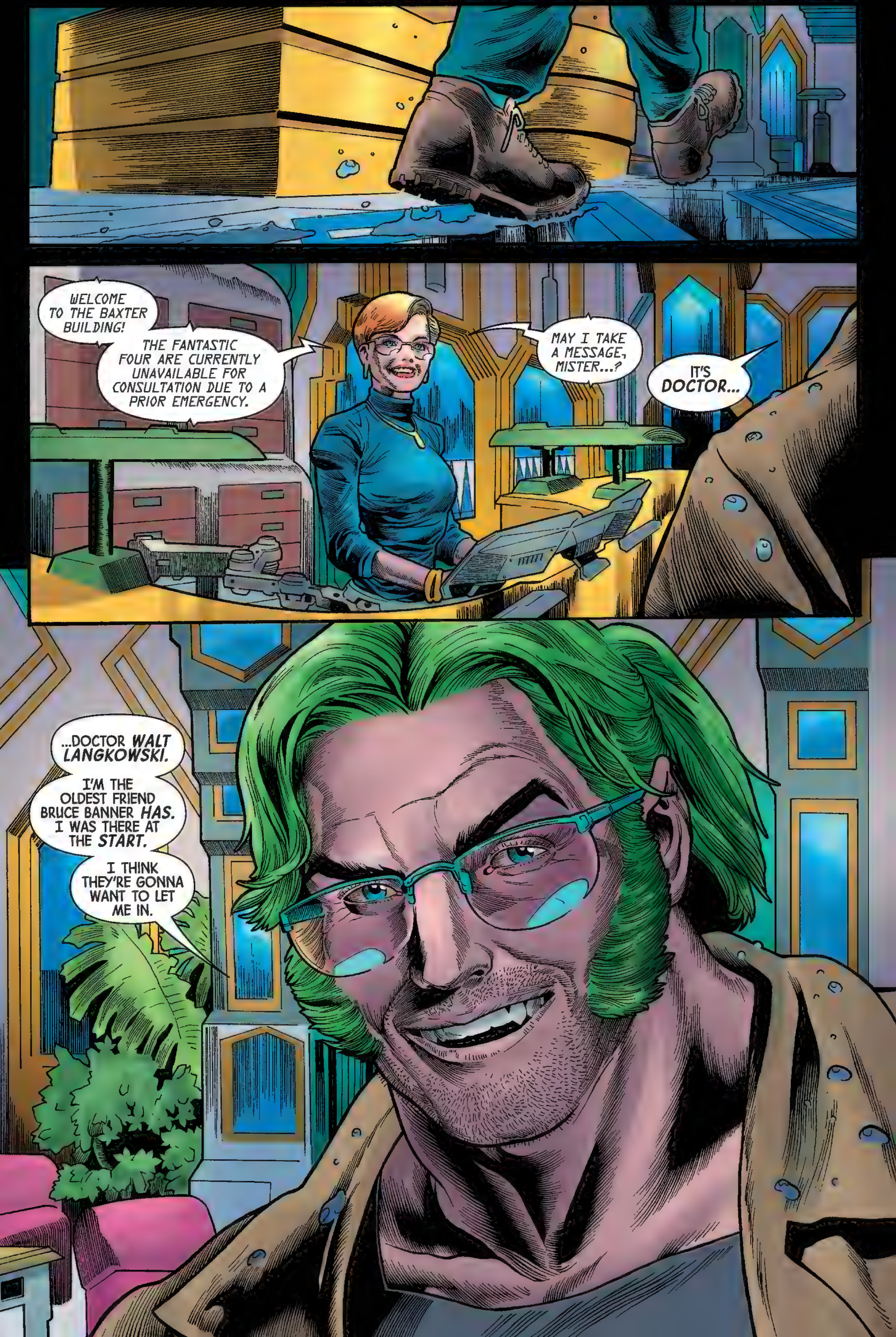

OH? AM I ON THE VERGE OF SMASHING YOUR PRETTY WORLD, SAMUEL?
DESTROYING THE THING YOU LOVE? ALL YOUR HARD WORK?
ROBERT-- PLEASE--
THAT SAMPLE ›KAFF‹ IS PRECIOUS--
I HAD SOMETHING PRECIOUS TOO.
A SPARK OF JOY, IN A WORLD THAT HAD BROUGHT ONLY PAIN.
SOMETHING BRIGHT AND GLOWING, THAT WAS MINE.
HAPPINESS, SAMUEL. FOR ME...THAT WAS WORK.
THE HARDEST WORK.
ROBERT, FOR GOD'S SAKE--I BEG YOU--

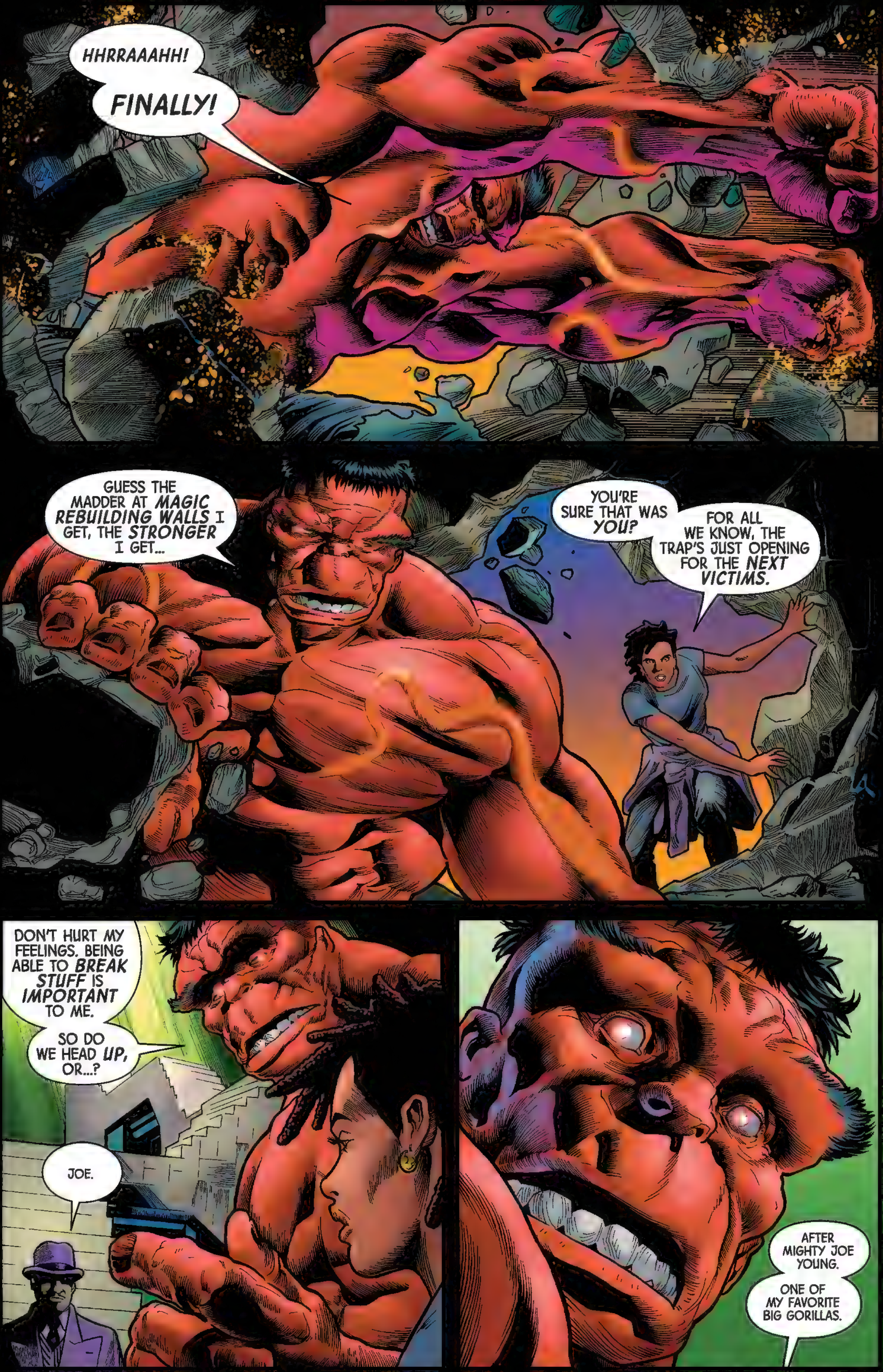

TELL ME WHY. WHY YOU *BROKE* THE WORLD I WAS *HAPPY* IN.
WHAT WAS THE *REASON?*
TELL ME.
TELL ME WHY!
I--WE NEVER MEANT TO *HURT* ANYONE.
BUT--BUT ANNE WAS *GONE.* MY HEART WAS *BROKEN,* AND...
I WAS *ALONE,* ROBERT.
I WAS ALONE...
...AND SO WAS *SHE.*
SHE--SHE TOLD ME HOW *COLD* YOU ALWAYS WERE. NEVER SHOWING *FEELING.* HOW... HOW YOU WERE *EMPTY,* ROBERT.
EMPTY AS THE WRECK OF A--

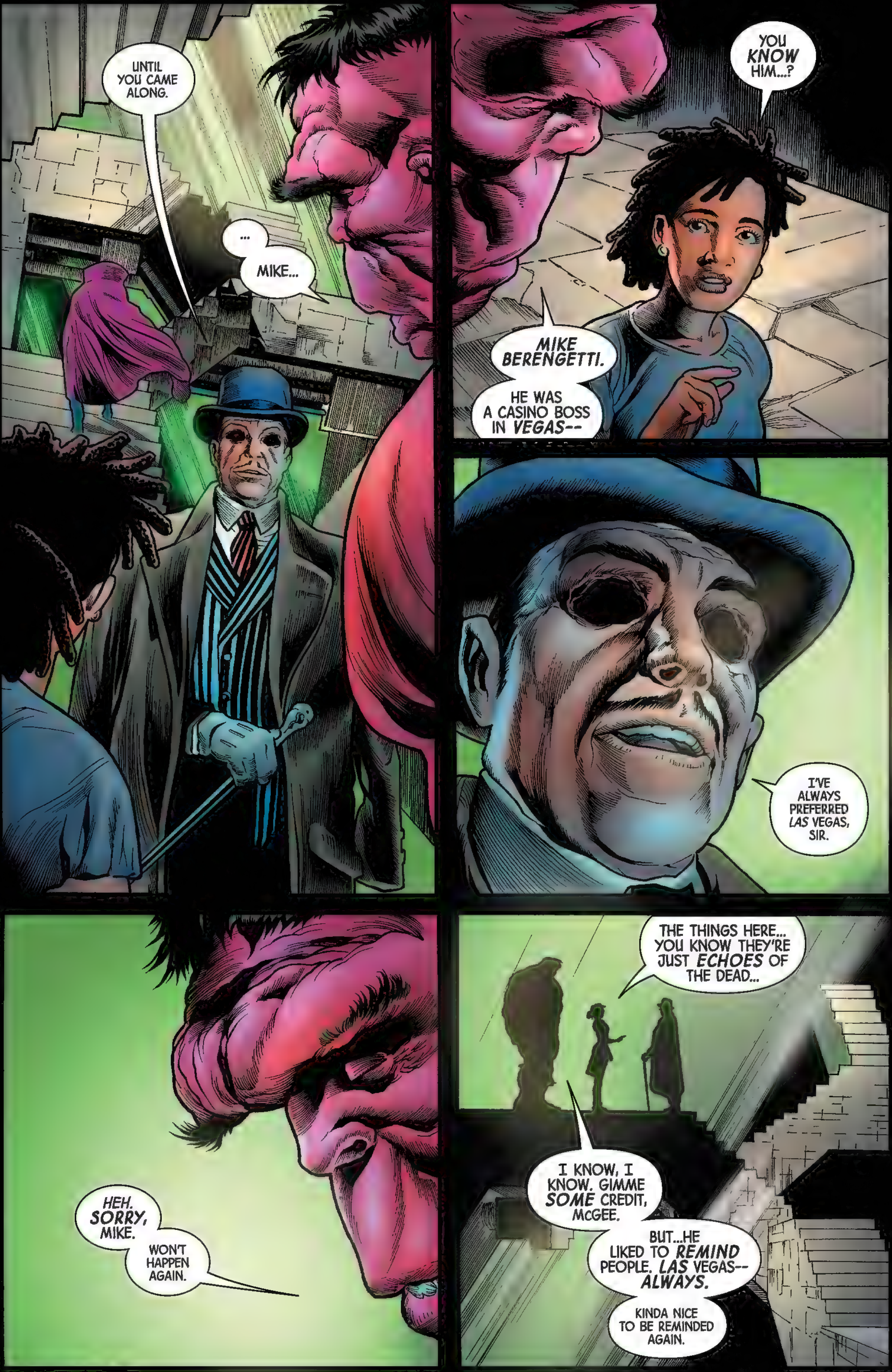

HRRKK--
OPEN.
OPEN!
KKAAH--
YOU-- YOUR GREAT WORK--
GLGGK--
HHRK!
HLLGKK--
HK

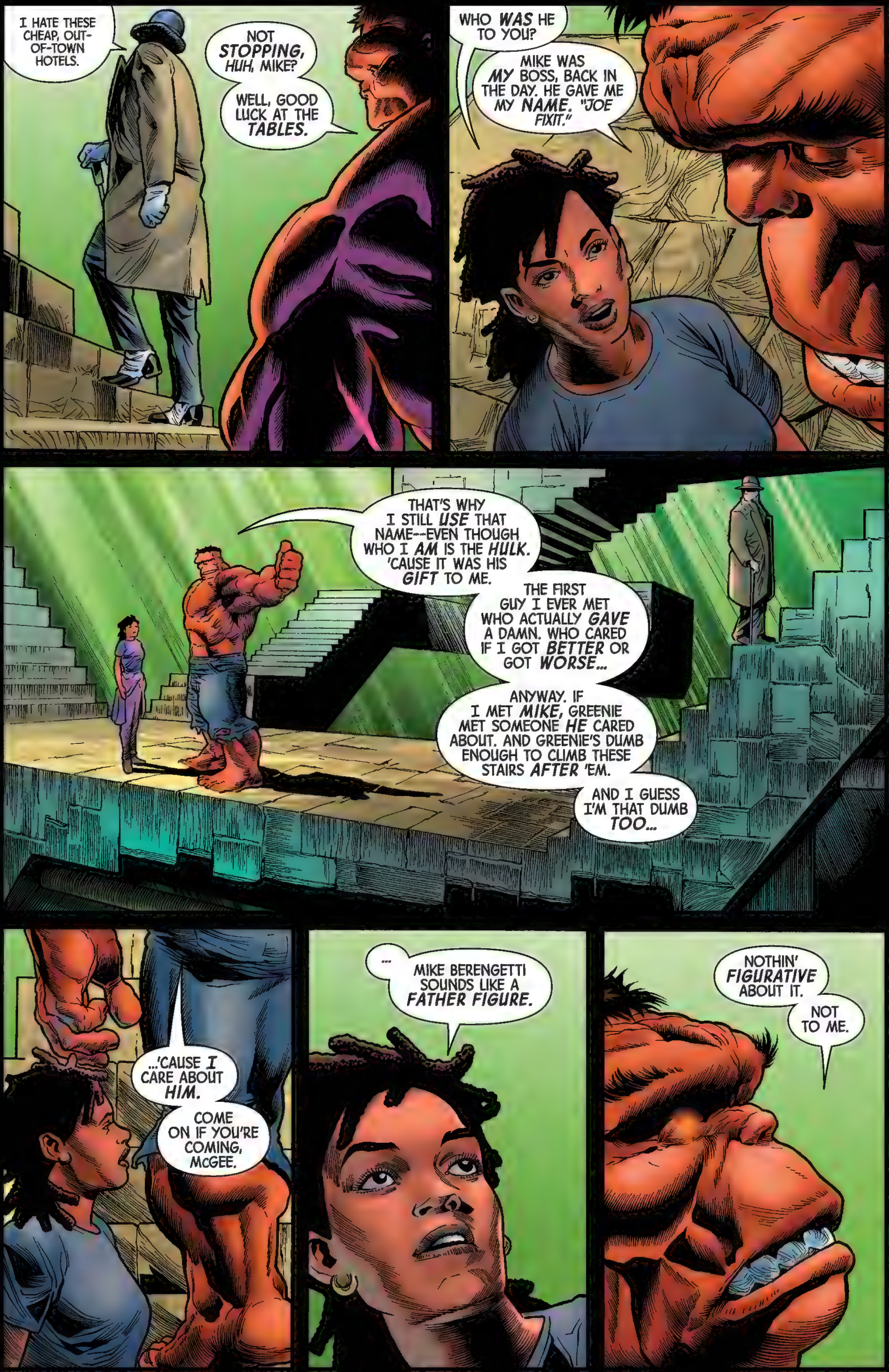

... WHO IS EMPTY *NOW*, SAMUEL?
NOT I.

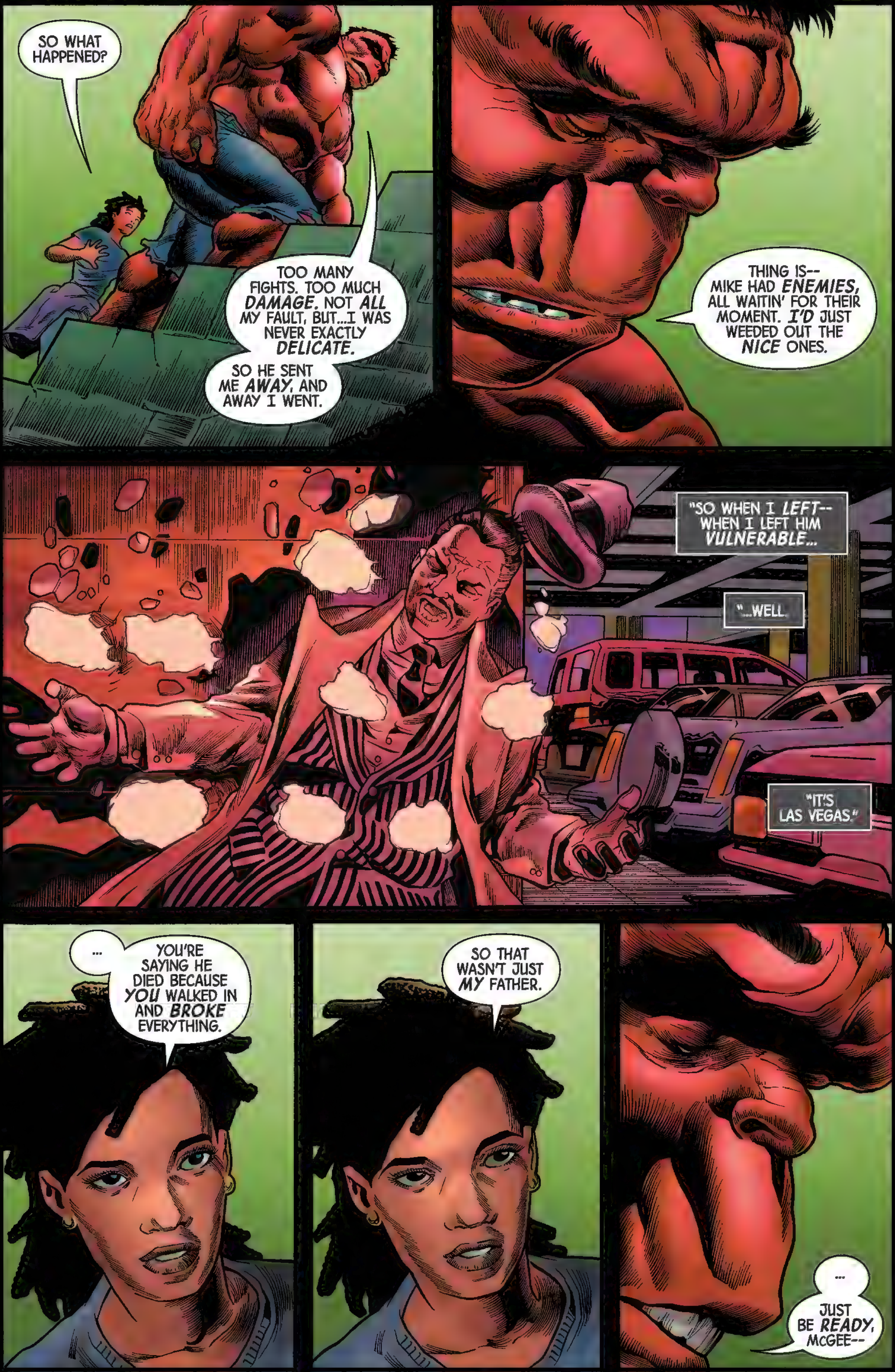

NOT I.

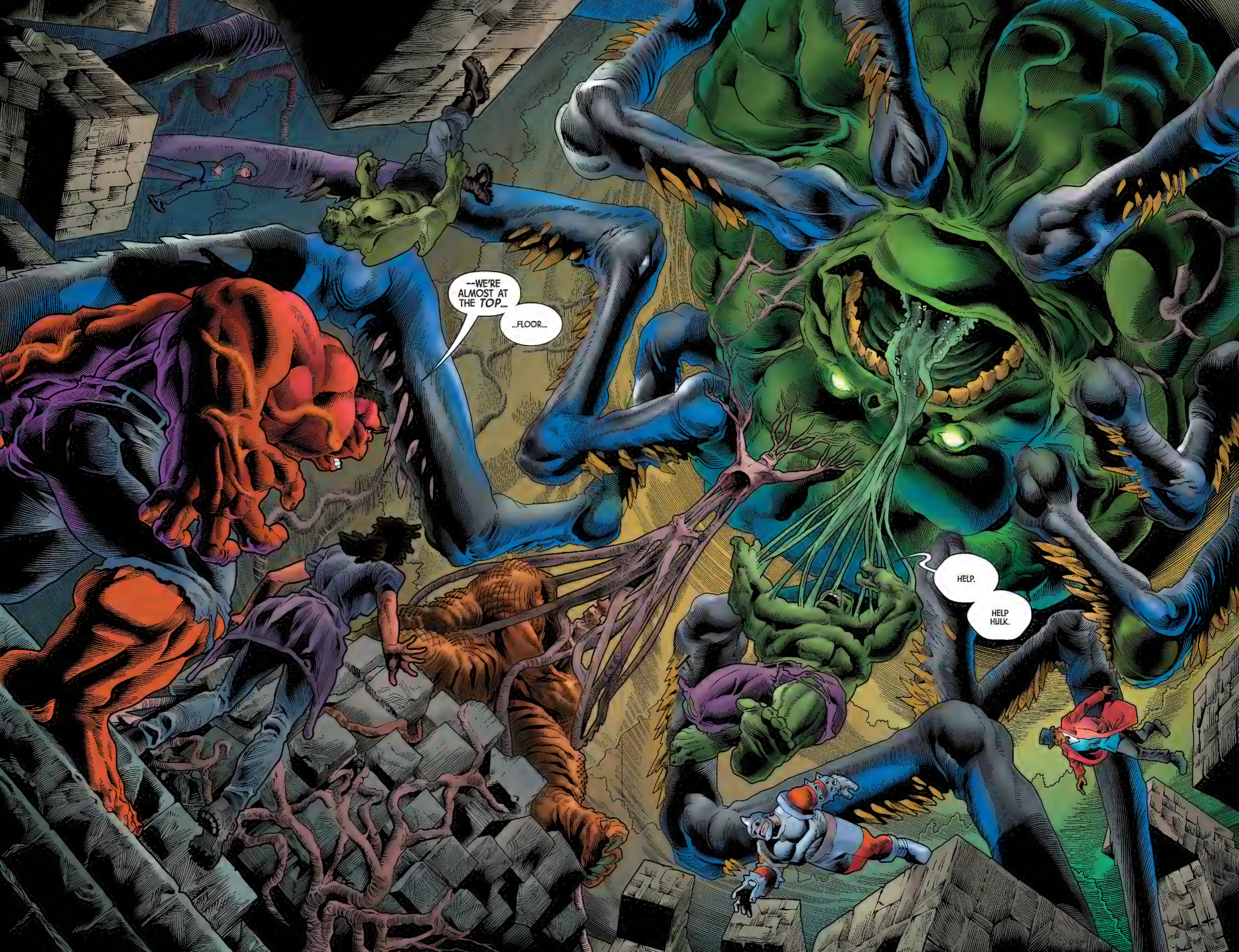

WELCOME TO THE BAXTER BUILDING!
THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION DUE TO A PRIOR EMERGENCY.
MAY I TAKE A MESSAGE, MISTER...?
IT'S DOCTOR...
...DOCTOR WALT LANGKOWSKI.
I'M THE OLDEST FRIEND BRUCE BANNER HAS. I WAS THERE AT THE START.
I THINK THEY'RE GONNA WANT TO LET ME IN.

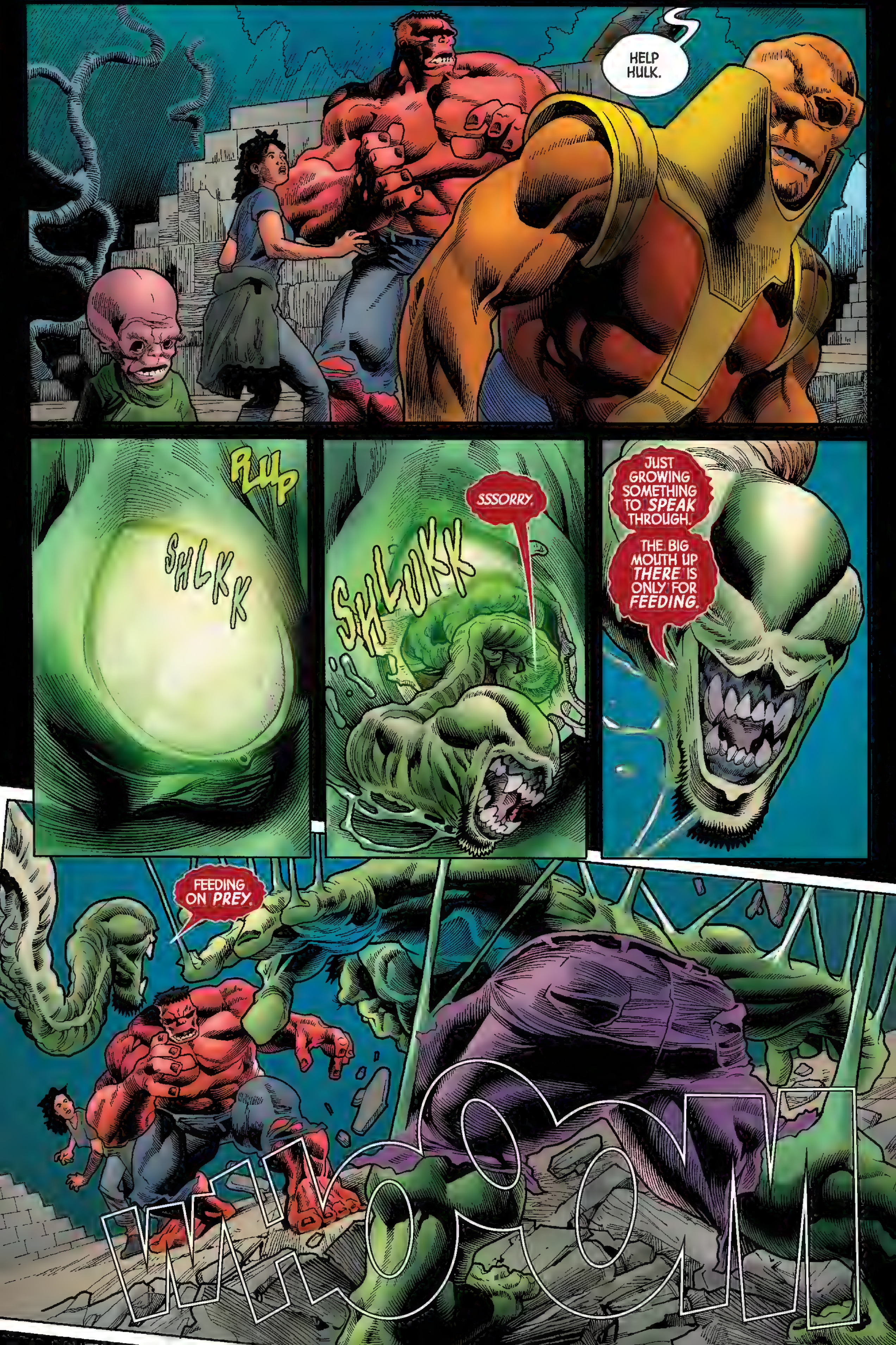

HHRRAAAHH!
FINALLY!
GUESS THE MADDER AT *MAGIC REBUILDING WALLS* I GET, THE *STRONGER* I GET...
YOU'RE SURE THAT WAS *YOU?*
FOR ALL WE KNOW, THE TRAP'S JUST OPENING FOR THE *NEXT VICTIMS.*
DON'T HURT MY FEELINGS. BEING ABLE TO *BREAK STUFF* IS *IMPORTANT* TO ME.
SO DO WE HEAD *UP,* OR...?
JOE.
AFTER MIGHTY JOE YOUNG.
ONE OF MY FAVORITE BIG GORILLAS.

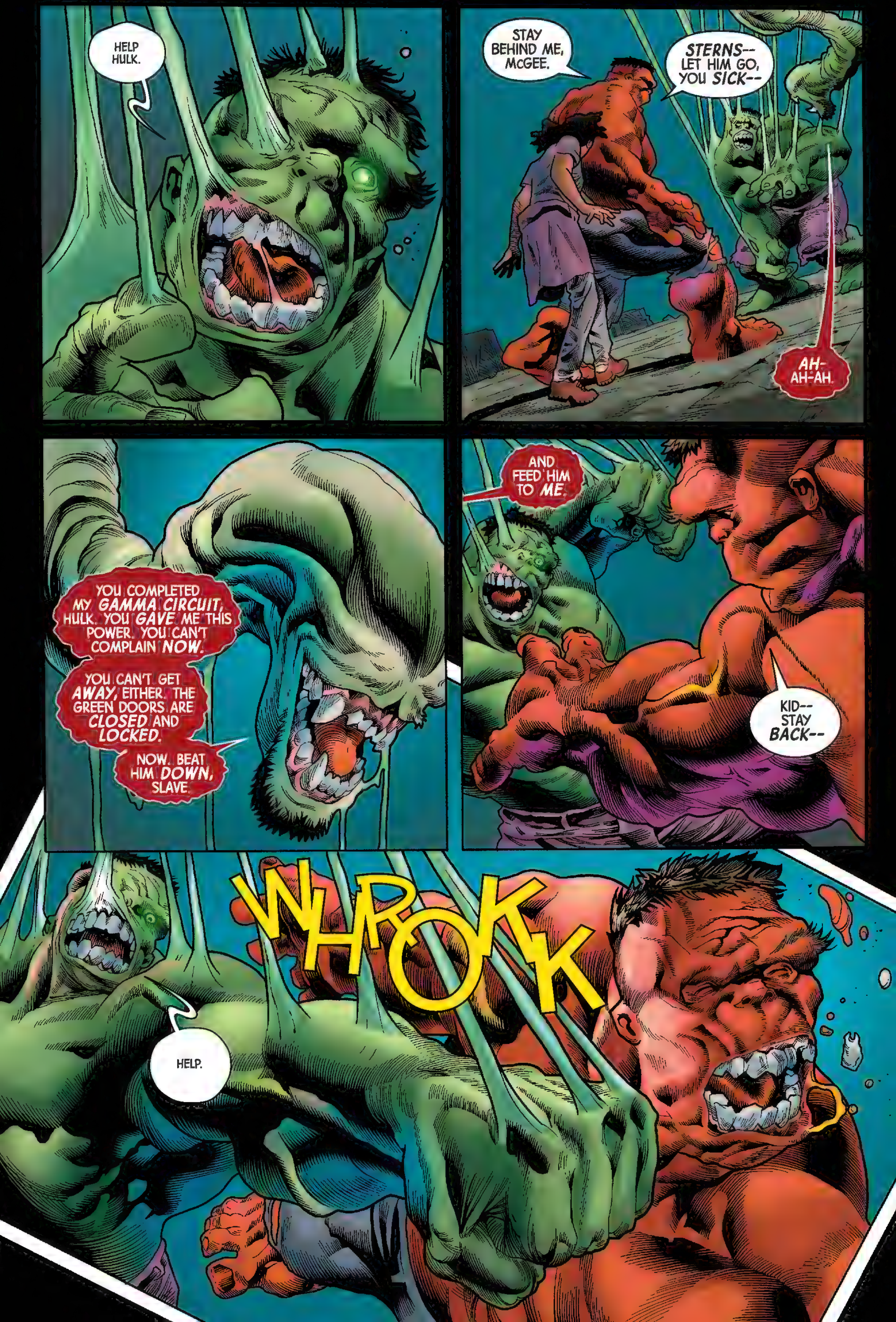

UNTIL YOU CAME ALONG.
...
MIKE...
YOU *KNOW* HIM...?
MIKE BERENGETTI.
HE WAS A CASINO BOSS IN *VEGAS*--
I'VE ALWAYS PREFERRED *LAS* VEGAS, SIR.
HEH. *SORRY,* MIKE.
WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
THE THINGS HERE... YOU KNOW THEY'RE JUST *ECHOES* OF THE DEAD...
I KNOW, I KNOW. GIMME *SOME* CREDIT, McGEE.
BUT...HE LIKED TO *REMIND* PEOPLE. *LAS* VEGAS-- *ALWAYS.*
KINDA NICE TO BE REMINDED AGAIN.

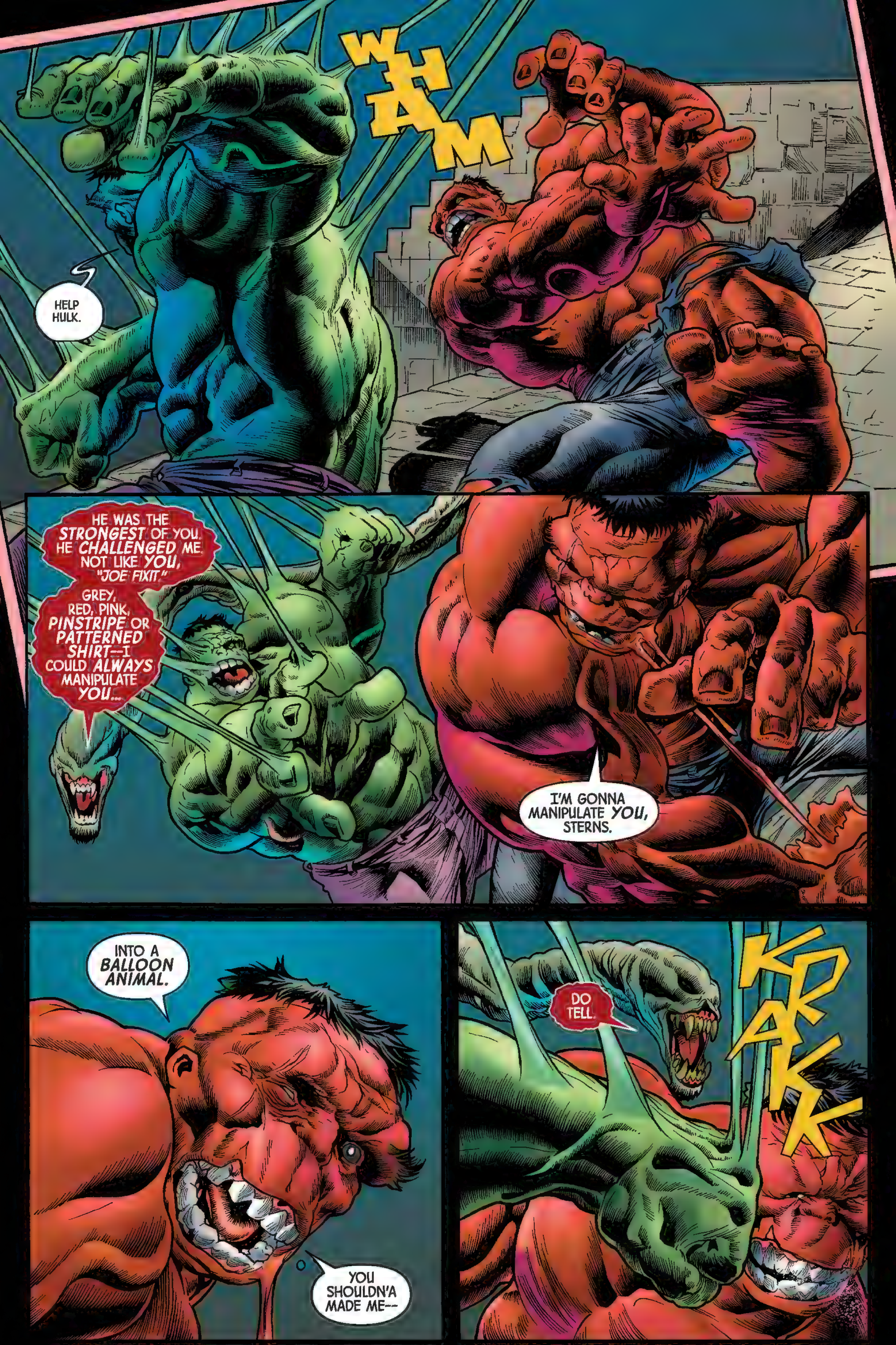

I HATE THESE CHEAP, OUT-OF-TOWN HOTELS.
NOT *STOPPING*, HUH, MIKE?
WELL, GOOD LUCK AT THE *TABLES*.
WHO *WAS* HE TO YOU?
MIKE WAS *MY* BOSS, BACK IN THE DAY. HE GAVE ME MY *NAME*. *"JOE FIXIT."*
THAT'S WHY I STILL *USE* THAT NAME--EVEN THOUGH WHO I *AM* IS THE *HULK*. 'CAUSE IT WAS HIS *GIFT* TO ME.
THE FIRST GUY I EVER MET WHO ACTUALLY *GAVE* A DAMN. WHO CARED IF I GOT *BETTER* OR GOT *WORSE*...
ANYWAY. IF I MET *MIKE*, GREENIE MET SOMEONE *HE* CARED ABOUT. AND GREENIE'S DUMB ENOUGH TO CLIMB THESE STAIRS *AFTER* 'EM.
AND I GUESS I'M THAT DUMB *TOO*...
...'CAUSE *I* CARE ABOUT *HIM*.
COME ON IF YOU'RE COMING, McGEE.
...
MIKE BERENGETTI SOUNDS LIKE A *FATHER FIGURE*.
NOTHIN' *FIGURATIVE* ABOUT IT.
NOT TO ME.

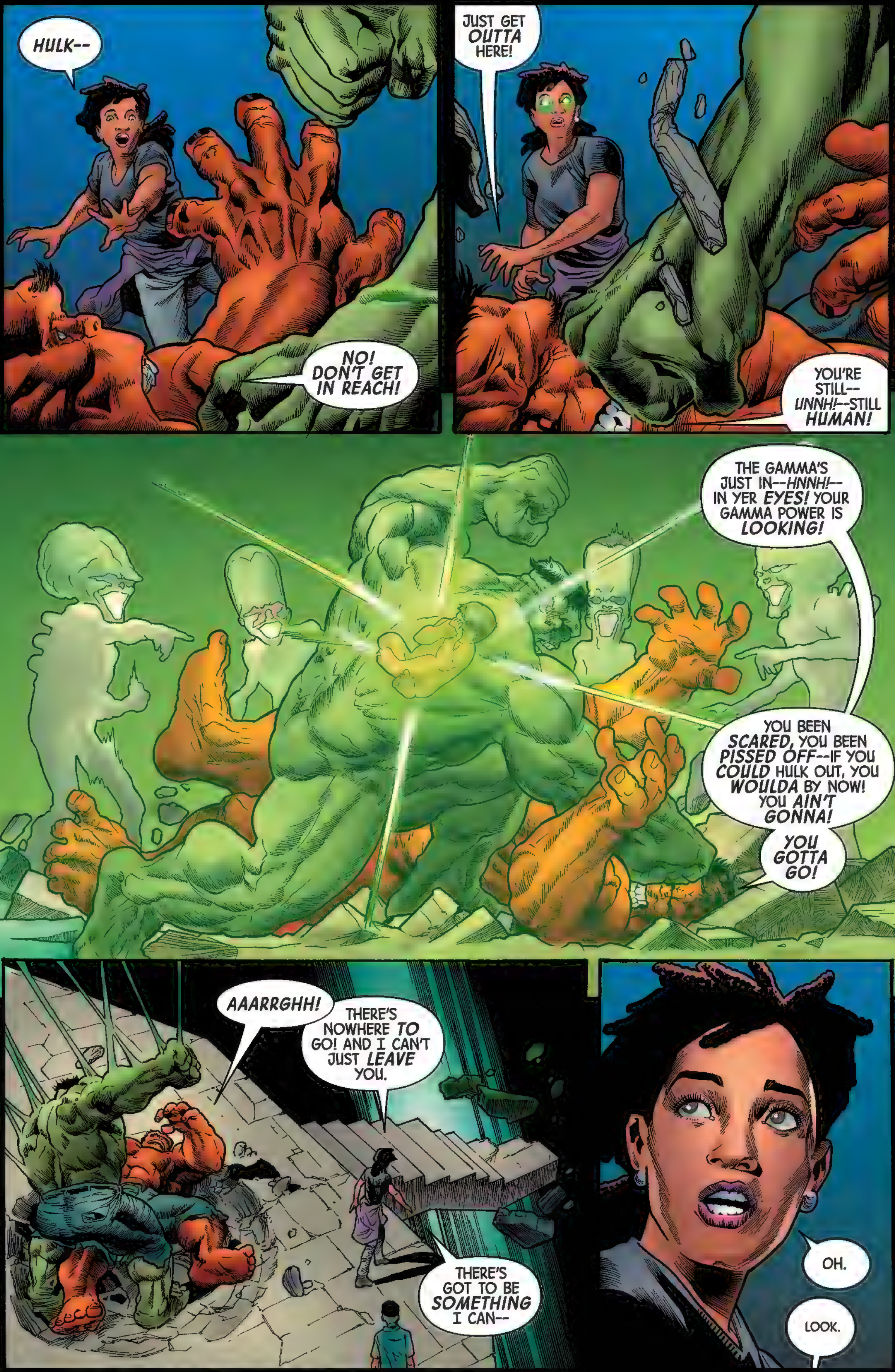

SO WHAT HAPPENED?
TOO MANY FIGHTS. TOO MUCH *DAMAGE*. NOT *ALL* MY FAULT, BUT...I WAS NEVER EXACTLY *DELICATE*.
SO HE SENT ME *AWAY*, AND AWAY I WENT.
THING IS-- MIKE HAD *ENEMIES*, ALL WAITIN' FOR THEIR MOMENT. *I'D* JUST WEEDED OUT THE *NICE* ONES.
"SO WHEN I *LEFT*-- WHEN I LEFT HIM *VULNERABLE*...
"...WELL.
"IT'S LAS VEGAS."
...
YOU'RE SAYING HE DIED BECAUSE *YOU* WALKED IN AND *BROKE* EVERYTHING.
SO THAT WASN'T JUST *MY* FATHER.
...
JUST BE *READY*, MCGEE--

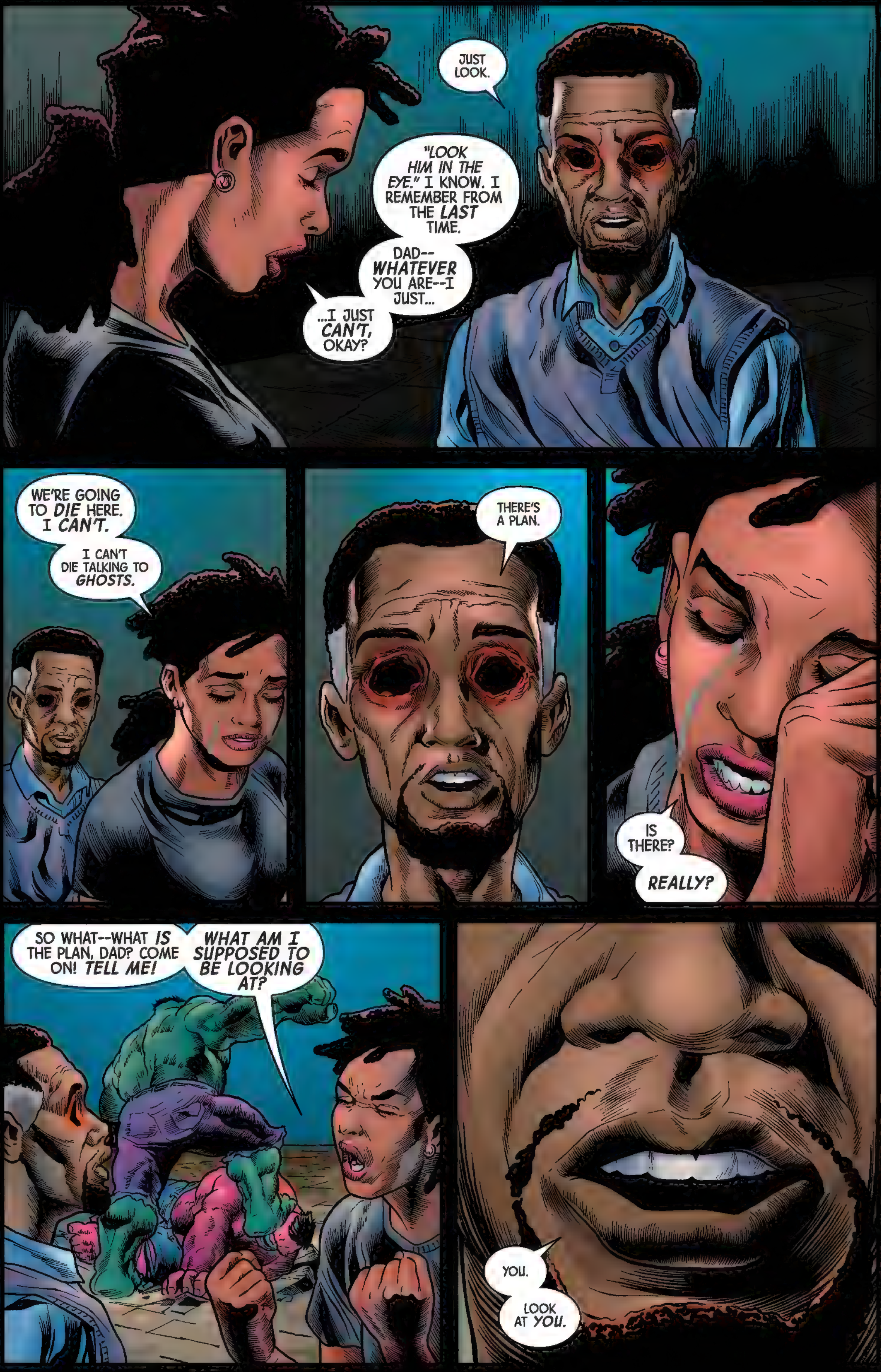

--WE'RE ALMOST AT THE *TOP*...
...FLOOR...
HELP.
HELP HULK.

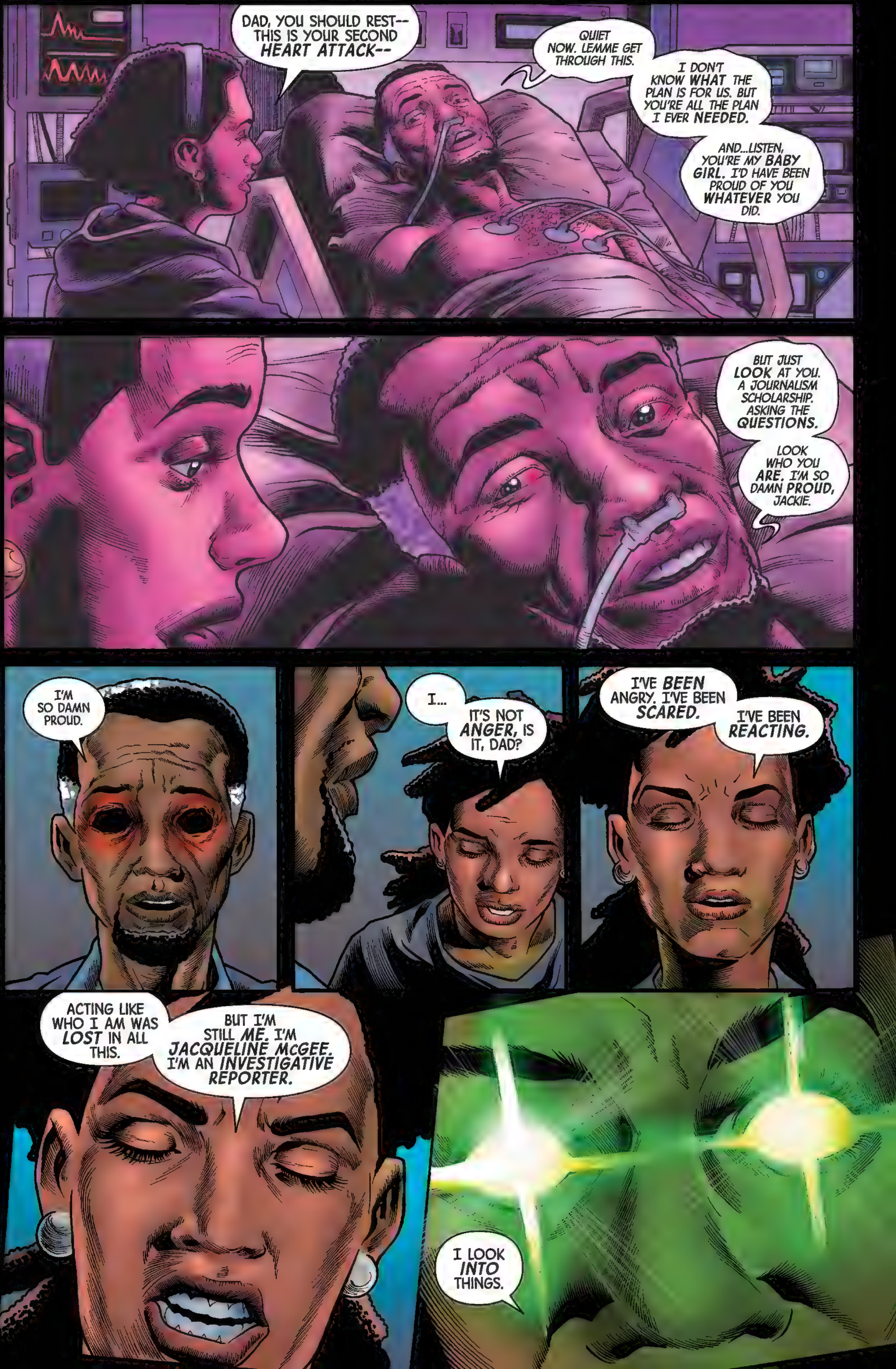

HELP HULK.
PLUP
SHLKK
SHLUKK
SSSORRY.
JUST GROWING SOMETHING TO *SPEAK* THROUGH.
THE BIG MOUTH UP *THERE* IS ONLY FOR *FEEDING*.
FEEDING ON *PREY*.
WHOOOM


HELP HULK.
STAY BEHIND ME, McGEE.
STERNS-- LET HIM GO, YOU *SICK*--
AH-AH-AH.
YOU COMPLETED MY *GAMMA CIRCUIT*, HULK. YOU *GAVE* ME THIS POWER. YOU CAN'T COMPLAIN *NOW*.
YOU CAN'T GET *AWAY*, EITHER. THE GREEN DOORS ARE *CLOSED* AND *LOCKED*.
NOW. BEAT HIM *DOWN*, SLAVE.
AND FEED HIM TO *ME*.
KID-- STAY *BACK*--
WHROKK
HELP.

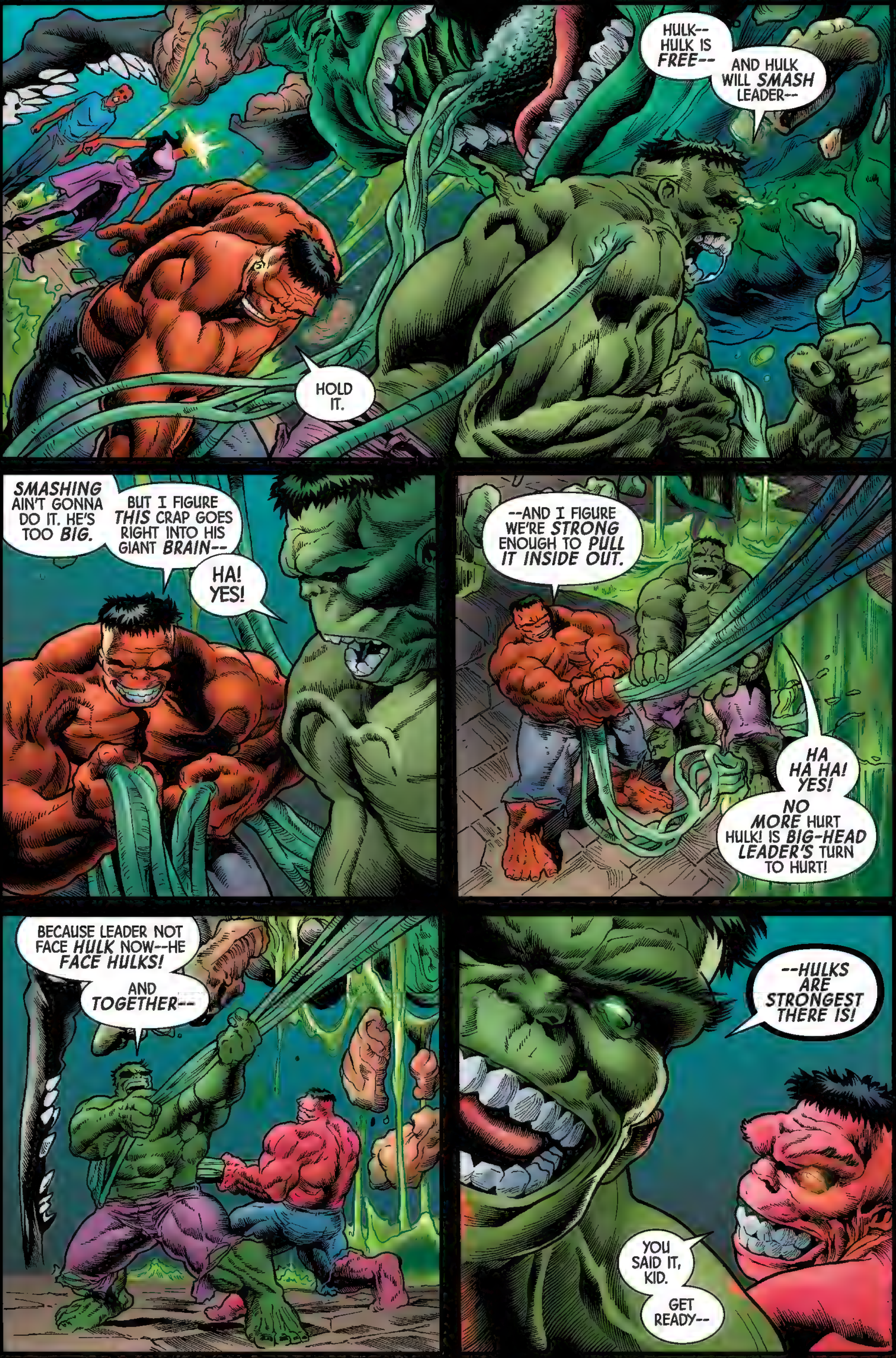

WHAM
HELP HULK.
HE WAS THE STRONGEST OF YOU. HE CHALLENGED ME. NOT LIKE YOU, "JOE FIXIT."
GREY, RED, PINK, PINSTRIPE OR PATTERNED SHIRT--I COULD ALWAYS MANIPULATE YOU...
I'M GONNA MANIPULATE YOU, STERNS.
INTO A BALLOON ANIMAL.
YOU SHOULDN'A MADE ME--
DO TELL.
KRAKK

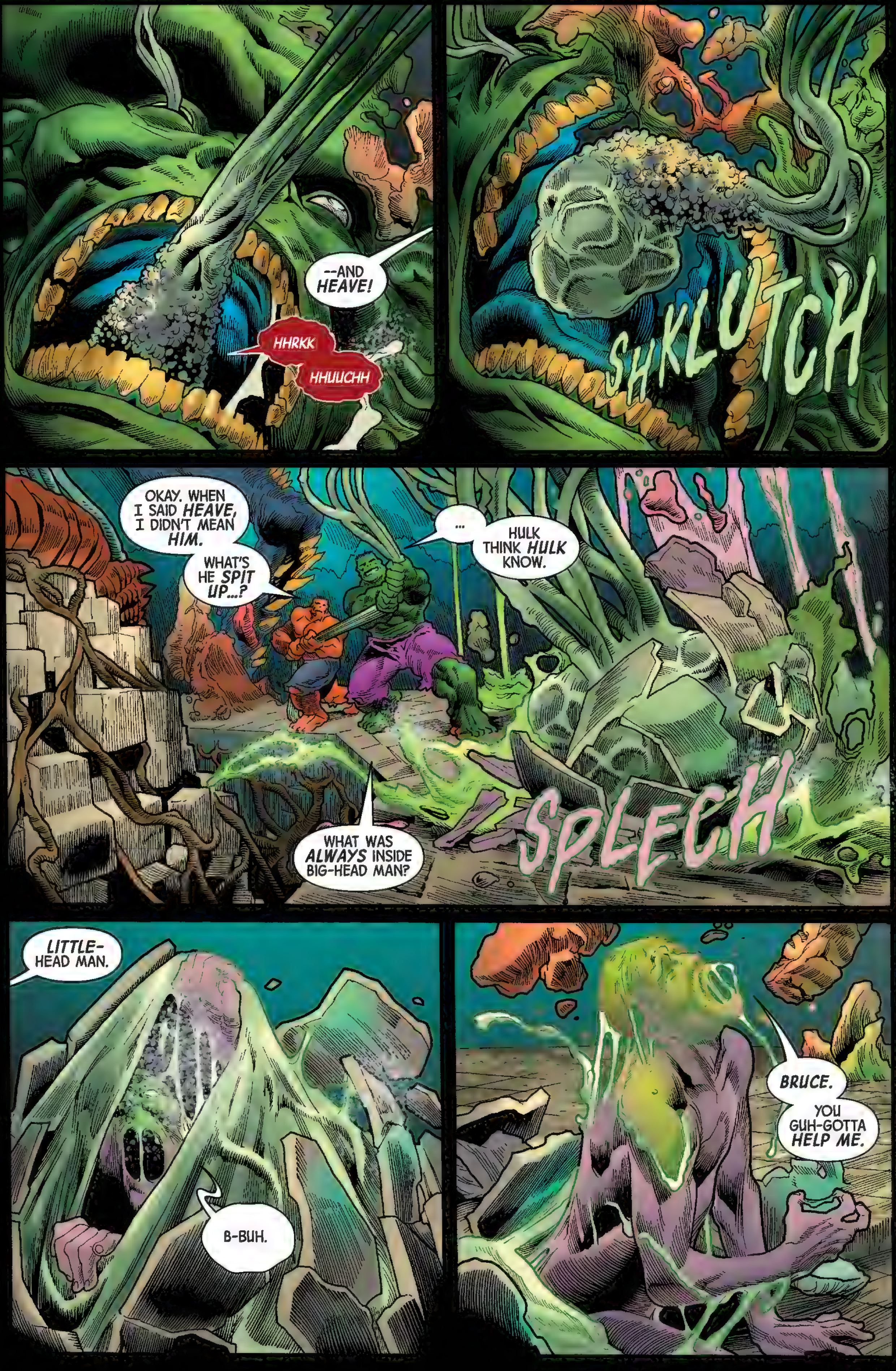

HULK--
NO! DON'T GET IN REACH!
JUST GET OUTTA HERE!
YOU'RE STILL-- UNNH!--STILL HUMAN!
THE GAMMA'S JUST IN--HNNH!-- IN YER EYES! YOUR GAMMA POWER IS LOOKING!
YOU BEEN SCARED, YOU BEEN PISSED OFF--IF YOU COULD HULK OUT, YOU WOULDA BY NOW! YOU AIN'T GONNA!
YOU GOTTA GO!
AAARRGHH!
THERE'S NOWHERE TO GO! AND I CAN'T JUST LEAVE YOU.
THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING I CAN--
OH.
LOOK.

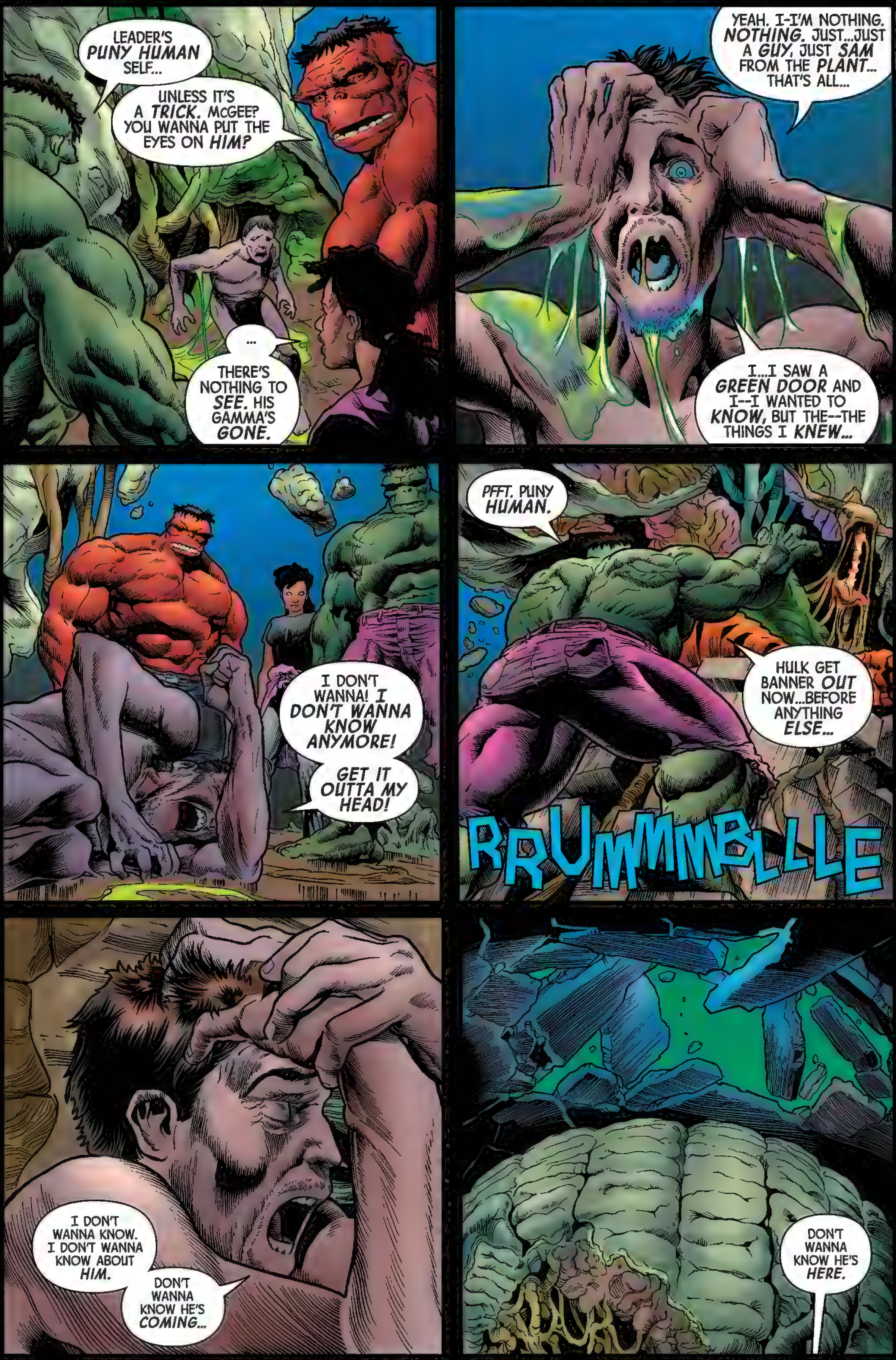

JUST LOOK.
"LOOK HIM IN THE EYE." I KNOW. I REMEMBER FROM THE LAST TIME.
DAD-- WHATEVER YOU ARE--I JUST...
...I JUST CAN'T, OKAY?
WE'RE GOING TO DIE HERE. I CAN'T.
I CAN'T DIE TALKING TO GHOSTS.
THERE'S A PLAN.
IS THERE?
REALLY?
SO WHAT--WHAT IS THE PLAN, DAD? COME ON! TELL ME!
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO BE LOOKING AT?
YOU.
LOOK AT YOU.

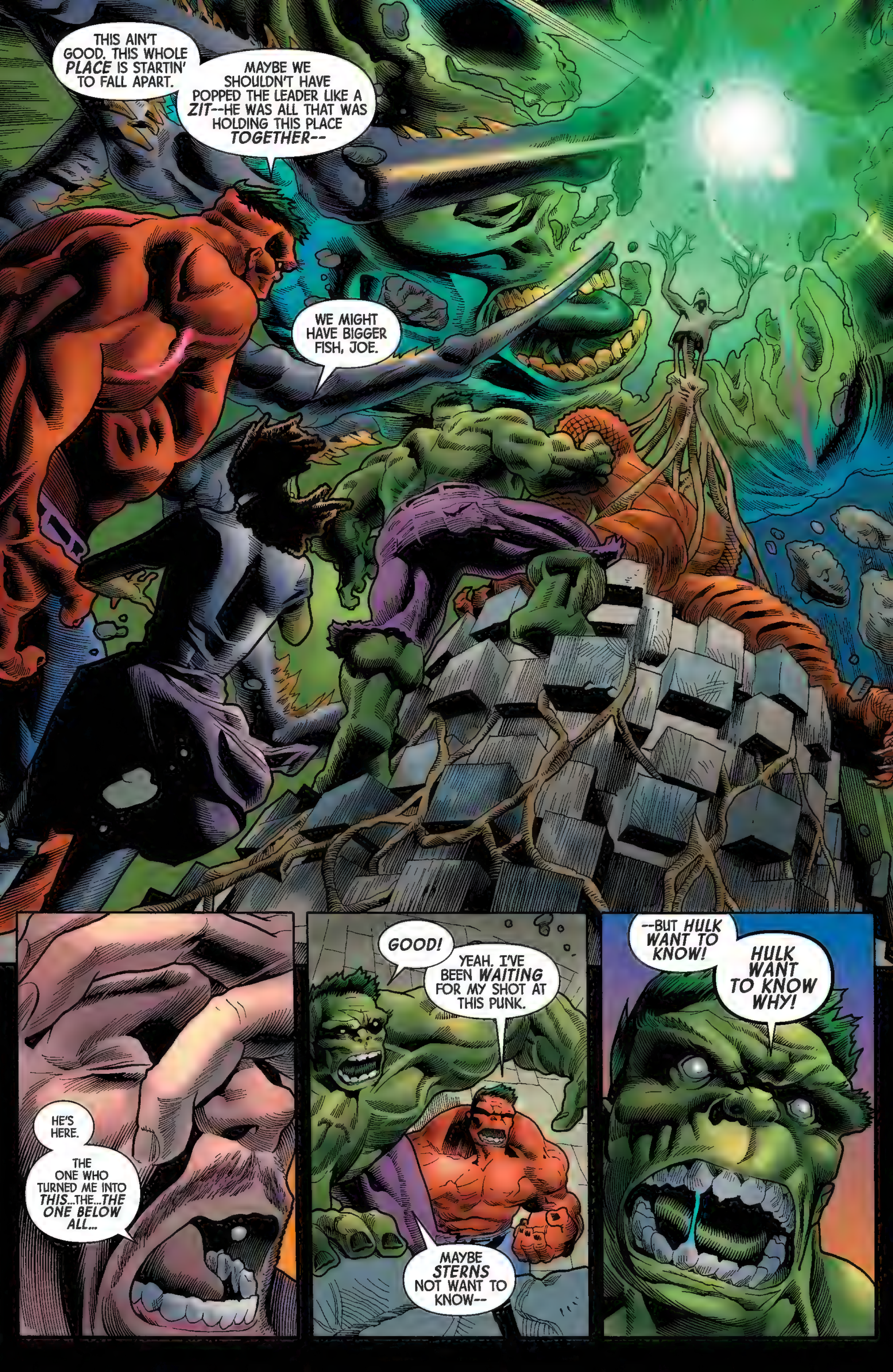

DAD, YOU SHOULD REST-- THIS IS YOUR SECOND HEART ATTACK--
QUIET NOW. LEMME GET THROUGH THIS.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE PLAN IS FOR US. BUT YOU'RE ALL THE PLAN I EVER NEEDED.
AND...LISTEN, YOU'RE MY BABY GIRL. I'D HAVE BEEN PROUD OF YOU WHATEVER YOU DID.
BUT JUST LOOK AT YOU. A JOURNALISM SCHOLARSHIP. ASKING THE QUESTIONS.
LOOK WHO YOU ARE. I'M SO DAMN PROUD, JACKIE.
I'M SO DAMN PROUD.
I...
IT'S NOT ANGER, IS IT, DAD?
I'VE BEEN ANGRY. I'VE BEEN SCARED.
I'VE BEEN REACTING.
ACTING LIKE WHO I AM WAS LOST IN ALL THIS.
BUT I'M STILL ME. I'M JACQUELINE McGEE. I'M AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER.
I LOOK INTO THINGS.

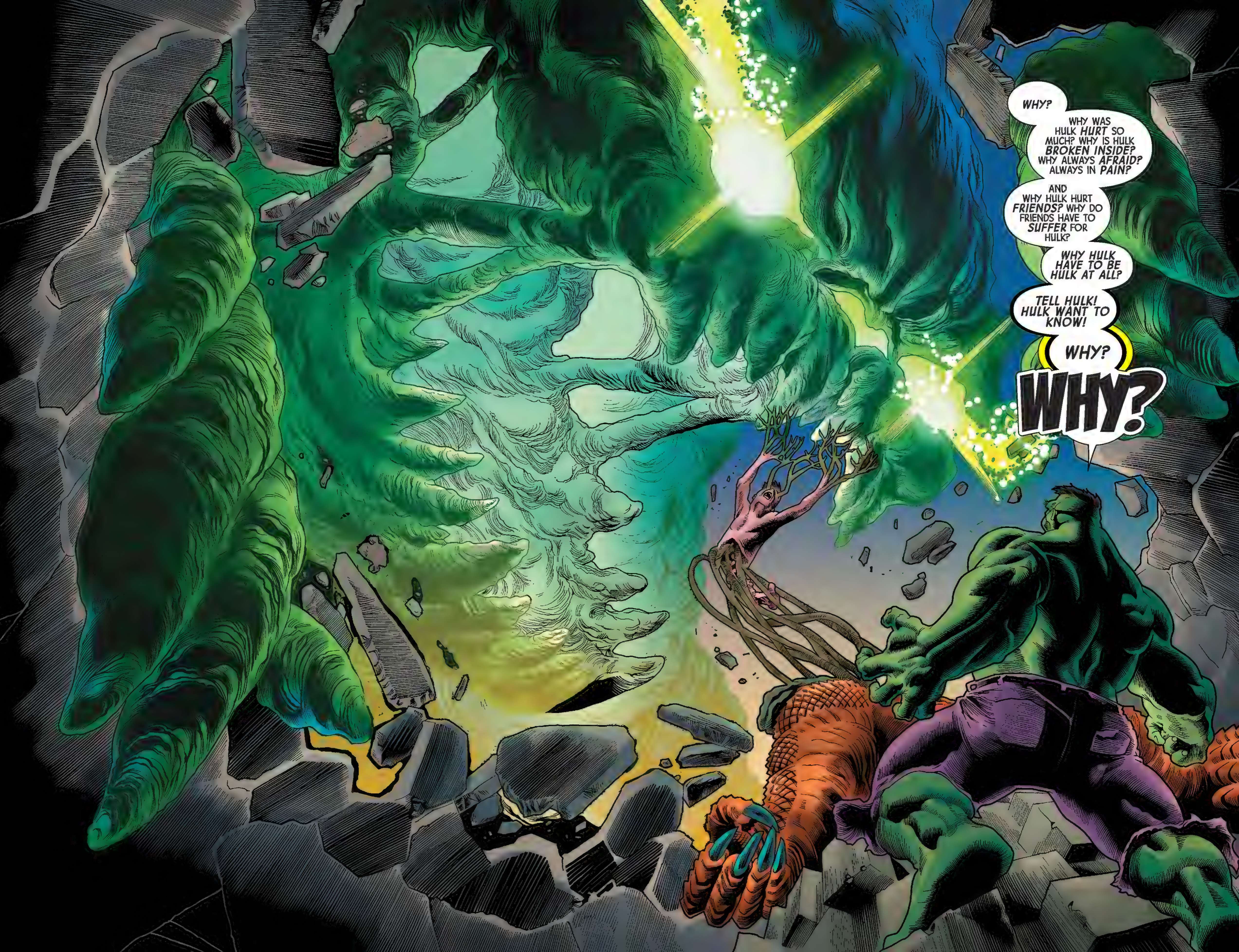
EEEEEEE!
SKRA-KROOM

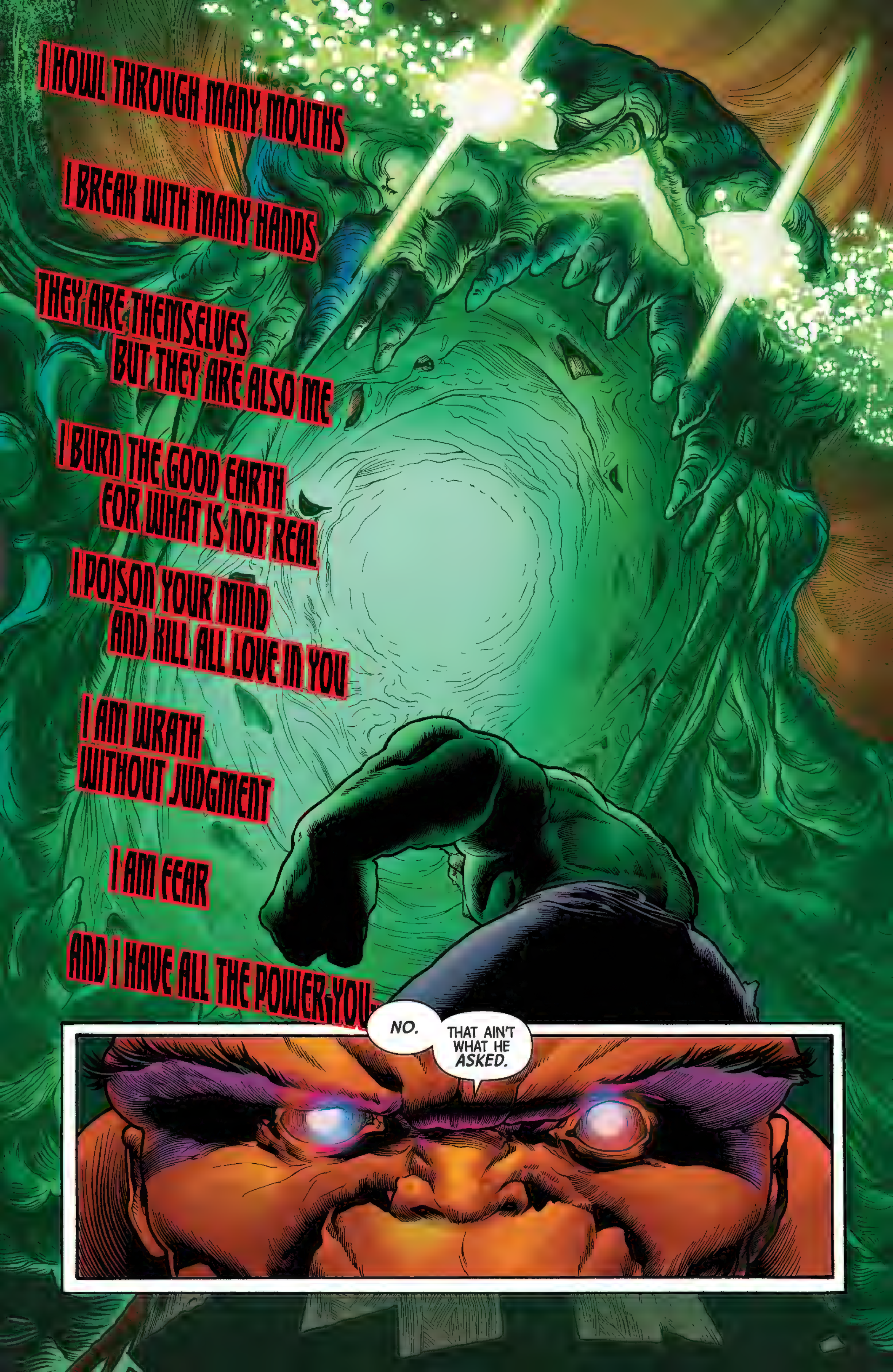

HULK-- HULK IS FREE--
AND HULK WILL SMASH LEADER--
HOLD IT.
SMASHING AIN'T GONNA DO IT. HE'S TOO BIG.
BUT I FIGURE THIS CRAP GOES RIGHT INTO HIS GIANT BRAIN--
HA! YES!
--AND I FIGURE WE'RE STRONG ENOUGH TO PULL IT INSIDE OUT.
HA HA HA! YES!
NO MORE HURT HULK! IS BIG-HEAD LEADER'S TURN TO HURT!
BECAUSE LEADER NOT FACE HULK NOW--HE FACE HULKS!
AND TOGETHER--
--HULKS ARE STRONGEST THERE IS!
YOU SAID IT, KID.
GET READY--

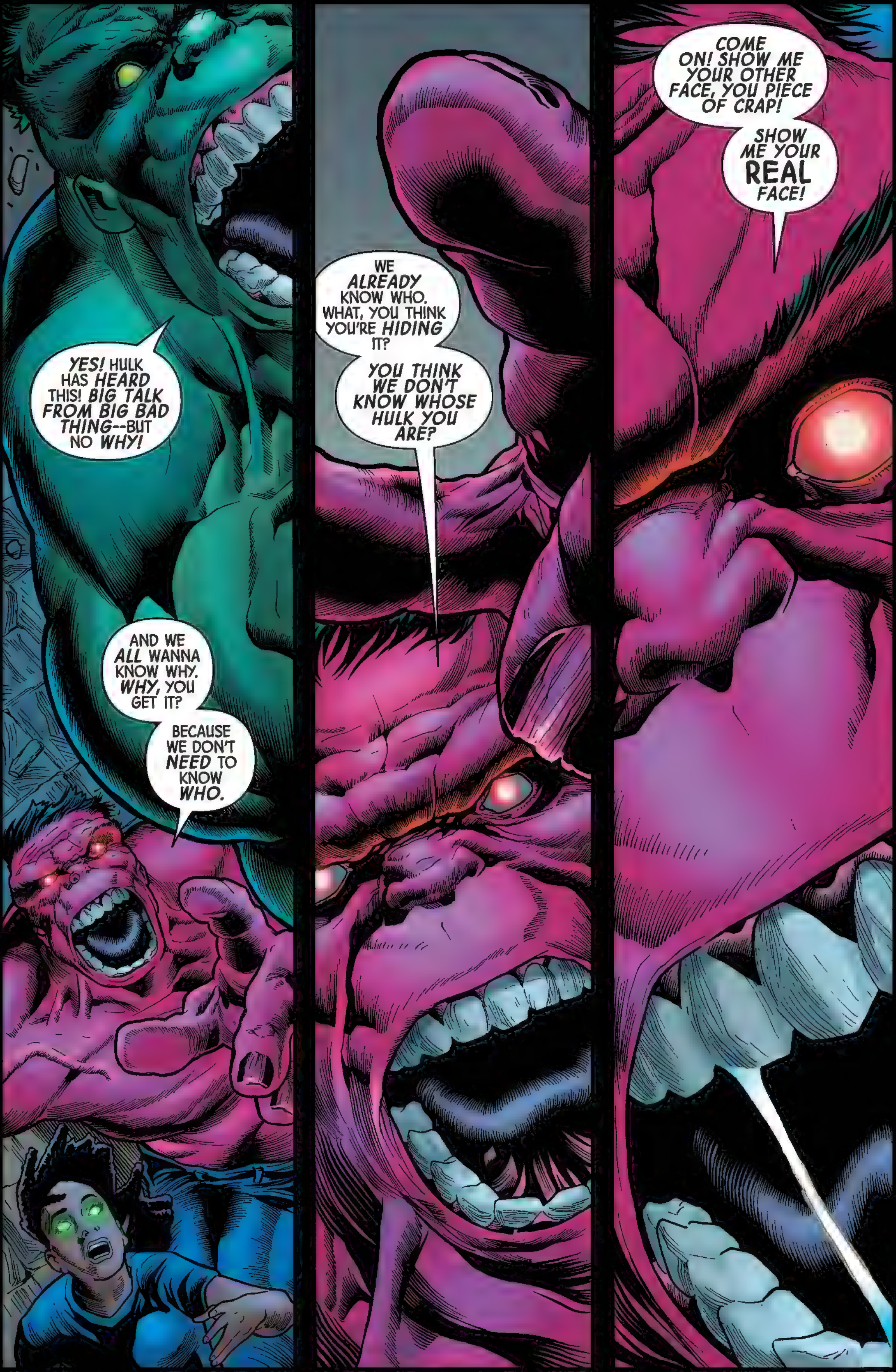

--AND HEAVE!
HHRKK
HHUUCHH
SHKLUTCH
OKAY. WHEN I SAID HEAVE, I DIDN'T MEAN HIM.
WHAT'S HE SPIT UP...?
...
HULK THINK HULK KNOW.
WHAT WAS ALWAYS INSIDE BIG-HEAD MAN?
SPLECH
LITTLE-HEAD MAN.
B-BUH.
BRUCE.
YOU GUH-GOTTA HELP ME.

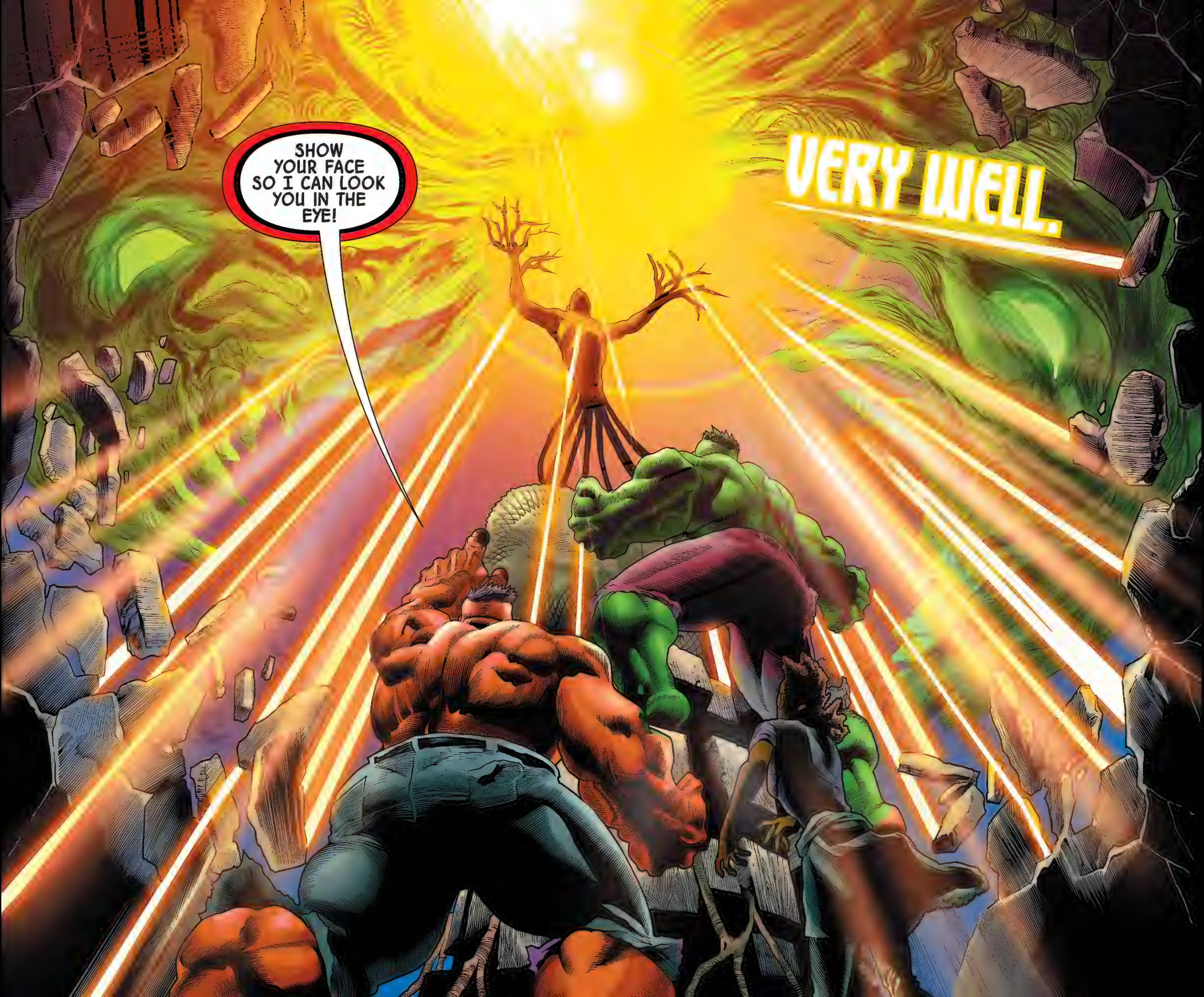

LEADER'S PUNY HUMAN SELF...
UNLESS IT'S A TRICK, McGEE? YOU WANNA PUT THE EYES ON HIM?
...
THERE'S NOTHING TO SEE. HIS GAMMA'S GONE.
YEAH. I-I'M NOTHING. NOTHING. JUST...JUST A GUY. JUST SAM FROM THE PLANT... THAT'S ALL...
I...I SAW A GREEN DOOR AND I--I WANTED TO KNOW, BUT THE--THE THINGS I KNEW...
I DON'T WANNA! I DON'T WANNA KNOW ANYMORE!
GET IT OUTTA MY HEAD!
PFFT. PUNY HUMAN.
HULK GET BANNER OUT NOW...BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE...
RRUMMMBLLE
I DON'T WANNA KNOW. I DON'T WANNA KNOW ABOUT HIM.
DON'T WANNA KNOW HE'S COMING...
DON'T WANNA KNOW HE'S HERE.

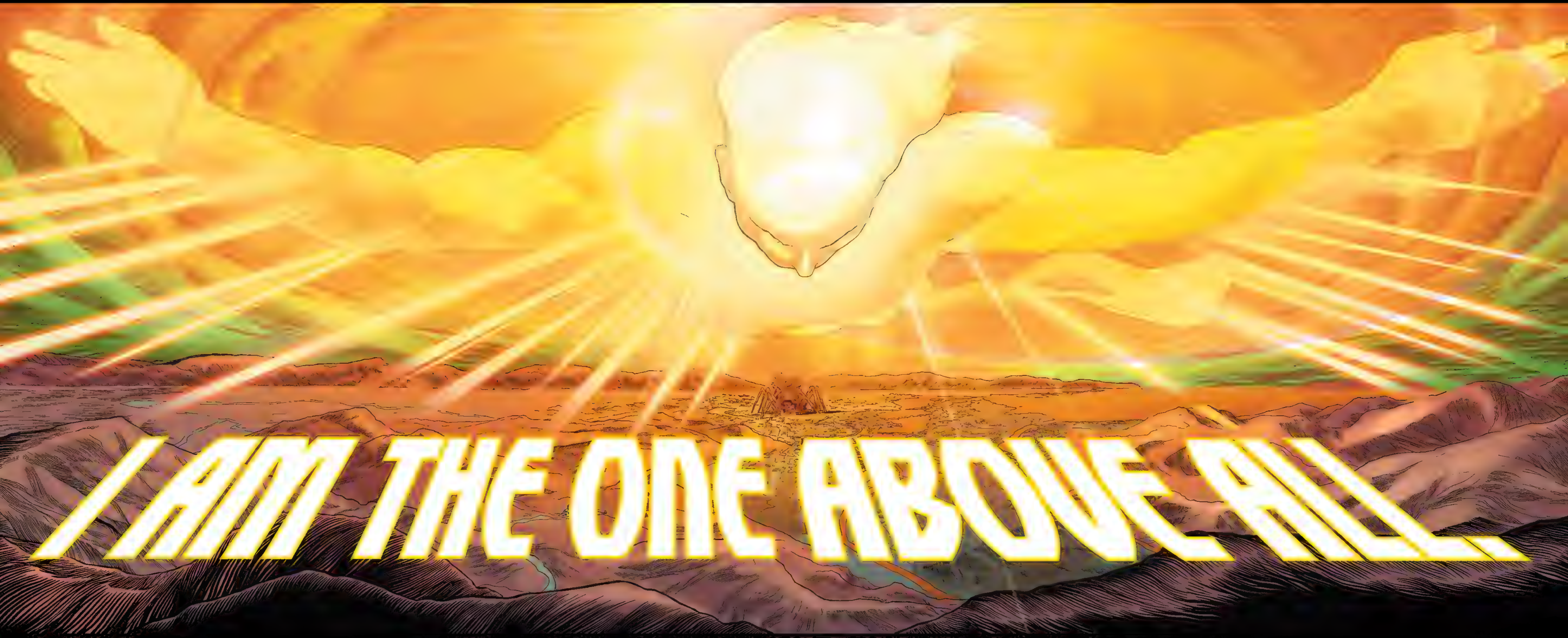

THIS AIN'T GOOD. THIS WHOLE *PLACE* IS STARTIN' TO FALL APART.
MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T HAVE POPPED THE LEADER LIKE A *ZIT*--HE WAS ALL THAT WAS HOLDING THIS PLACE *TOGETHER*--
WE MIGHT HAVE BIGGER FISH, JOE.
HE'S HERE.
THE ONE WHO TURNED ME INTO *THIS*...THE...*THE ONE BELOW ALL*...
GOOD!
YEAH. I'VE BEEN *WAITING* FOR MY SHOT AT THIS PUNK.
MAYBE *STERNS* NOT WANT TO KNOW--
--BUT *HULK WANT TO KNOW!*
HULK WANT TO KNOW WHY!

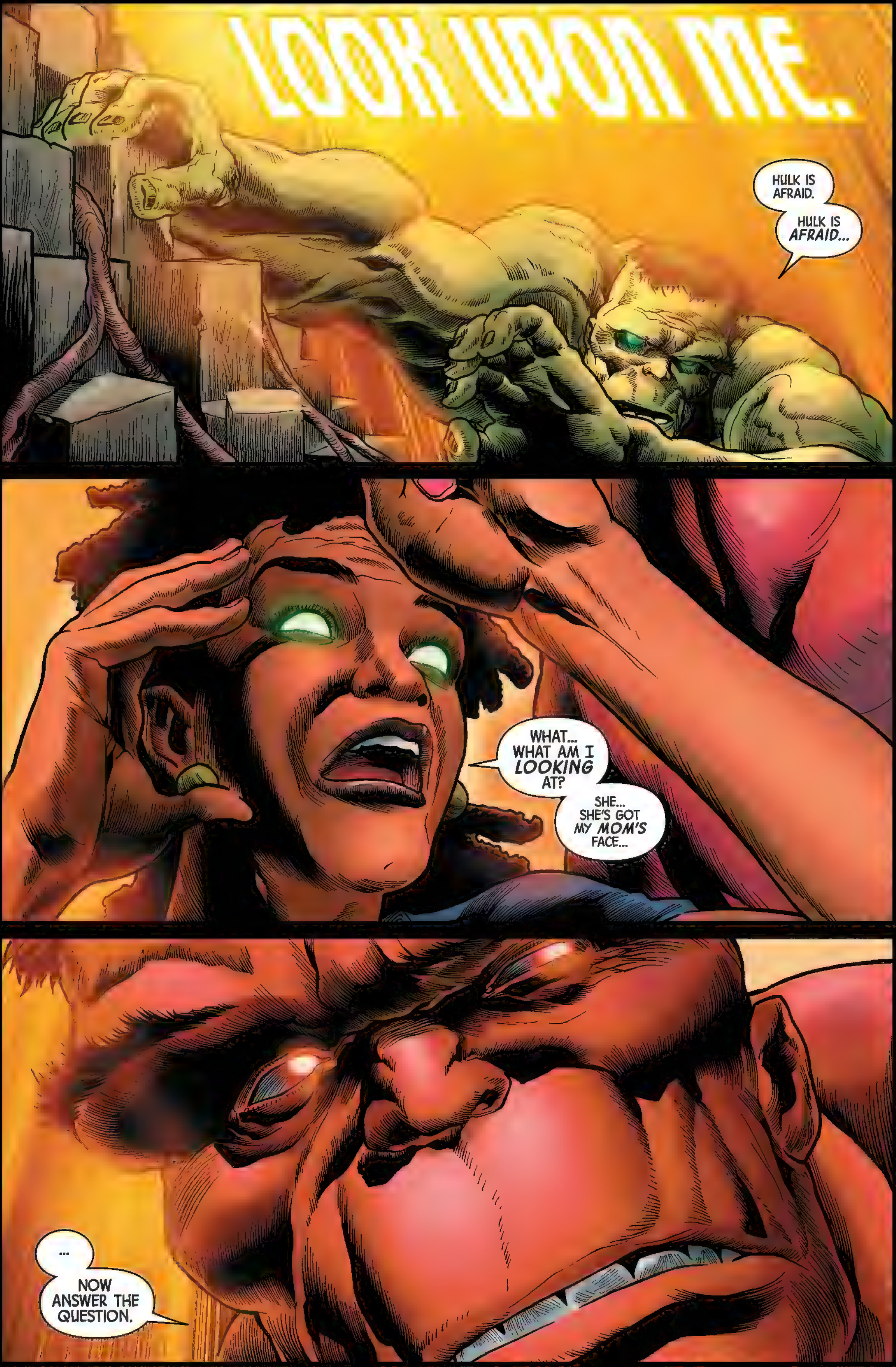

WHY?
WHY WAS HULK HURT SO MUCH? WHY IS HULK BROKEN INSIDE? WHY ALWAYS AFRAID? ALWAYS IN PAIN?
AND WHY HULK HURT FRIENDS? WHY DO FRIENDS HAVE TO SUFFER FOR HULK?
WHY HULK HAVE TO BE HULK AT ALL?
TELL HULK! HULK WANT TO KNOW!
WHY?
WHY?


I HOWL THROUGH MANY MOUTHS
I BREAK WITH MANY HANDS
THEY ARE THEMSELVES BUT THEY ARE ALSO ME
I BURN THE GOOD EARTH FOR WHAT IS NOT REAL
I POISON YOUR MIND AND KILL ALL LOVE IN YOU
I AM WRATH WITHOUT JUDGMENT
I AM FEAR
AND I HAVE ALL THE POWER YOU--
NO.
THAT AIN'T WHAT HE ASKED.

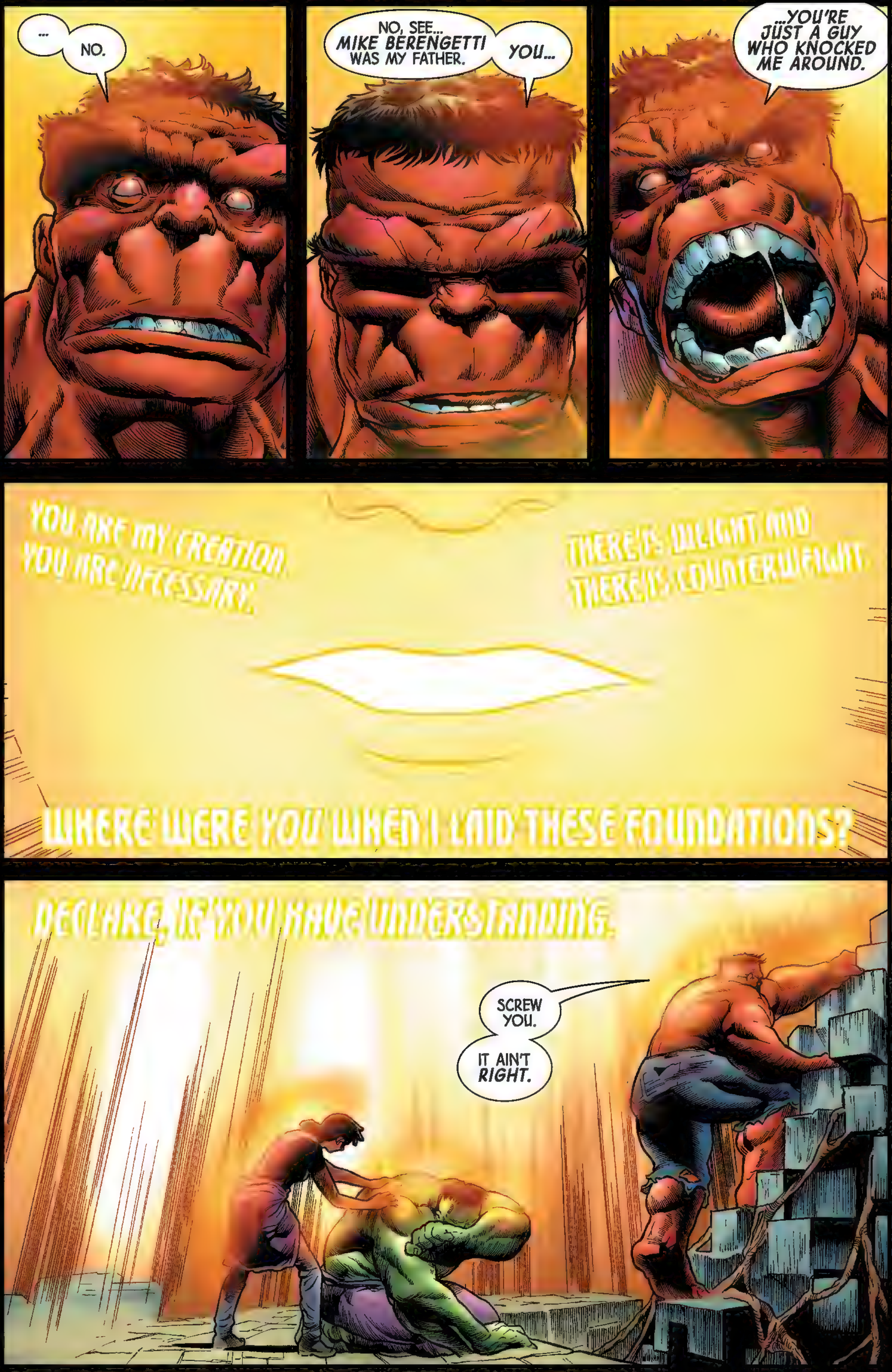

YES! HULK HAS HEARD THIS! BIG TALK FROM BIG BAD THING--BUT NO WHY!
AND WE ALL WANNA KNOW WHY. WHY, YOU GET IT?
BECAUSE WE DON'T NEED TO KNOW WHO.
WE ALREADY KNOW WHO. WHAT, YOU THINK YOU'RE HIDING IT?
YOU THINK WE DON'T KNOW WHOSE HULK YOU ARE?
COME ON! SHOW ME YOUR OTHER FACE, YOU PIECE OF CRAP!
SHOW ME YOUR REAL FACE!

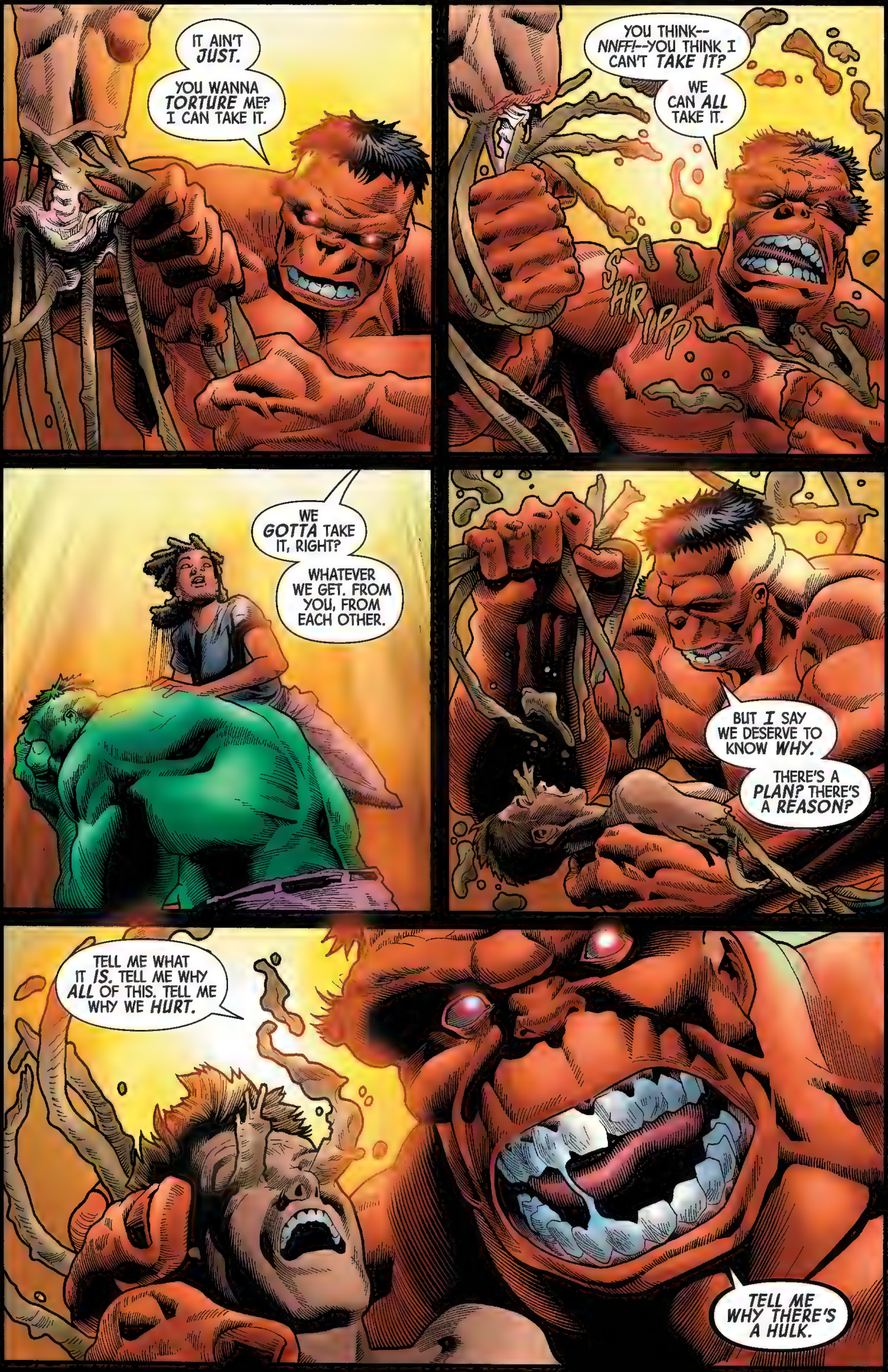

SHOW YOUR FACE SO I CAN LOOK YOU IN THE EYE!
VERY WELL.

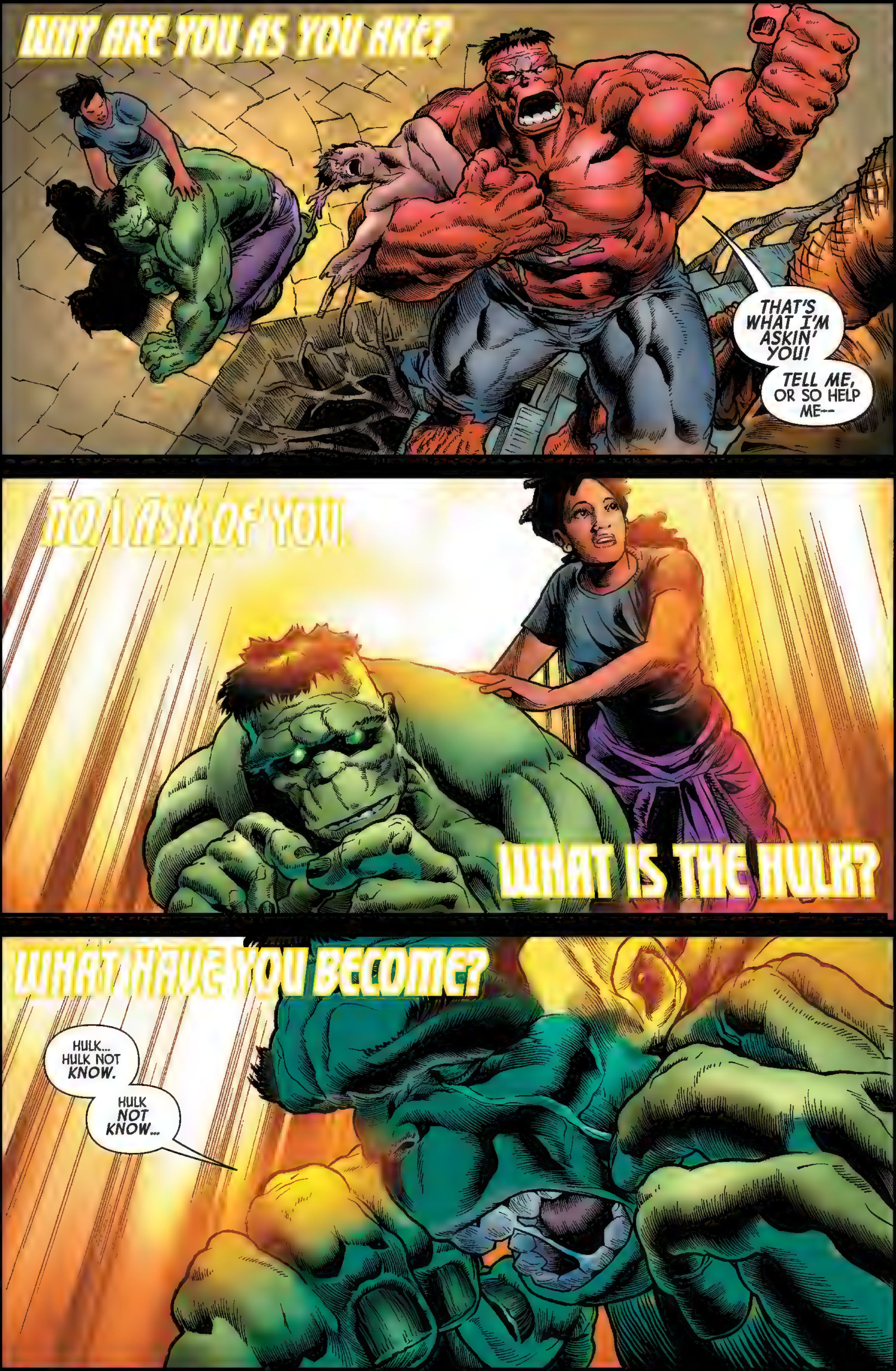

I AM THE ONE ABOVE ALL.

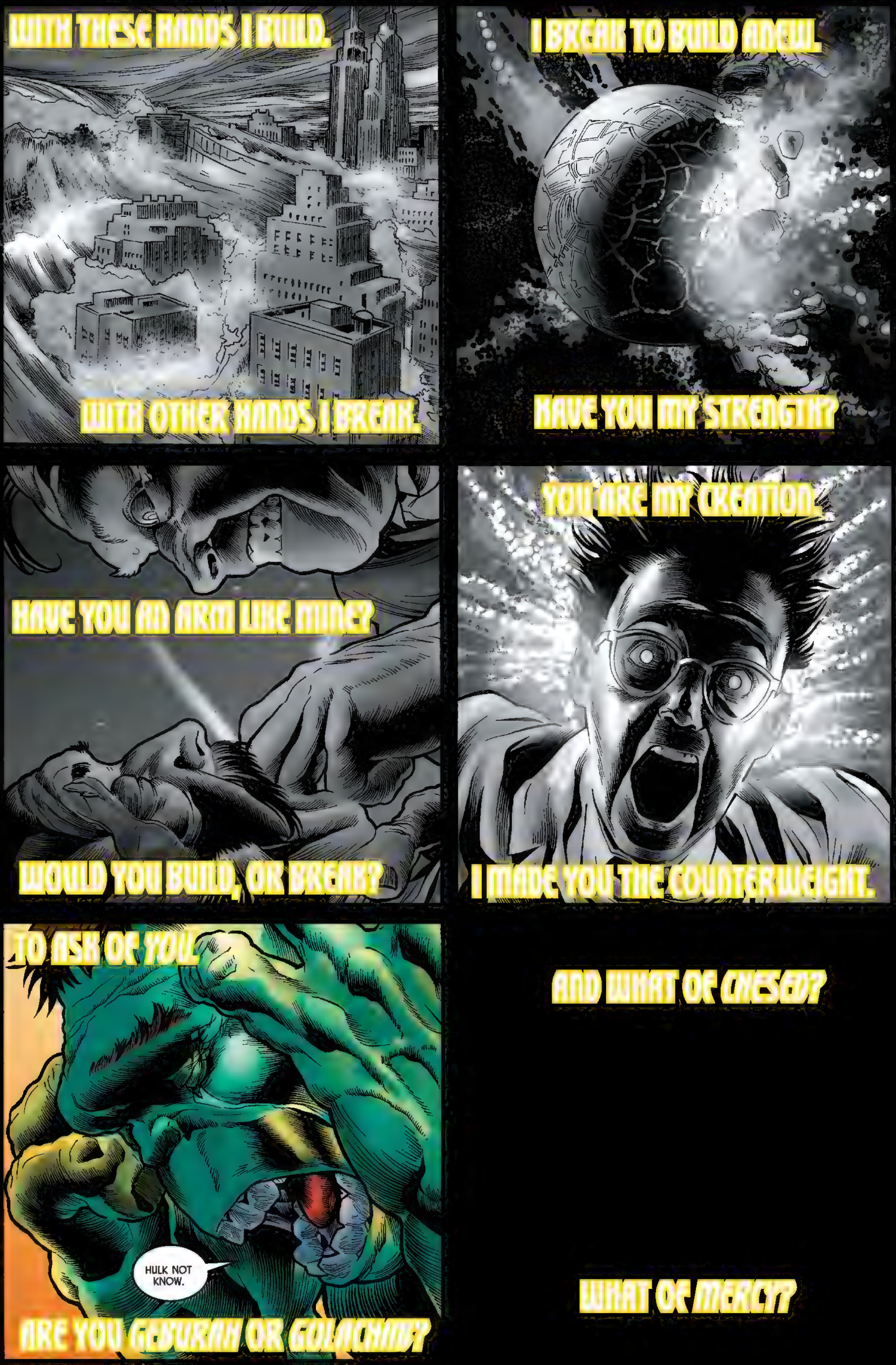

LOOK UPON ME.
HULK IS AFRAID.
HULK IS *AFRAID*...
WHAT... WHAT AM I *LOOKING* AT?
SHE... SHE'S GOT MY *MOM'S* FACE...
...
NOW ANSWER THE QUESTION.

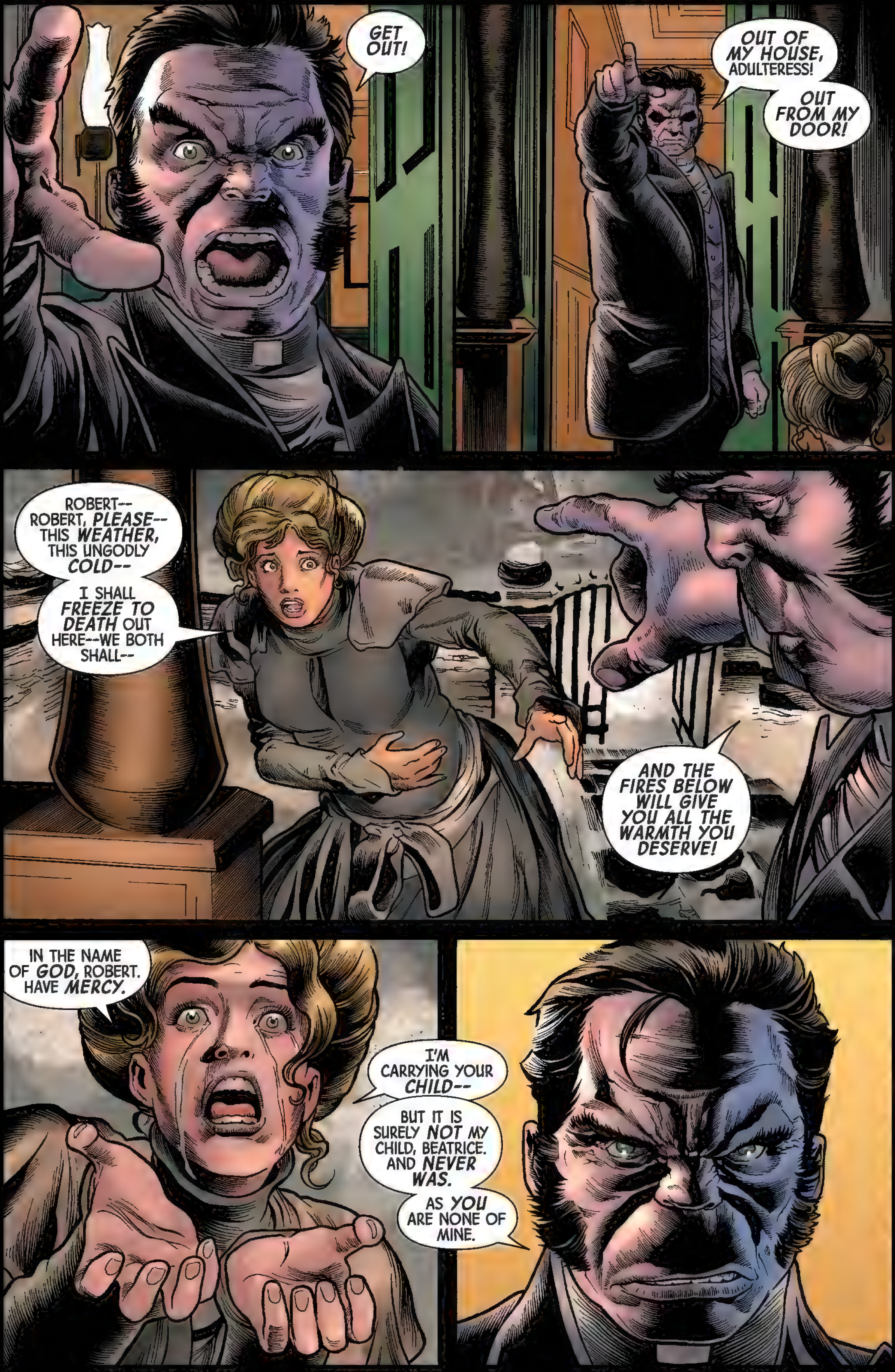
BECAUSE YOU ARE MY CHILD.

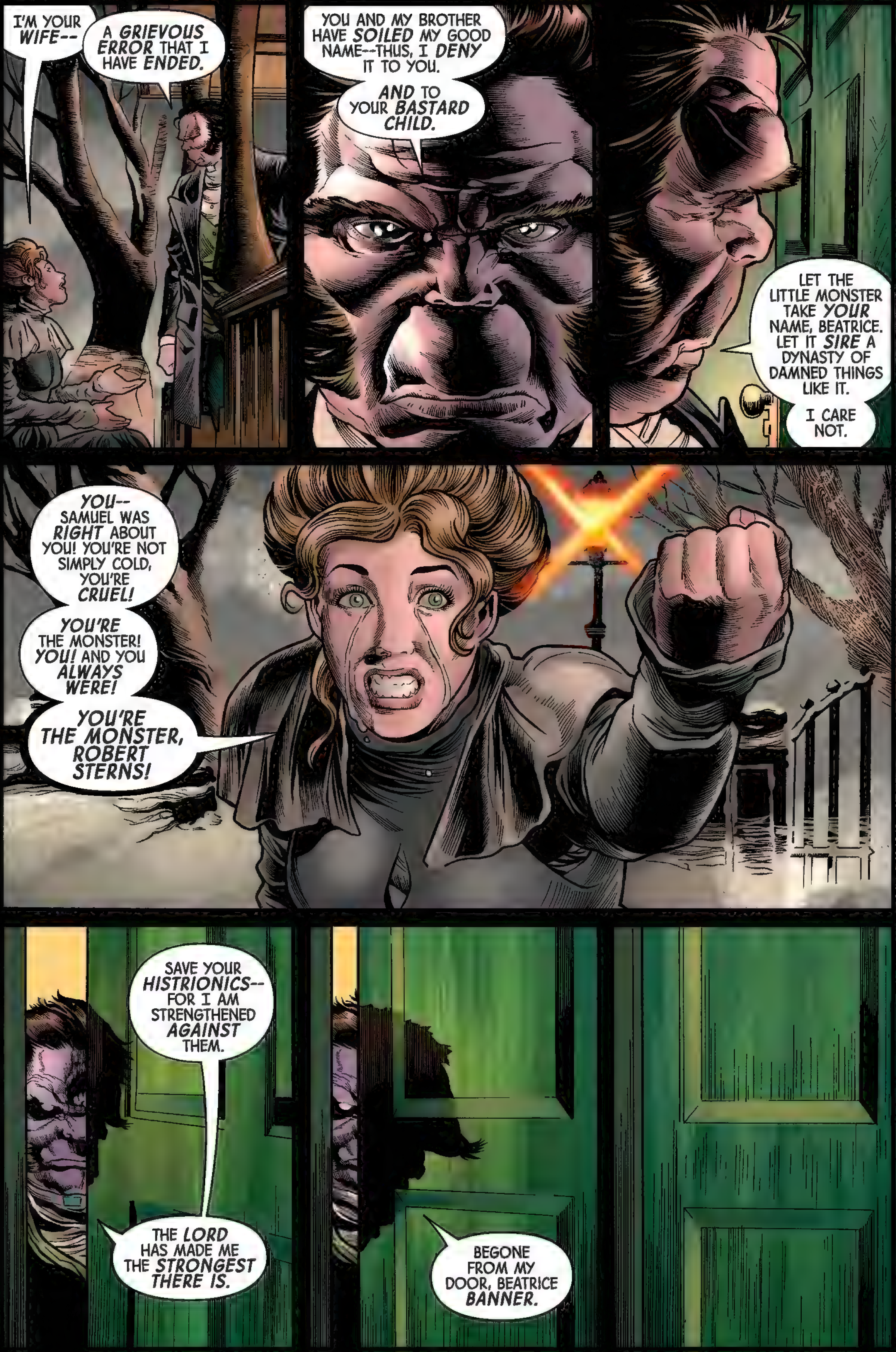

...
NO.
NO, SEE... *MIKE BERENGETTI* WAS MY FATHER.
YOU...
...YOU'RE JUST A GUY WHO KNOCKED ME AROUND.
YOU ARE MY CREATION. YOU ARE NECESSARY.
THERE IS WEIGHT AND THERE IS COUNTERWEIGHT.
WHERE WERE *YOU* WHEN I LAID THESE FOUNDATIONS?
DECLARE, IF YOU HAVE UNDERSTANDING.
SCREW YOU.
IT AIN'T *RIGHT.*

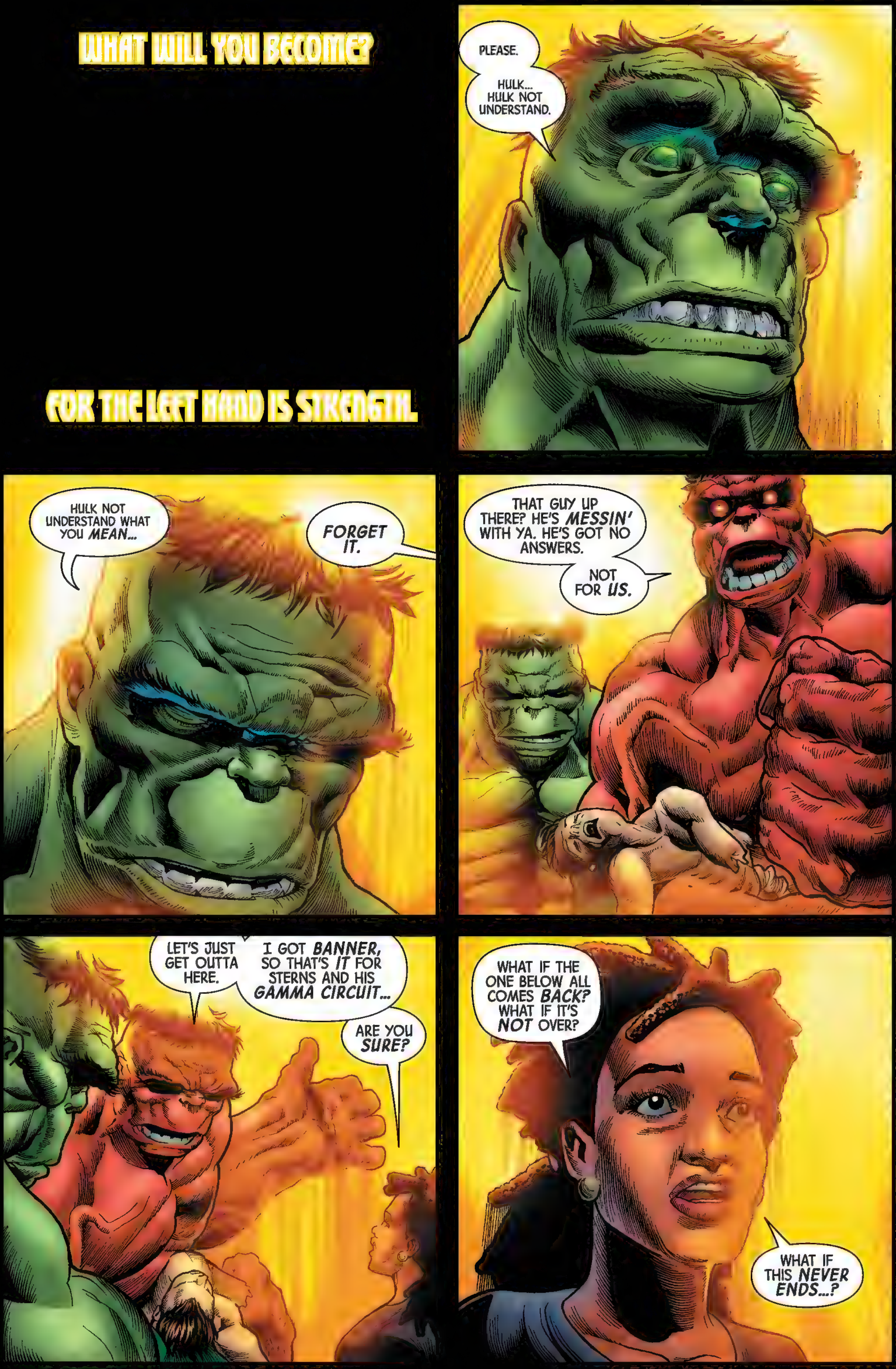

IT AIN'T *JUST.*
YOU WANNA *TORTURE* ME? I CAN TAKE IT.
YOU THINK-- *NNFF!*--YOU THINK I CAN'T *TAKE IT?*
WE CAN *ALL* TAKE IT.
SHRIPP
WE *GOTTA* TAKE IT, RIGHT?
WHATEVER WE GET. FROM YOU, FROM EACH OTHER.
BUT *I* SAY WE DESERVE TO KNOW *WHY.*
THERE'S A *PLAN?* THERE'S A *REASON?*
TELL ME WHAT IT *IS.* TELL ME WHY *ALL* OF THIS. TELL ME WHY WE *HURT.*
TELL ME WHY THERE'S A HULK.

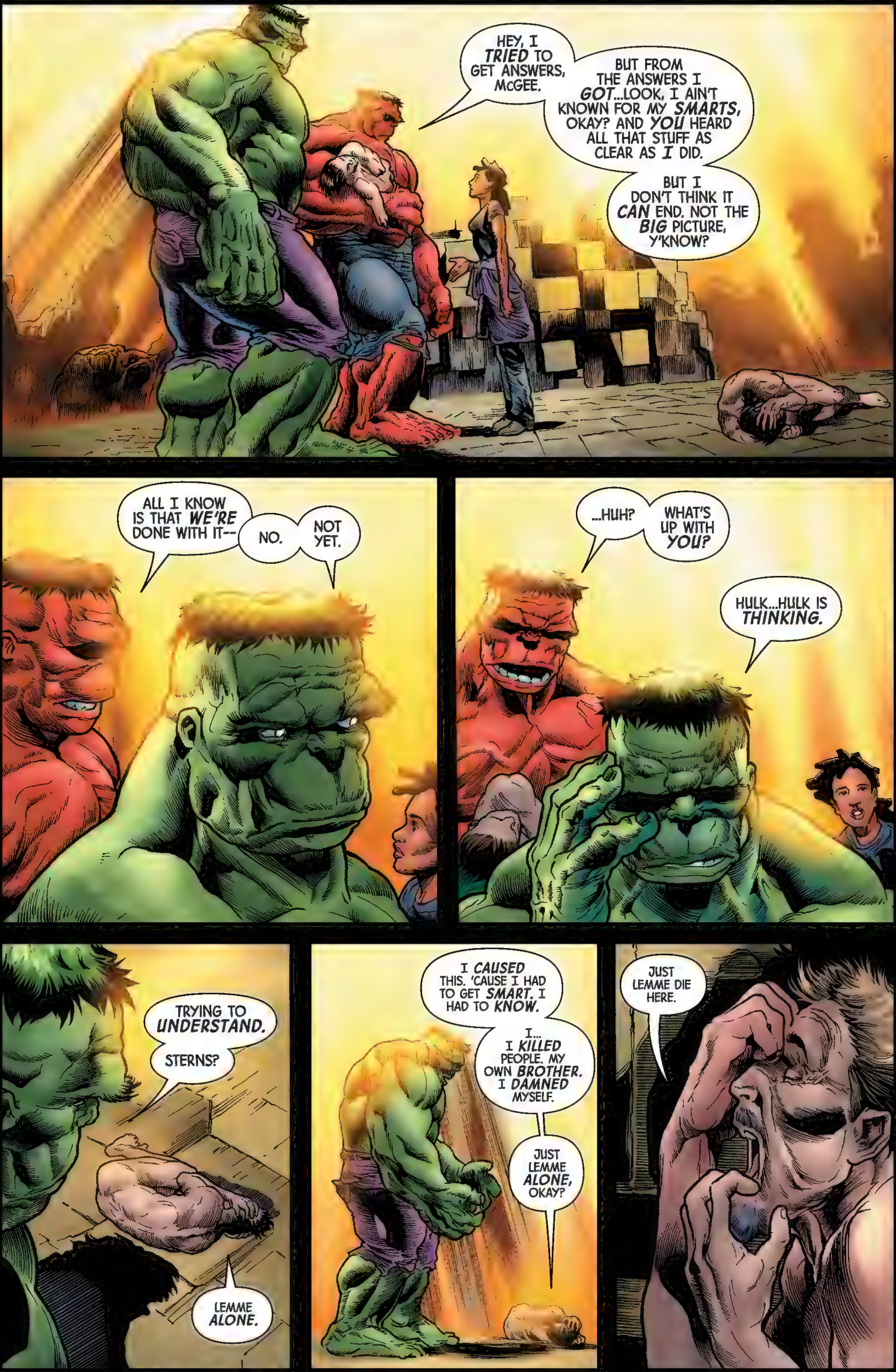

WHY ARE YOU AS YOU ARE?
THAT'S WHAT I'M ASKIN' YOU!
TELL ME, OR SO HELP ME--
NO I ASK OF YOU!
WHAT IS THE HULK?
WHAT HAVE YOU BECOME?
HULK... HULK NOT KNOW.
HULK NOT KNOW...

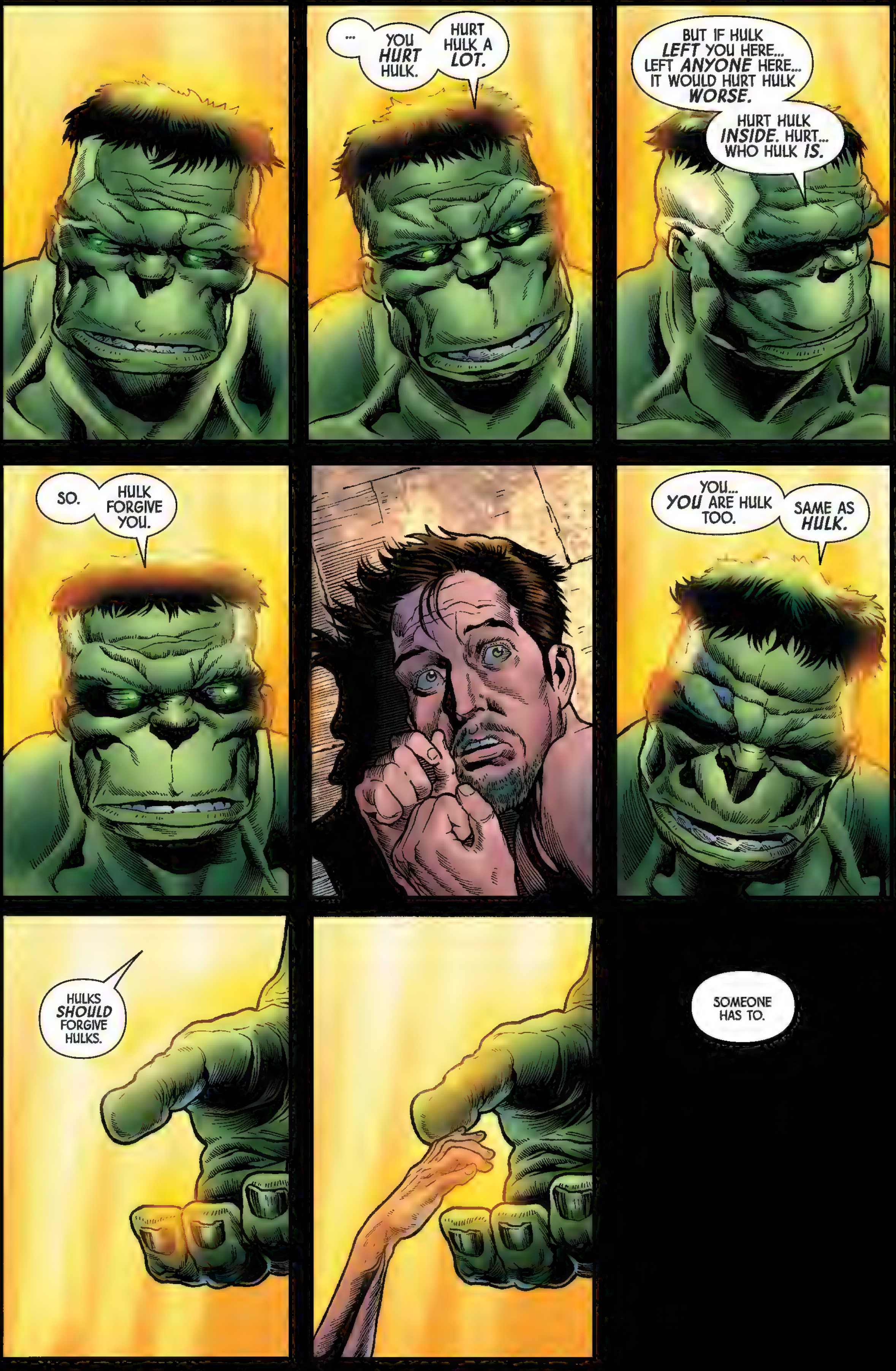

WITH THESE HANDS I BUILD.
WITH OTHER HANDS I BREAK.
I BREAK TO BUILD ANEW.
HAVE YOU MY STRENGTH?
HAVE YOU AN ARM LIKE MINE?
WOULD YOU BUILD, OR BREAK?
YOU ARE MY CREATION.
I MADE YOU THE COUNTERWEIGHT.
TO ASK OF YOU.
HULK NOT KNOW.
ARE YOU *GEBURAH* OR *GOLACHAB*?
AND WHAT OF *CHESED*?
WHAT OF *MERCY*?


GET OUT!
OUT OF MY HOUSE, ADULTERESS!
OUT FROM MY DOOR!
ROBERT-- ROBERT, PLEASE-- THIS WEATHER, THIS UNGODLY COLD--
I SHALL FREEZE TO DEATH OUT HERE--WE BOTH SHALL--
AND THE FIRES BELOW WILL GIVE YOU ALL THE WARMTH YOU DESERVE!
IN THE NAME OF GOD, ROBERT. HAVE MERCY.
I'M CARRYING YOUR CHILD--
BUT IT IS SURELY NOT MY CHILD, BEATRICE. AND NEVER WAS.
AS YOU ARE NONE OF MINE.

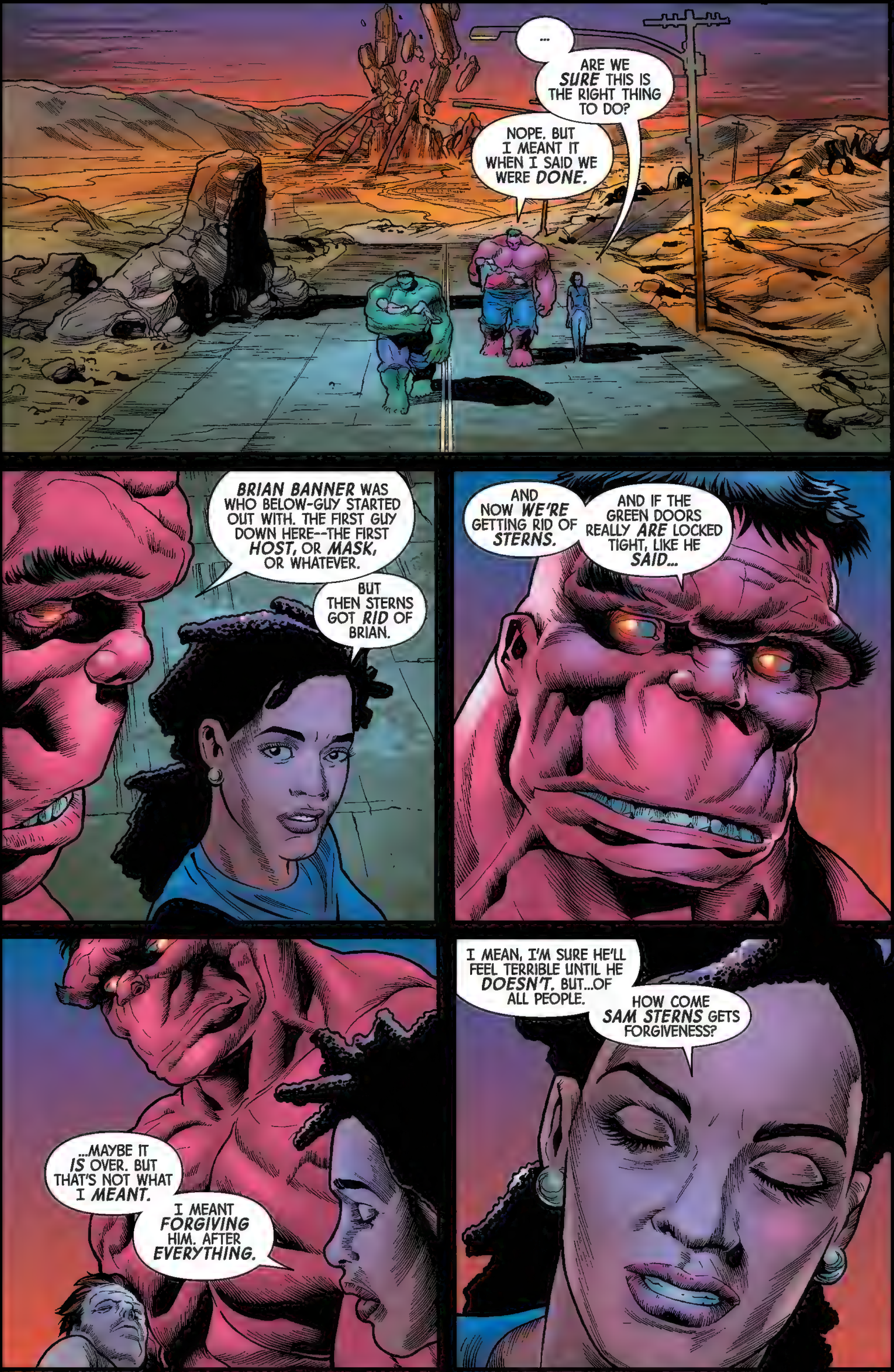

I'M YOUR WIFE--
A GRIEVOUS ERROR THAT I HAVE ENDED.
YOU AND MY BROTHER HAVE SOILED MY GOOD NAME--THUS, I DENY IT TO YOU.
AND TO YOUR BASTARD CHILD.
LET THE LITTLE MONSTER TAKE YOUR NAME, BEATRICE. LET IT SIRE A DYNASTY OF DAMNED THINGS LIKE IT.
I CARE NOT.
YOU-- SAMUEL WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU! YOU'RE NOT SIMPLY COLD, YOU'RE CRUEL!
YOU'RE THE MONSTER! YOU! AND YOU ALWAYS WERE!
YOU'RE THE MONSTER, ROBERT STERNS!
SAVE YOUR HISTRIONICS-- FOR I AM STRENGTHENED AGAINST THEM.
THE LORD HAS MADE ME THE STRONGEST THERE IS.
BEGONE FROM MY DOOR, BEATRICE BANNER.

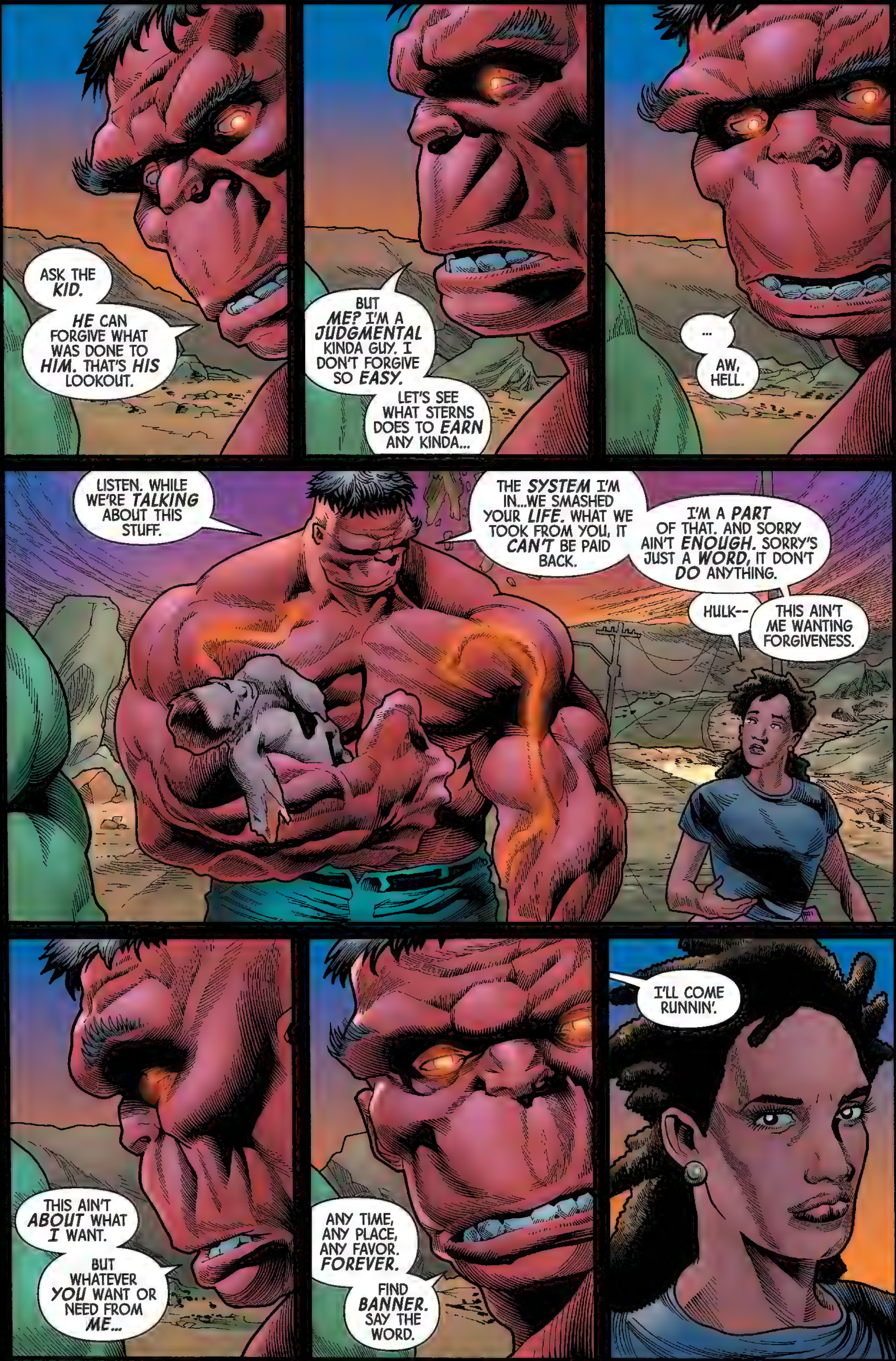

WHAT WILL YOU BECOME?
FOR THE LEFT HAND IS STRENGTH
PLEASE.
HULK... HULK NOT UNDERSTAND.
HULK NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU *MEAN*...
FORGET IT.
THAT GUY UP THERE? HE'S *MESSIN'* WITH YA. HE'S GOT NO ANSWERS.
NOT FOR *US*.
LET'S JUST GET OUTTA HERE.
I GOT *BANNER*, SO THAT'S *IT* FOR STERNS AND HIS *GAMMA CIRCUIT*...
ARE YOU *SURE?*
WHAT IF THE ONE BELOW ALL COMES *BACK?* WHAT IF IT'S *NOT* OVER?
WHAT IF THIS *NEVER ENDS...?*

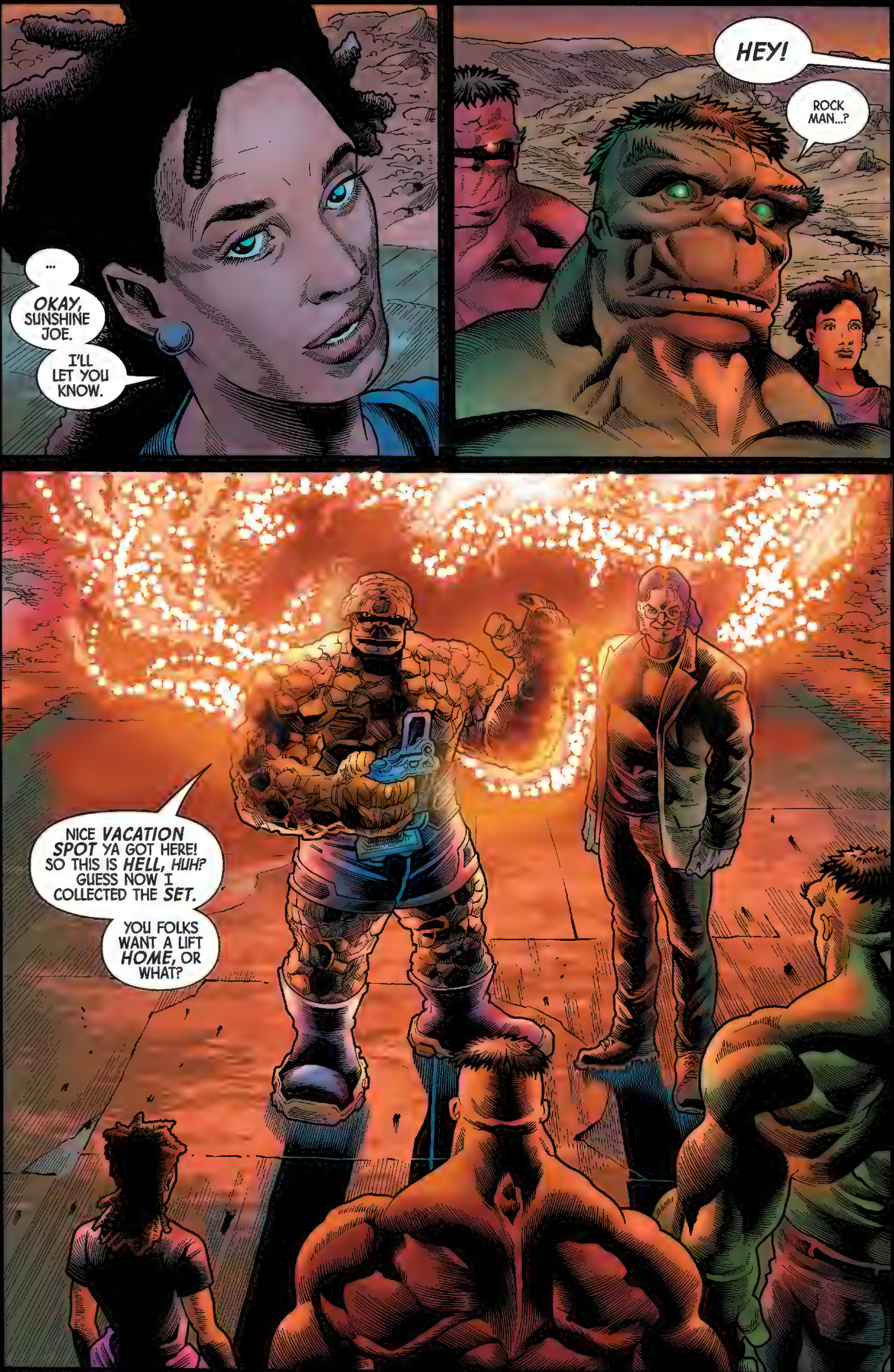

HEY, I *TRIED* TO GET ANSWERS, McGEE.
BUT FROM THE ANSWERS I *GOT*...LOOK, I AIN'T KNOWN FOR MY *SMARTS*, OKAY? AND *YOU* HEARD ALL THAT STUFF AS CLEAR AS *I* DID.
BUT I DON'T THINK IT *CAN* END. NOT THE *BIG* PICTURE, Y'KNOW?
ALL I KNOW IS THAT *WE'RE* DONE WITH IT--
NO.
NOT YET.
...HUH?
WHAT'S UP WITH *YOU?*
HULK...HULK IS *THINKING.*
TRYING TO *UNDERSTAND.*
STERNS?
LEMME *ALONE.*
I *CAUSED* THIS. 'CAUSE I HAD TO GET *SMART.* I HAD TO *KNOW.*
I... I *KILLED* PEOPLE. MY OWN *BROTHER.* I *DAMNED* MYSELF.
JUST LEMME *ALONE,* OKAY?
JUST LEMME DIE HERE.

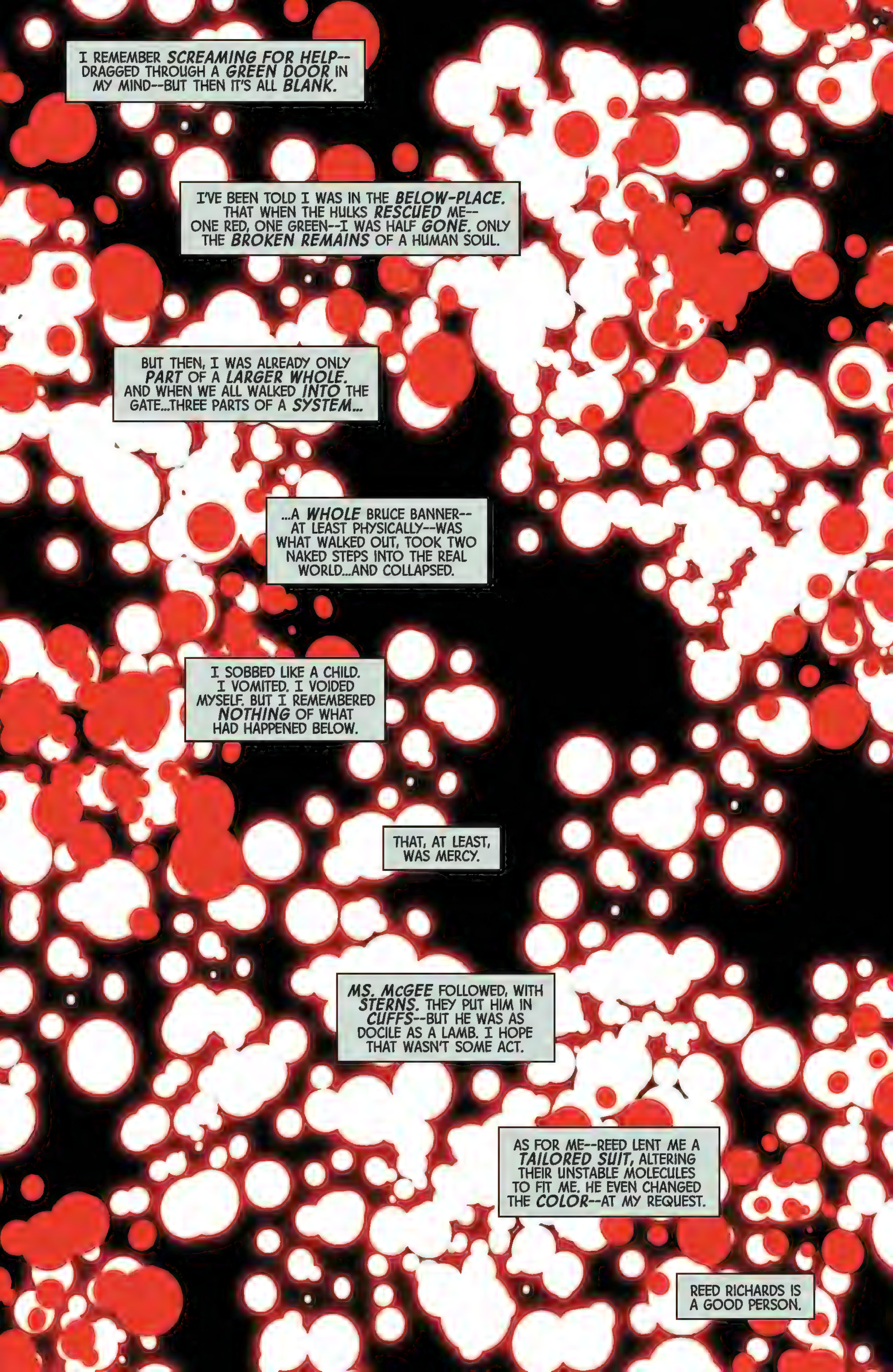

...
YOU *HURT* HULK.
HURT HULK A *LOT.*
BUT IF HULK *LEFT* YOU HERE... LEFT *ANYONE* HERE... IT WOULD HURT HULK *WORSE.*
HURT HULK *INSIDE.* HURT... WHO HULK *IS.*
SO.
HULK FORGIVE YOU.
YOU... *YOU* ARE HULK TOO.
SAME AS *HULK.*
HULKS *SHOULD* FORGIVE HULKS.
SOMEONE HAS TO.

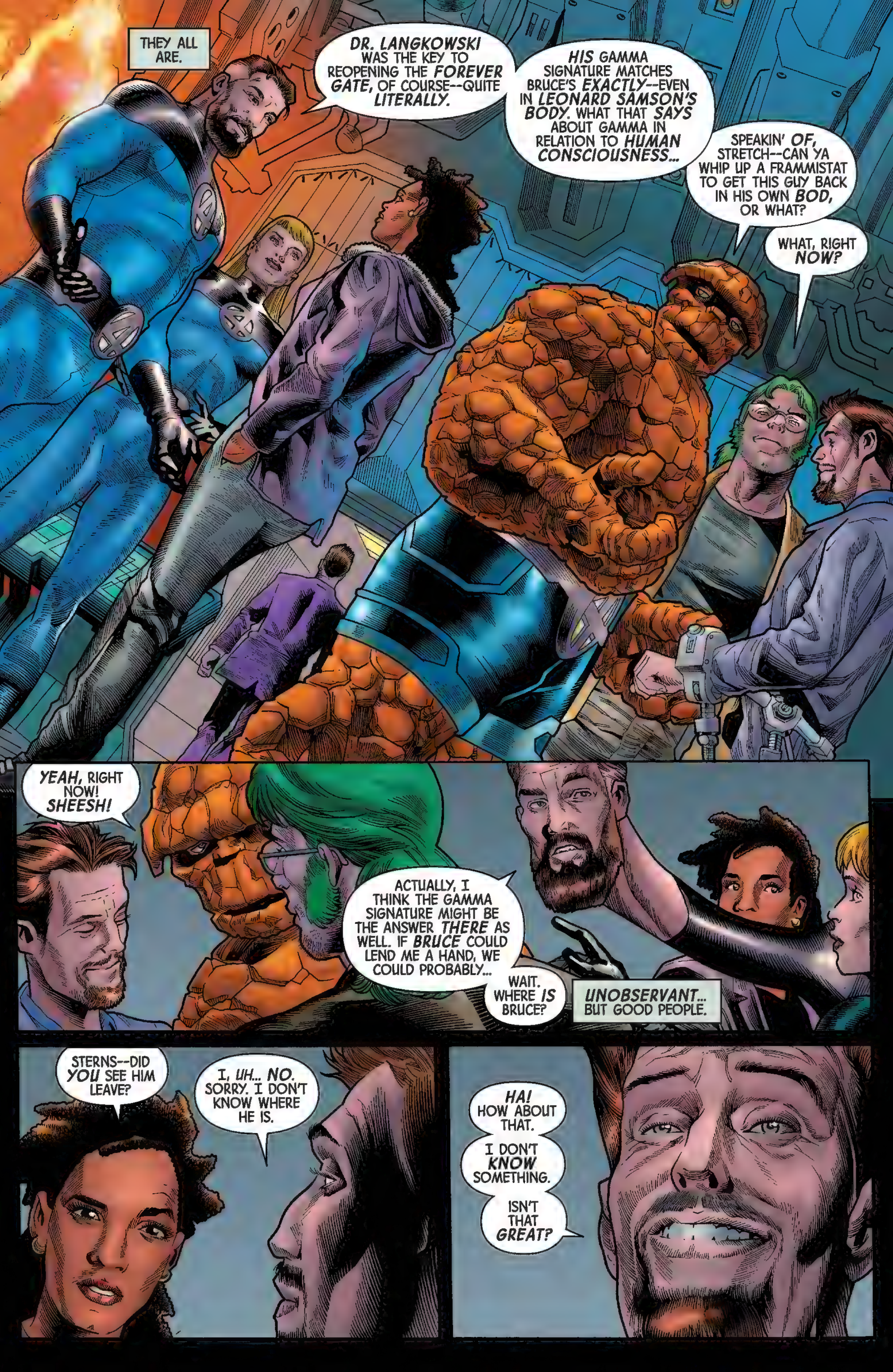
BUT THE RIGHT HAND IS MERCY.

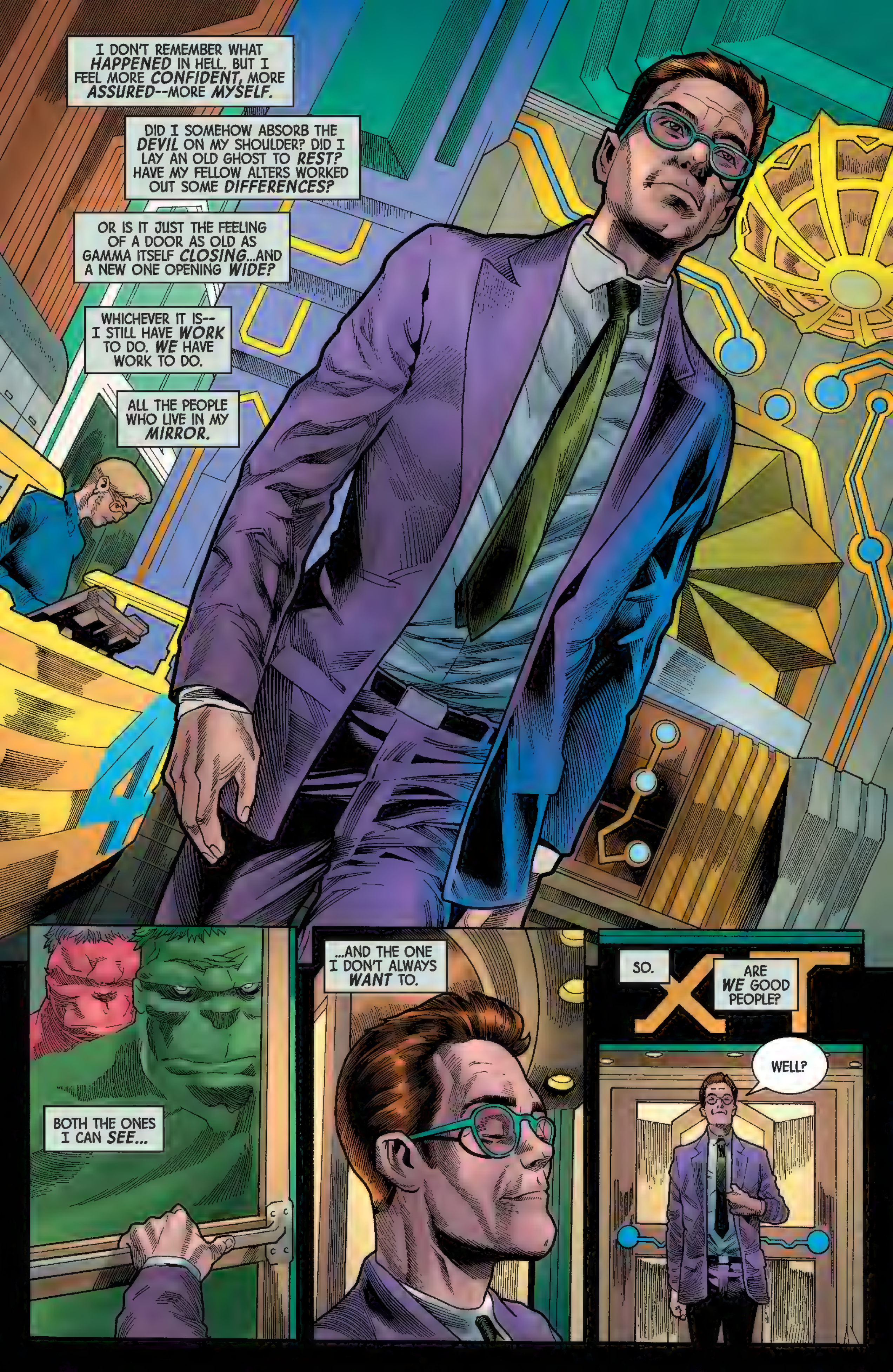

...
ARE WE *SURE* THIS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO?
NOPE. BUT I MEANT IT WHEN I SAID WE WERE *DONE.*
BRIAN BANNER WAS WHO BELOW-GUY STARTED OUT WITH. THE FIRST GUY DOWN HERE--THE FIRST *HOST,* OR *MASK,* OR WHATEVER.
BUT THEN STERNS GOT *RID* OF BRIAN.
AND NOW *WE'RE* GETTING RID OF *STERNS.*
AND IF THE GREEN DOORS REALLY *ARE* LOCKED TIGHT, LIKE HE *SAID...*
...MAYBE IT *IS* OVER. BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I *MEANT.*
I MEANT *FORGIVING* HIM. AFTER *EVERYTHING.*
I MEAN, I'M SURE HE'LL FEEL TERRIBLE UNTIL HE *DOESN'T.* BUT...OF ALL PEOPLE.
HOW COME *SAM STERNS* GETS FORGIVENESS?


ASK THE *KID.*
HE CAN FORGIVE WHAT WAS DONE TO *HIM.* THAT'S *HIS* LOOKOUT.
BUT *ME?* I'M A *JUDGMENTAL* KINDA GUY. I DON'T FORGIVE SO *EASY.*
LET'S SEE WHAT STERNS DOES TO *EARN* ANY KINDA...
...
AW, HELL.
LISTEN. WHILE WE'RE *TALKING* ABOUT THIS STUFF.
THE *SYSTEM* I'M IN...WE SMASHED YOUR *LIFE.* WHAT WE TOOK FROM YOU, IT *CAN'T* BE PAID BACK.
I'M A *PART* OF THAT. AND SORRY AIN'T *ENOUGH.* SORRY'S JUST A *WORD,* IT DON'T *DO* ANYTHING.
HULK--
THIS AIN'T ME WANTING FORGIVENESS.
THIS AIN'T *ABOUT* WHAT *I* WANT.
BUT WHATEVER *YOU* WANT OR NEED FROM *ME...*
ANY TIME, ANY PLACE, ANY FAVOR. *FOREVER.*
FIND *BANNER.* SAY THE WORD.
I'LL COME RUNNIN'.

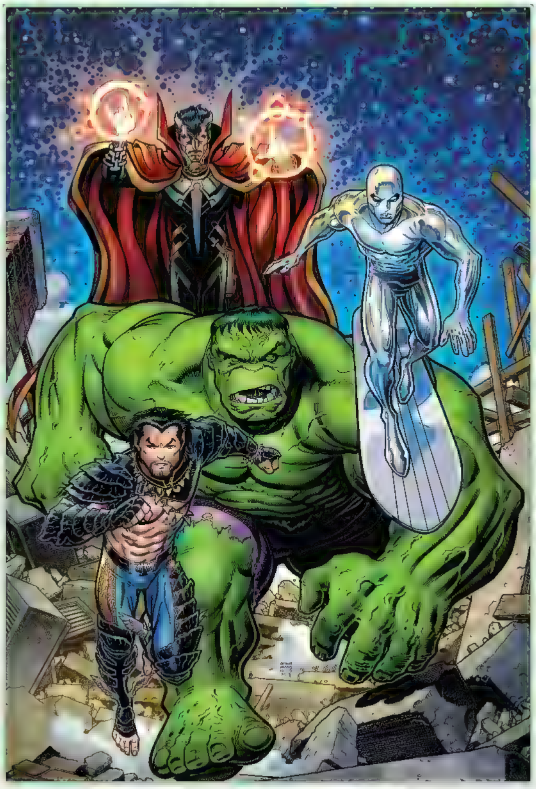

...
OKAY, SUNSHINE JOE.
I'LL LET YOU KNOW.
HEY!
ROCK MAN...?
NICE VACATION SPOT YA GOT HERE! SO THIS IS HELL, HUH? GUESS NOW I COLLECTED THE SET.
YOU FOLKS WANT A LIFT HOME, OR WHAT?


I REMEMBER SCREAMING FOR HELP--DRAGGED THROUGH A GREEN DOOR IN MY MIND--BUT THEN IT'S ALL BLANK.
I'VE BEEN TOLD I WAS IN THE BELOW-PLACE. THAT WHEN THE HULKS RESCUED ME--ONE RED, ONE GREEN--I WAS HALF GONE. ONLY THE BROKEN REMAINS OF A HUMAN SOUL.
BUT THEN, I WAS ALREADY ONLY PART OF A LARGER WHOLE. AND WHEN WE ALL WALKED INTO THE GATE...THREE PARTS OF A SYSTEM...
...A WHOLE BRUCE BANNER--AT LEAST PHYSICALLY--WAS WHAT WALKED OUT, TOOK TWO NAKED STEPS INTO THE REAL WORLD...AND COLLAPSED.
I SOBBED LIKE A CHILD. I VOMITED. I VOIDED MYSELF. BUT I REMEMBERED NOTHING OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED BELOW.
THAT, AT LEAST, WAS MERCY.
MS. McGEE FOLLOWED, WITH STERNS. THEY PUT HIM IN CUFFS--BUT HE WAS AS DOCILE AS A LAMB. I HOPE THAT WASN'T SOME ACT.
AS FOR ME--REED LENT ME A TAILORED SUIT, ALTERING THEIR UNSTABLE MOLECULES TO FIT ME. HE EVEN CHANGED THE COLOR--AT MY REQUEST.
REED RICHARDS IS A GOOD PERSON.

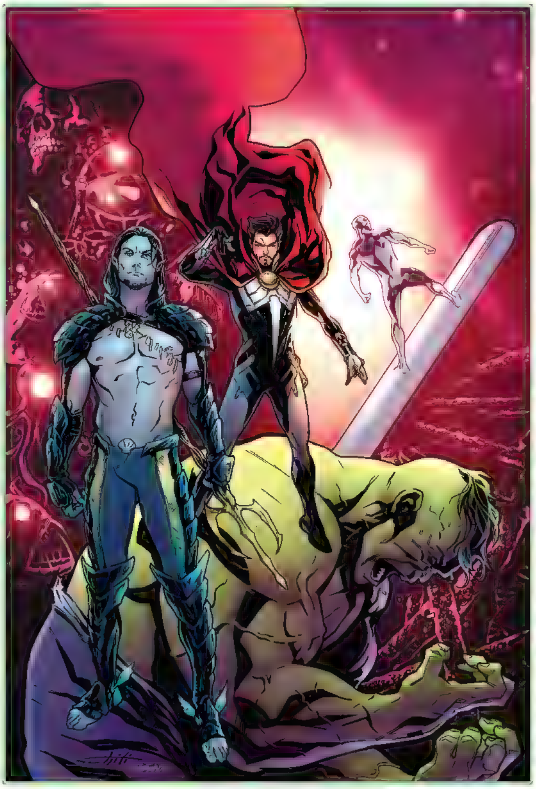

THEY ALL ARE.
DR. LANGKOWSKI WAS THE KEY TO REOPENING THE FOREVER GATE, OF COURSE--QUITE LITERALLY.
HIS GAMMA SIGNATURE MATCHES BRUCE'S EXACTLY--EVEN IN LEONARD SAMSON'S BODY. WHAT THAT SAYS ABOUT GAMMA IN RELATION TO HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS...
SPEAKIN' OF, STRETCH--CAN YA WHIP UP A FRAMMISTAT TO GET THIS GUY BACK IN HIS OWN BOD, OR WHAT?
WHAT, RIGHT NOW?
YEAH, RIGHT NOW! SHEESH!
ACTUALLY, I THINK THE GAMMA SIGNATURE MIGHT BE THE ANSWER THERE AS WELL. IF BRUCE COULD LEND ME A HAND, WE COULD PROBABLY...
WAIT. WHERE IS BRUCE?
UNOBSERVANT... BUT GOOD PEOPLE.
STERNS--DID YOU SEE HIM LEAVE?
I, UH... NO. SORRY. I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS.
HA! HOW ABOUT THAT.
I DON'T KNOW SOMETHING.
ISN'T THAT GREAT?


I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT *HAPPENED* IN HELL. BUT I FEEL MORE *CONFIDENT*, MORE *ASSURED*--MORE *MYSELF*.
DID I SOMEHOW ABSORB THE *DEVIL* ON MY SHOULDER? DID I LAY AN OLD GHOST TO *REST?* HAVE MY FELLOW ALTERS WORKED OUT SOME *DIFFERENCES?*
OR IS IT JUST THE FEELING OF A DOOR AS OLD AS GAMMA ITSELF *CLOSING*...AND A NEW ONE OPENING *WIDE?*
WHICHEVER IT IS-- I STILL HAVE *WORK* TO DO. *WE* HAVE WORK TO DO.
ALL THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN MY *MIRROR*.
BOTH THE ONES I CAN *SEE*...
...AND THE ONE I DON'T ALWAYS *WANT* TO.
SO.
ARE *WE* GOOD PEOPLE?
WELL?

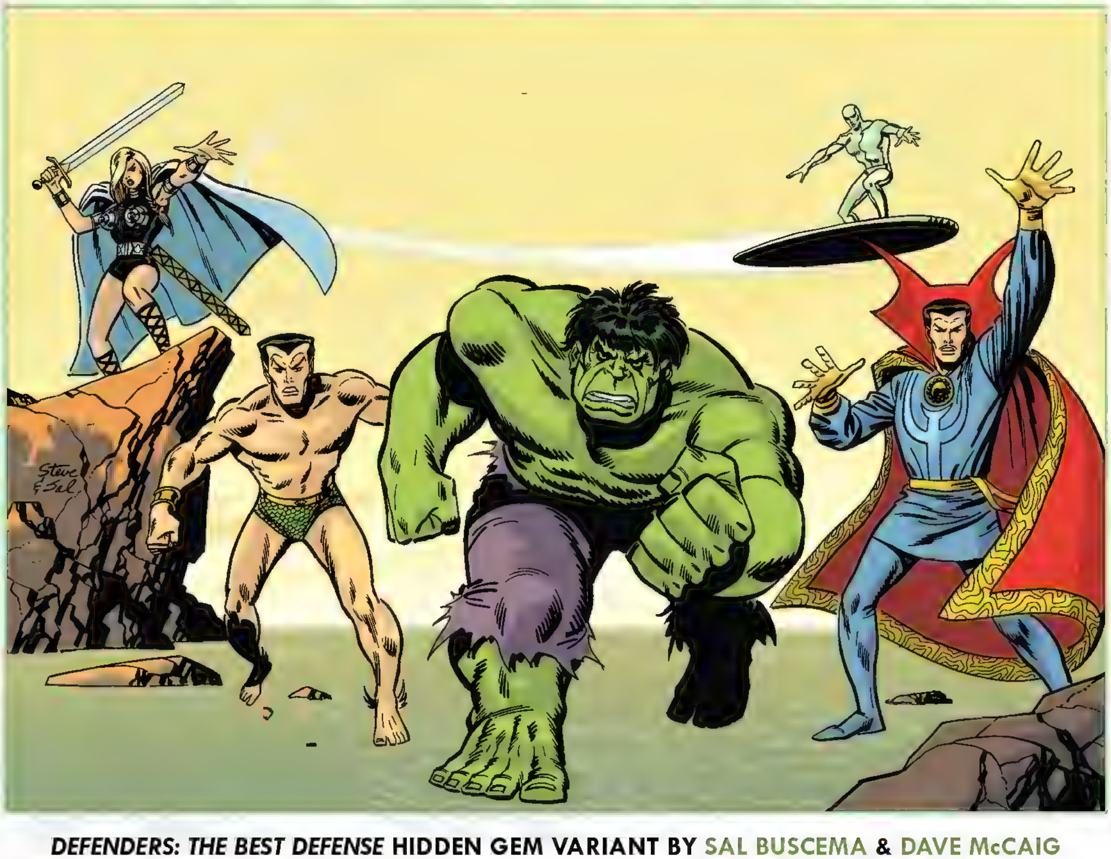
WHAT DO *YOU* THINK?



DEFENDERS: THE BEST DEFENSE **VARIANT BY**
ARTHUR ADAMS & PAUL MOUNTS

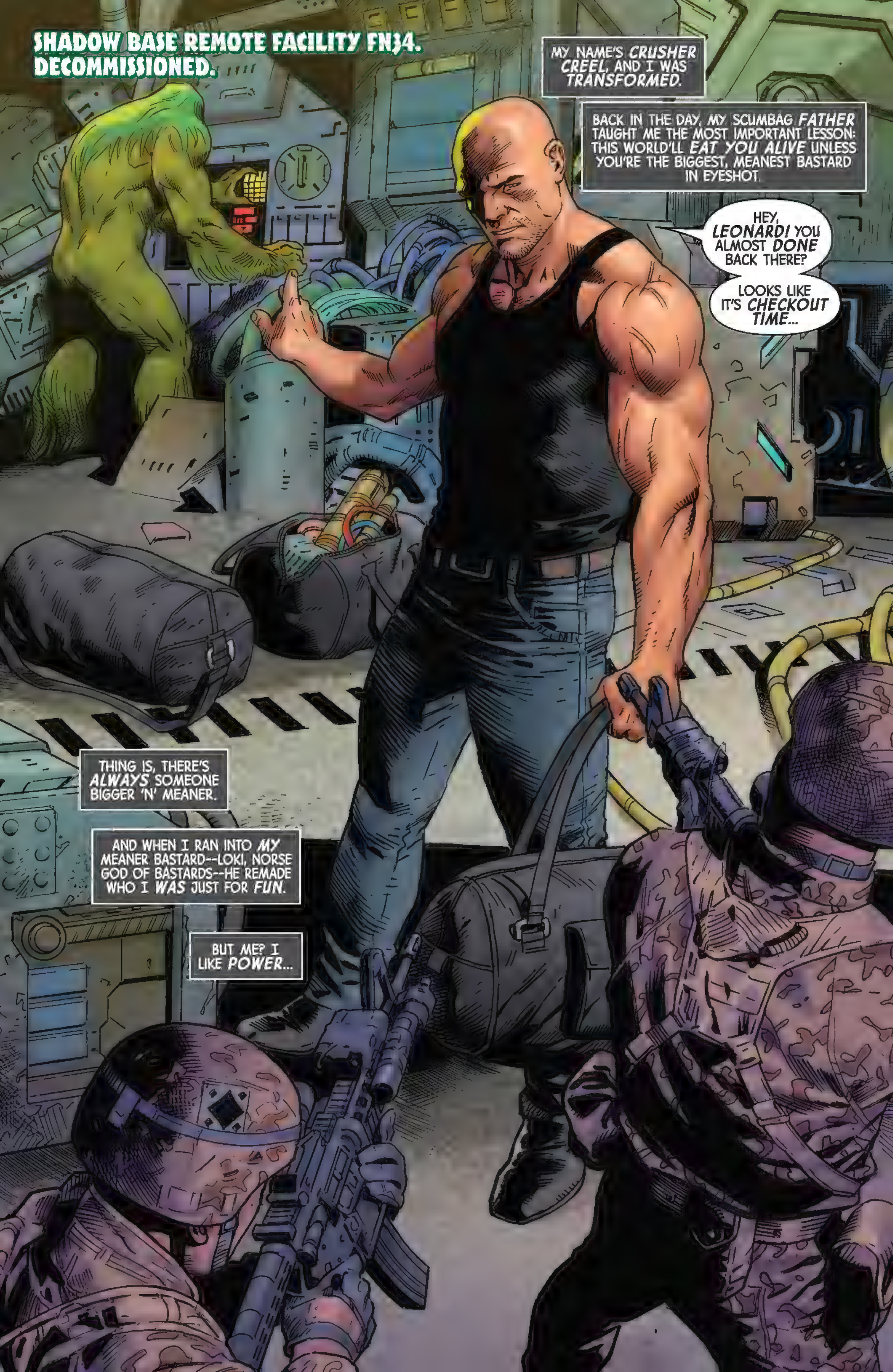


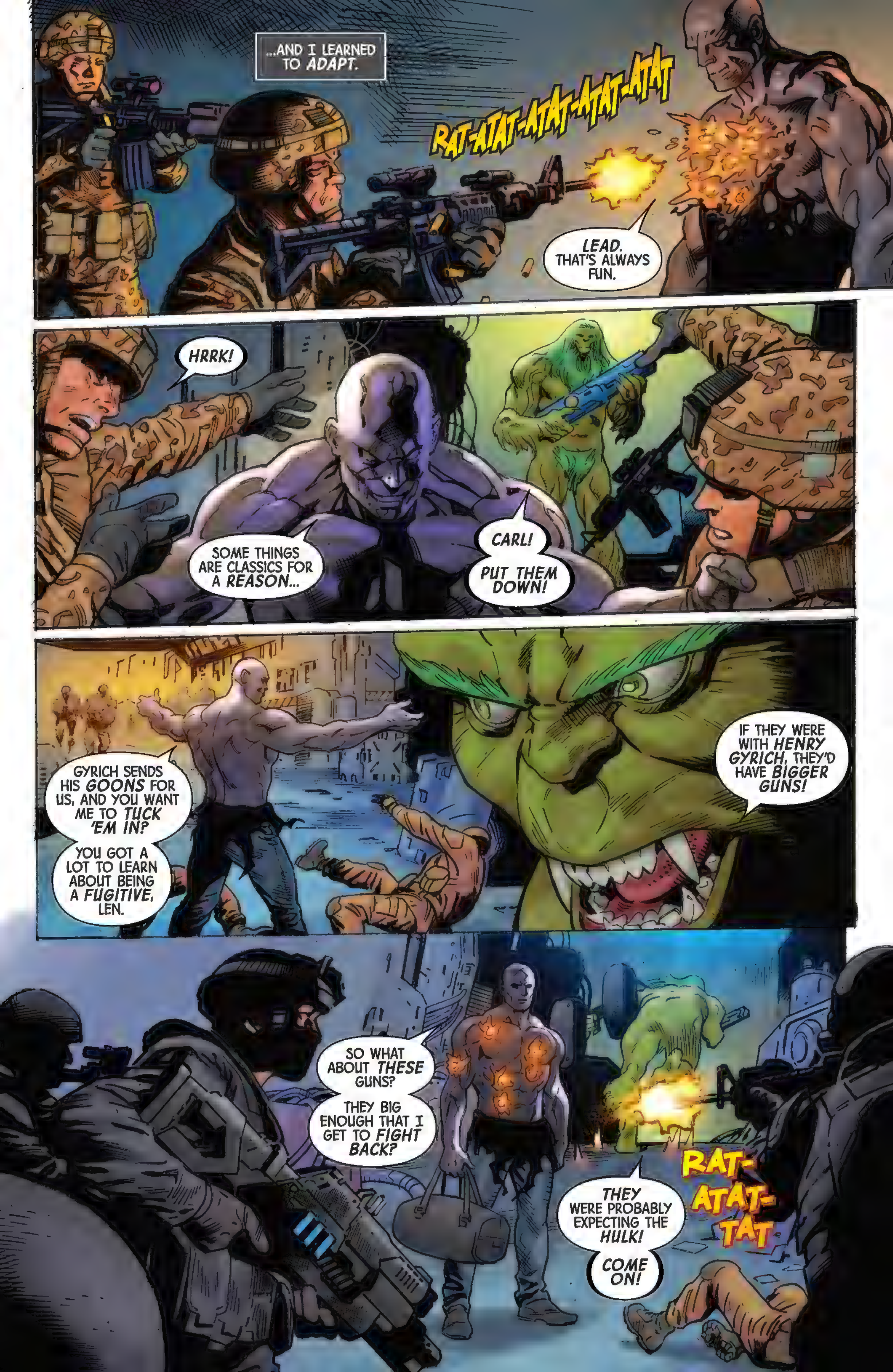
DEFENDERS: THE BEST DEFENSE **VARIANT BY**
VALERIO SCHITI & JASON KEITH

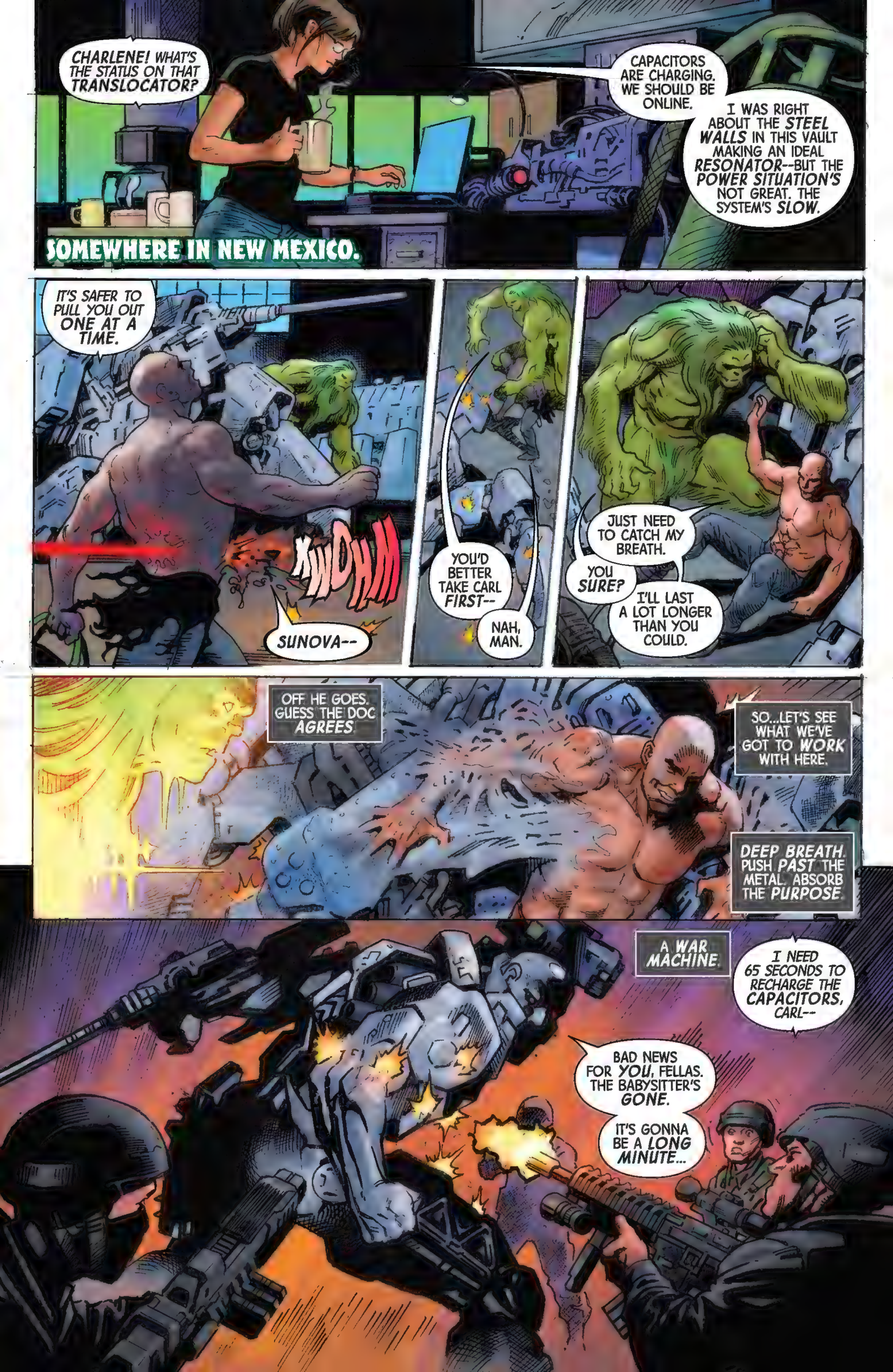


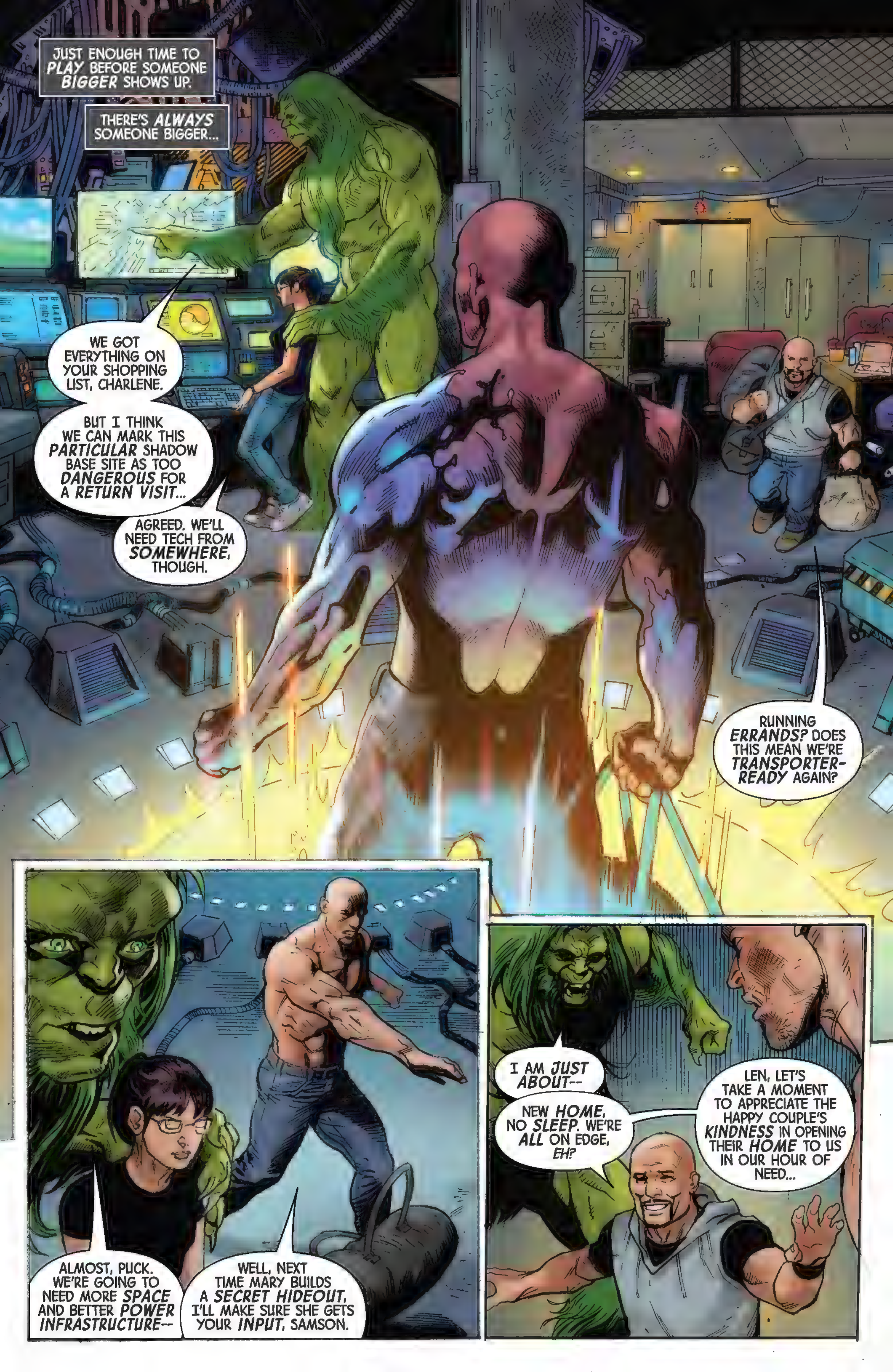
DEFENDERS: THE BEST DEFENSE **HIDDEN GEM VARIANT BY SAL BUSCEMA & DAVE McCAIG**

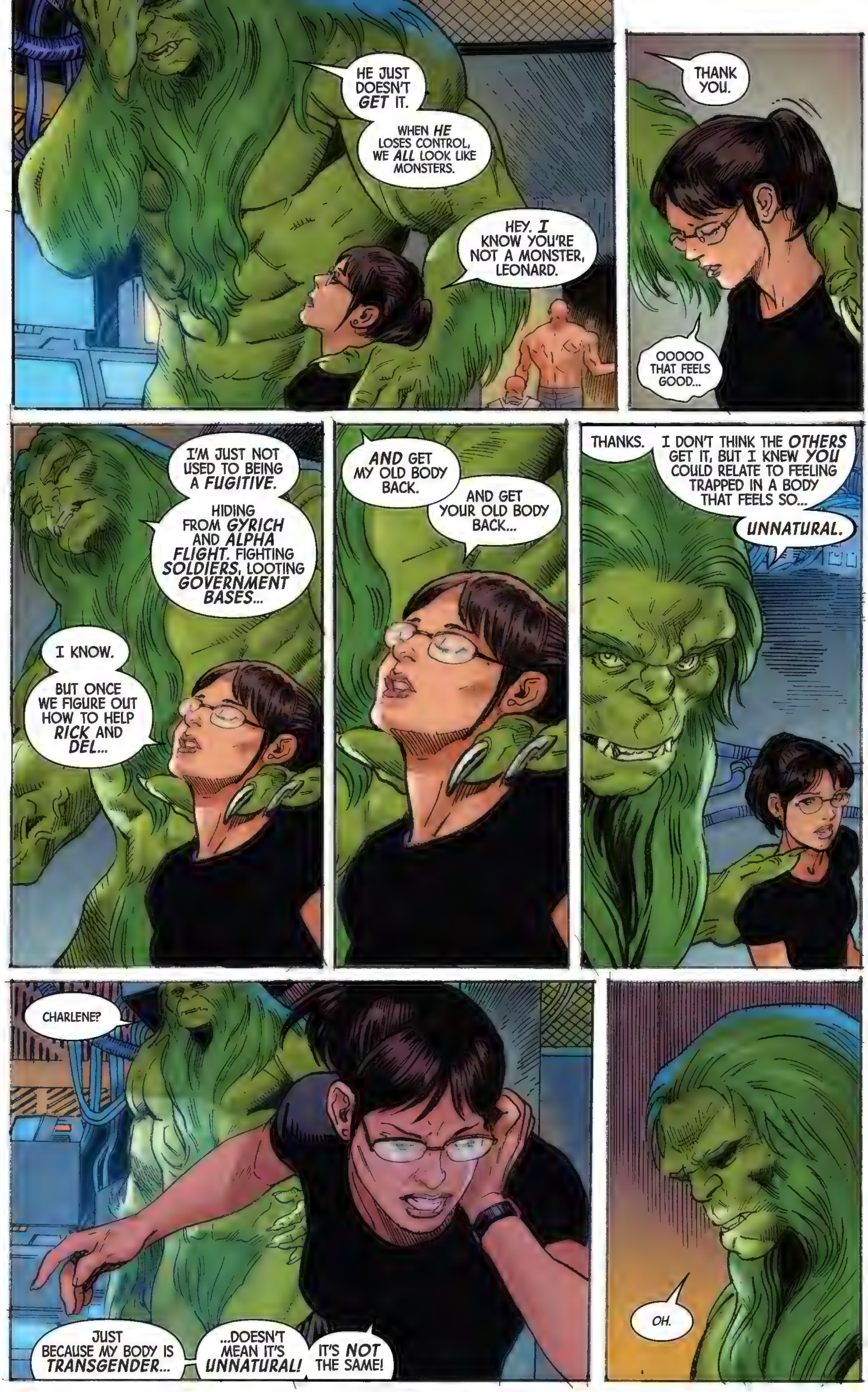
GAMMA FLIGHT 1

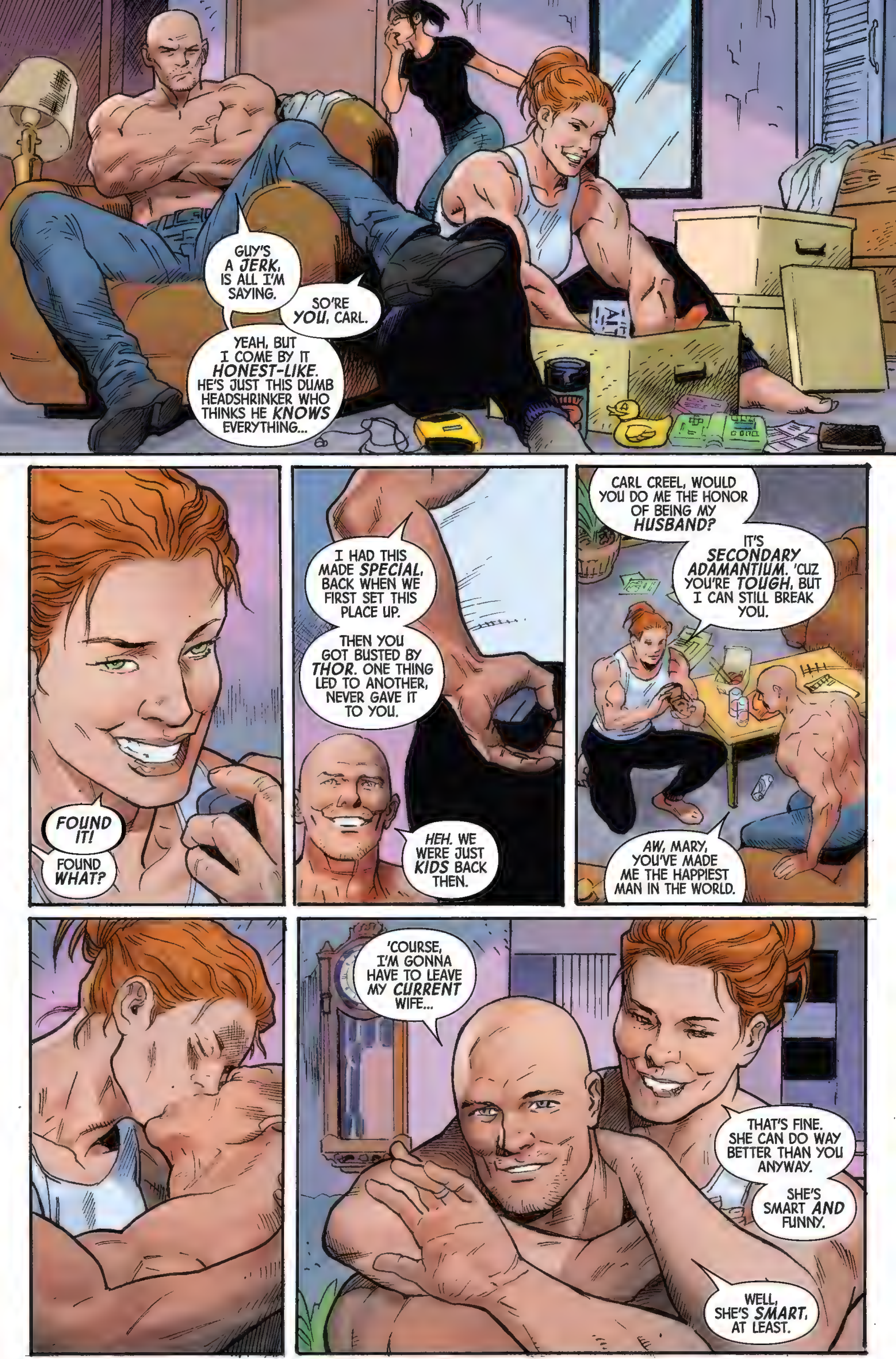

SHADOW BASE REMOTE FACILITY FN34. DECOMMISSIONED.
MY NAME'S CRUSHER CREEL, AND I WAS TRANSFORMED.
BACK IN THE DAY, MY SCUMBAG FATHER TAUGHT ME THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON: THIS WORLD'LL EAT YOU ALIVE UNLESS YOU'RE THE BIGGEST, MEANEST BASTARD IN EYESHOT.
HEY, LEONARD! YOU ALMOST DONE BACK THERE?
LOOKS LIKE IT'S CHECKOUT TIME...
THING IS, THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE BIGGER 'N' MEANER.
AND WHEN I RAN INTO MY MEANER BASTARD--LOKI, NORSE GOD OF BASTARDS--HE REMADE WHO I WAS JUST FOR FUN.
BUT ME? I LIKE POWER...

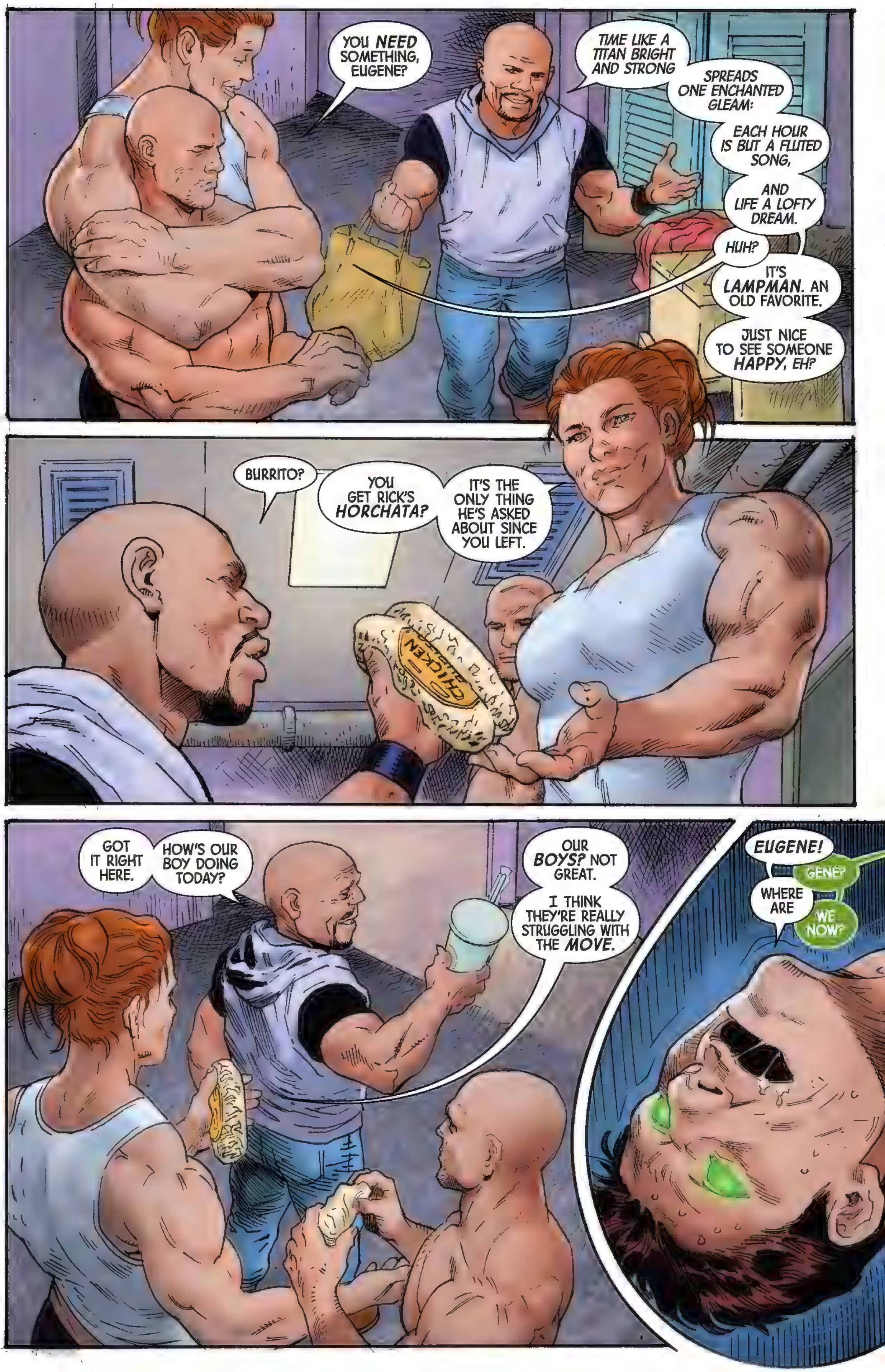

...AND I LEARNED TO *ADAPT.*
RAT-ATAT-ATAT-ATAT-ATAT
LEAD. THAT'S ALWAYS FUN.
HRRK!
SOME THINGS ARE CLASSICS FOR A *REASON*...
CARL!
PUT THEM DOWN!
GYRICH SENDS HIS *GOONS* FOR US, AND YOU WANT ME TO *TUCK 'EM IN?*
YOU GOT A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT BEING A *FUGITIVE,* LEN.
IF THEY WERE WITH *HENRY GYRICH,* THEY'D HAVE *BIGGER GUNS!*
SO WHAT ABOUT *THESE* GUNS?
THEY BIG ENOUGH THAT I GET TO *FIGHT BACK?*
THEY WERE PROBABLY EXPECTING THE *HULK!*
COME ON!
RAT-ATAT-TAT

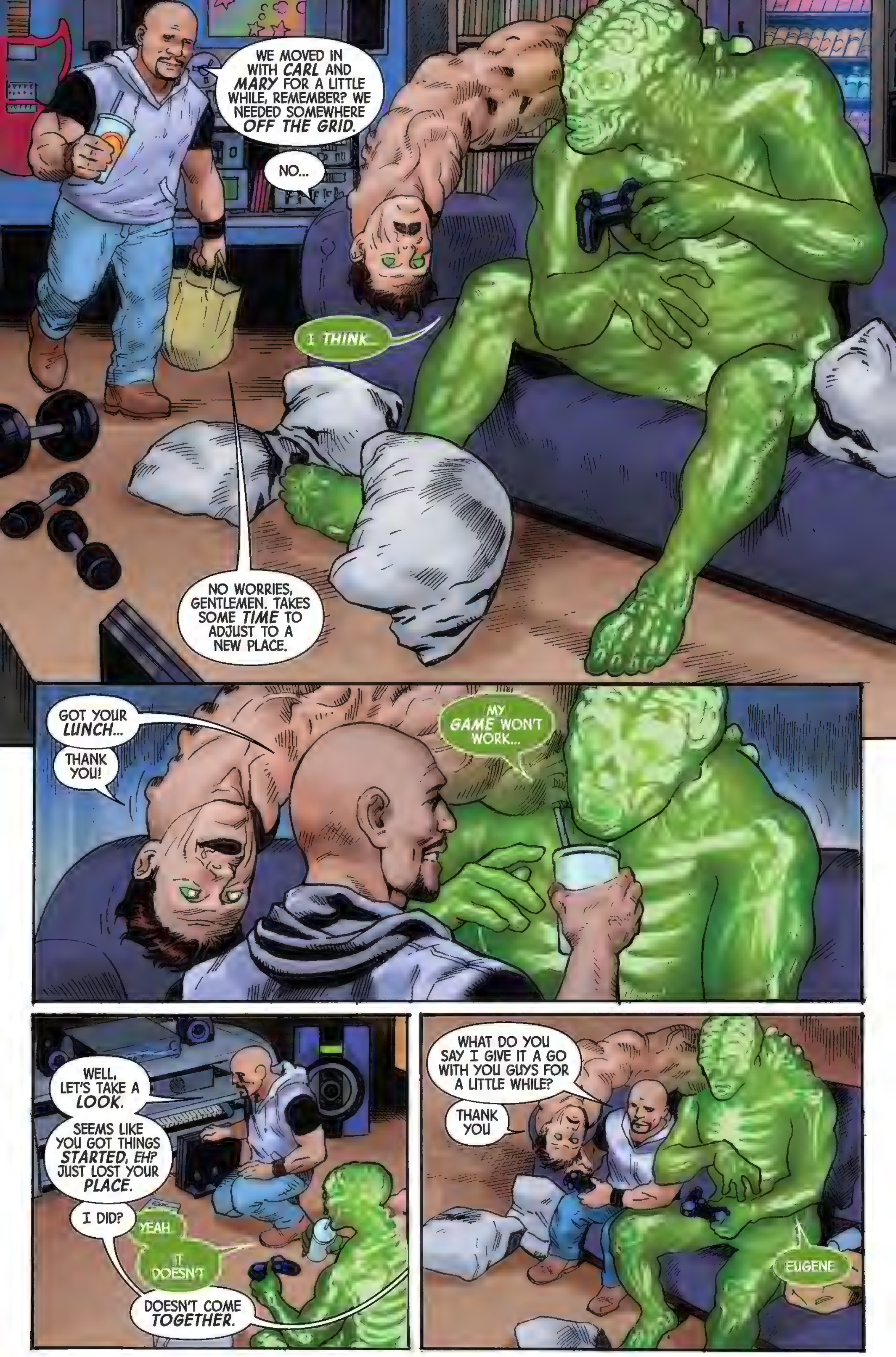

CHARLENE! WHAT'S THE STATUS ON THAT TRANSLOCATOR?
CAPACITORS ARE CHARGING. WE SHOULD BE ONLINE.
I WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE STEEL WALLS IN THIS VAULT MAKING AN IDEAL RESONATOR--BUT THE POWER SITUATION'S NOT GREAT. THE SYSTEM'S SLOW.
SOMEWHERE IN NEW MEXICO.
IT'S SAFER TO PULL YOU OUT ONE AT A TIME.
XWOHM
SUNOVA--
YOU'D BETTER TAKE CARL FIRST--
NAH, MAN.
JUST NEED TO CATCH MY BREATH.
YOU SURE?
I'LL LAST A LOT LONGER THAN YOU COULD.
OFF HE GOES. GUESS THE DOC AGREES.
SO...LET'S SEE WHAT WE'VE GOT TO WORK WITH HERE.
DEEP BREATH. PUSH PAST THE METAL. ABSORB THE PURPOSE.
A WAR MACHINE.
I NEED 65 SECONDS TO RECHARGE THE CAPACITORS, CARL--
BAD NEWS FOR YOU, FELLAS. THE BABYSITTER'S GONE.
IT'S GONNA BE A LONG MINUTE...

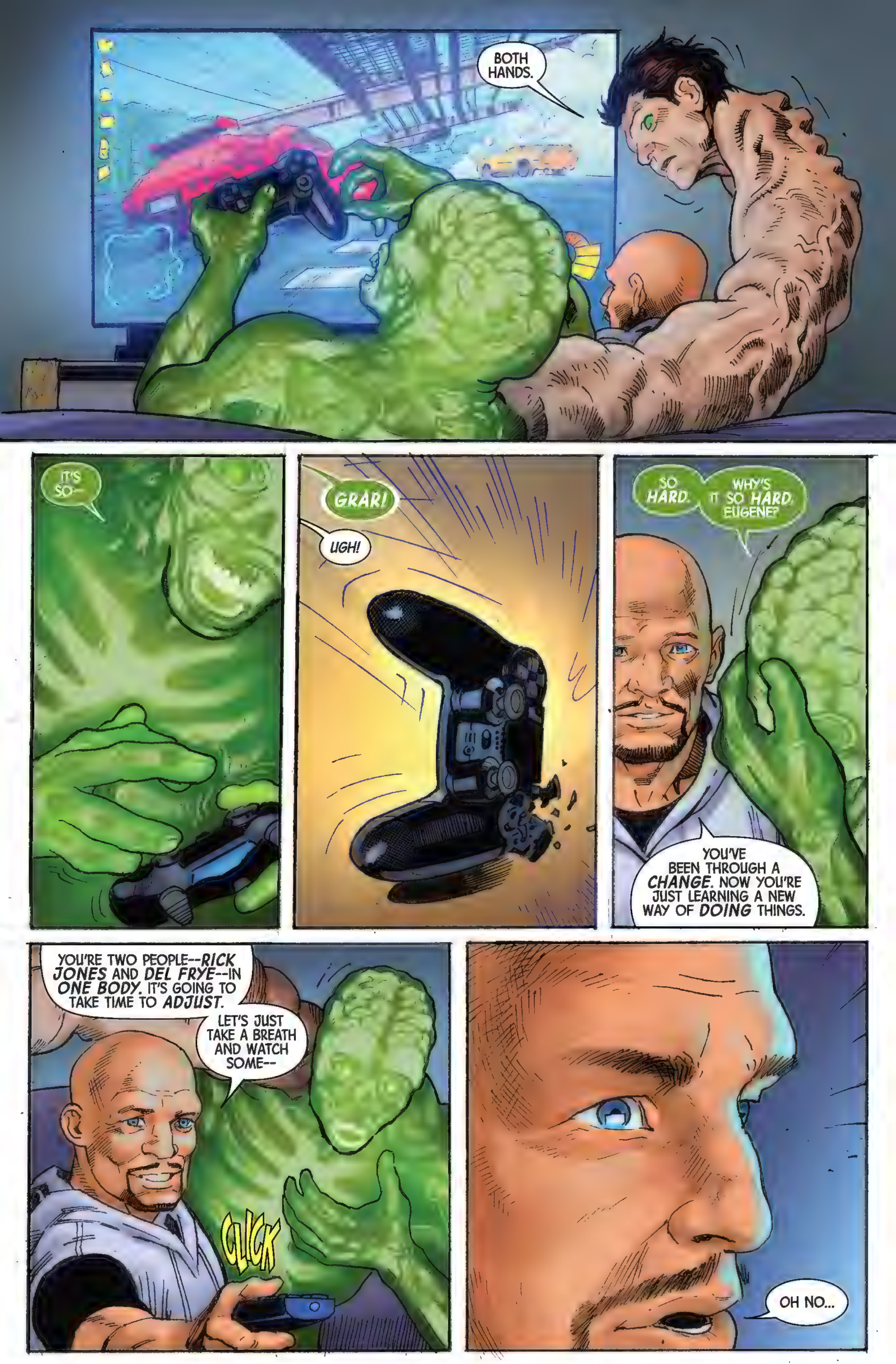

JUST ENOUGH TIME TO *PLAY* BEFORE SOMEONE *BIGGER* SHOWS UP.
THERE'S *ALWAYS* SOMEONE BIGGER...
WE GOT EVERYTHING ON YOUR SHOPPING LIST, CHARLENE.
BUT I THINK WE CAN MARK THIS *PARTICULAR* SHADOW BASE SITE AS TOO *DANGEROUS* FOR A *RETURN VISIT*...
AGREED. WE'LL NEED TECH FROM *SOMEWHERE*, THOUGH.
RUNNING *ERRANDS?* DOES THIS MEAN WE'RE *TRANSPORTER-READY* AGAIN?
ALMOST, PUCK. WE'RE GOING TO NEED MORE *SPACE* AND BETTER *POWER INFRASTRUCTURE*--
WELL, NEXT TIME MARY BUILDS A *SECRET HIDEOUT*, I'LL MAKE SURE SHE GETS YOUR *INPUT*, SAMSON.
I AM *JUST ABOUT*--
NEW *HOME*, NO *SLEEP*. WE'RE *ALL* ON EDGE, EH?
LEN, LET'S TAKE A MOMENT TO APPRECIATE THE HAPPY COUPLE'S *KINDNESS* IN OPENING THEIR *HOME* TO US IN OUR HOUR OF NEED...

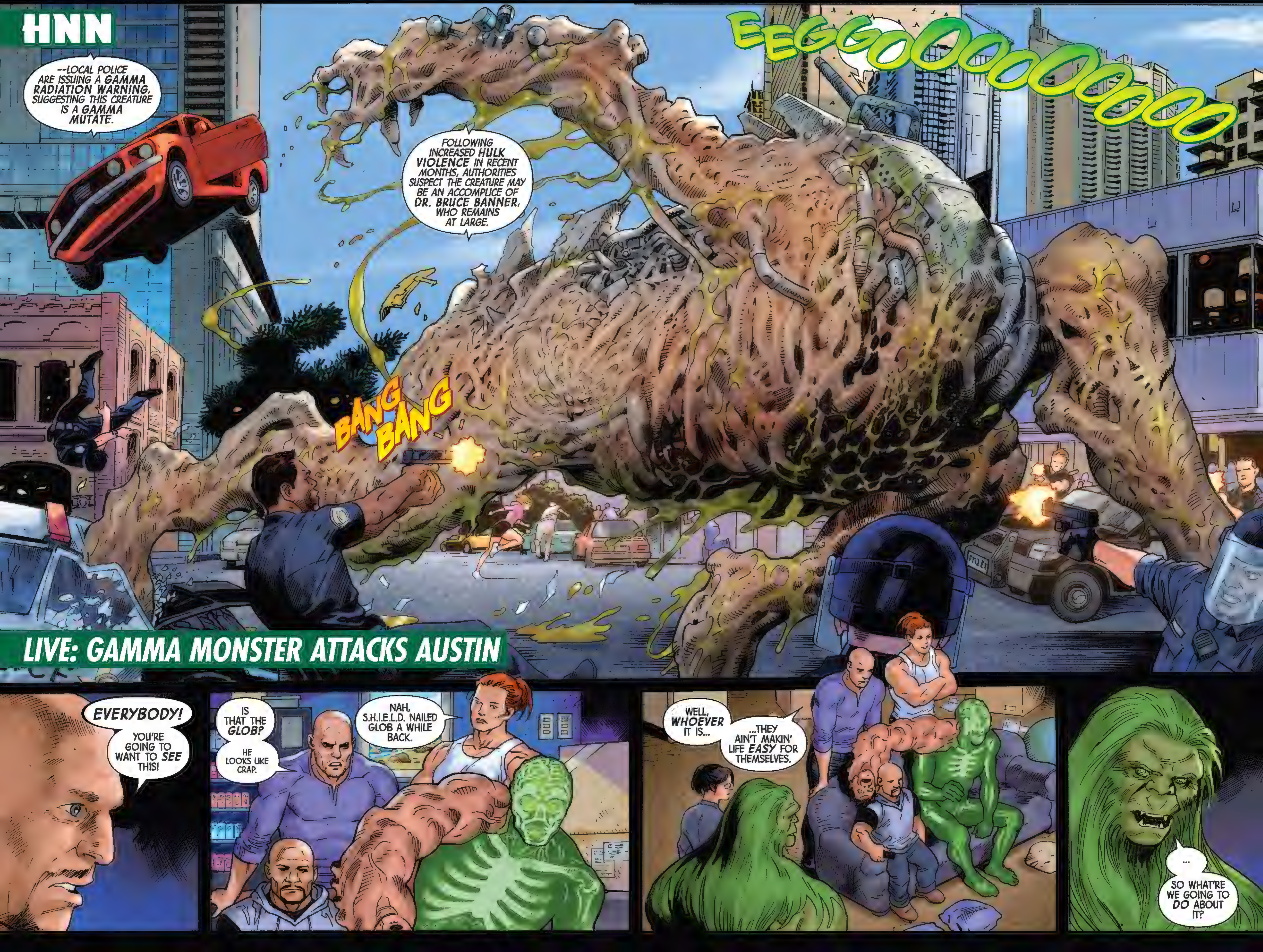

HE JUST DOESN'T *GET* IT.
WHEN *HE* LOSES CONTROL, WE *ALL* LOOK LIKE MONSTERS.
HEY. *I* KNOW YOU'RE NOT A MONSTER, LEONARD.
THANK YOU.
OOOOO THAT FEELS GOOD...
I'M JUST NOT USED TO BEING A *FUGITIVE*.
HIDING FROM *GYRICH* AND *ALPHA FLIGHT*. FIGHTING *SOLDIERS*, LOOTING *GOVERNMENT BASES*...
I KNOW.
BUT ONCE WE FIGURE OUT HOW TO HELP *RICK* AND *DEL*...
AND GET MY OLD BODY BACK.
AND GET YOUR OLD BODY BACK...
THANKS.
I DON'T THINK THE *OTHERS* GET IT, BUT I KNEW *YOU* COULD RELATE TO FEELING TRAPPED IN A BODY THAT FEELS SO...
UNNATURAL.
CHARLENE?
JUST BECAUSE MY BODY IS *TRANSGENDER*...
...DOESN'T MEAN IT'S *UNNATURAL!*
IT'S *NOT* THE SAME!
OH.

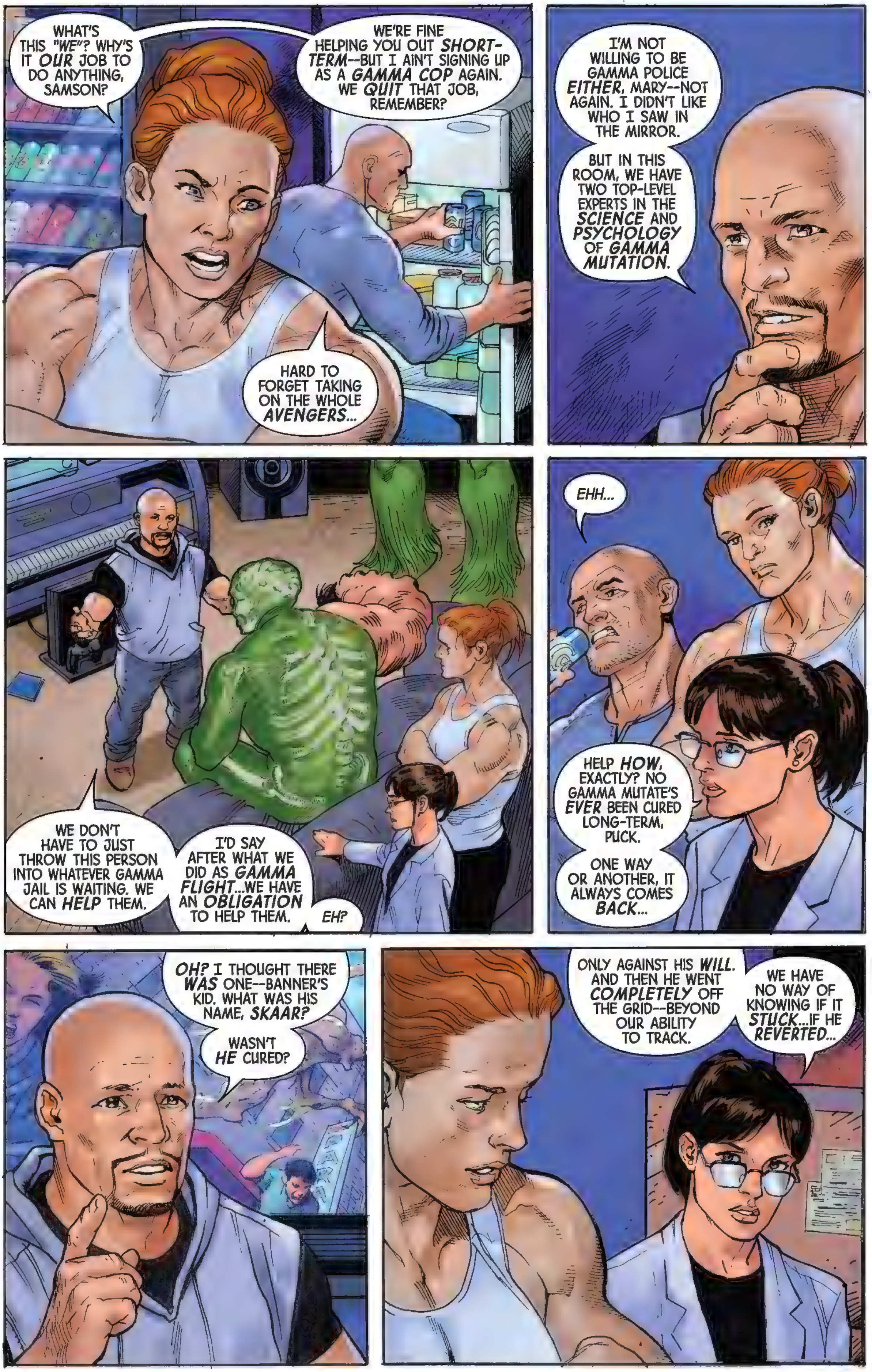

GUY'S A *JERK*, IS ALL I'M SAYING.
SO'RE *YOU*, CARL.
YEAH, BUT I COME BY IT *HONEST-LIKE*. HE'S JUST THIS DUMB HEADSHRINKER WHO THINKS HE *KNOWS* EVERYTHING...
FOUND IT!
FOUND *WHAT?*
I HAD THIS MADE *SPECIAL*, BACK WHEN WE FIRST SET THIS PLACE UP.
THEN YOU GOT BUSTED BY *THOR*. ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER, NEVER GAVE IT TO YOU.
HEH. WE WERE JUST *KIDS* BACK THEN.
CARL CREEL, WOULD YOU DO ME THE HONOR OF BEING MY *HUSBAND?*
IT'S *SECONDARY ADAMANTIUM*. 'CUZ YOU'RE *TOUGH*, BUT I CAN STILL BREAK YOU.
AW, MARY, YOU'VE MADE ME THE HAPPIEST MAN IN THE WORLD.
'COURSE, I'M GONNA HAVE TO LEAVE MY *CURRENT* WIFE...
THAT'S FINE. SHE CAN DO WAY BETTER THAN YOU ANYWAY.
SHE'S SMART *AND* FUNNY.
WELL, SHE'S *SMART*, AT LEAST.

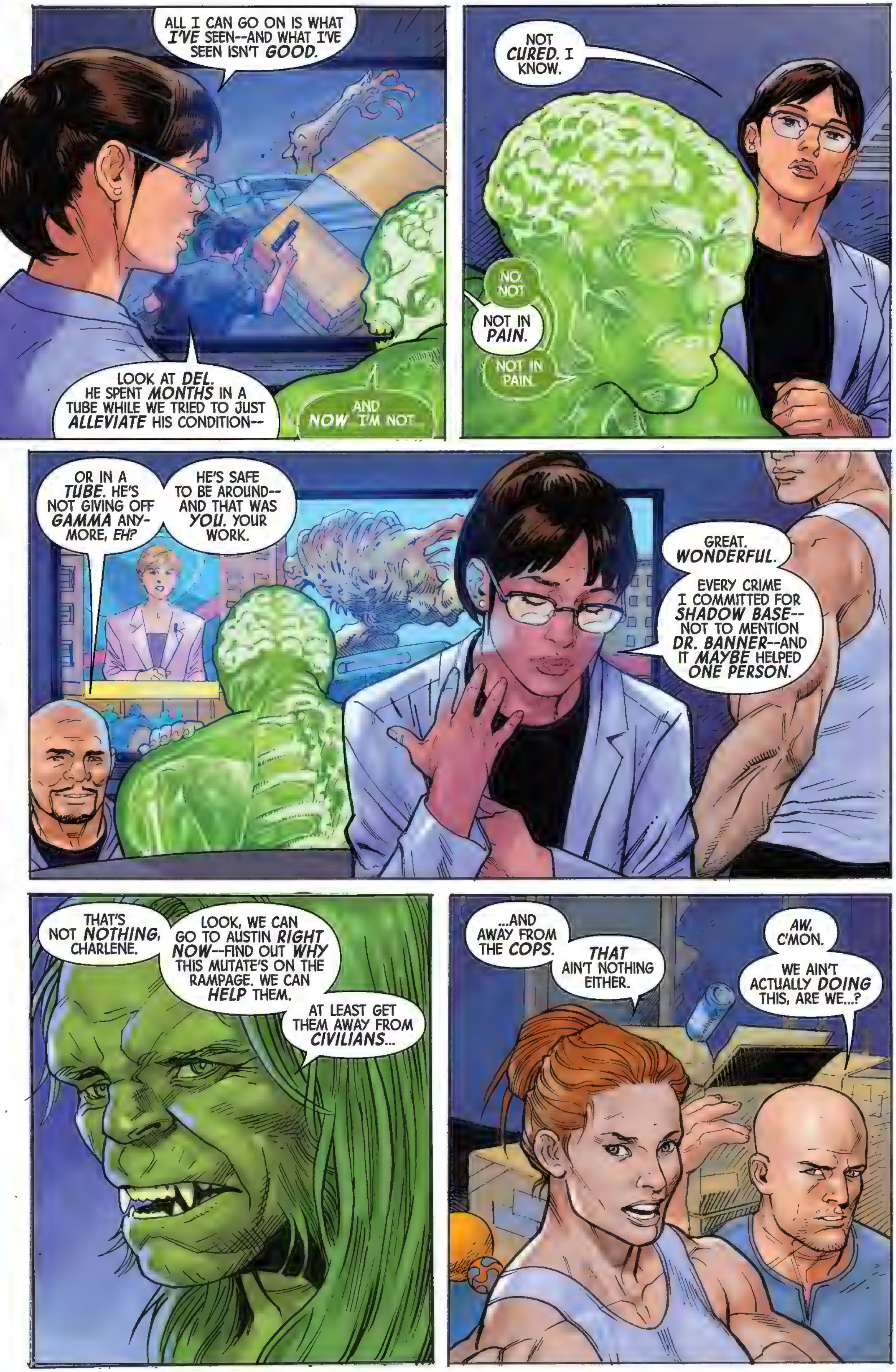

YOU NEED SOMETHING, EUGENE?
TIME LIKE A TITAN BRIGHT AND STRONG
SPREADS ONE ENCHANTED GLEAM:
EACH HOUR IS BUT A FLUTED SONG,
AND LIFE A LOFTY DREAM.
HUH?
IT'S LAMPMAN. AN OLD FAVORITE.
JUST NICE TO SEE SOMEONE HAPPY, EH?
BURRITO?
YOU GET RICK'S HORCHATA?
IT'S THE ONLY THING HE'S ASKED ABOUT SINCE YOU LEFT.
CHICKEN
GOT IT RIGHT HERE.
HOW'S OUR BOY DOING TODAY?
OUR BOYS? NOT GREAT.
I THINK THEY'RE REALLY STRUGGLING WITH THE MOVE.
EUGENE!
GENE?
WHERE ARE
WE NOW?

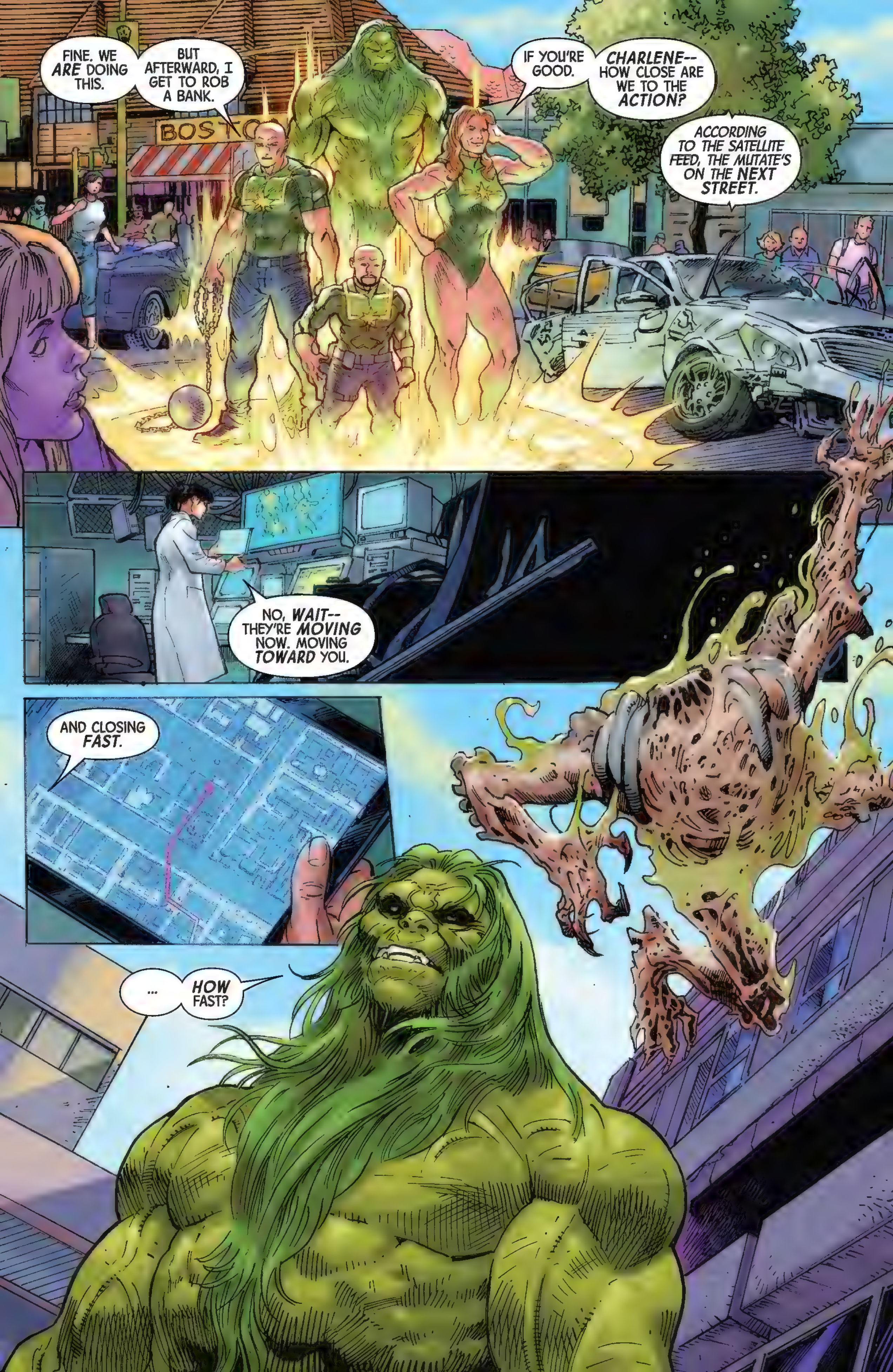

WE MOVED IN WITH *CARL* AND *MARY* FOR A LITTLE WHILE, REMEMBER? WE NEEDED SOMEWHERE *OFF THE GRID*.
NO...
I THINK...
NO WORRIES, GENTLEMEN. TAKES SOME *TIME* TO ADJUST TO A NEW PLACE.
GOT YOUR *LUNCH*...
THANK YOU!
MY *GAME* WON'T WORK...
WELL, LET'S TAKE A *LOOK*.
SEEMS LIKE YOU GOT THINGS *STARTED*, EH? JUST LOST YOUR *PLACE*.
I DID?
YEAH
I DOESN'T
DOESN'T COME *TOGETHER*.
WHAT DO YOU SAY I GIVE IT A GO WITH YOU GUYS FOR A LITTLE WHILE?
THANK YOU
EUGENE

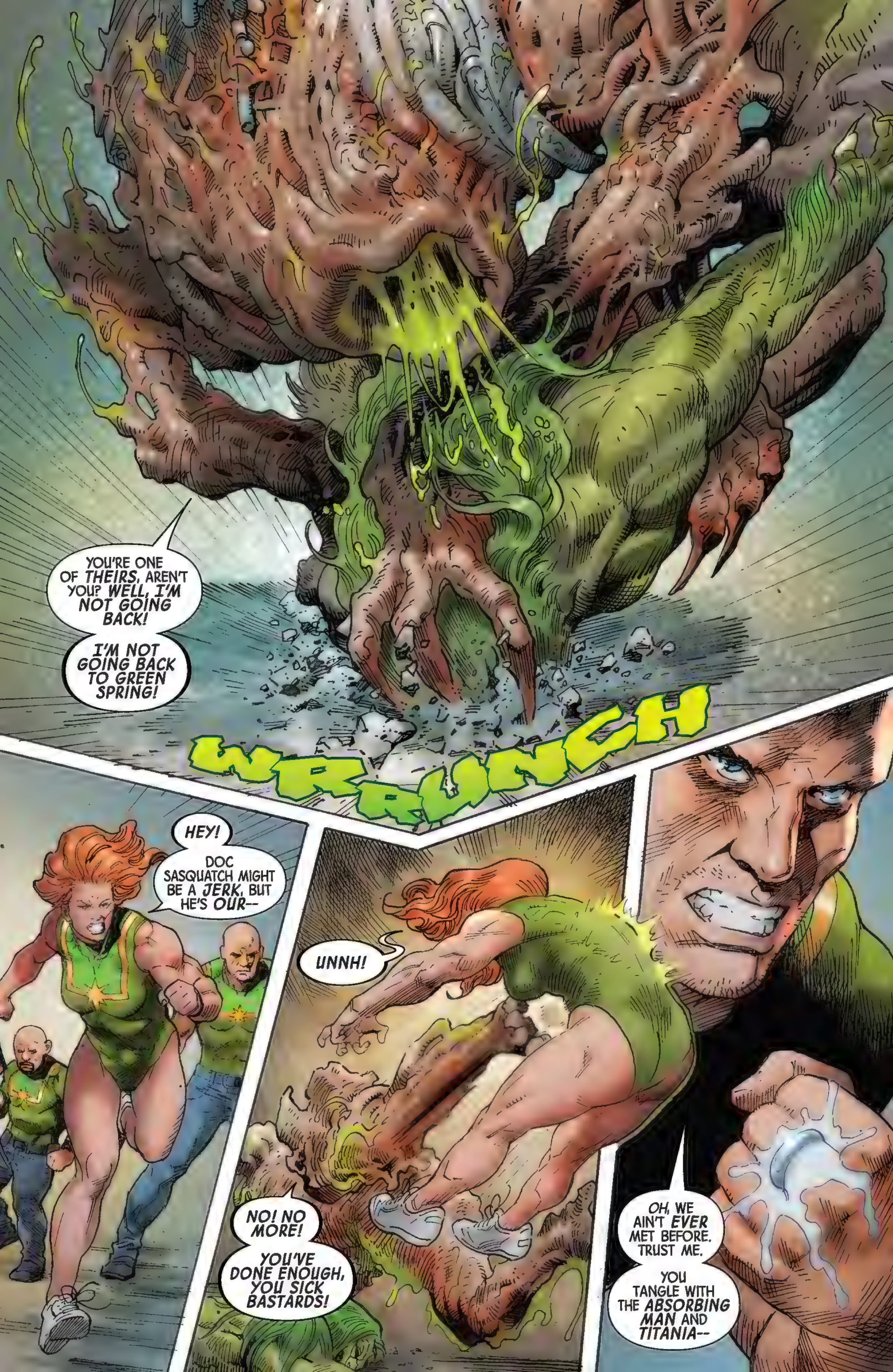

BOTH HANDS.
IT'S SO--
GRAR!
UGH!
SO HARD.
WHY'S IT SO HARD, EUGENE?
YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A CHANGE. NOW YOU'RE JUST LEARNING A NEW WAY OF DOING THINGS.
YOU'RE TWO PEOPLE--RICK JONES AND DEL FRYE--IN ONE BODY. IT'S GOING TO TAKE TIME TO ADJUST.
LET'S JUST TAKE A BREATH AND WATCH SOME--
CLICK
OH NO...

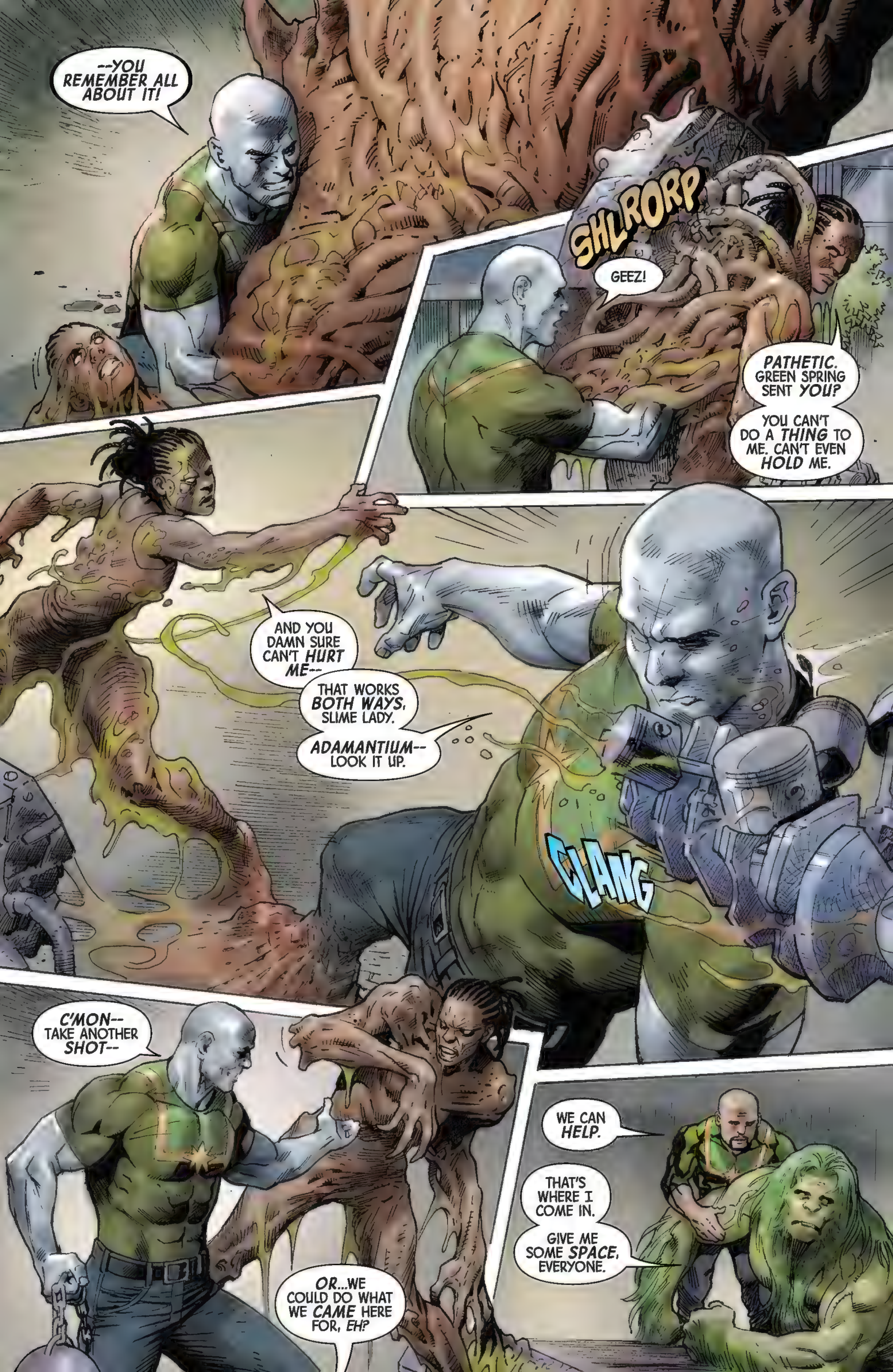

HNN
--LOCAL POLICE ARE ISSUING A *GAMMA RADIATION WARNING*, SUGGESTING THIS CREATURE IS A *GAMMA MUTATE*.
FOLLOWING INCREASED **HULK VIOLENCE** IN RECENT MONTHS, AUTHORITIES SUSPECT THE CREATURE MAY BE AN ACCOMPLICE OF **DR. BRUCE BANNER**, WHO REMAINS AT LARGE.
EEGGOOOOOOOOO
BANG BANG
LIVE: GAMMA MONSTER ATTACKS AUSTIN
EVERYBODY! YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO *SEE* THIS!
IS THAT THE *GLOB?*
HE LOOKS LIKE CRAP.
NAH, S.H.I.E.L.D. NAILED GLOB A WHILE BACK.
WELL, *WHOEVER* IT IS...
...THEY AIN'T MAKIN' LIFE *EASY* FOR THEMSELVES.
... SO WHAT'RE WE GOING TO *DO* ABOUT IT?

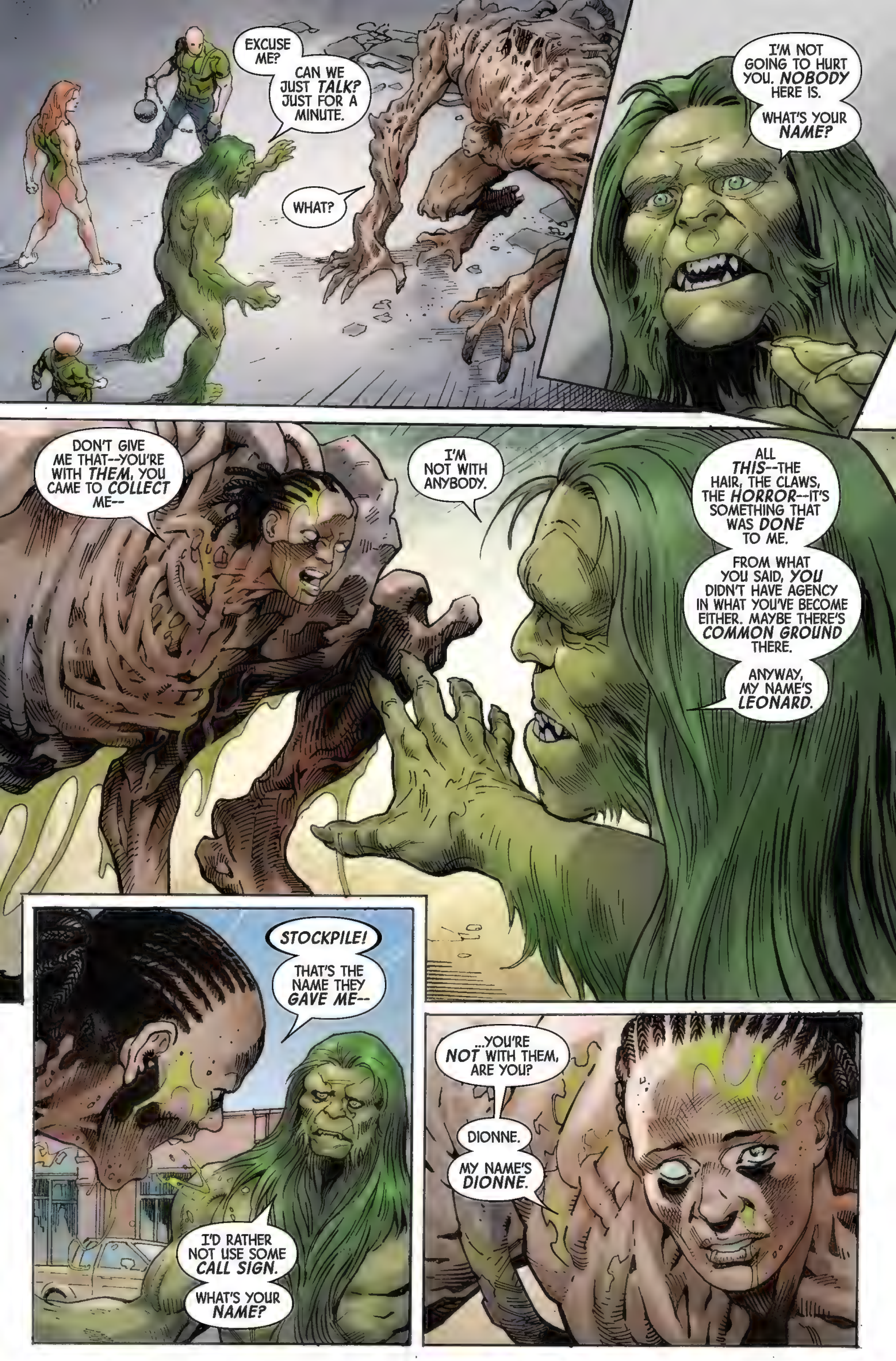

WHAT'S THIS "WE"? WHY'S IT OUR JOB TO DO ANYTHING, SAMSON?
WE'RE FINE HELPING YOU OUT SHORT-TERM--BUT I AIN'T SIGNING UP AS A GAMMA COP AGAIN. WE QUIT THAT JOB, REMEMBER?
HARD TO FORGET TAKING ON THE WHOLE AVENGERS...
I'M NOT WILLING TO BE GAMMA POLICE EITHER, MARY--NOT AGAIN. I DIDN'T LIKE WHO I SAW IN THE MIRROR.
BUT IN THIS ROOM, WE HAVE TWO TOP-LEVEL EXPERTS IN THE SCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY OF GAMMA MUTATION.
WE DON'T HAVE TO JUST THROW THIS PERSON INTO WHATEVER GAMMA JAIL IS WAITING. WE CAN HELP THEM.
I'D SAY AFTER WHAT WE DID AS GAMMA FLIGHT...WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO HELP THEM.
EH?
EHH...
HELP HOW, EXACTLY? NO GAMMA MUTATE'S EVER BEEN CURED LONG-TERM, PUCK.
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, IT ALWAYS COMES BACK...
OH? I THOUGHT THERE WAS ONE--BANNER'S KID. WHAT WAS HIS NAME, SKAAR?
WASN'T HE CURED?
ONLY AGAINST HIS WILL. AND THEN HE WENT COMPLETELY OFF THE GRID--BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO TRACK.
WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING IF IT STUCK...IF HE REVERTED...

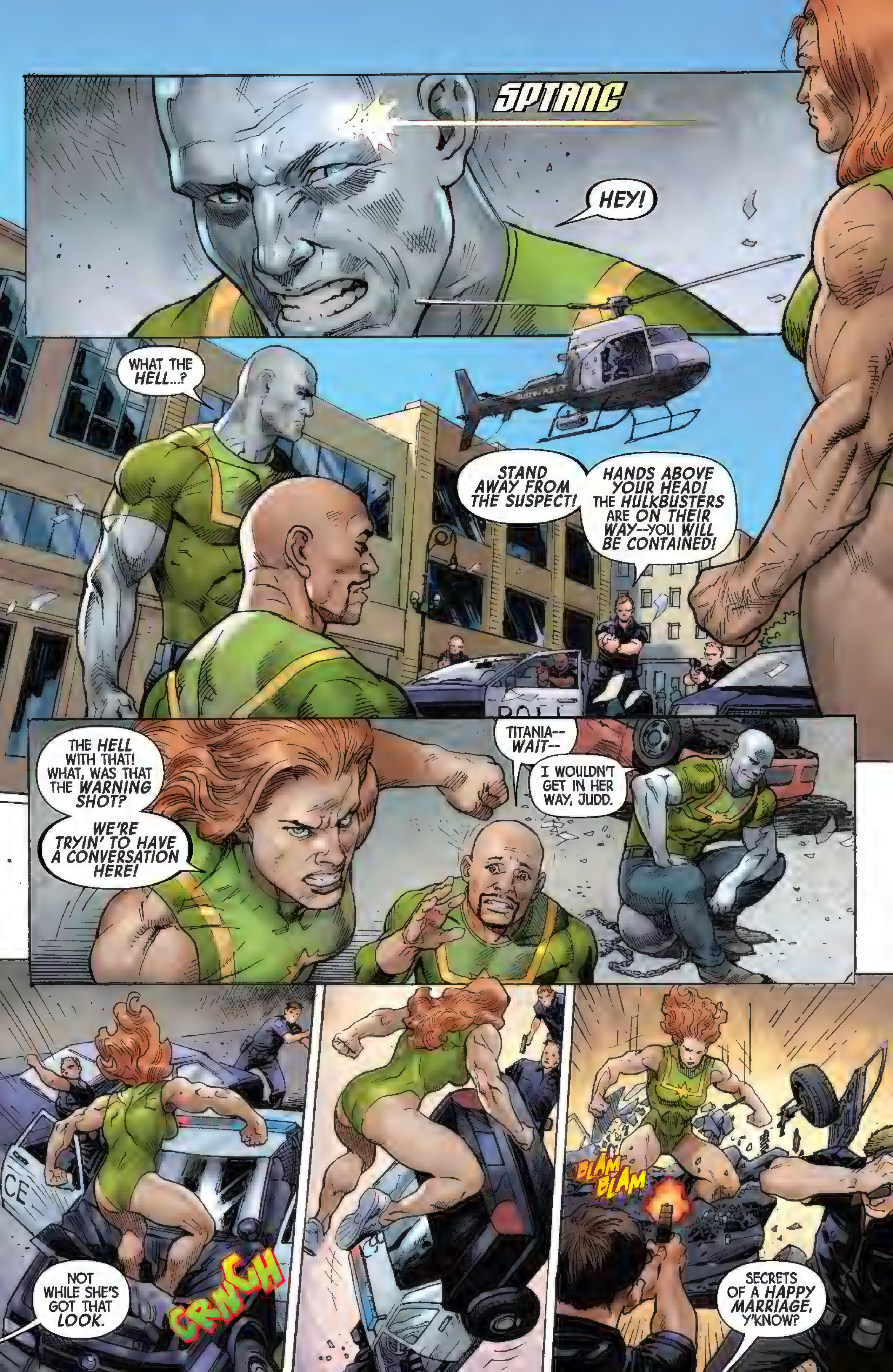

ALL I CAN GO ON IS WHAT *I'VE* SEEN--AND WHAT I'VE SEEN ISN'T *GOOD.*
LOOK AT *DEL.* HE SPENT *MONTHS* IN A TUBE WHILE WE TRIED TO JUST *ALLEVIATE* HIS CONDITION--
AND *NOW* I'M NOT.
NOT *CURED.* I KNOW.
NO. NOT
NOT IN *PAIN.*
NOT IN PAIN.
OR IN A *TUBE.* HE'S NOT GIVING OFF *GAMMA* ANYMORE, *EH?*
HE'S SAFE TO BE AROUND-- AND THAT WAS *YOU.* YOUR WORK.
GREAT. *WONDERFUL.*
EVERY CRIME I COMMITTED FOR *SHADOW BASE*-- NOT TO MENTION *DR. BANNER*--AND IT *MAYBE* HELPED *ONE PERSON.*
THAT'S NOT *NOTHING,* CHARLENE.
LOOK, WE CAN GO TO AUSTIN *RIGHT NOW*--FIND OUT *WHY* THIS MUTATE'S ON THE RAMPAGE. WE CAN *HELP* THEM.
AT LEAST GET THEM AWAY FROM *CIVILIANS...*
...AND AWAY FROM THE *COPS.*
THAT AIN'T NOTHING EITHER.
AW, C'MON.
WE AIN'T ACTUALLY *DOING* THIS, ARE WE...?

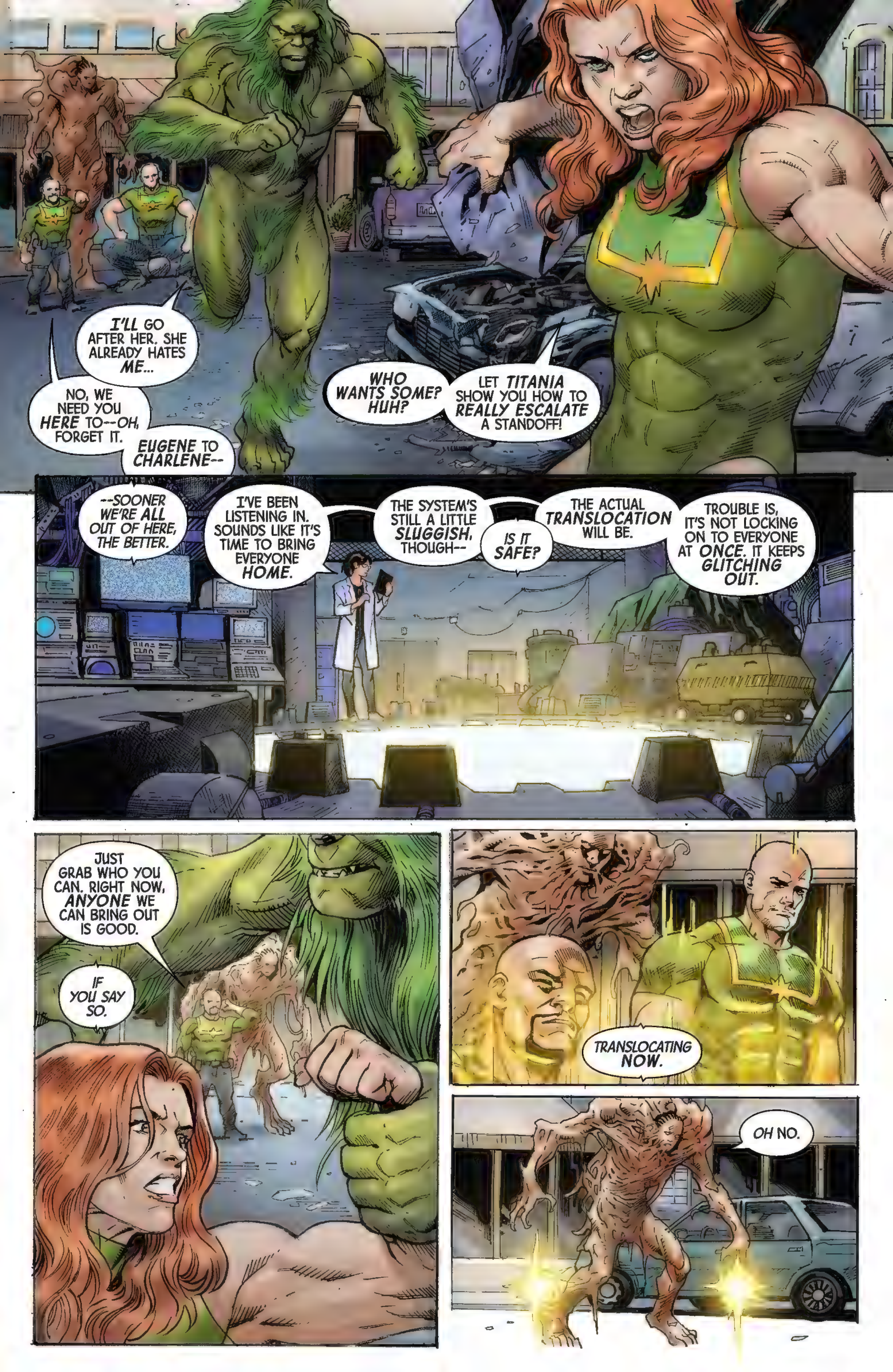

FINE. WE *ARE* DOING THIS.
BUT AFTERWARD, I GET TO ROB A BANK.
BOSTO
IF YOU'RE GOOD.
CHARLENE-- HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO THE *ACTION?*
ACCORDING TO THE SATELLITE FEED, THE MUTATE'S ON THE *NEXT STREET.*
NO, *WAIT*-- THEY'RE *MOVING* NOW. MOVING *TOWARD* YOU.
AND CLOSING *FAST.*
... *HOW* FAST?

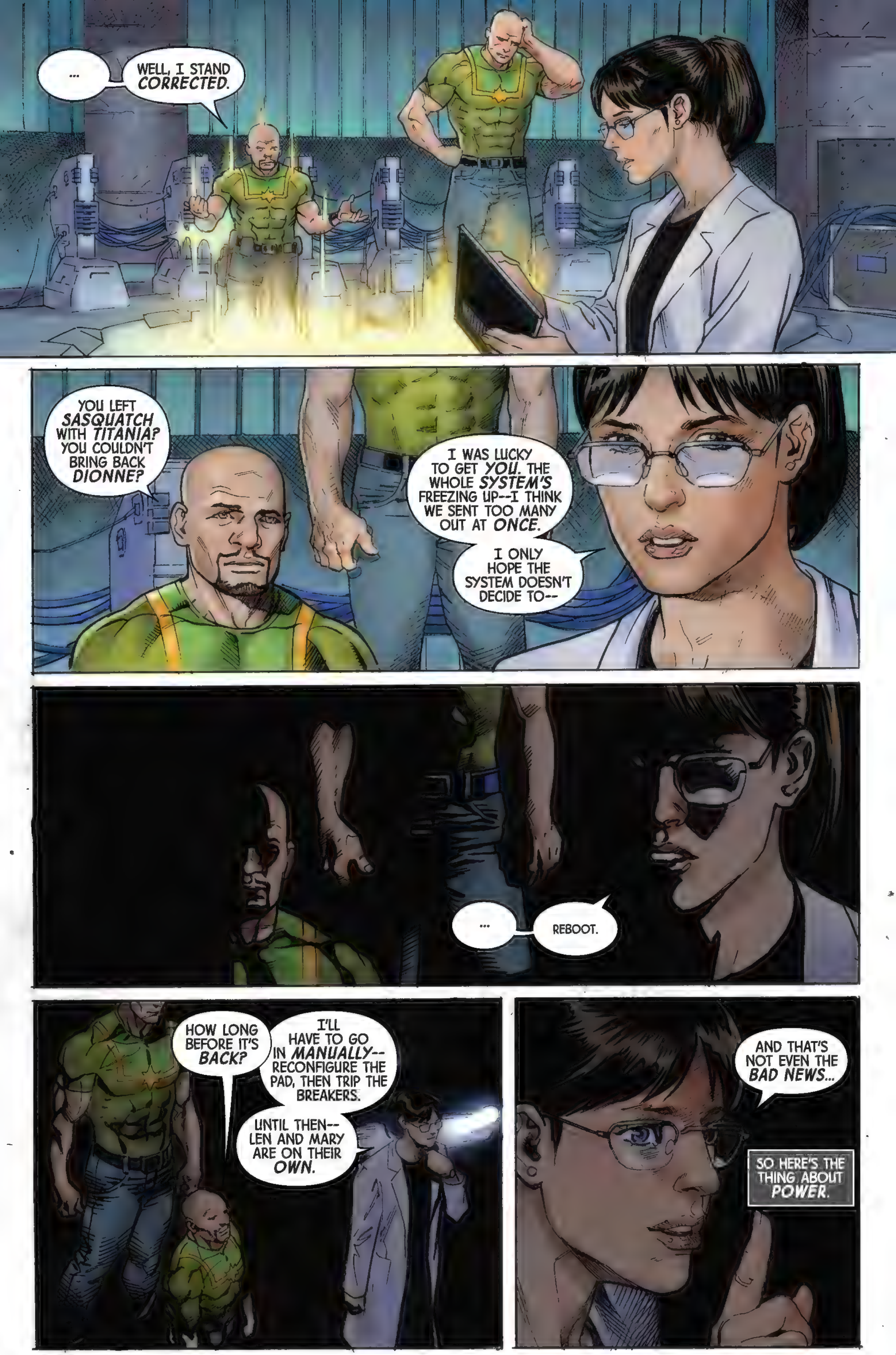

YOU'RE ONE OF THEIRS, AREN'T YOU? WELL, I'M NOT GOING BACK!
I'M NOT GOING BACK TO GREEN SPRING!
WRUNCH
HEY!
DOC SASQUATCH MIGHT BE A JERK, BUT HE'S OUR--
UNNH!
NO! NO MORE!
YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH, YOU SICK BASTARDS!
OH, WE AIN'T EVER MET BEFORE. TRUST ME.
YOU TANGLE WITH THE ABSORBING MAN AND TITANIA--

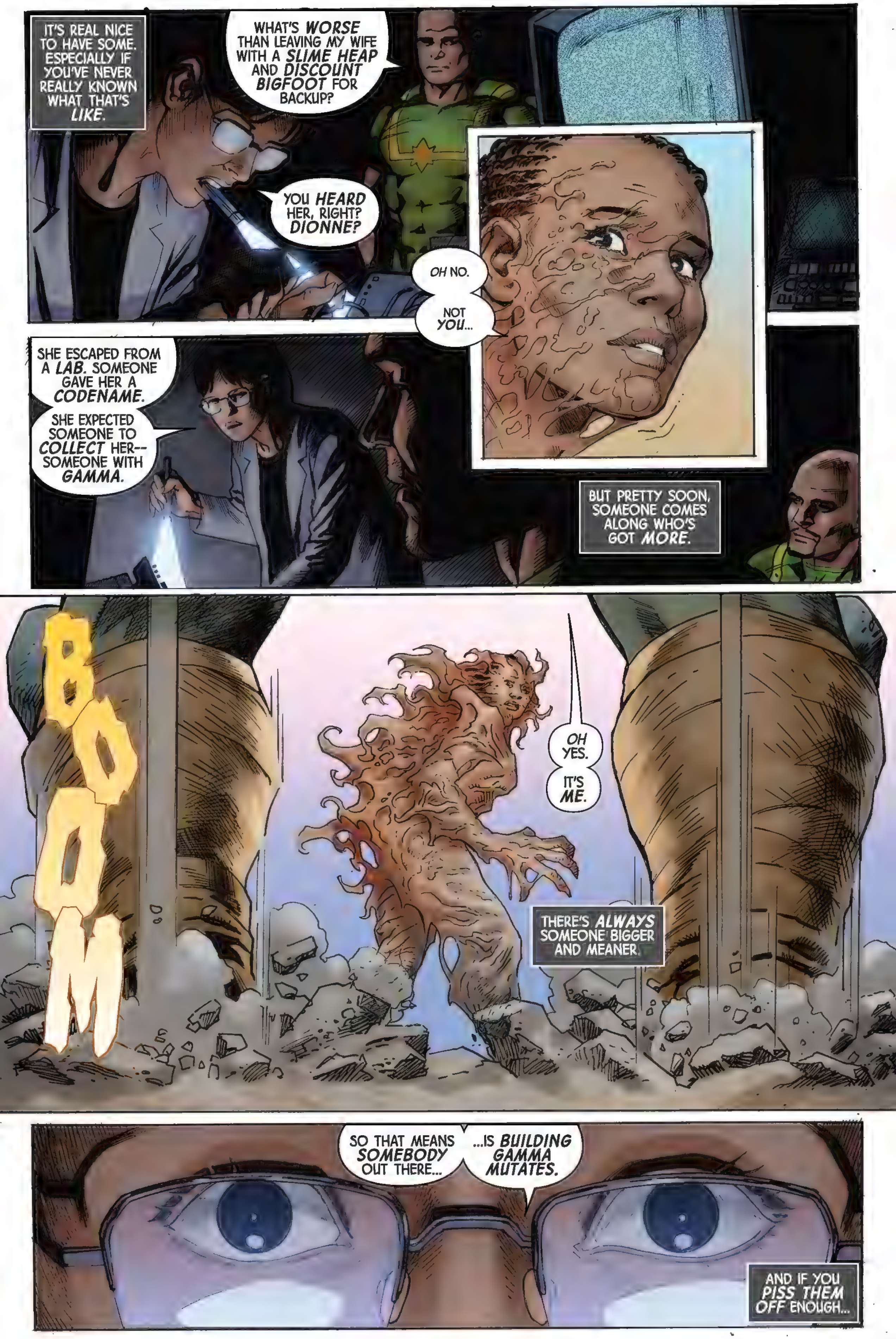

--YOU REMEMBER ALL ABOUT IT!
SHLRORP
GEEZ!
PATHETIC. GREEN SPRING SENT YOU?
YOU CAN'T DO A THING TO ME. CAN'T EVEN HOLD ME.
AND YOU DAMN SURE CAN'T HURT ME--
THAT WORKS BOTH WAYS, SLIME LADY.
ADAMANTIUM-- LOOK IT UP.
CLANG
C'MON-- TAKE ANOTHER SHOT--
OR...WE COULD DO WHAT WE CAME HERE FOR, EH?
WE CAN HELP.
THAT'S WHERE I COME IN.
GIVE ME SOME SPACE, EVERYONE.

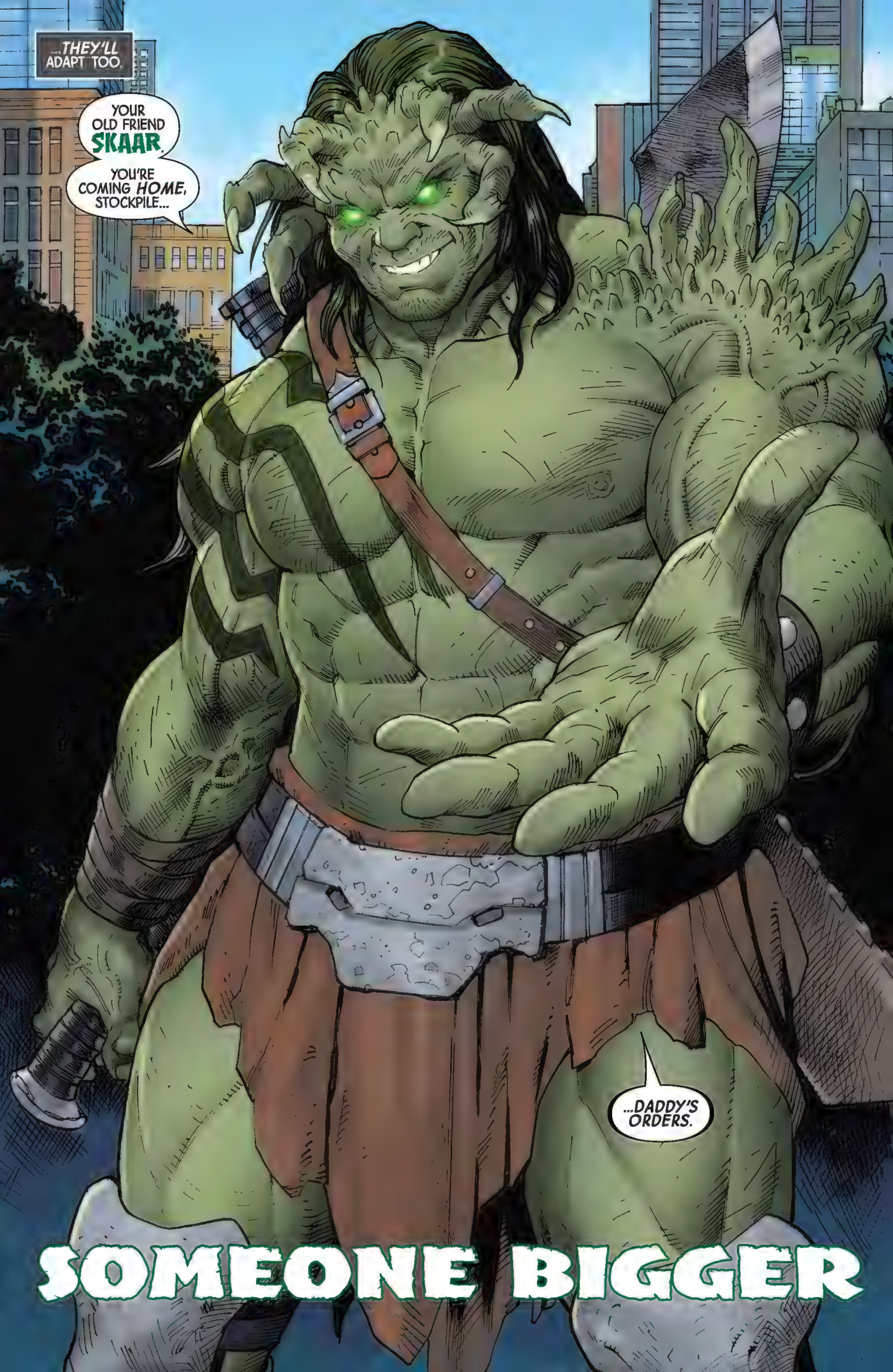

EXCUSE ME?
CAN WE JUST *TALK?* JUST FOR A MINUTE.
WHAT?
I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU. *NOBODY* HERE IS.
WHAT'S YOUR *NAME?*
DON'T GIVE ME THAT--YOU'RE WITH *THEM*, YOU CAME TO *COLLECT* ME--
I'M NOT WITH ANYBODY.
ALL *THIS*--THE HAIR, THE CLAWS, THE *HORROR*--IT'S SOMETHING THAT WAS *DONE* TO ME.
FROM WHAT YOU SAID, *YOU* DIDN'T HAVE AGENCY IN WHAT YOU'VE BECOME EITHER. MAYBE THERE'S *COMMON GROUND* THERE.
ANYWAY, MY NAME'S *LEONARD*.
STOCKPILE!
THAT'S THE NAME THEY *GAVE ME*--
I'D RATHER NOT USE SOME *CALL SIGN*.
WHAT'S YOUR *NAME?*
...YOU'RE *NOT* WITH THEM, ARE YOU?
DIONNE.
MY NAME'S *DIONNE*.

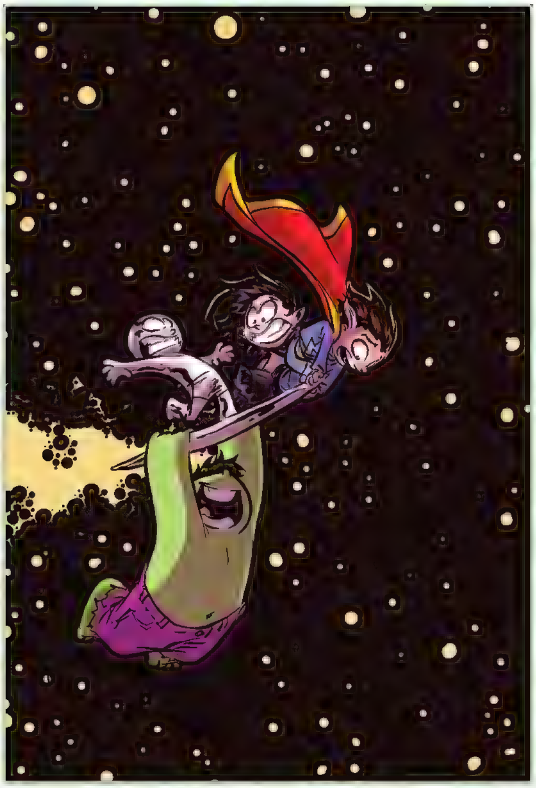

SPTANG
HEY!
WHAT THE HELL...?
STAND AWAY FROM THE SUSPECT!
HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEAD! THE HULKBUSTERS ARE ON THEIR WAY--YOU WILL BE CONTAINED!
THE HELL WITH THAT! WHAT, WAS THAT THE WARNING SHOT?
WE'RE TRYIN' TO HAVE A CONVERSATION HERE!
TITANIA-- WAIT--
I WOULDN'T GET IN HER WAY, JUDD.
NOT WHILE SHE'S GOT THAT LOOK.
CRUNCH
BLAM BLAM
SECRETS OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE, Y'KNOW?


I'LL GO AFTER HER. SHE ALREADY HATES ME...
WHO WANTS SOME? HUH?
LET TITANIA SHOW YOU HOW TO REALLY ESCALATE A STANDOFF!
NO, WE NEED YOU HERE TO--OH, FORGET IT.
EUGENE TO CHARLENE--
--SOONER WE'RE ALL OUT OF HERE, THE BETTER.
I'VE BEEN LISTENING IN. SOUNDS LIKE IT'S TIME TO BRING EVERYONE HOME.
THE SYSTEM'S STILL A LITTLE SLUGGISH, THOUGH--
IS IT SAFE?
THE ACTUAL TRANSLOCATION WILL BE.
TROUBLE IS, IT'S NOT LOCKING ON TO EVERYONE AT ONCE. IT KEEPS GLITCHING OUT.
JUST GRAB WHO YOU CAN. RIGHT NOW, ANYONE WE CAN BRING OUT IS GOOD.
IF YOU SAY SO.
TRANSLOCATING NOW.
OH NO.

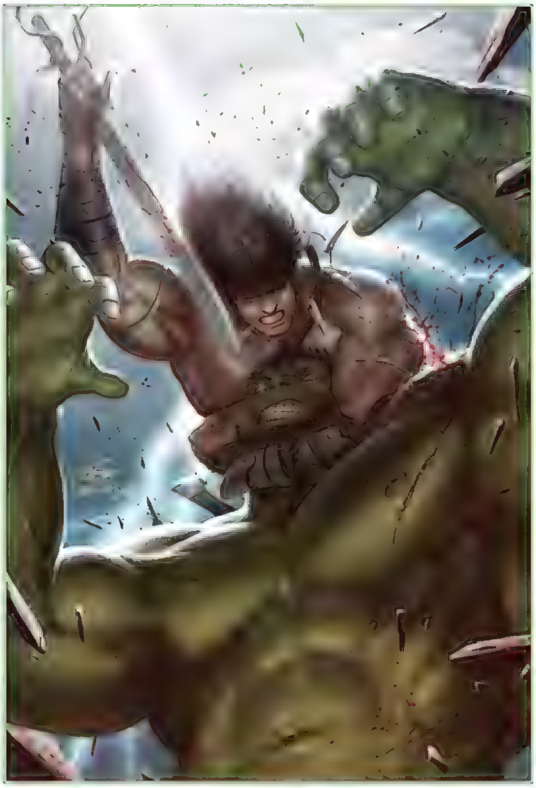

...
WELL, I STAND *CORRECTED.*
YOU LEFT *SASQUATCH* WITH *TITANIA?* YOU COULDN'T BRING BACK *DIONNE?*
I WAS LUCKY TO GET *YOU.* THE WHOLE *SYSTEM'S* FREEZING UP--I THINK WE SENT TOO MANY OUT AT *ONCE.*
I ONLY HOPE THE SYSTEM DOESN'T DECIDE TO--
...
REBOOT.
HOW LONG BEFORE IT'S *BACK?*
I'LL HAVE TO GO IN *MANUALLY*--RECONFIGURE THE PAD, THEN TRIP THE BREAKERS.
UNTIL THEN--LEN AND MARY ARE ON THEIR *OWN.*
AND THAT'S NOT EVEN THE *BAD NEWS...*
SO HERE'S THE THING ABOUT *POWER.*


IT'S REAL NICE TO HAVE SOME. ESPECIALLY IF YOU'VE NEVER REALLY KNOWN WHAT THAT'S *LIKE*.
WHAT'S *WORSE* THAN LEAVING *MY WIFE* WITH A *SLIME HEAP* AND *DISCOUNT BIGFOOT* FOR BACKUP?
YOU *HEARD* HER, RIGHT? *DIONNE?*
OH NO.
NOT *YOU*...
SHE ESCAPED FROM A *LAB*. SOMEONE GAVE HER A *CODENAME*.
SHE EXPECTED SOMEONE TO *COLLECT* HER-- SOMEONE WITH *GAMMA*.
BUT PRETTY SOON, SOMEONE COMES ALONG WHO'S GOT *MORE*.
BOOM
OH YES.
IT'S *ME*.
THERE'S *ALWAYS* SOMEONE BIGGER AND MEANER.
SO THAT MEANS *SOMEBODY* OUT THERE...
...IS *BUILDING GAMMA MUTATES*.
AND IF YOU *PISS THEM OFF* ENOUGH...

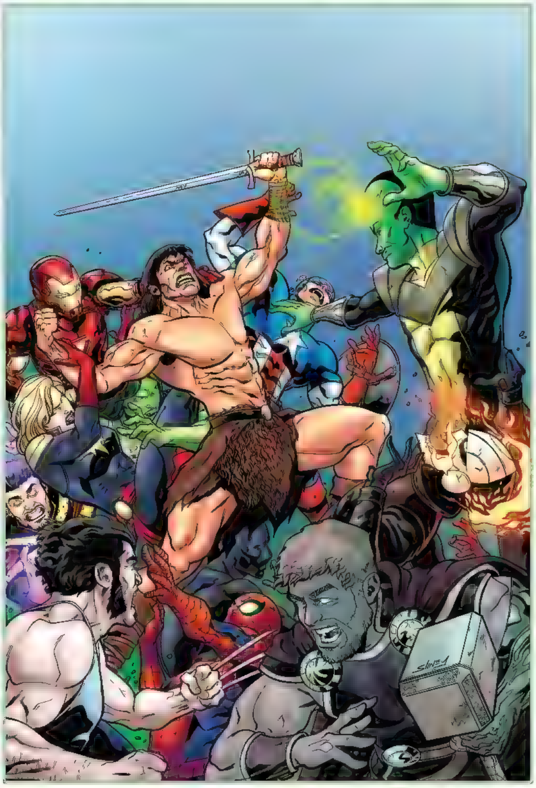

...THEY'LL ADAPT TOO.
YOUR OLD FRIEND SKAAR.
YOU'RE COMING HOME, STOCKPILE...
...DADDY'S ORDERS.
SOMEONE BIGGER



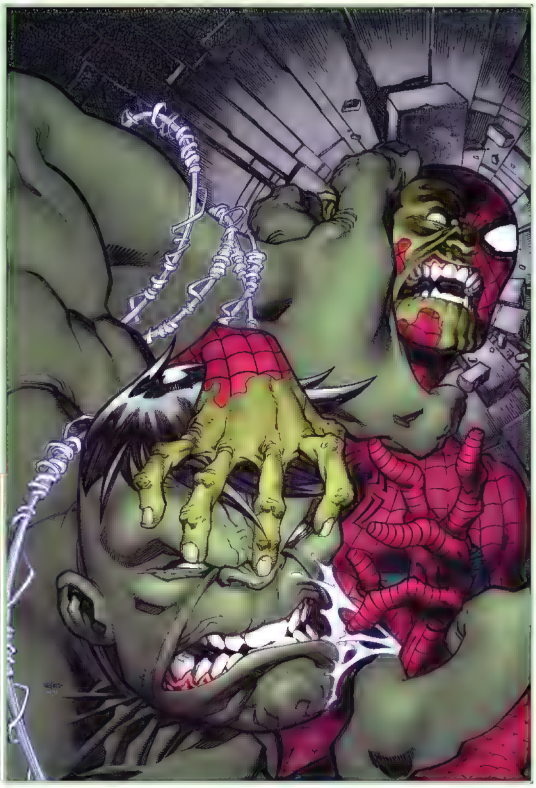
DEFENDERS: THE BEST DEFENSE VARIANT BY
SKOTTIE YOUNG



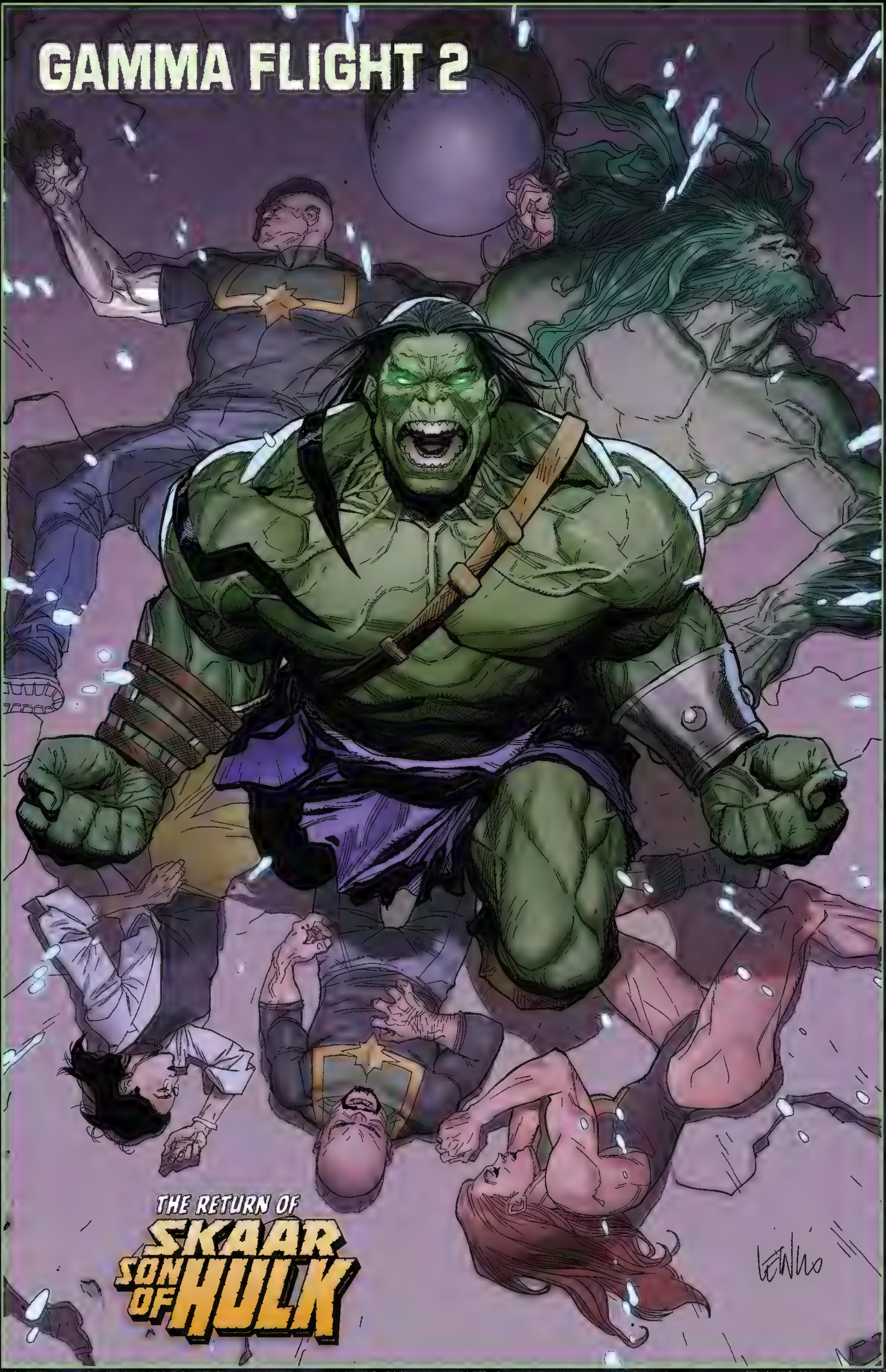
#10 CONAN VS. VARIANT BY
INHYUK LEE

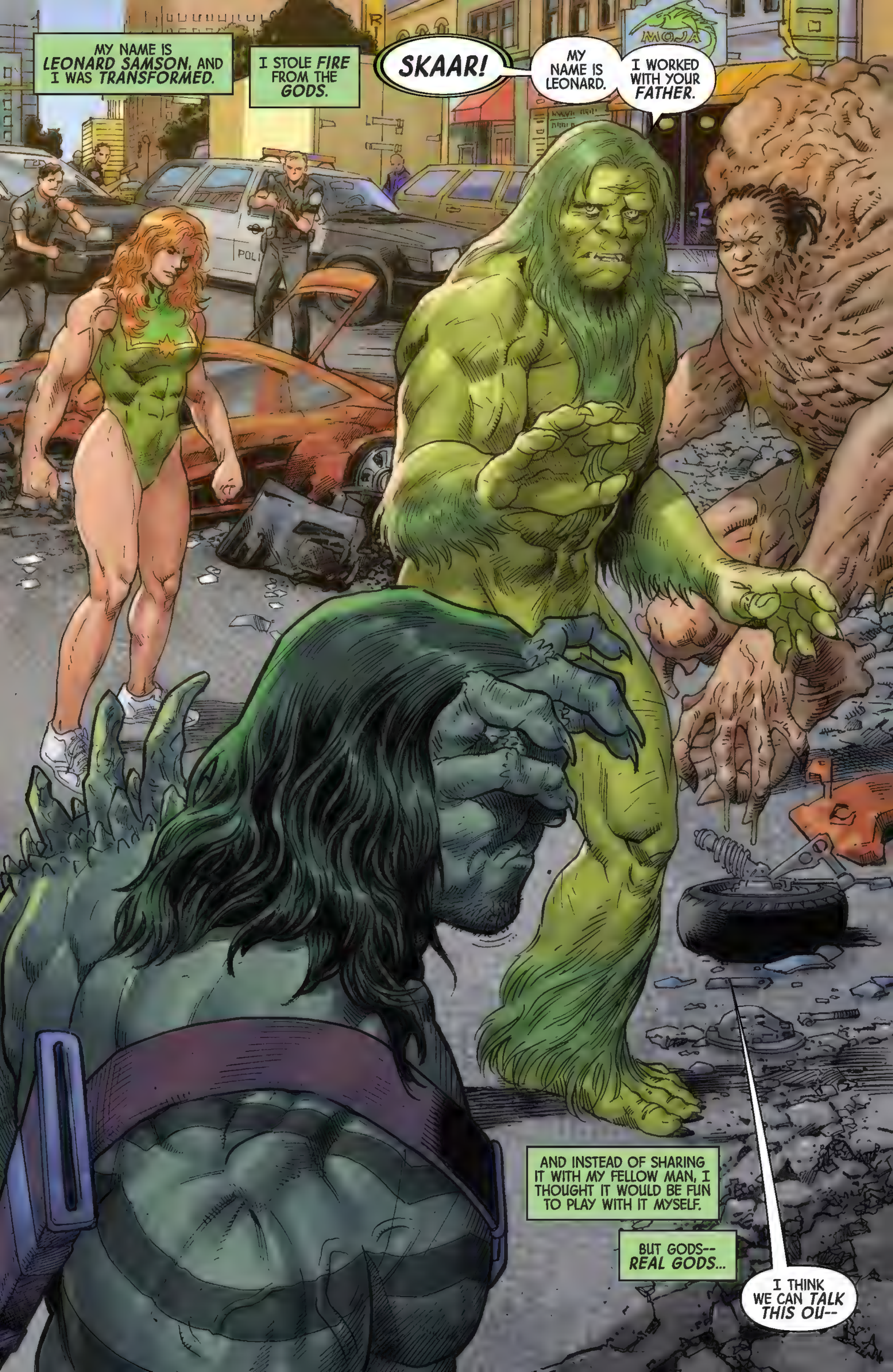


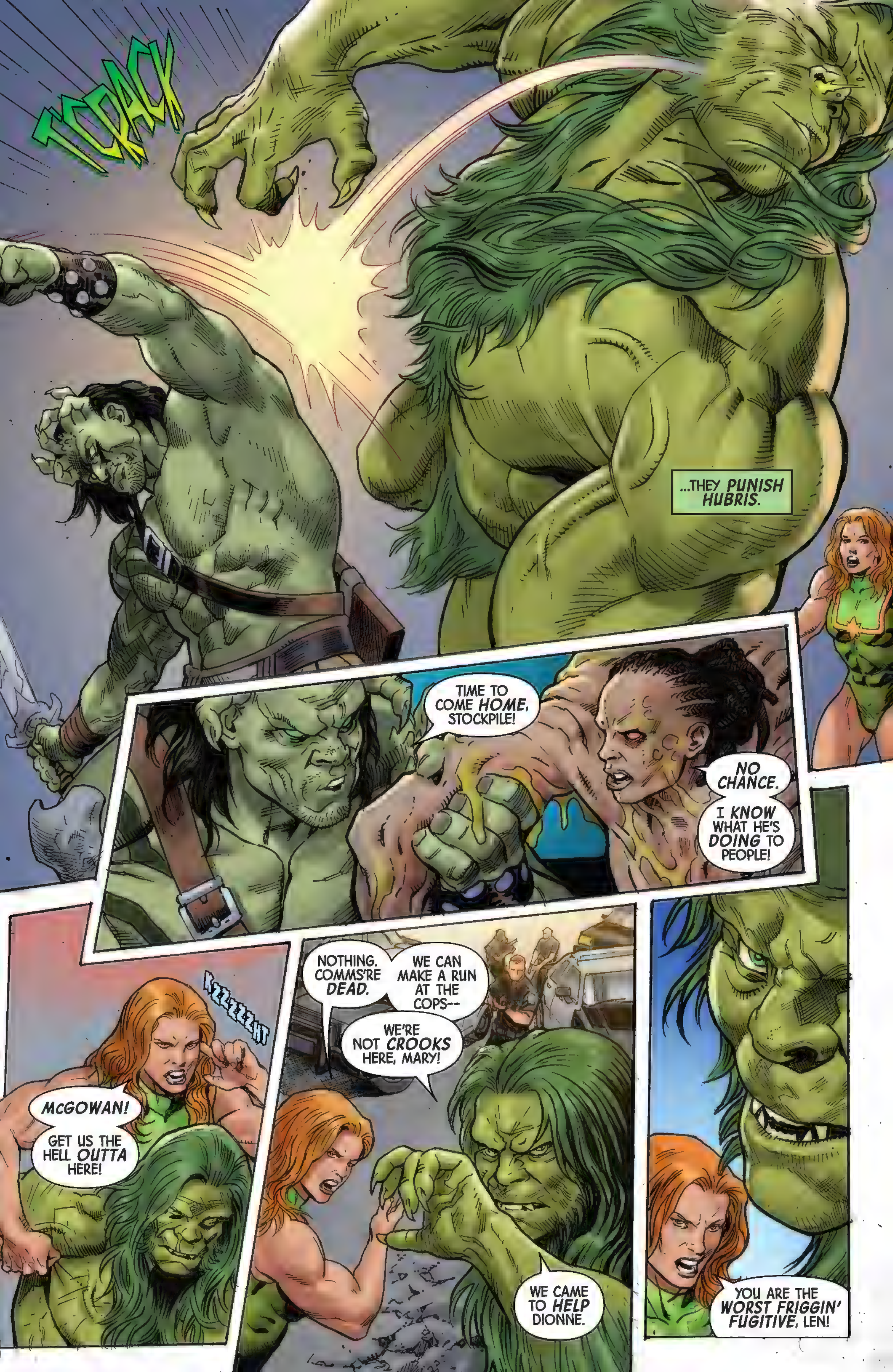
#12 CONAN VS. VARIANT BY
WILL SLINEY & CHRIS SOTOMAYOR

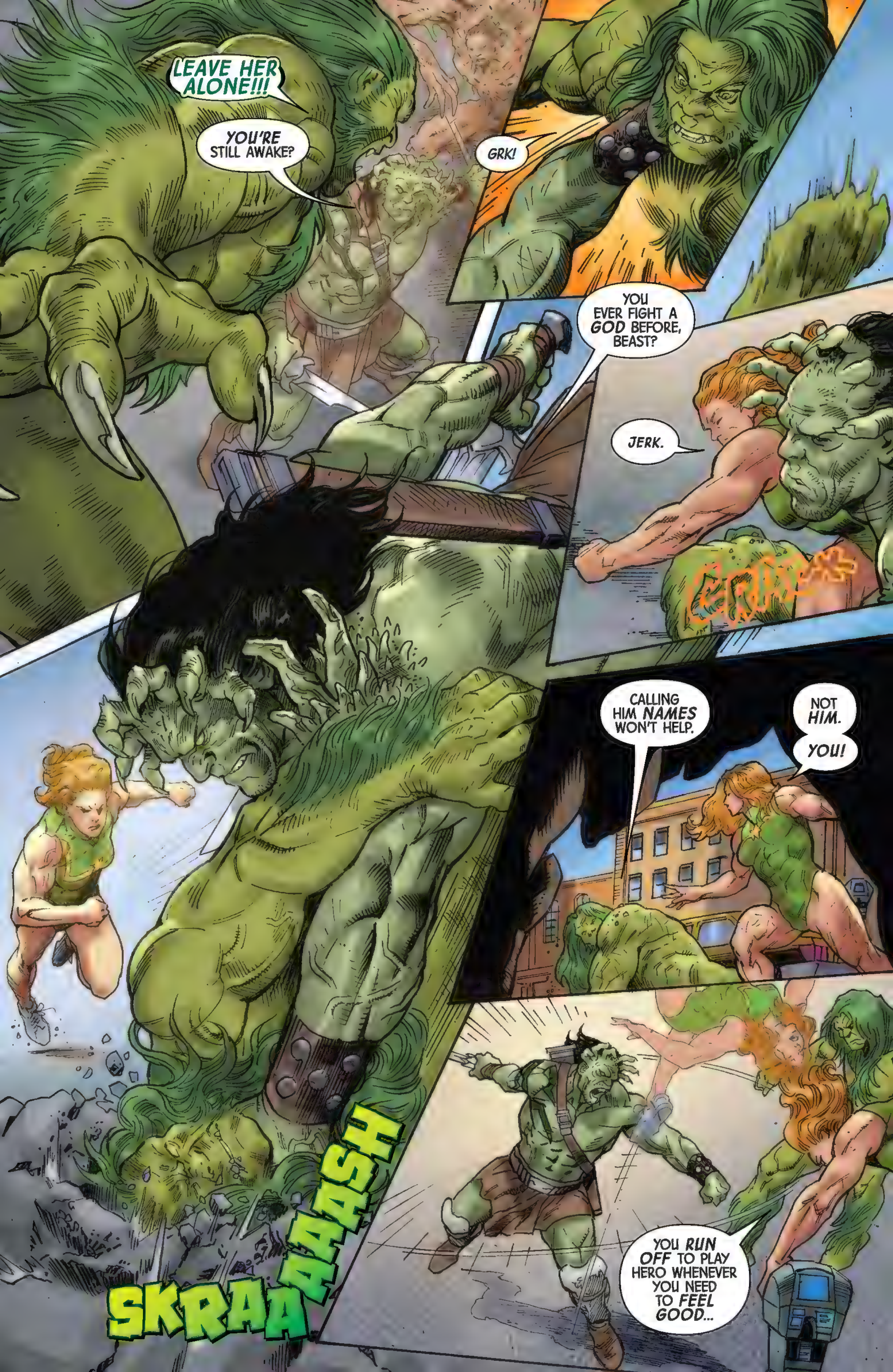


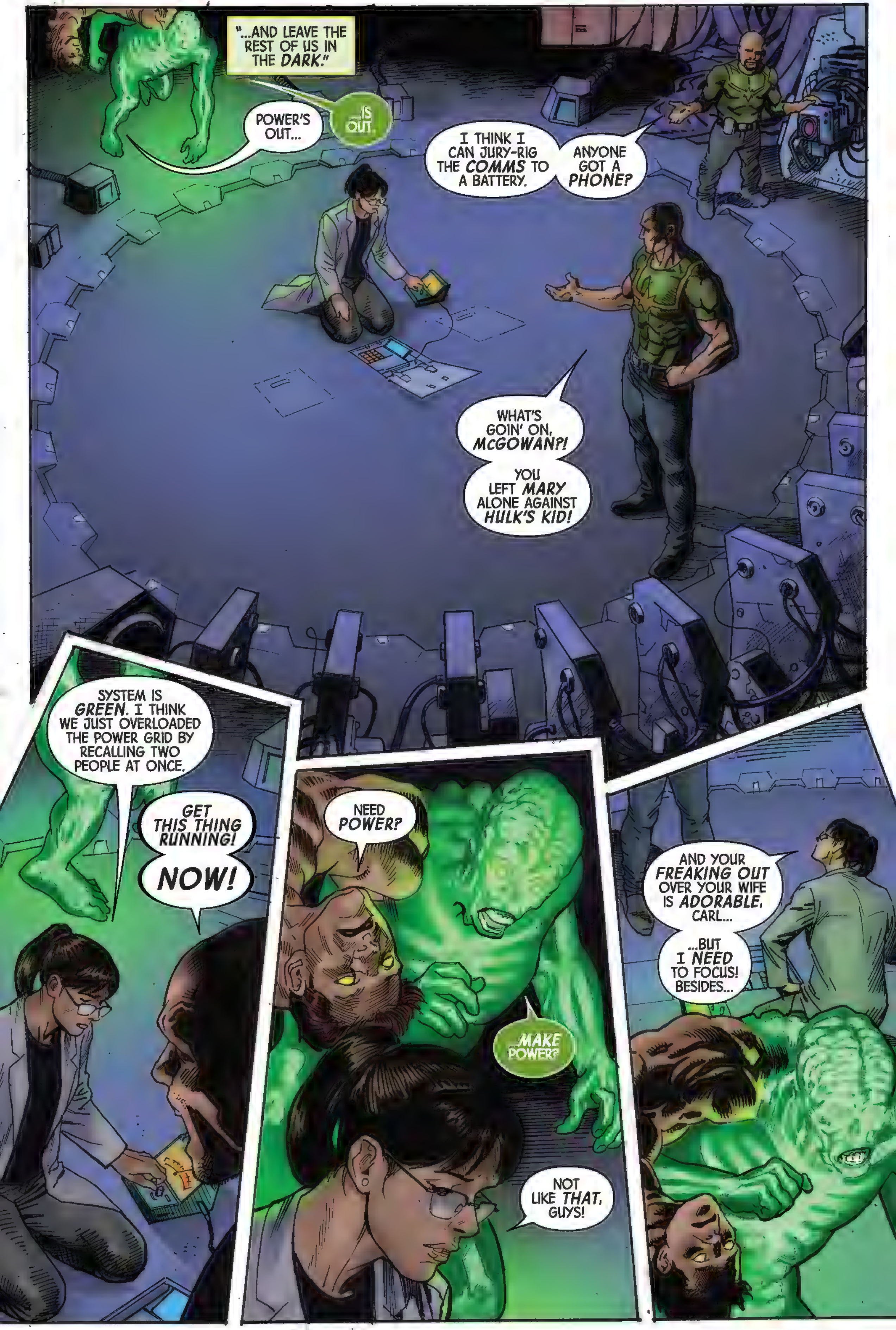
#13 SKRULLS VARIANT BY
CHRIS STEVENS & MORRY HOLLOWELL

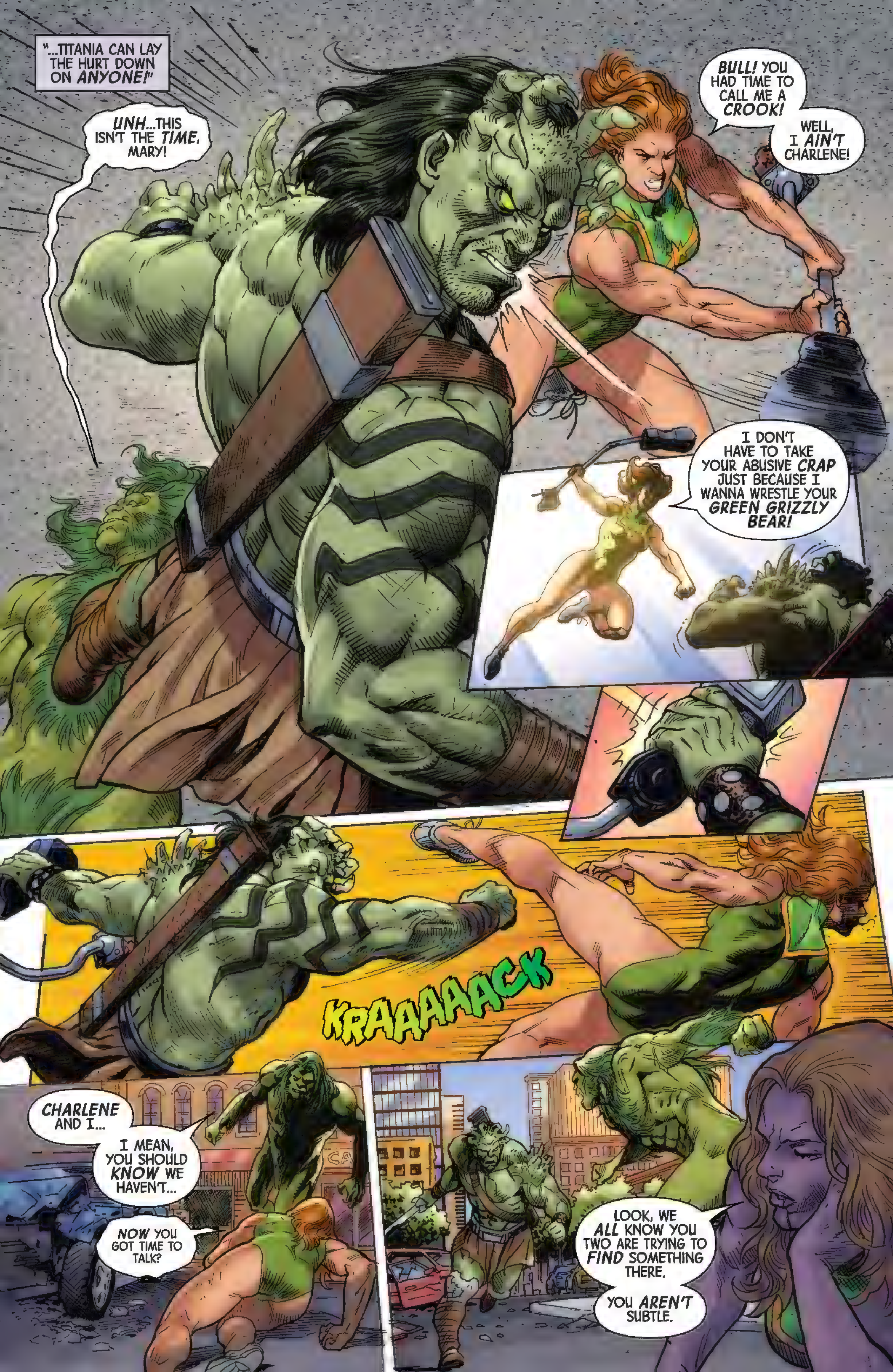

GAMMA FLIGHT 2
THE RETURN OF
SKAAR
SON OF HULK

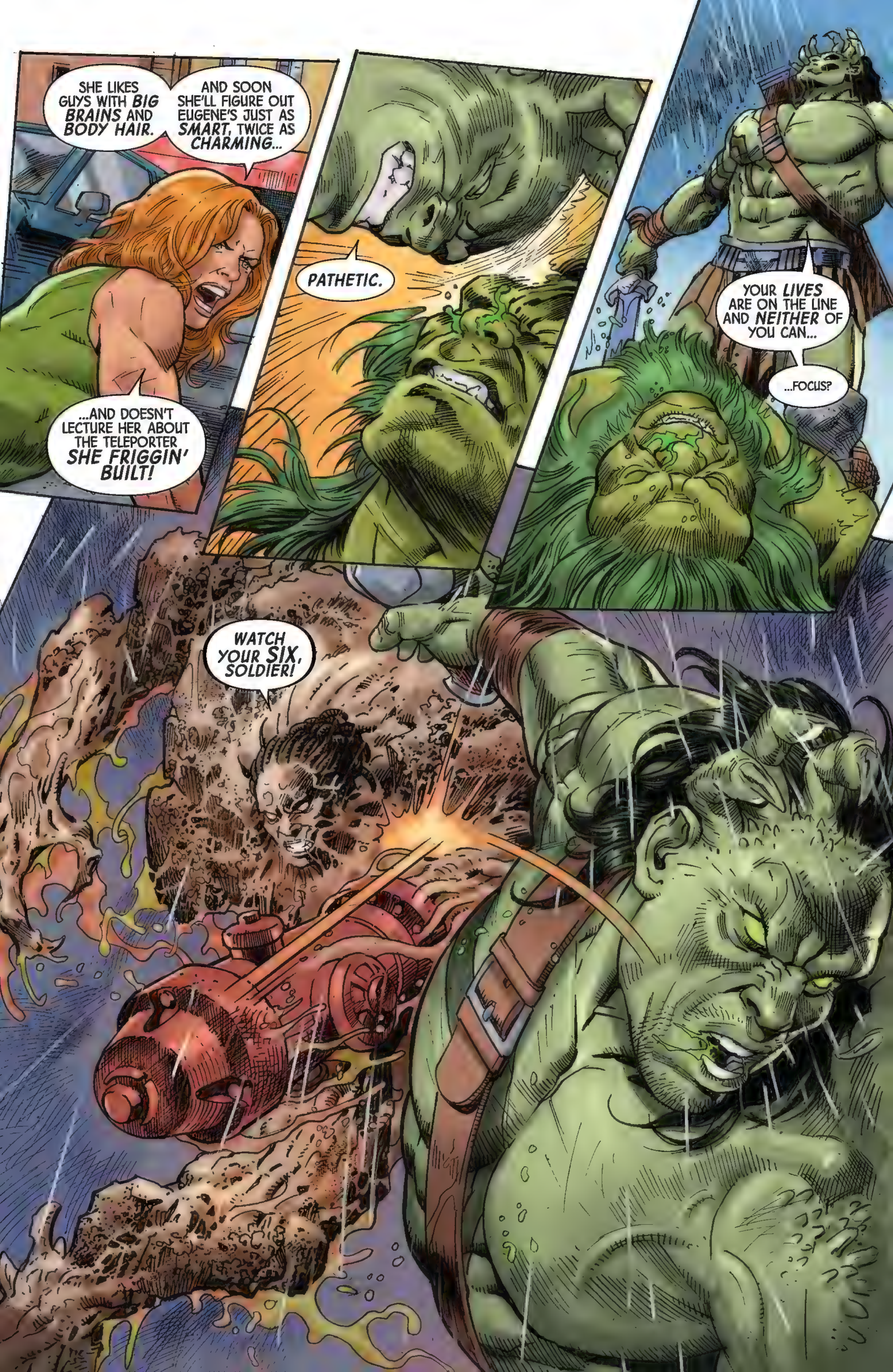

MY NAME IS LEONARD SAMSON, AND I WAS TRANSFORMED.
I STOLE FIRE FROM THE GODS.
SKAAR!
MY NAME IS LEONARD.
I WORKED WITH YOUR FATHER.
MOJA
POLI
AND INSTEAD OF SHARING IT WITH MY FELLOW MAN, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FUN TO PLAY WITH IT MYSELF.
BUT GODS-- REAL GODS...
I THINK WE CAN TALK THIS OU--

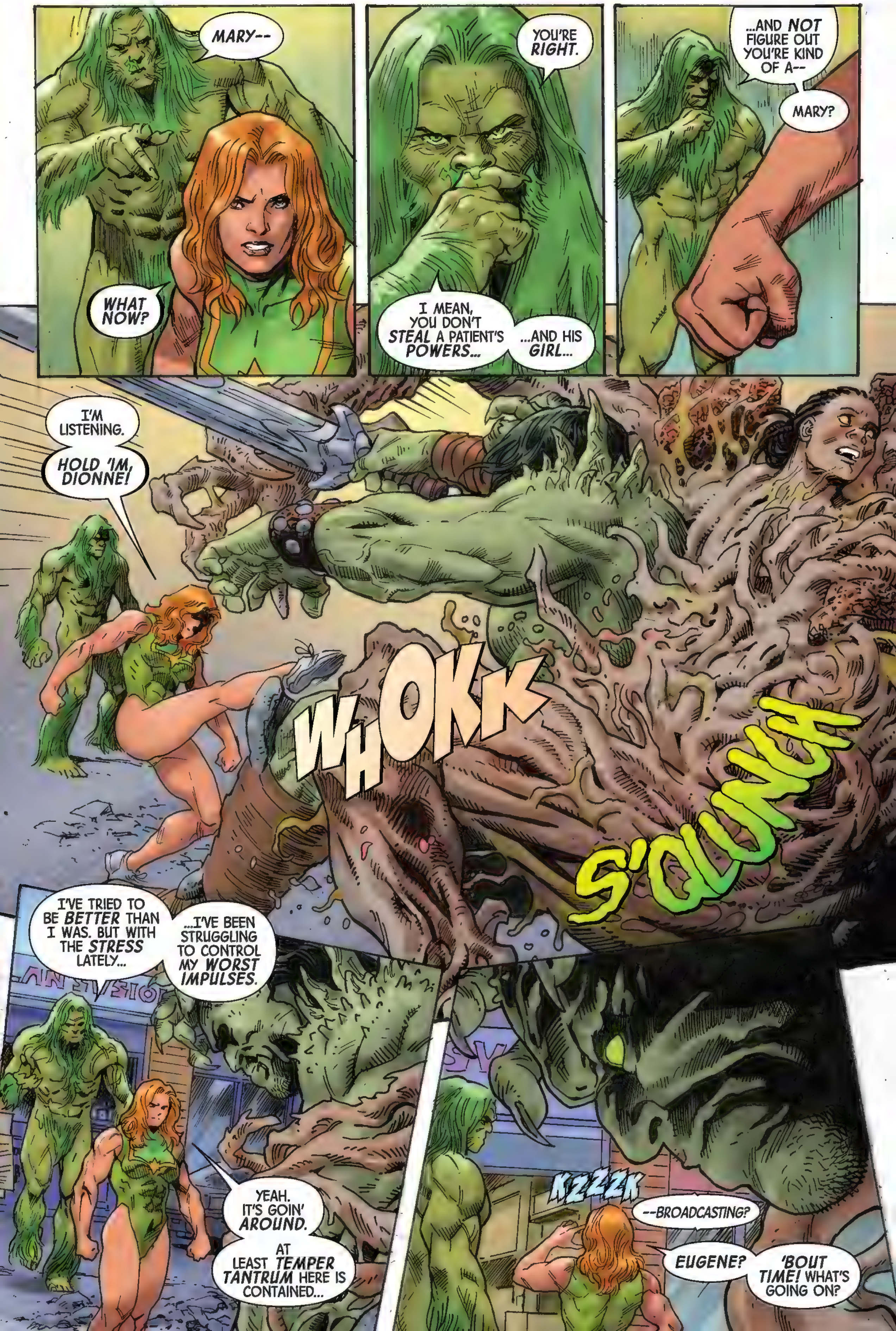

TCRACK
...THEY PUNISH HUBRIS.
TIME TO COME HOME, STOCKPILE!
NO CHANCE.
I KNOW WHAT HE'S DOING TO PEOPLE!
KZZZZZZHT
McGOWAN!
GET US THE HELL OUTTA HERE!
NOTHING. COMMS'RE DEAD.
WE CAN MAKE A RUN AT THE COPS--
WE'RE NOT CROOKS HERE, MARY!
WE CAME TO HELP DIONNE.
YOU ARE THE WORST FRIGGIN' FUGITIVE, LEN!

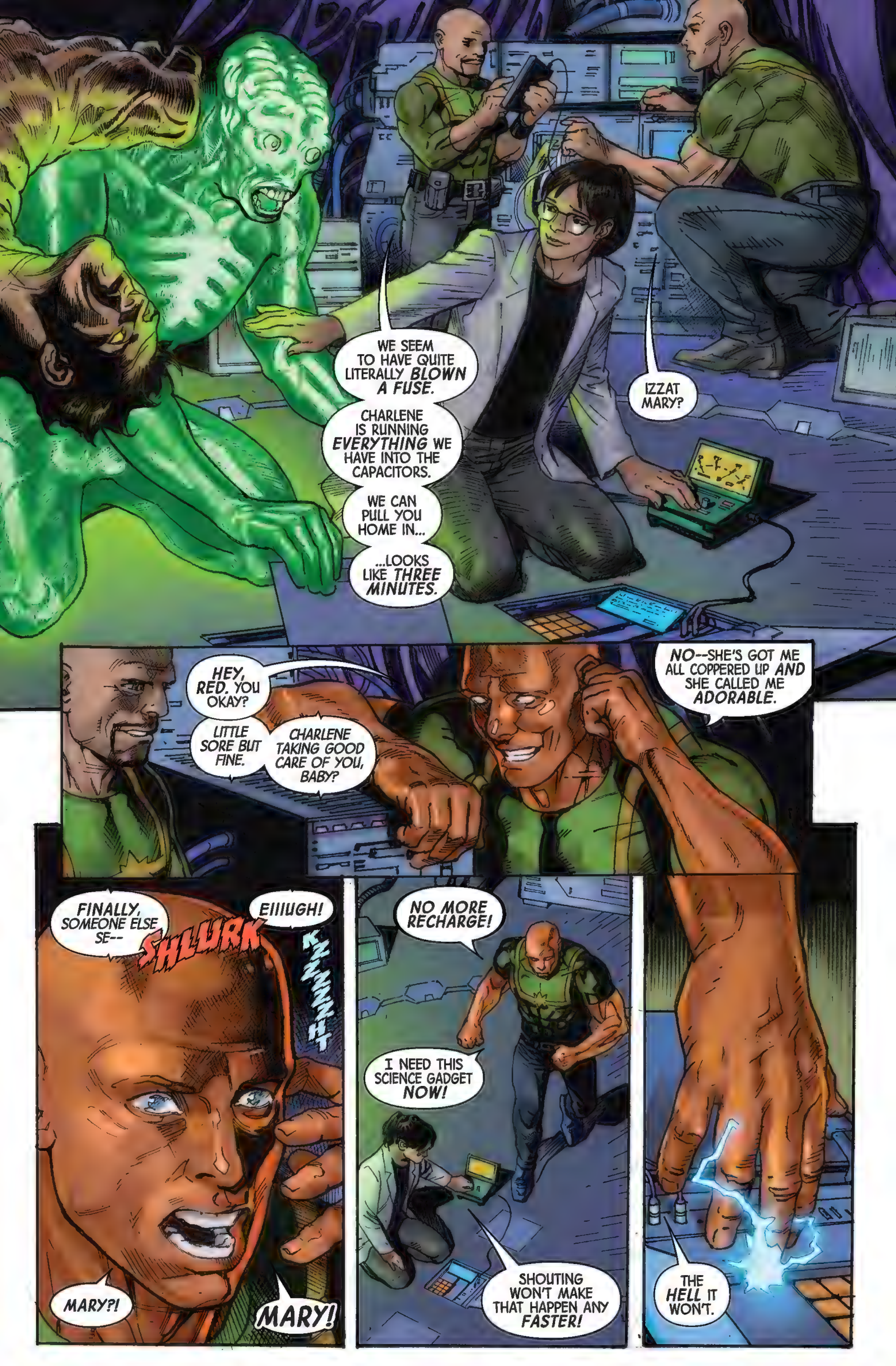

LEAVE HER ALONE!!!
YOU'RE STILL AWAKE?
GRK!
YOU EVER FIGHT A *GOD* BEFORE, BEAST?
JERK.
CRAK
SKRAAAAASH
CALLING HIM *NAMES* WON'T HELP.
NOT HIM.
YOU!
YOU *RUN OFF* TO PLAY HERO WHENEVER YOU NEED TO *FEEL GOOD*...

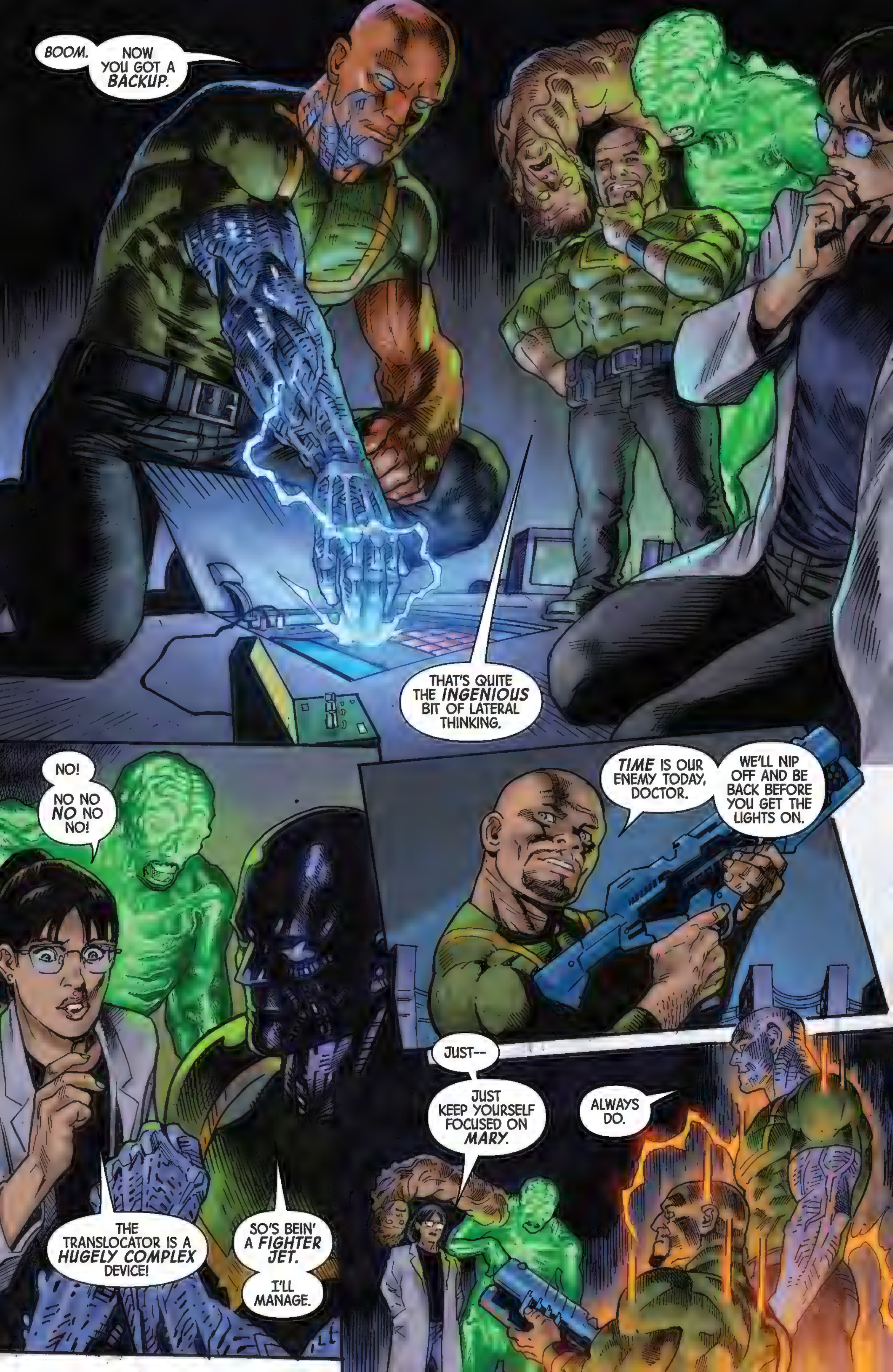

"...AND LEAVE THE REST OF US IN THE *DARK*."
POWER'S OUT...
...IS OUT.
I THINK I CAN JURY-RIG THE *COMMS* TO A BATTERY.
ANYONE GOT A *PHONE?*
WHAT'S GOIN' ON, *McGOWAN?!*
YOU LEFT *MARY* ALONE AGAINST *HULK'S KID!*
SYSTEM IS *GREEN*. I THINK WE JUST OVERLOADED THE POWER GRID BY RECALLING TWO PEOPLE AT ONCE.
GET THIS THING RUNNING!
NOW!
NEED *POWER?*
...*MAKE* POWER?
NOT LIKE *THAT*, GUYS!
AND YOUR *FREAKING OUT* OVER YOUR WIFE IS *ADORABLE*, CARL...
...BUT I *NEED* TO FOCUS! BESIDES...

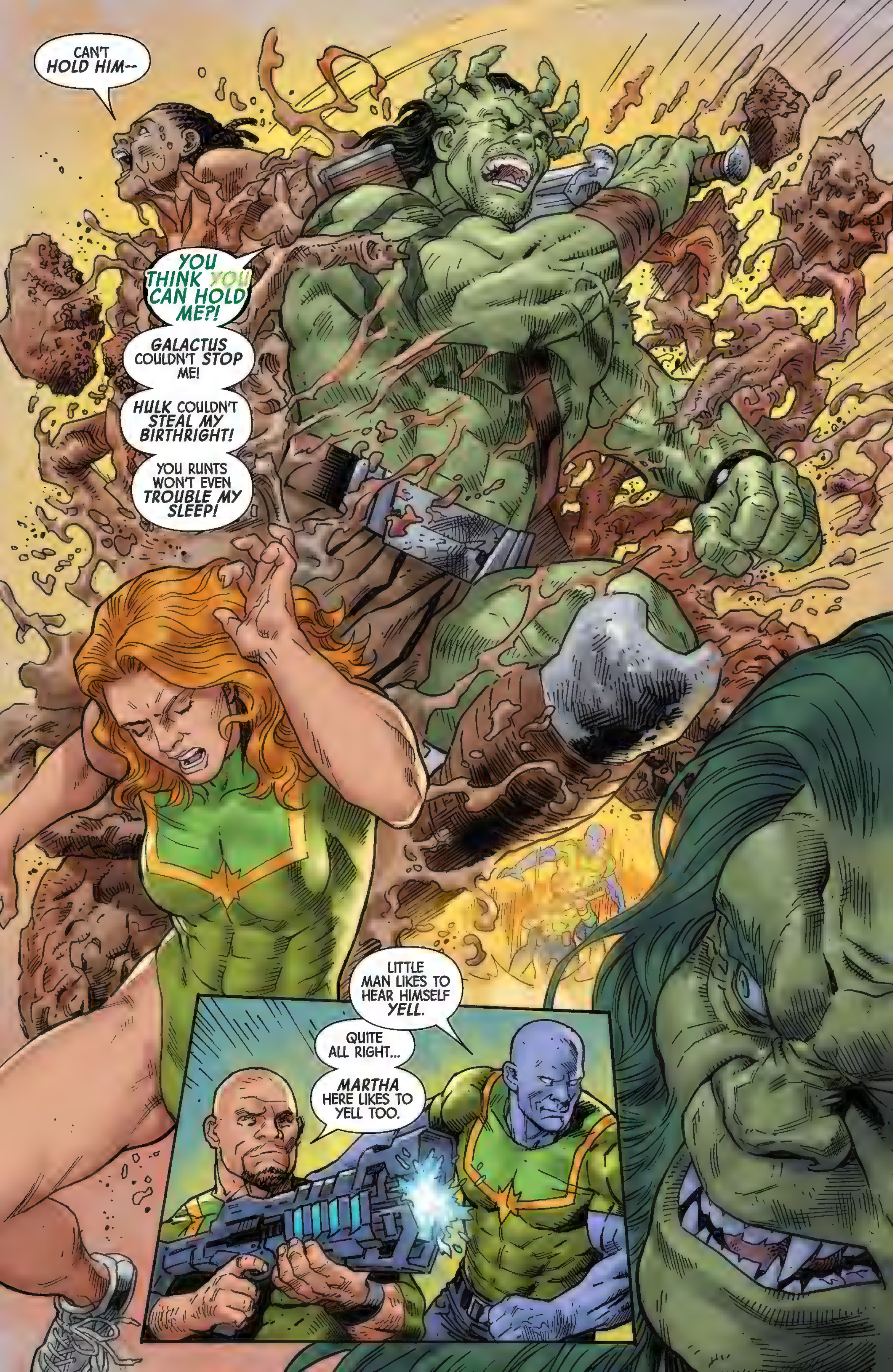

"...TITANIA CAN LAY THE HURT DOWN ON *ANYONE!*"
UNH...THIS ISN'T THE *TIME,* MARY!
BULL! YOU HAD TIME TO CALL ME A *CROOK!*
WELL, I *AIN'T* CHARLENE!
I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE YOUR ABUSIVE *CRAP* JUST BECAUSE I WANNA WRESTLE YOUR *GREEN GRIZZLY BEAR!*
KRAAAAACK
CHARLENE AND I...
I MEAN, YOU SHOULD *KNOW* WE HAVEN'T...
NOW YOU GOT TIME TO TALK?
LOOK, WE *ALL* KNOW YOU TWO ARE TRYING TO *FIND* SOMETHING THERE.
YOU *AREN'T* SUBTLE.

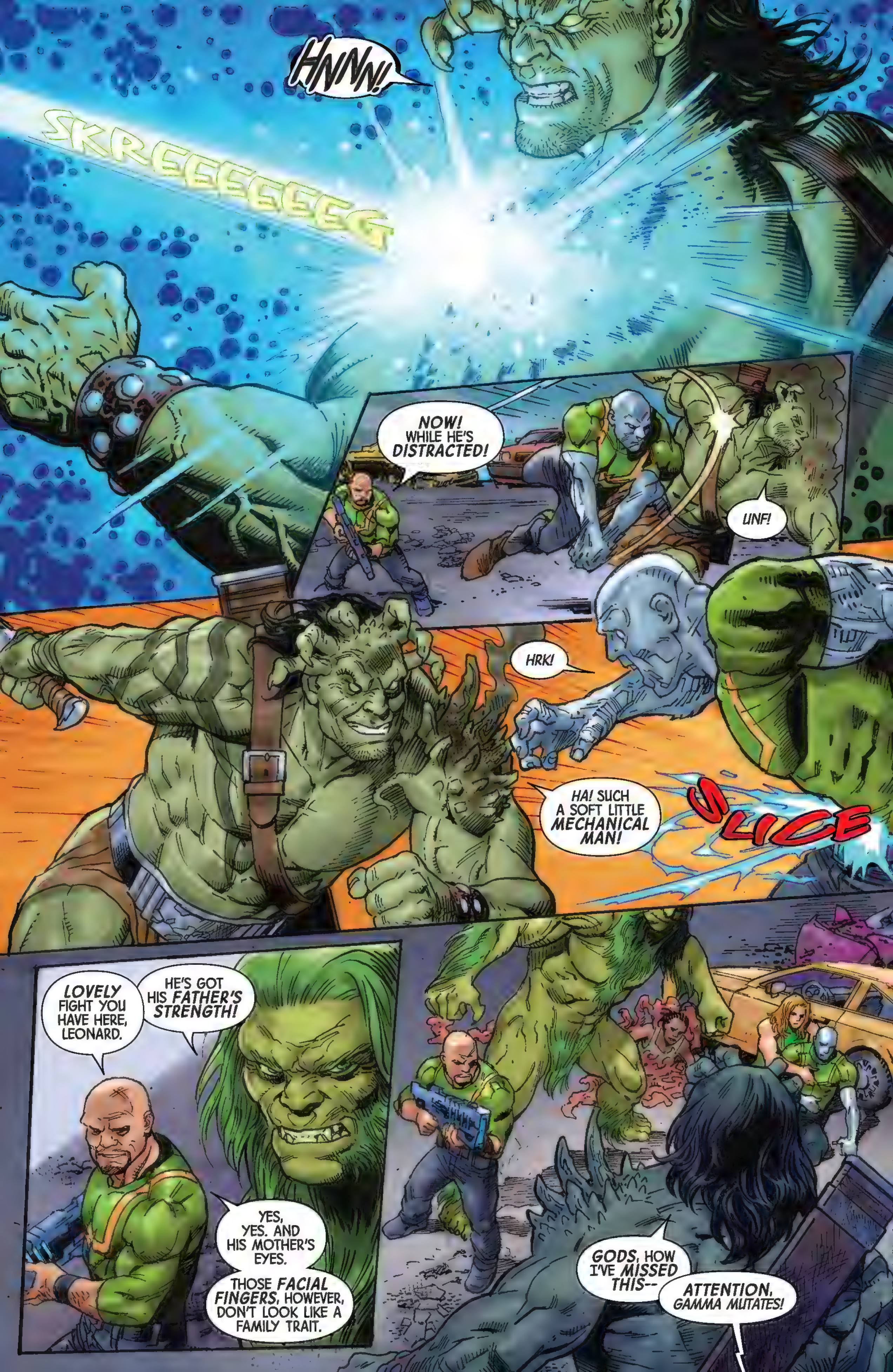

SHE LIKES GUYS WITH BIG BRAINS AND BODY HAIR.
AND SOON SHE'LL FIGURE OUT EUGENE'S JUST AS SMART, TWICE AS CHARMING...
...AND DOESN'T LECTURE HER ABOUT THE TELEPORTER SHE FRIGGIN' BUILT!
PATHETIC.
YOUR LIVES ARE ON THE LINE AND NEITHER OF YOU CAN...
...FOCUS?
WATCH YOUR SIX, SOLDIER!

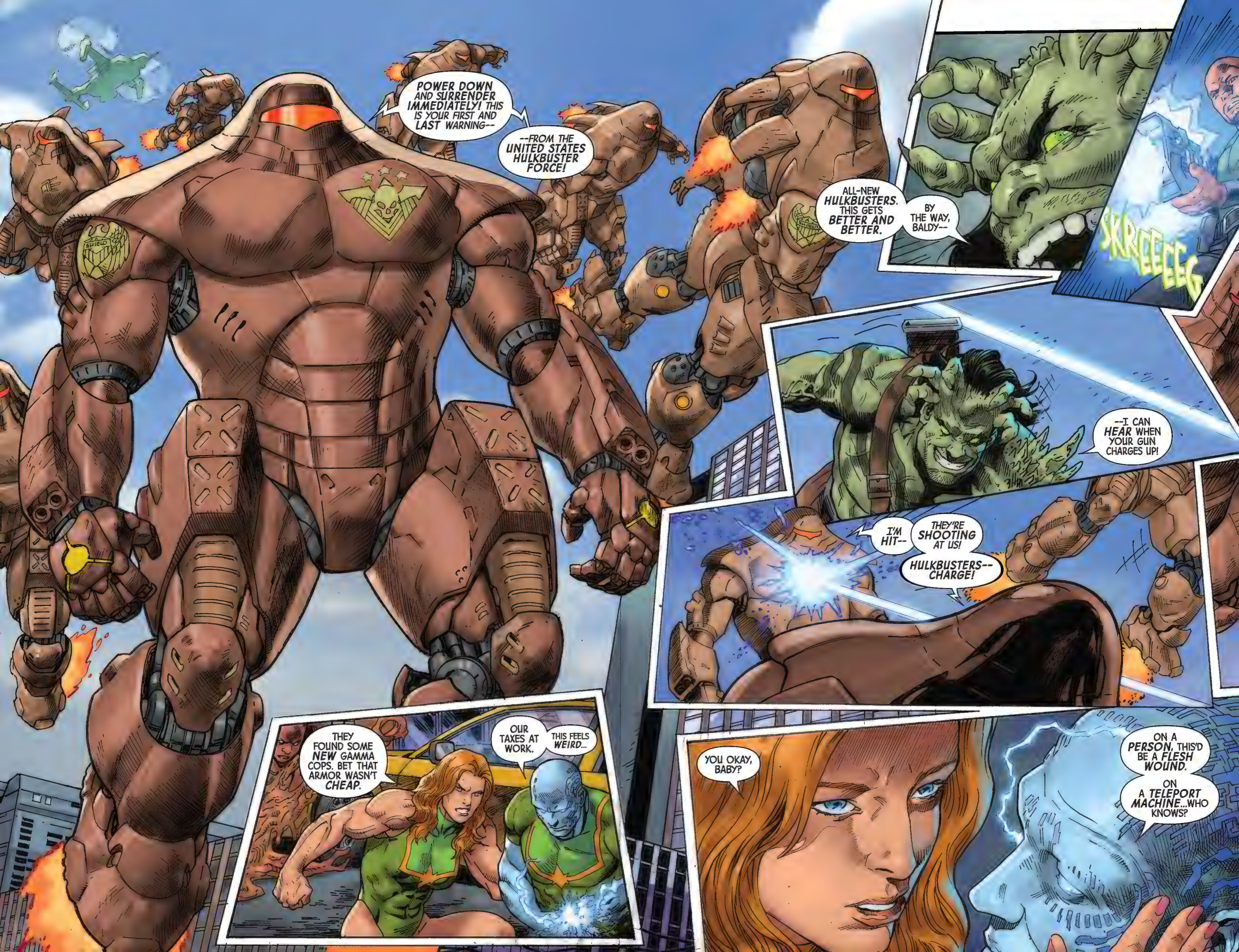

MARY--
WHAT NOW?
YOU'RE *RIGHT*.
I MEAN, YOU DON'T *STEAL* A PATIENT'S *POWERS*...
...AND HIS *GIRL*...
...AND *NOT* FIGURE OUT YOU'RE KIND OF A--
MARY?
I'M LISTENING.
HOLD 'IM, DIONNE!
WHOKK
S'QUNCH
I'VE TRIED TO BE *BETTER* THAN I WAS. BUT WITH THE *STRESS* LATELY...
...I'VE BEEN STRUGGLING TO CONTROL MY *WORST IMPULSES*.
YEAH. IT'S GOIN' *AROUND*.
AT LEAST *TEMPER TANTRUM* HERE IS CONTAINED...
KZZZK
--BROADCASTING?
EUGENE?
'BOUT TIME! WHAT'S GOING ON?

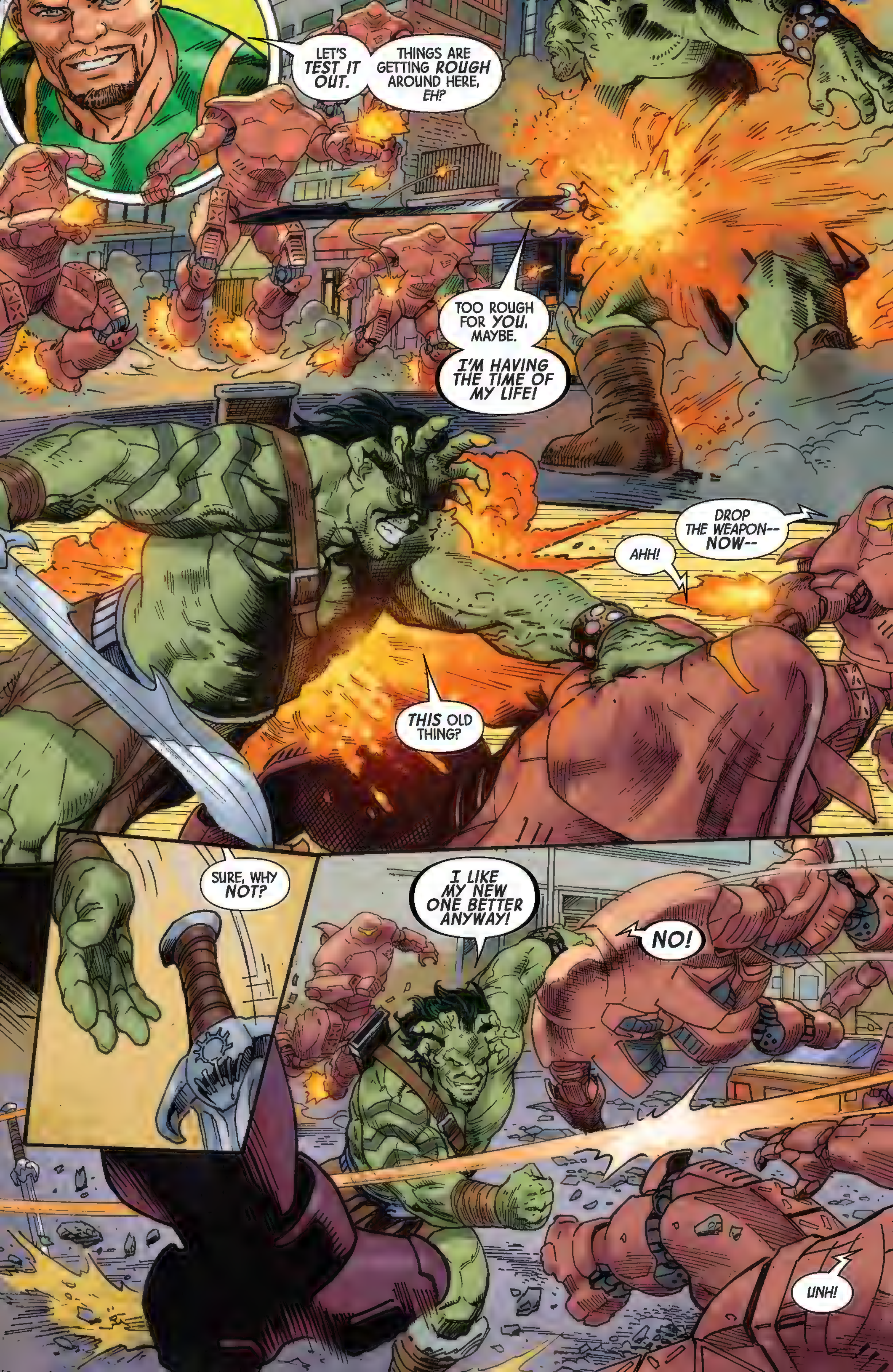

WE SEEM TO HAVE QUITE LITERALLY BLOWN A FUSE.
CHARLENE IS RUNNING EVERYTHING WE HAVE INTO THE CAPACITORS.
WE CAN PULL YOU HOME IN...
...LOOKS LIKE THREE MINUTES.
IZZAT MARY?
HEY, RED. YOU OKAY?
LITTLE SORE BUT FINE.
CHARLENE TAKING GOOD CARE OF YOU, BABY?
NO--SHE'S GOT ME ALL COPPERED UP AND SHE CALLED ME ADORABLE.
FINALLY, SOMEONE ELSE SE--
SHLURK
EIIIUGH!
KZZZZZHT
MARY?!
MARY!
NO MORE RECHARGE!
I NEED THIS SCIENCE GADGET NOW!
SHOUTING WON'T MAKE THAT HAPPEN ANY FASTER!
THE HELL IT WON'T.

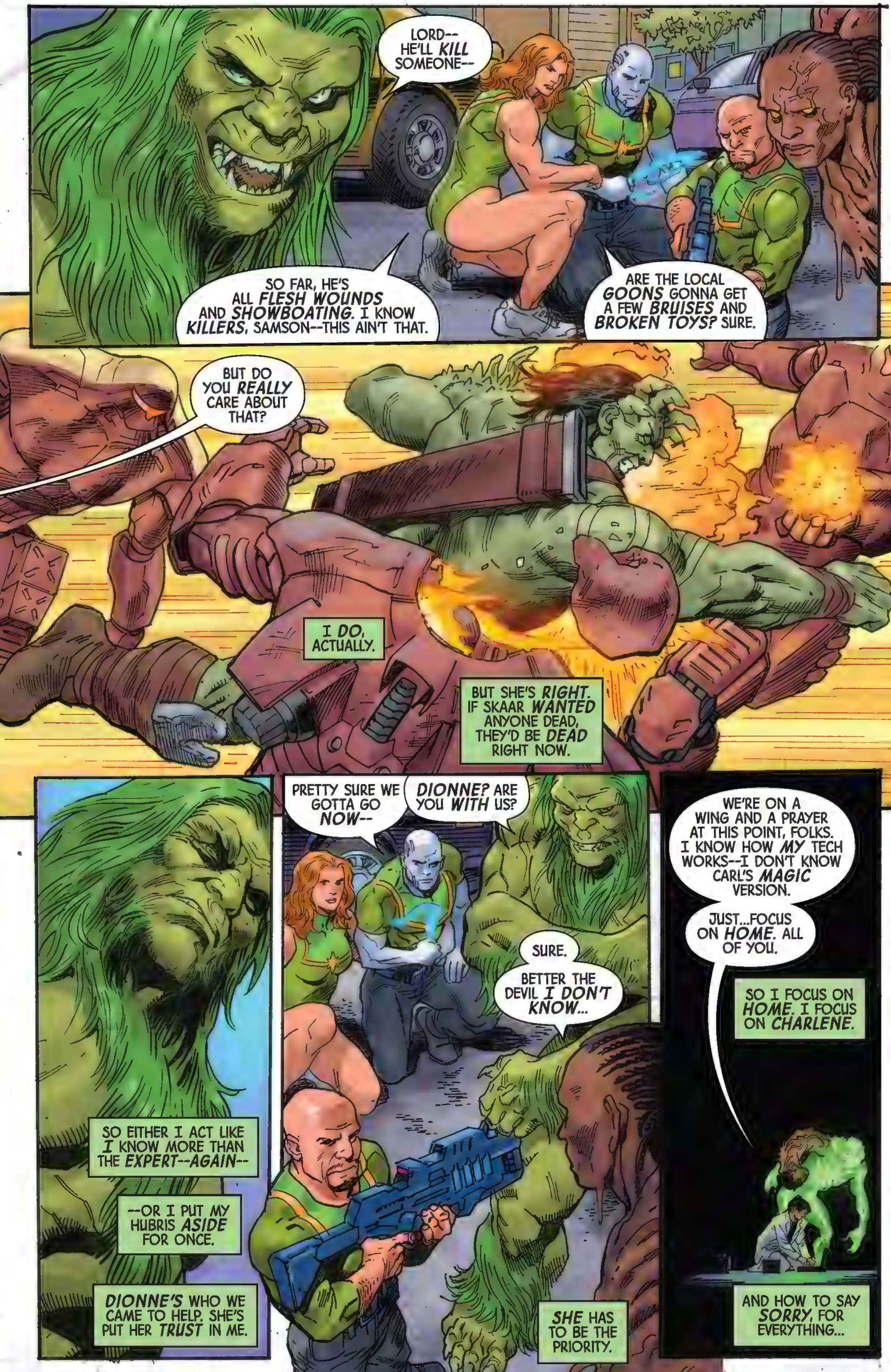

BOOM.
NOW YOU GOT A *BACKUP.*
THAT'S QUITE THE *INGENIOUS* BIT OF LATERAL THINKING.
NO!
NO NO *NO* NO NO!
THE TRANSLOCATOR IS A *HUGELY COMPLEX* DEVICE!
SO'S BEIN' A *FIGHTER JET.*
I'LL MANAGE.
TIME IS OUR ENEMY TODAY, DOCTOR.
WE'LL NIP OFF AND BE BACK BEFORE YOU GET THE LIGHTS ON.
JUST--
JUST KEEP YOURSELF FOCUSED ON *MARY.*
ALWAYS DO.

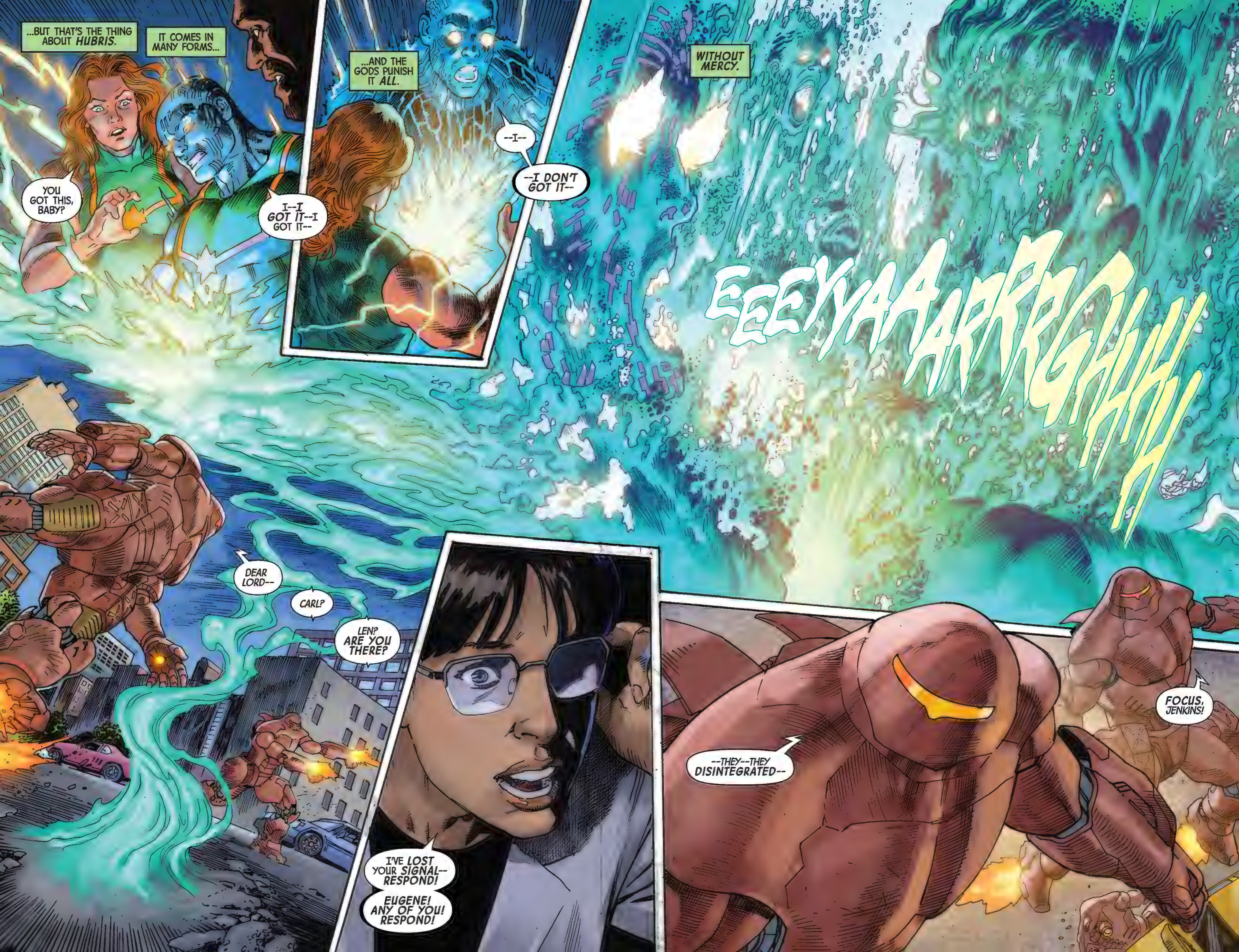

CAN'T HOLD HIM--
YOU THINK YOU CAN HOLD ME?!
GALACTUS COULDN'T STOP ME!
HULK COULDN'T STEAL MY BIRTHRIGHT!
YOU RUNTS WON'T EVEN TROUBLE MY SLEEP!
LITTLE MAN LIKES TO HEAR HIMSELF YELL.
QUITE ALL RIGHT...
MARTHA HERE LIKES TO YELL TOO.

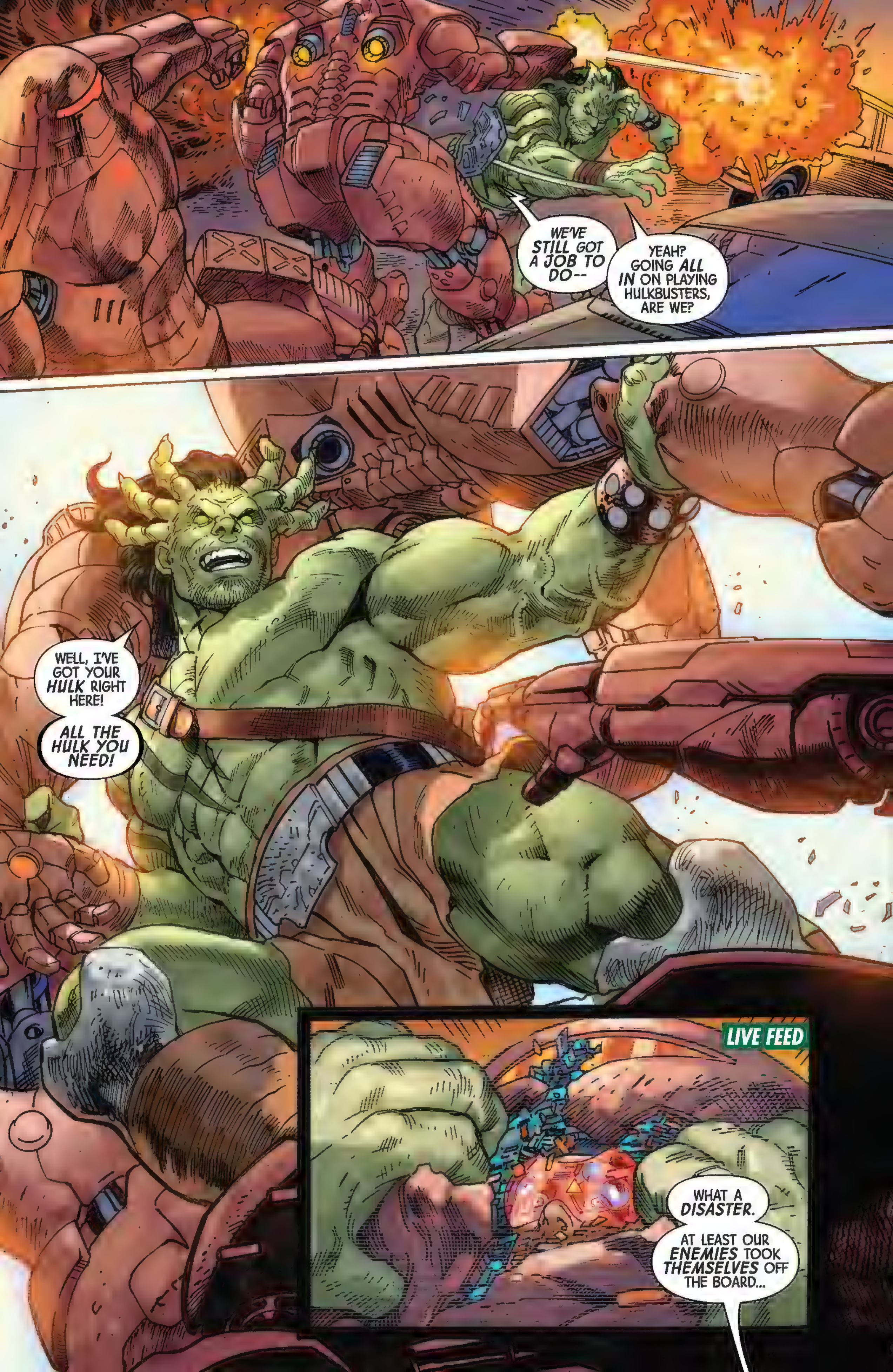

HNNN!
SKREEEEEEEG
NOW! WHILE HE'S DISTRACTED!
UNF!
HRK!
HA! SUCH A SOFT LITTLE MECHANICAL MAN!
SLICE
LOVELY FIGHT YOU HAVE HERE, LEONARD.
HE'S GOT HIS FATHER'S STRENGTH!
YES, YES. AND HIS MOTHER'S EYES.
THOSE FACIAL FINGERS, HOWEVER, DON'T LOOK LIKE A FAMILY TRAIT.
GODS, HOW I'VE MISSED THIS--
ATTENTION, GAMMA MUTATES!

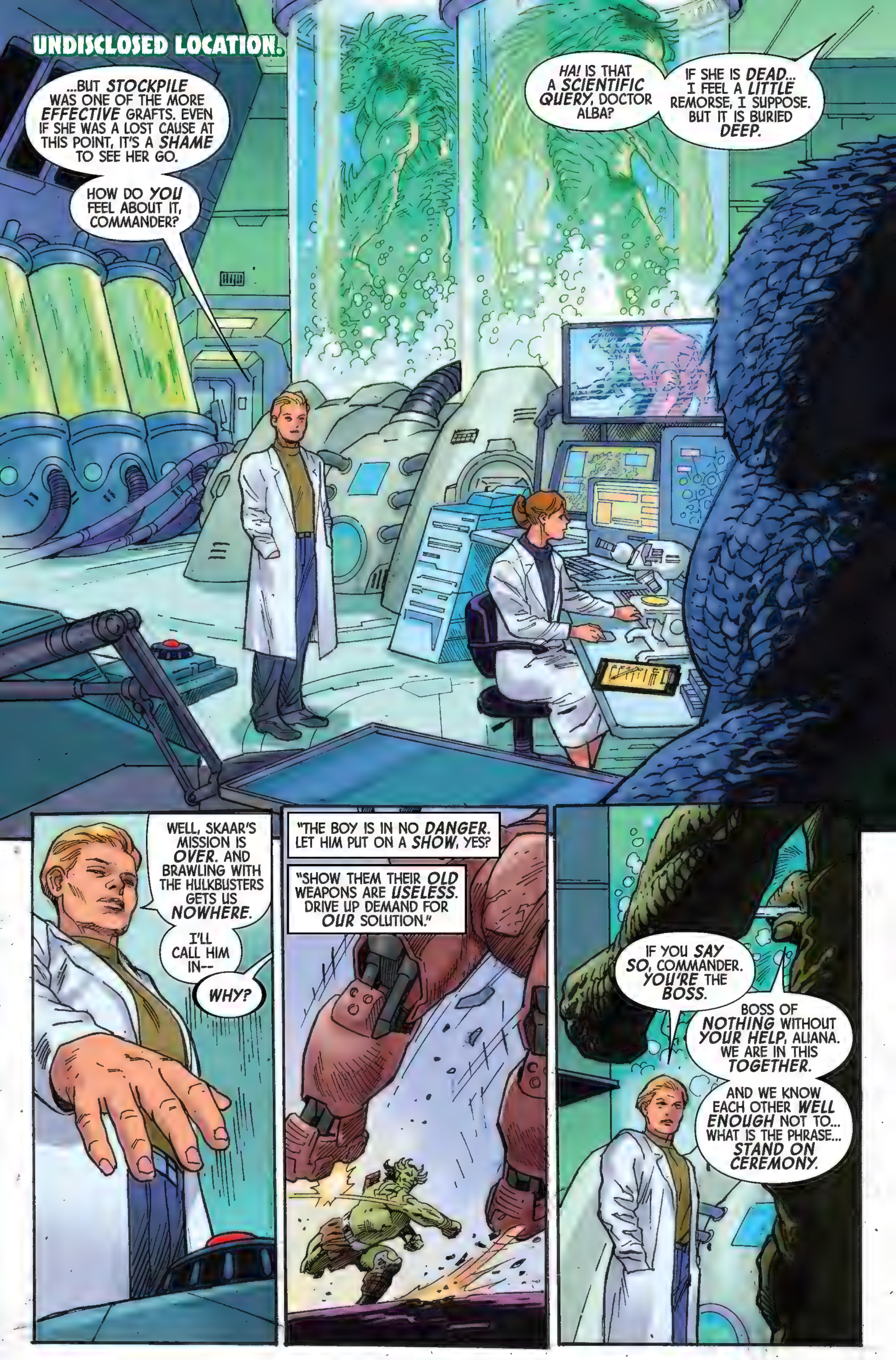

POWER DOWN AND SURRENDER IMMEDIATELY! THIS IS YOUR FIRST AND LAST WARNING--
--FROM THE UNITED STATES HULKBUSTER FORCE!
ALL-NEW HULKBUSTERS. THIS GETS BETTER AND BETTER.
BY THE WAY, BALDY--
SKREEEEG
--I CAN HEAR WHEN YOUR GUN CHARGES UP!
I'M HIT--
THEY'RE SHOOTING AT US!
HULKBUSTERS--CHARGE!
THEY FOUND SOME NEW GAMMA COPS. BET THAT ARMOR WASN'T CHEAP.
OUR TAXES AT WORK.
THIS FEELS WEIRD...
YOU OKAY, BABY?
ON A PERSON, THIS'D BE A FLESH WOUND.
ON A TELEPORT MACHINE...WHO KNOWS?

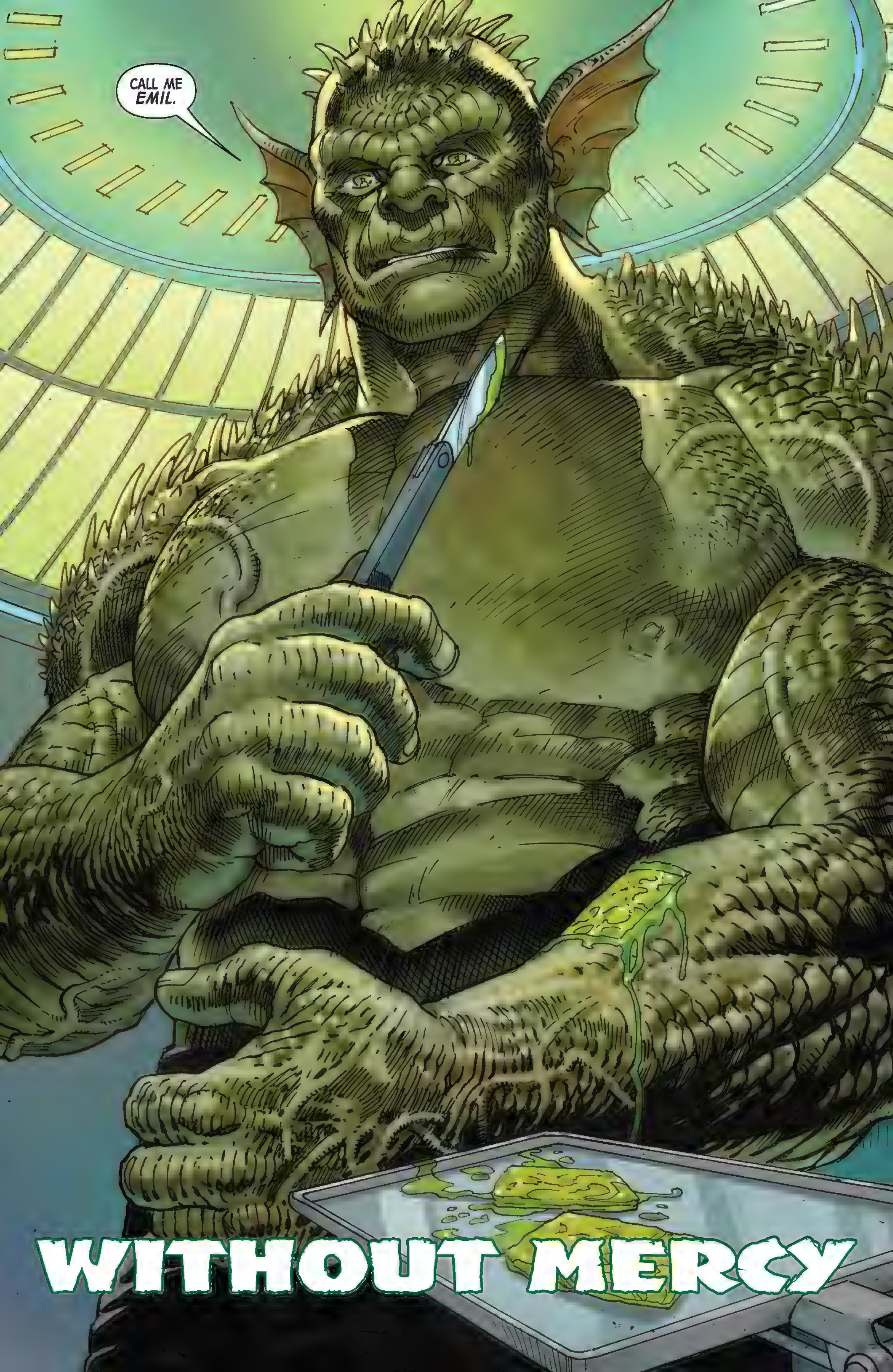

LET'S *TEST IT OUT.*
THINGS ARE GETTING *ROUGH* AROUND HERE, EH?
TOO ROUGH FOR *YOU,* MAYBE.
I'M HAVING THE TIME OF MY LIFE!
DROP THE WEAPON-- *NOW--*
AHH!
THIS OLD THING?
SURE, WHY *NOT?*
I LIKE MY NEW ONE BETTER ANYWAY!
NO!
UNH!

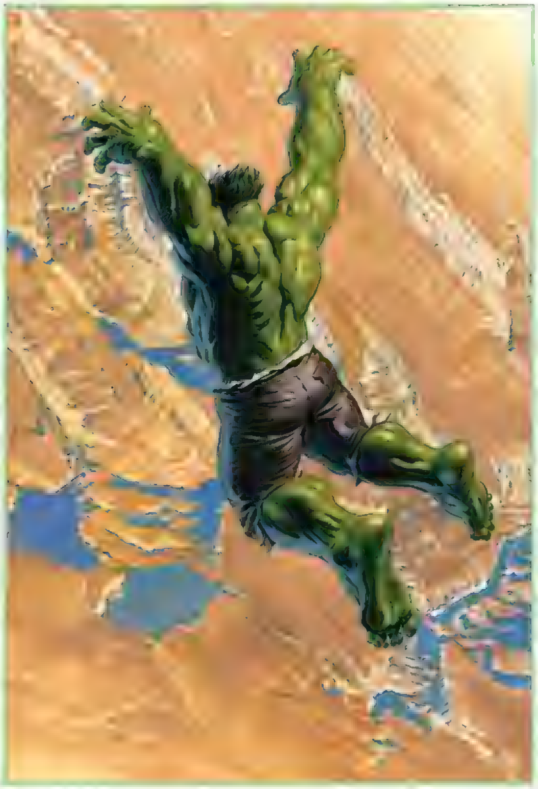

LORD-- HE'LL KILL SOMEONE--
SO FAR, HE'S ALL FLESH WOUNDS AND SHOWBOATING. I KNOW KILLERS, SAMSON--THIS AIN'T THAT.
ARE THE LOCAL GOONS GONNA GET A FEW BRUISES AND BROKEN TOYS? SURE.
BUT DO YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT THAT?
I DO, ACTUALLY.
BUT SHE'S RIGHT. IF SKAAR WANTED ANYONE DEAD, THEY'D BE DEAD RIGHT NOW.
SO EITHER I ACT LIKE I KNOW MORE THAN THE EXPERT--AGAIN--
--OR I PUT MY HUBRIS ASIDE FOR ONCE.
DIONNE'S WHO WE CAME TO HELP. SHE'S PUT HER TRUST IN ME.
PRETTY SURE WE GOTTA GO NOW--
DIONNE? ARE YOU WITH US?
SURE.
BETTER THE DEVIL I DON'T KNOW...
SHE HAS TO BE THE PRIORITY.
WE'RE ON A WING AND A PRAYER AT THIS POINT, FOLKS. I KNOW HOW MY TECH WORKS--I DON'T KNOW CARL'S MAGIC VERSION.
JUST...FOCUS ON HOME. ALL OF YOU.
SO I FOCUS ON HOME. I FOCUS ON CHARLENE.
AND HOW TO SAY SORRY, FOR EVERYTHING...


...BUT THAT'S THE THING ABOUT *HUBRIS*.
IT COMES IN MANY FORMS...
YOU GOT THIS, BABY?
I--*I* *GOT IT*--I GOT IT--
...AND THE GODS PUNISH IT *ALL*.
--I--
--*I DON'T* GOT IT--
WITHOUT MERCY.
EEEYYAAARRRGHHH
DEAR LORD--
CARL?
LEN? *ARE YOU THERE?*
I'VE *LOST* YOUR *SIGNAL*-- RESPOND!
EUGENE! ANY OF YOU! RESPOND!
--THEY--THEY DISINTEGRATED--
FOCUS, JENKINS!

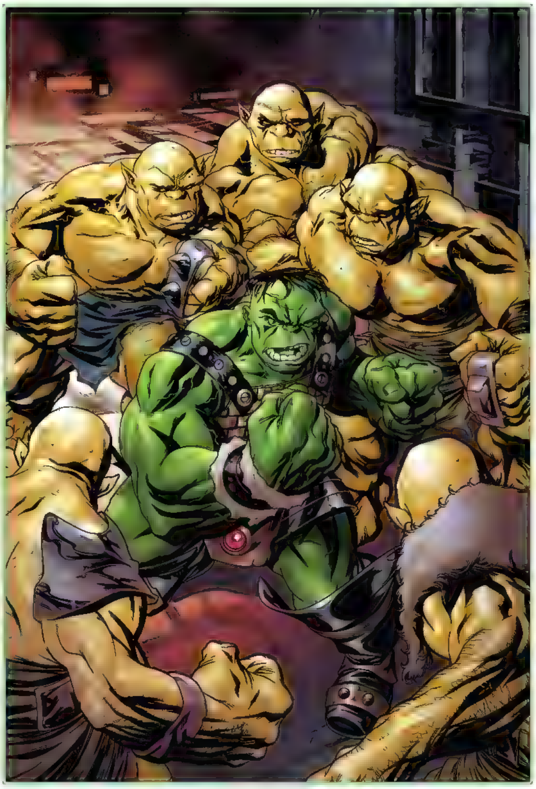

WE'VE STILL GOT A JOB TO DO--
YEAH? GOING ALL IN ON PLAYING HULKBUSTERS, ARE WE?
WELL, I'VE GOT YOUR HULK RIGHT HERE!
ALL THE HULK YOU NEED!
LIVE FEED
WHAT A DISASTER.
AT LEAST OUR ENEMIES TOOK THEMSELVES OFF THE BOARD...


UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.
...BUT STOCKPILE WAS ONE OF THE MORE EFFECTIVE GRAFTS. EVEN IF SHE WAS A LOST CAUSE AT THIS POINT, IT'S A SHAME TO SEE HER GO.
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT, COMMANDER?
HA! IS THAT A SCIENTIFIC QUERY, DOCTOR ALBA?
IF SHE IS DEAD... I FEEL A LITTLE REMORSE, I SUPPOSE. BUT IT IS BURIED DEEP.
WELL, SKAAR'S MISSION IS OVER. AND BRAWLING WITH THE HULKBUSTERS GETS US NOWHERE.
I'LL CALL HIM IN--
WHY?
"THE BOY IS IN NO DANGER. LET HIM PUT ON A SHOW, YES?
"SHOW THEM THEIR OLD WEAPONS ARE USELESS. DRIVE UP DEMAND FOR OUR SOLUTION."
IF YOU SAY SO, COMMANDER. YOU'RE THE BOSS.
BOSS OF NOTHING WITHOUT YOUR HELP, ALIANA. WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER.
AND WE KNOW EACH OTHER WELL ENOUGH NOT TO... WHAT IS THE PHRASE... STAND ON CEREMONY.

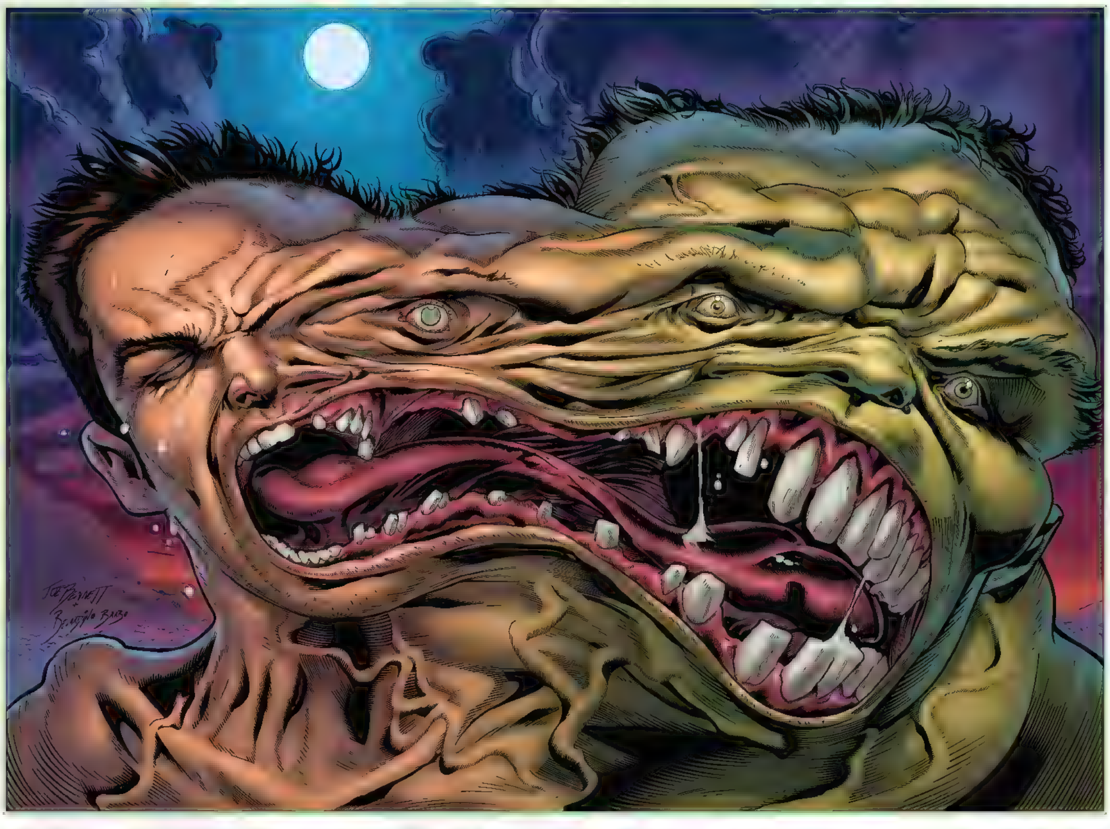

CALL ME *EMIL.*
WITHOUT MERCY



#15 *MARVELS* 25TH TRIBUTE VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS

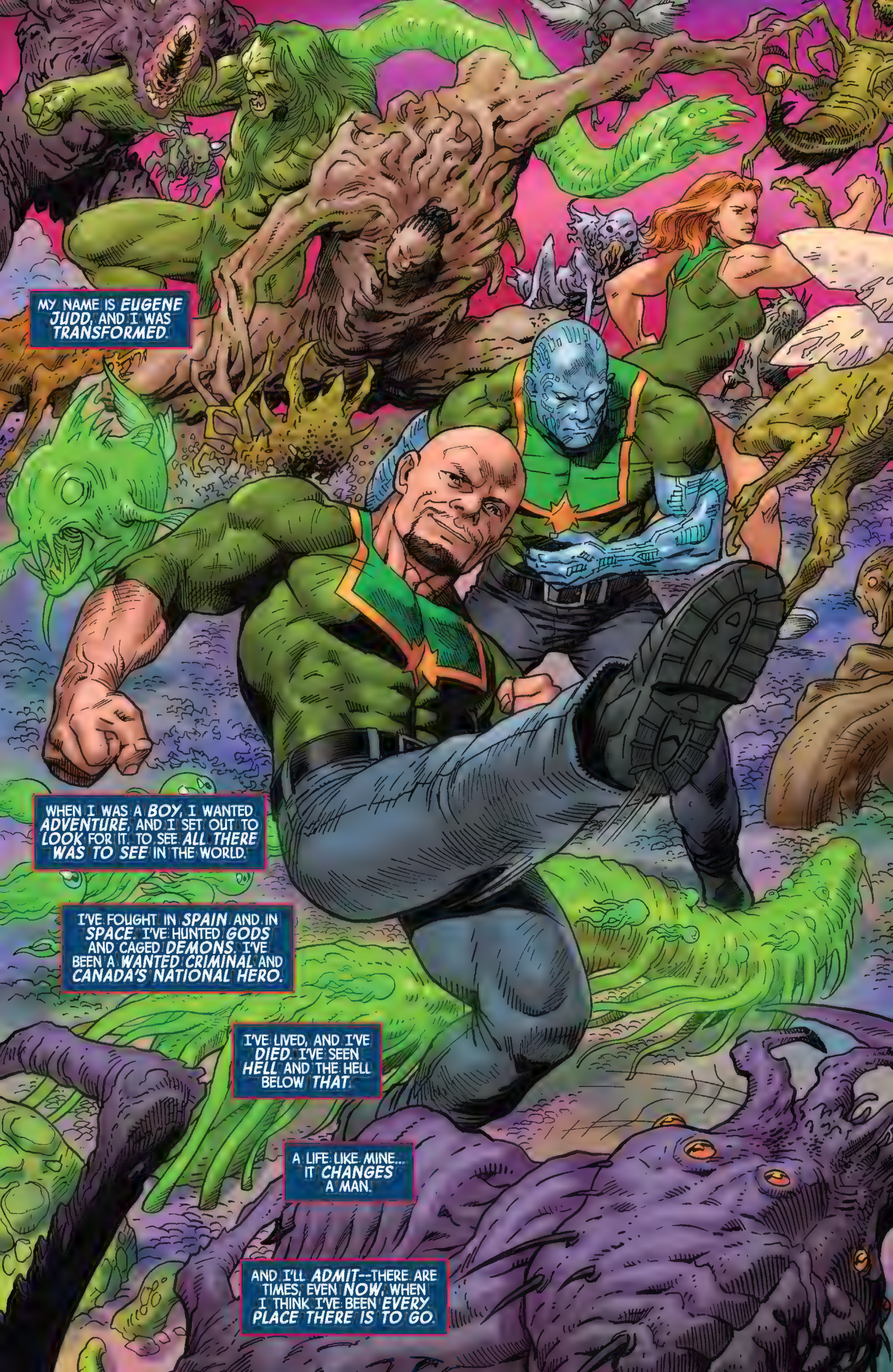


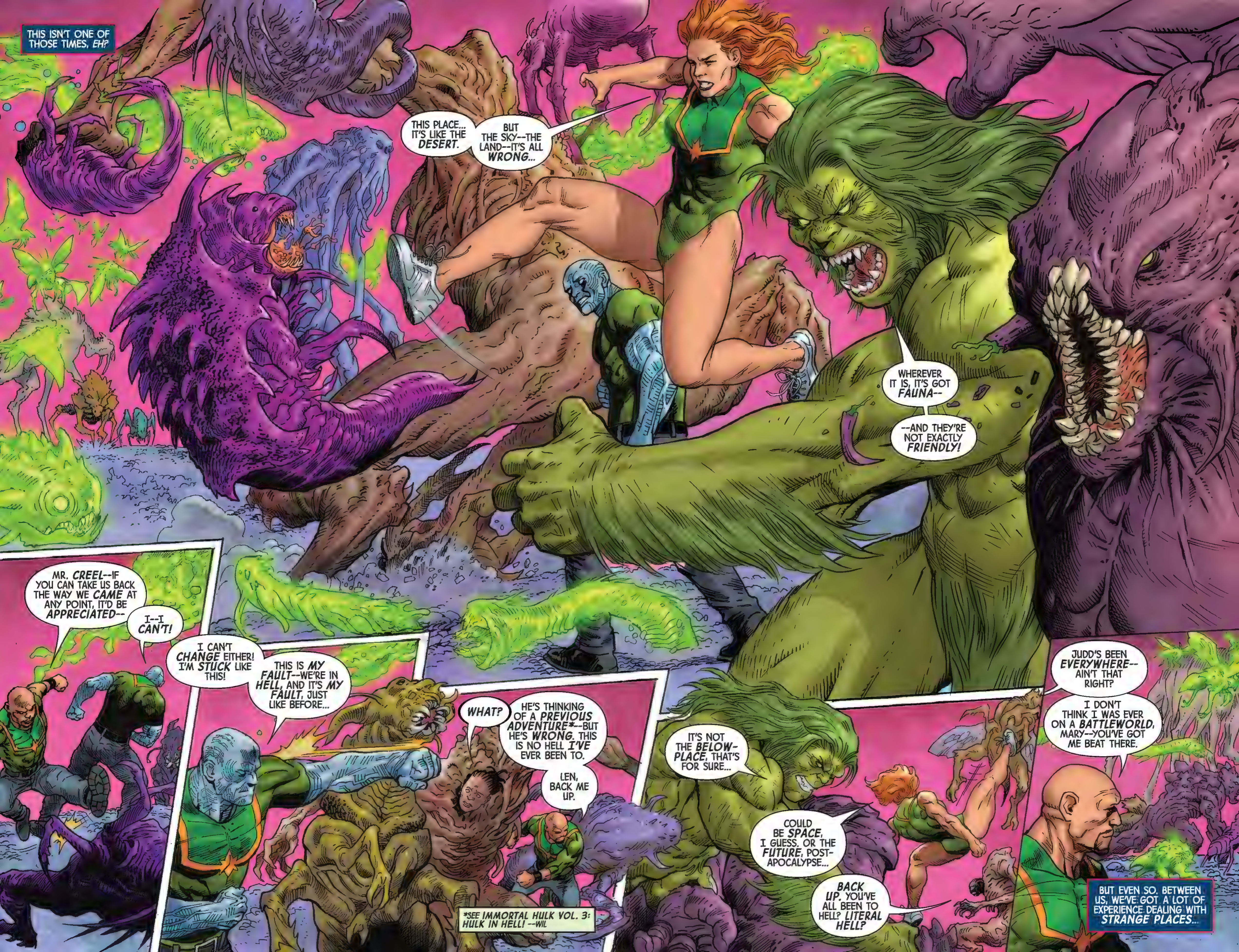
#16 ASGARDIAN VARIANT BY
MIKE McKONE & RAIN BEREDO

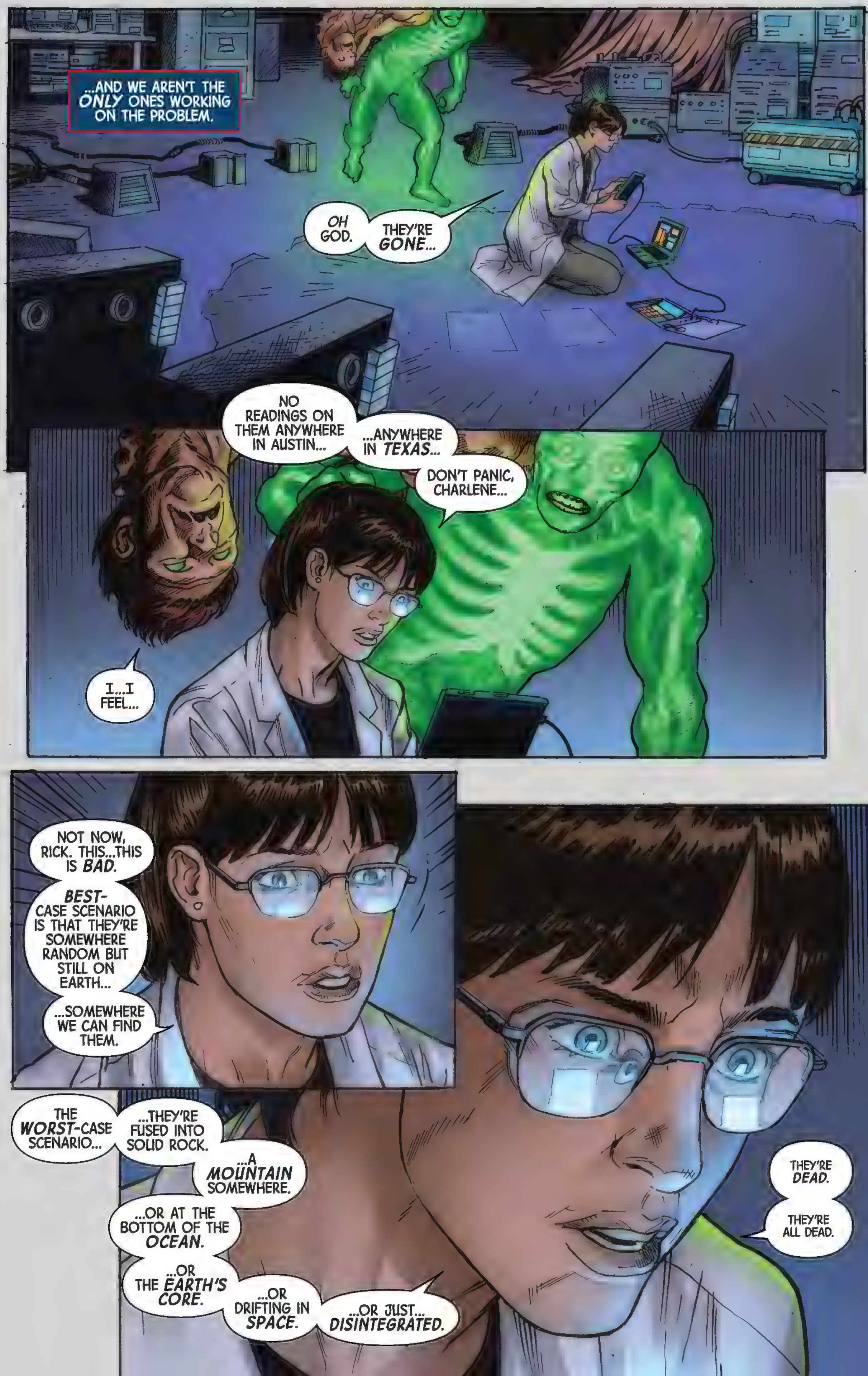


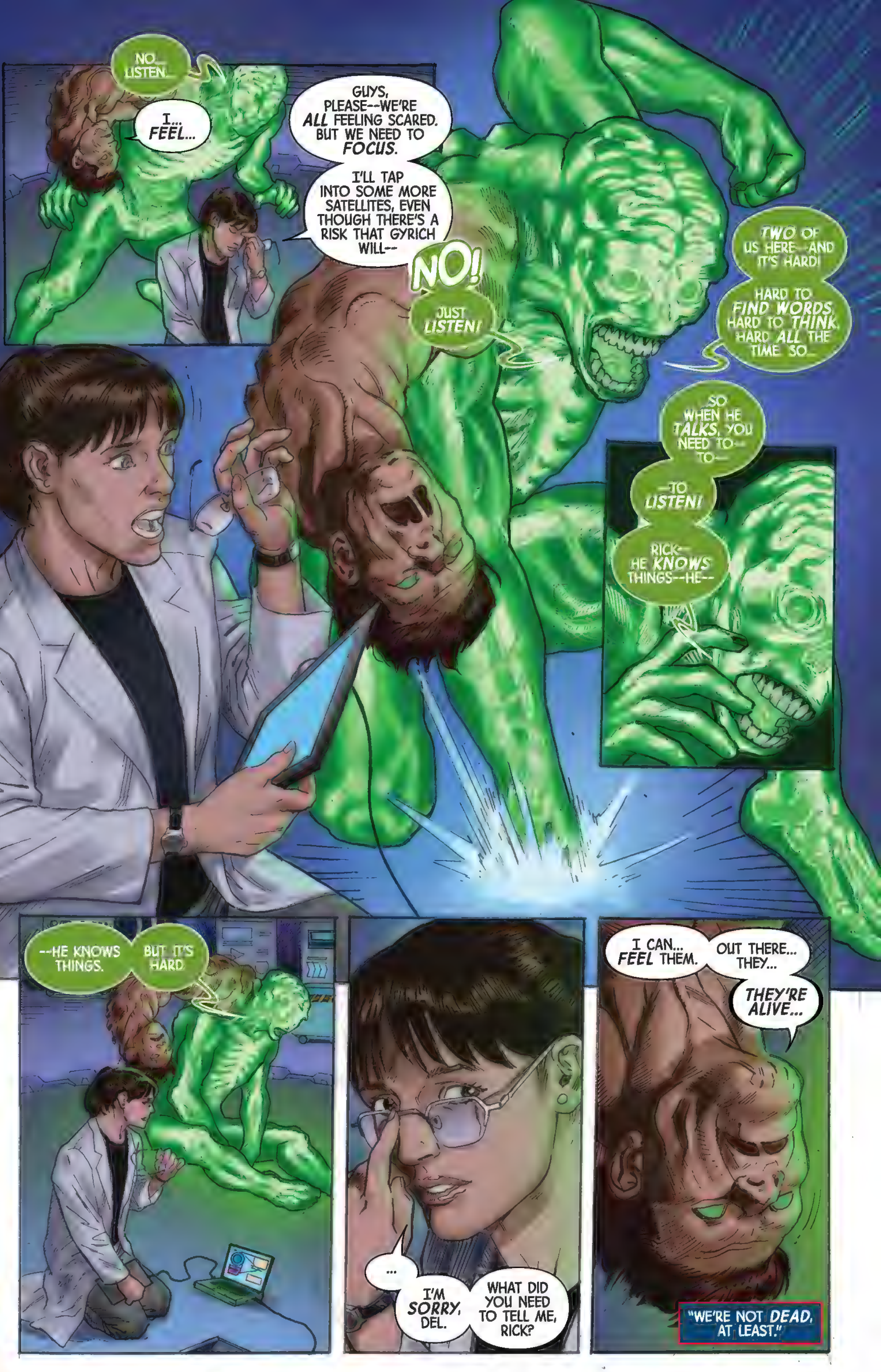
#16 IMMORTAL VARIANT BY JOE BENNETT, BELARDINO BRABO & LAURA MARTIN

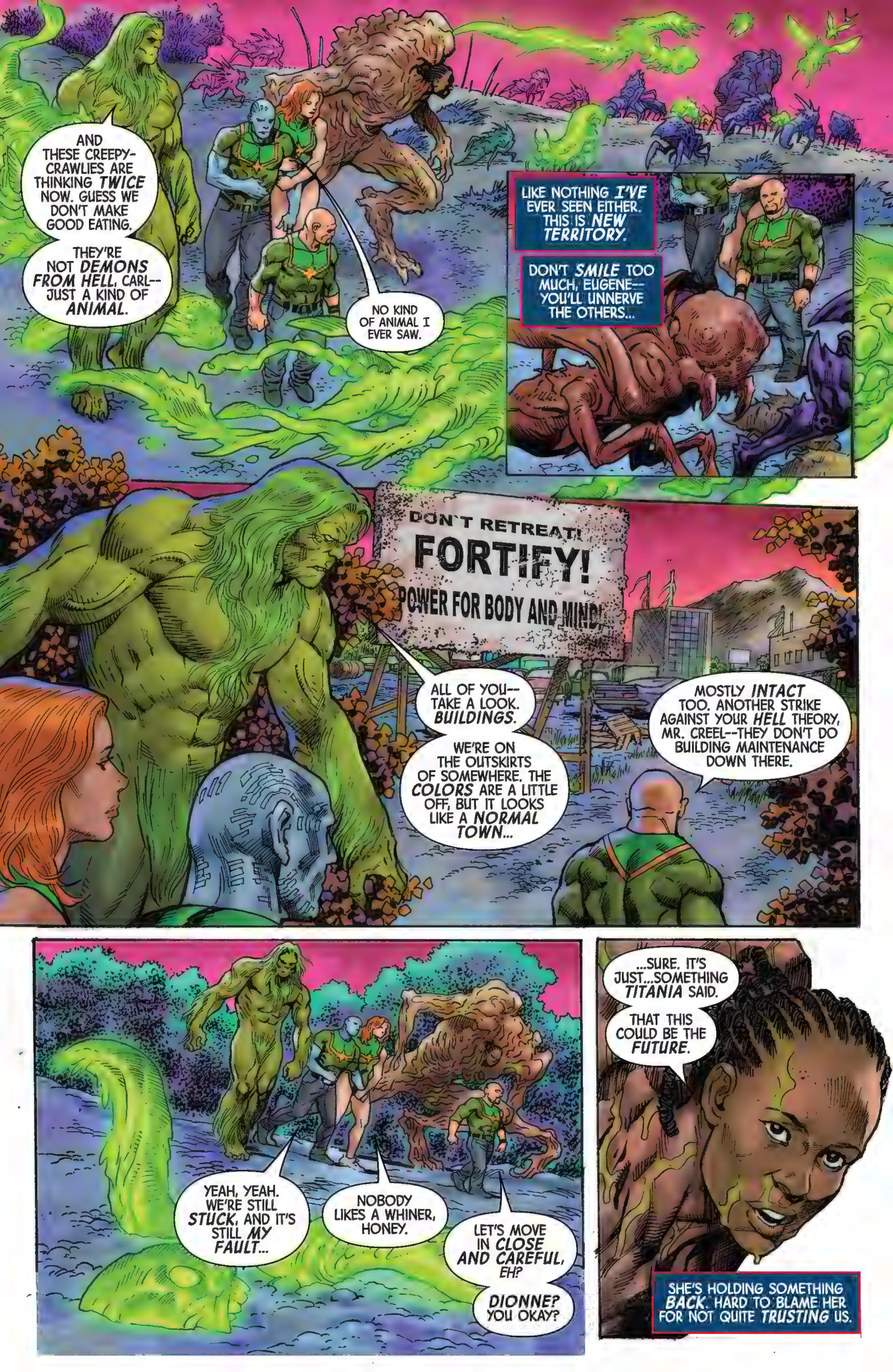
GAMMA FLIGHT 3

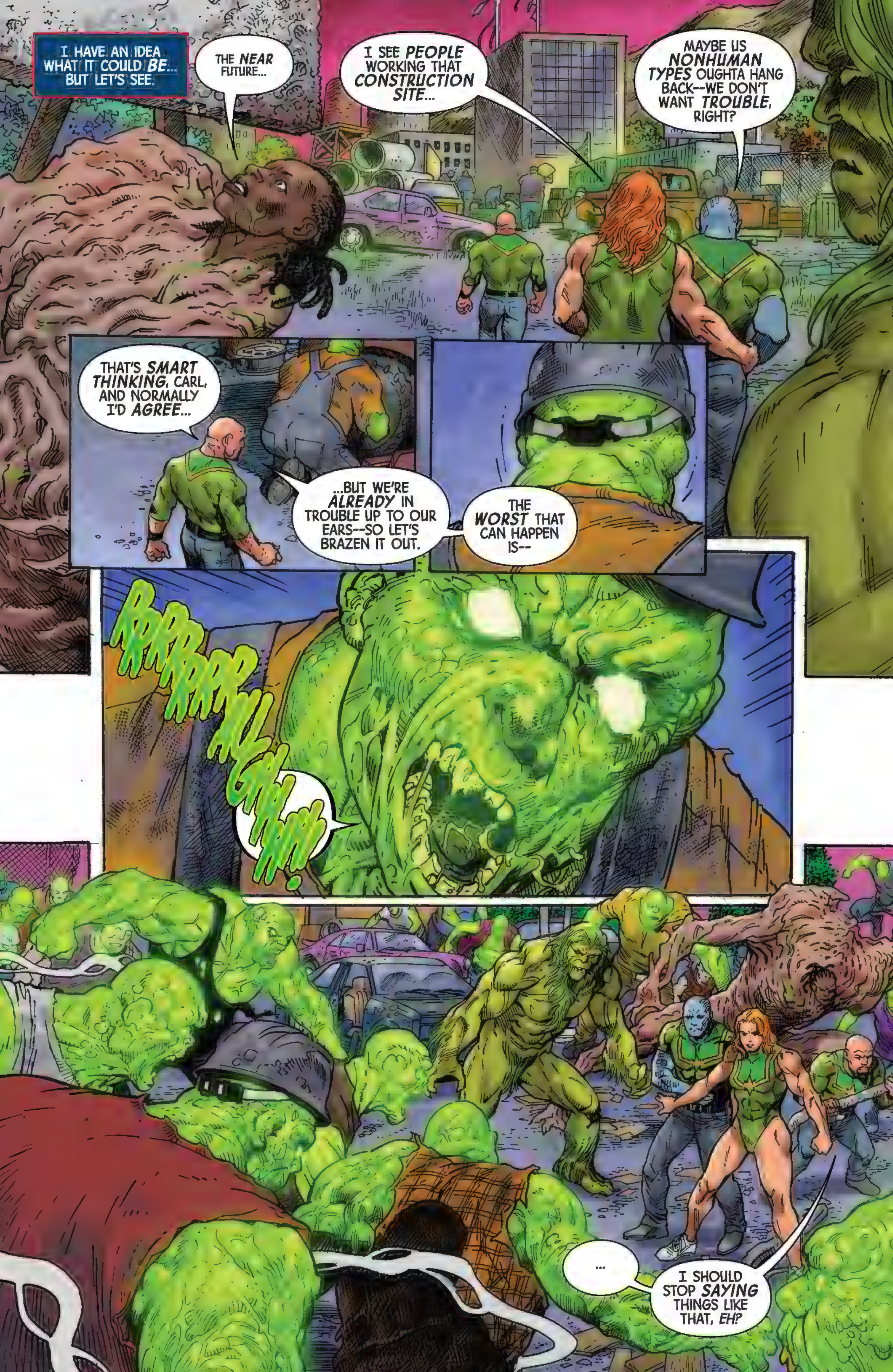

MY NAME IS *EUGENE JUDD*, AND I WAS *TRANSFORMED*.
WHEN I WAS A *BOY*, I WANTED *ADVENTURE*, AND I SET OUT TO *LOOK* FOR IT. TO SEE *ALL THERE WAS TO SEE* IN THE WORLD.
I'VE FOUGHT IN *SPAIN* AND IN *SPACE*. I'VE HUNTED *GODS* AND CAGED *DEMONS*. I'VE BEEN A *WANTED CRIMINAL* AND *CANADA'S NATIONAL HERO*.
I'VE LIVED, AND I'VE *DIED*. I'VE SEEN *HELL* AND THE HELL BELOW *THAT*.
A LIFE LIKE MINE... IT *CHANGES* A MAN.
AND I'LL *ADMIT*--THERE ARE TIMES, EVEN *NOW*, WHEN I THINK I'VE BEEN *EVERY PLACE THERE IS TO GO*.

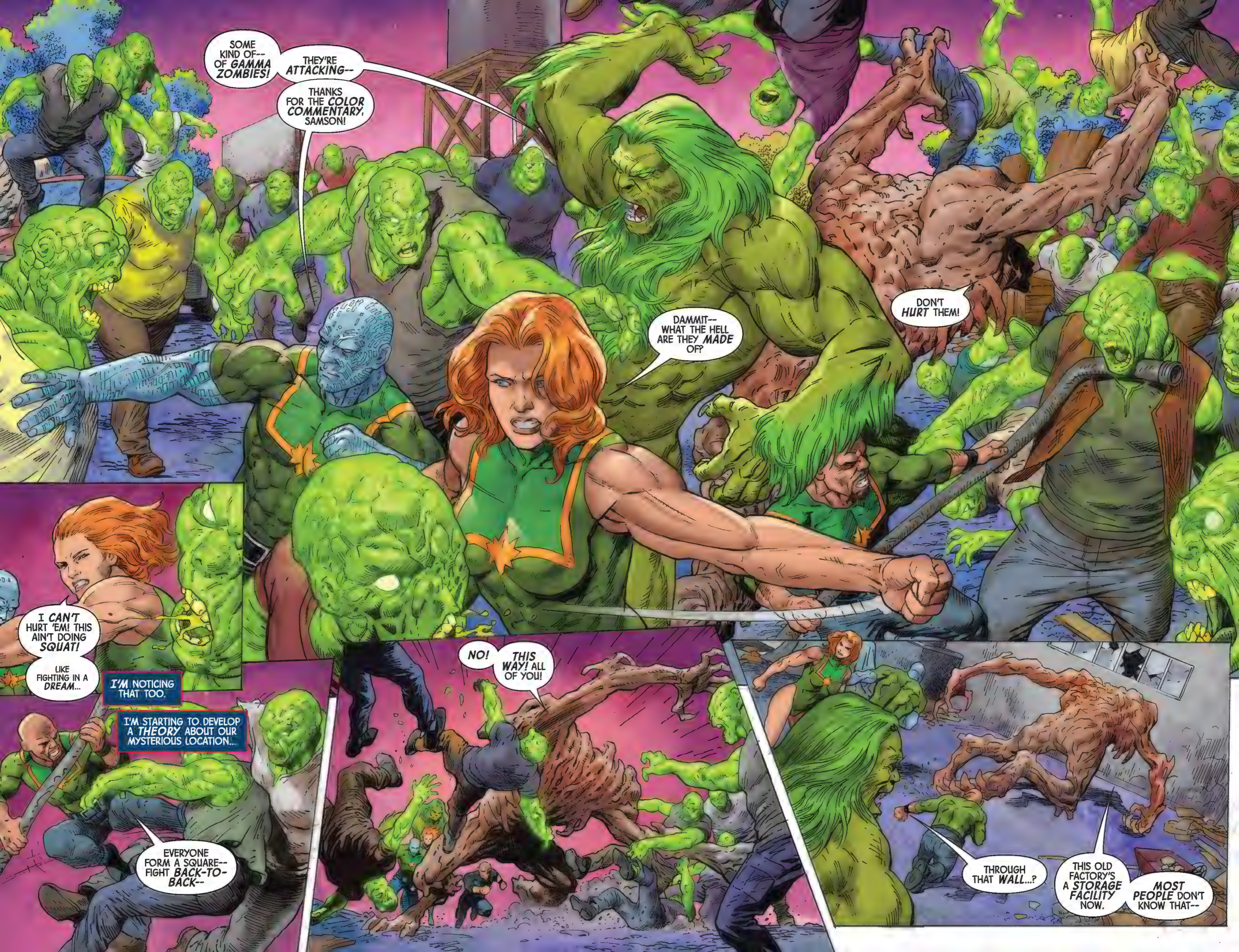

THIS ISN'T ONE OF THOSE TIMES, EH?
THIS PLACE... IT'S LIKE THE DESERT.
BUT THE SKY--THE LAND--IT'S ALL WRONG...
WHEREVER IT IS, IT'S GOT FAUNA--
--AND THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY FRIENDLY!
MR. CREEL--IF YOU CAN TAKE US BACK THE WAY WE CAME AT ANY POINT, IT'D BE APPRECIATED--
I--I CAN'T!
I CAN'T CHANGE EITHER! I'M STUCK LIKE THIS!
THIS IS MY FAULT--WE'RE IN HELL, AND IT'S MY FAULT, JUST LIKE BEFORE...
WHAT?
HE'S THINKING OF A PREVIOUS ADVENTURE*--BUT HE'S WRONG. THIS IS NO HELL I'VE EVER BEEN TO.
LEN, BACK ME UP.
*SEE IMMORTAL HULK VOL. 3: HULK IN HELL! --WIL
IT'S NOT THE BELOW-PLACE, THAT'S FOR SURE...
COULD BE SPACE, I GUESS. OR THE FUTURE, POST-APOCALYPSE...
BACK UP. YOU'VE ALL BEEN TO HELL? LITERAL HELL?
JUDD'S BEEN EVERYWHERE--AIN'T THAT RIGHT?
I DON'T THINK I WAS EVER ON A BATTLEWORLD, MARY--YOU'VE GOT ME BEAT THERE.
BUT EVEN SO, BETWEEN US, WE'VE GOT A LOT OF EXPERIENCE DEALING WITH STRANGE PLACES...

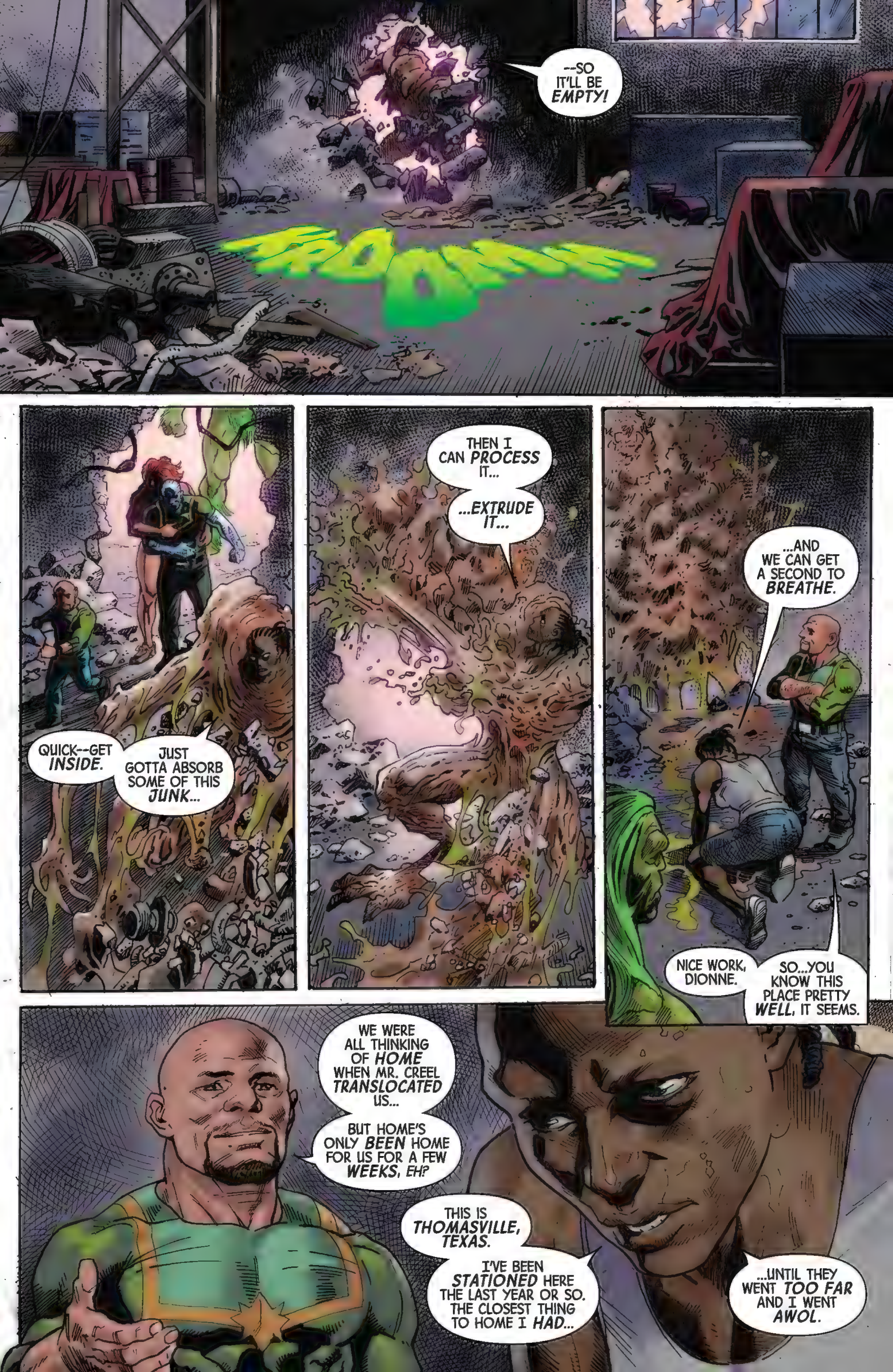

...AND WE AREN'T THE *ONLY* ONES WORKING ON THE PROBLEM.
OH GOD.
THEY'RE *GONE*...
NO READINGS ON THEM ANYWHERE IN AUSTIN...
...ANYWHERE IN *TEXAS*...
DON'T PANIC, CHARLENE...
I...I FEEL...
NOT NOW, RICK. THIS...THIS IS *BAD*.
BEST-CASE SCENARIO IS THAT THEY'RE SOMEWHERE RANDOM BUT STILL ON EARTH...
...SOMEWHERE WE CAN FIND THEM.
THE *WORST*-CASE SCENARIO...
...THEY'RE FUSED INTO SOLID ROCK.
...A *MOUNTAIN* SOMEWHERE.
...OR AT THE BOTTOM OF THE *OCEAN*.
...OR THE *EARTH'S CORE*.
...OR DRIFTING IN *SPACE*.
...OR JUST... *DISINTEGRATED*.
THEY'RE *DEAD*.
THEY'RE ALL DEAD.

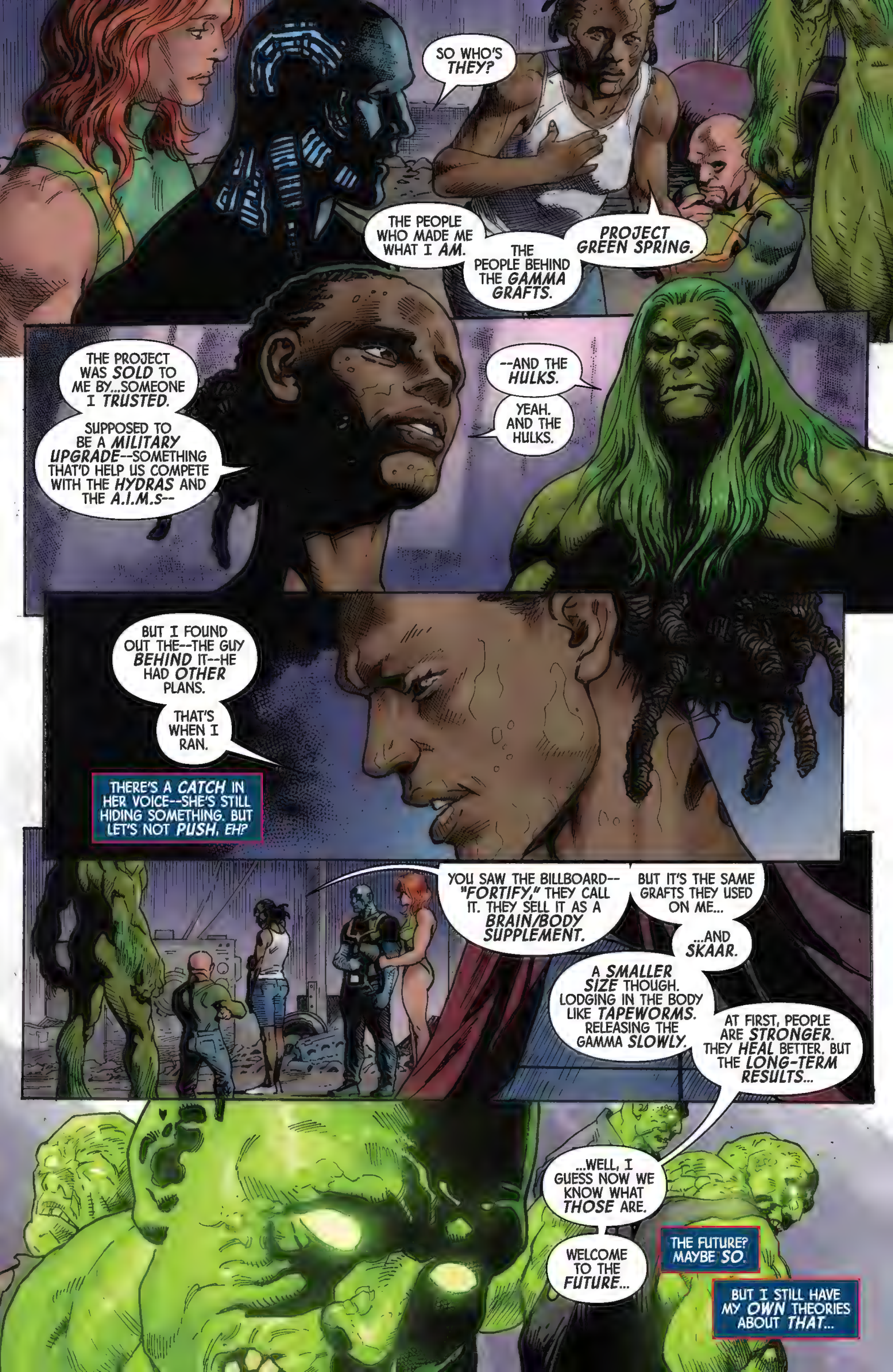

NO... LISTEN...
I... *FEEL*...
GUYS, PLEASE--WE'RE *ALL* FEELING SCARED. BUT WE NEED TO *FOCUS*.
I'LL TAP INTO SOME MORE SATELLITES, EVEN THOUGH THERE'S A RISK THAT GYRICH WILL--
NO!
JUST *LISTEN!*
TWO OF US HERE--AND IT'S HARD!
HARD TO *FIND WORDS*, HARD TO *THINK*, HARD *ALL* THE TIME. SO...
...SO WHEN HE *TALKS*, YOU NEED TO-- TO--
--TO *LISTEN!*
RICK-- HE *KNOWS* THINGS--HE--
--HE KNOWS THINGS.
BUT IT'S HARD
...
I'M *SORRY*, DEL.
WHAT DID YOU NEED TO TELL ME, RICK?
I CAN... *FEEL* THEM.
OUT THERE... THEY...
THEY'RE ALIVE...
"WE'RE NOT *DEAD*, AT LEAST."

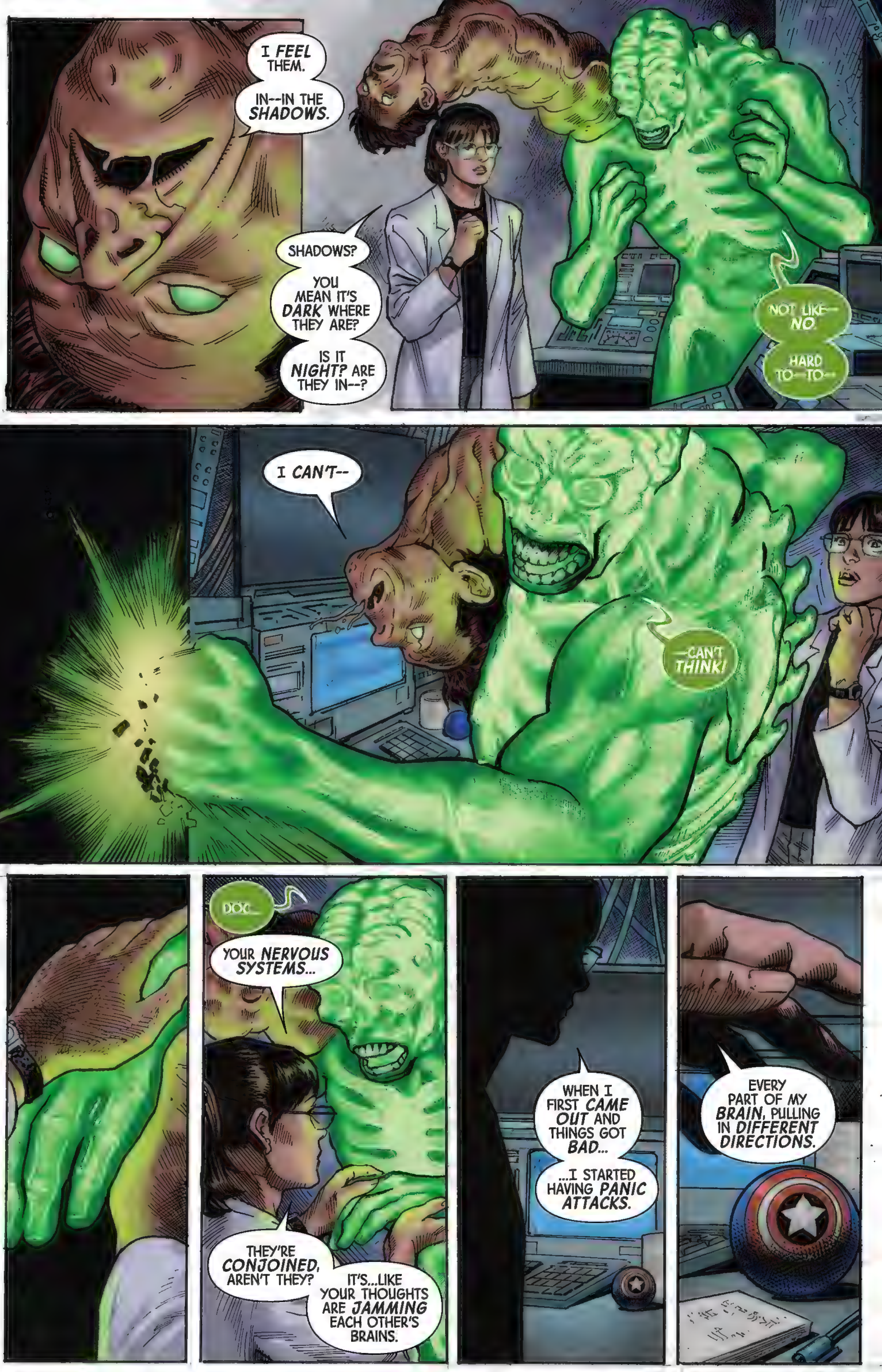

AND THESE CREEPY-CRAWLIES ARE THINKING *TWICE* NOW. GUESS WE DON'T MAKE GOOD EATING.
THEY'RE NOT *DEMONS FROM HELL*, CARL-- JUST A KIND OF *ANIMAL*.
NO KIND OF ANIMAL I EVER SAW.
LIKE NOTHING *I'VE* EVER SEEN EITHER. THIS IS *NEW TERRITORY*.
DON'T *SMILE* TOO MUCH, EUGENE-- YOU'LL UNNERVE THE OTHERS...
DON'T RETREAT! FORTIFY! POWER FOR BODY AND MIND!
ALL OF YOU-- TAKE A LOOK. *BUILDINGS*.
WE'RE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF SOMEWHERE. THE *COLORS* ARE A LITTLE OFF, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE A *NORMAL TOWN*...
MOSTLY *INTACT* TOO. ANOTHER STRIKE AGAINST YOUR *HELL* THEORY, MR. CREEL--THEY DON'T DO BUILDING MAINTENANCE DOWN THERE.
YEAH, YEAH. WE'RE STILL *STUCK*, AND IT'S STILL *MY FAULT*...
NOBODY LIKES A WHINER, HONEY.
LET'S MOVE IN *CLOSE AND CAREFUL*, EH?
DIONNE? YOU OKAY?
...SURE. IT'S JUST...SOMETHING *TITANIA* SAID.
THAT THIS COULD BE THE *FUTURE*.
SHE'S HOLDING SOMETHING *BACK*. HARD TO BLAME HER FOR NOT QUITE *TRUSTING* US.

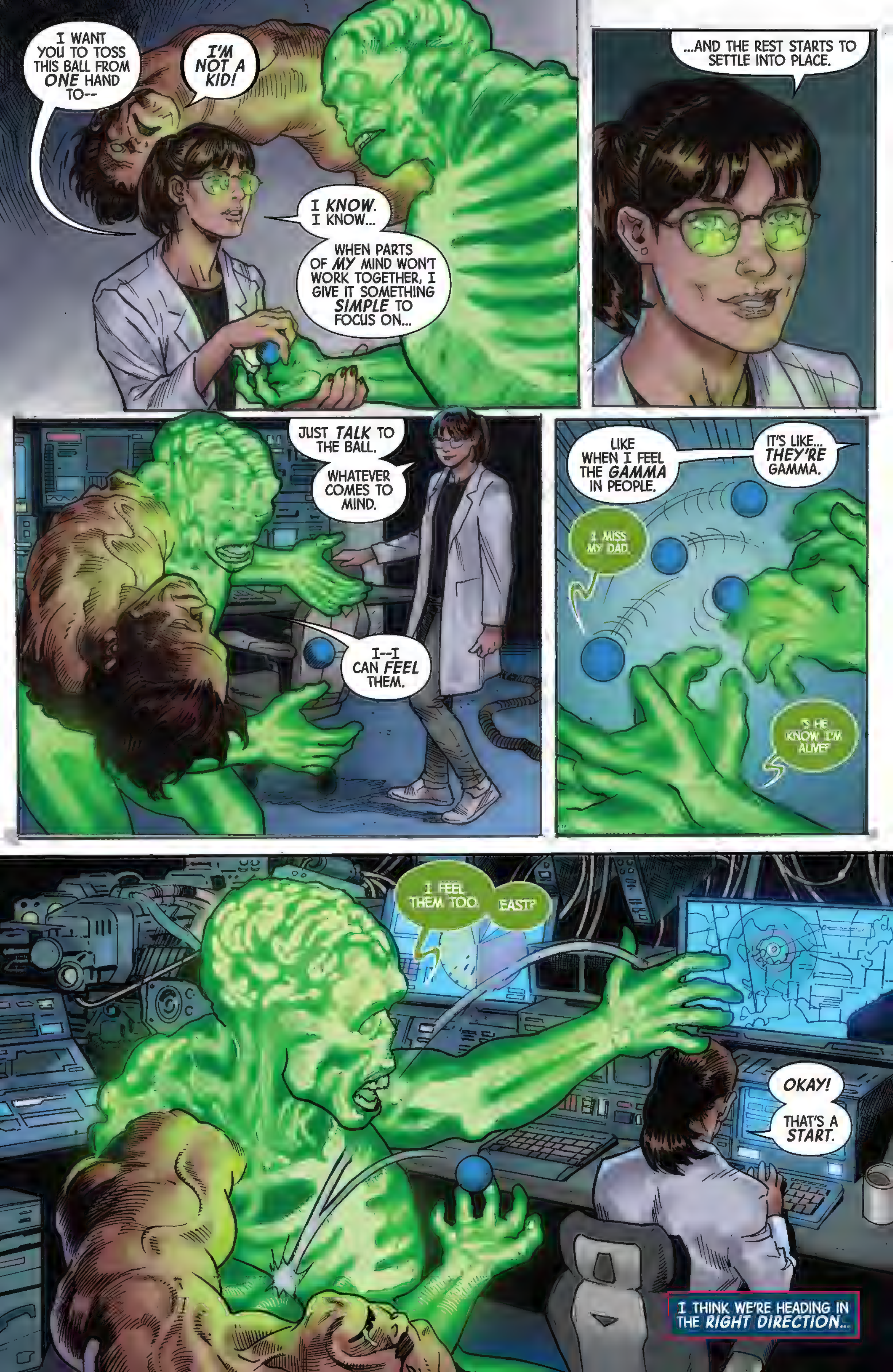

I HAVE AN IDEA WHAT IT COULD *BE*... BUT LET'S SEE.
THE *NEAR* FUTURE...
I SEE *PEOPLE* WORKING THAT *CONSTRUCTION SITE*...
MAYBE US *NONHUMAN TYPES* OUGHTA HANG BACK--WE DON'T WANT *TROUBLE*, RIGHT?
THAT'S *SMART THINKING*, CARL, AND NORMALLY I'D *AGREE*...
...BUT WE'RE *ALREADY* IN TROUBLE UP TO OUR EARS--SO LET'S BRAZEN IT OUT.
THE *WORST* THAT CAN HAPPEN IS--
RRRRRRRAAAAGHHH!
...
I SHOULD STOP *SAYING* THINGS LIKE THAT, *EH?*

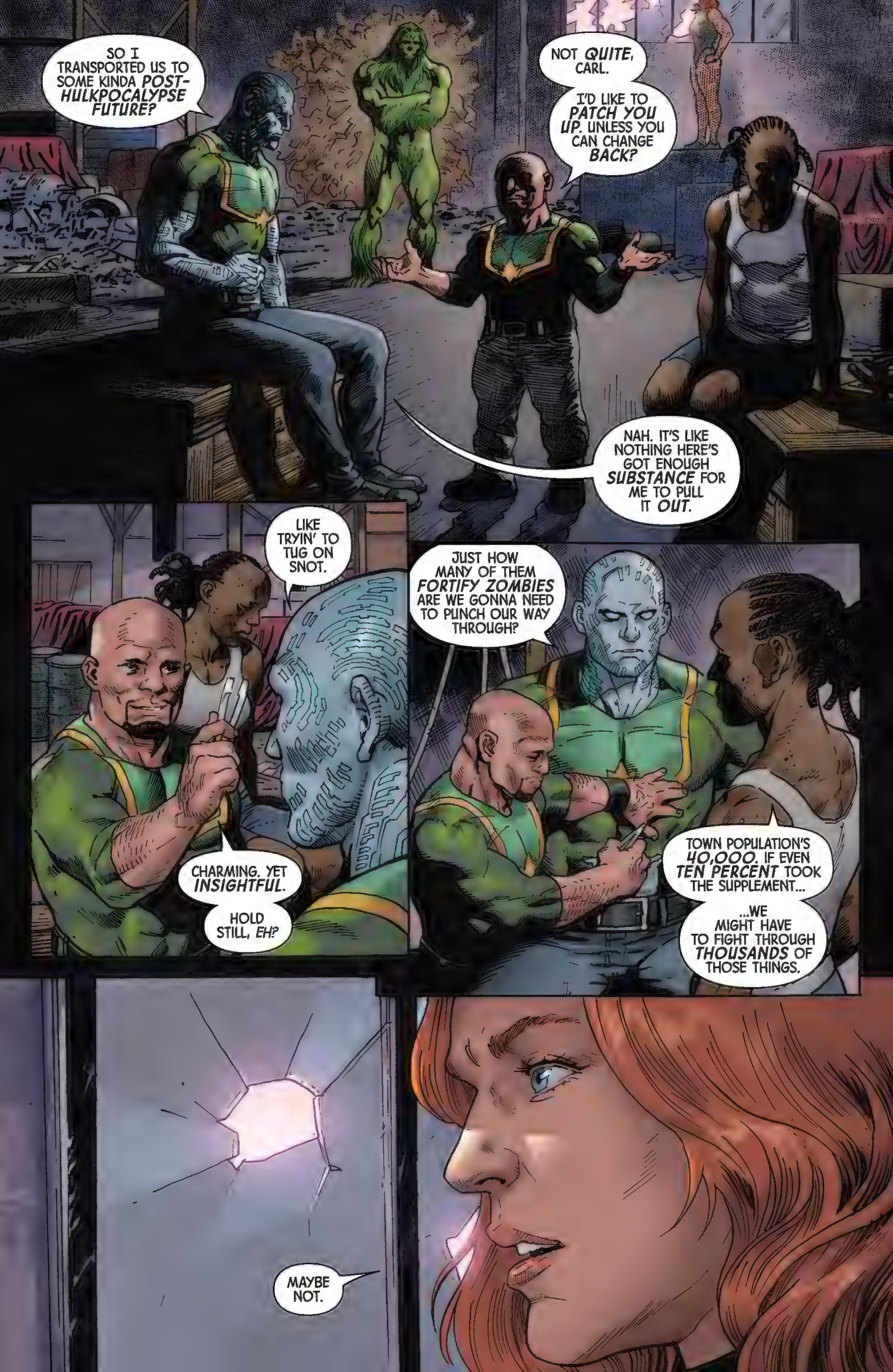

SOME KIND OF-- OF *GAMMA ZOMBIES!*
THEY'RE *ATTACKING*--
THANKS FOR THE *COLOR COMMENTARY,* SAMSON!
DAMMIT-- WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY *MADE* OF?
DON'T *HURT* THEM!
I *CAN'T* HURT 'EM! THIS AIN'T DOING *SQUAT!*
LIKE FIGHTING IN A *DREAM*...
I'M NOTICING THAT TOO.
I'M STARTING TO DEVELOP A *THEORY* ABOUT OUR MYSTERIOUS LOCATION...
EVERYONE FORM A SQUARE-- FIGHT *BACK-TO-BACK*--
NO! THIS WAY! ALL OF YOU!
THROUGH THAT *WALL*...?
THIS OLD FACTORY'S A *STORAGE FACILITY* NOW.
MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THAT--

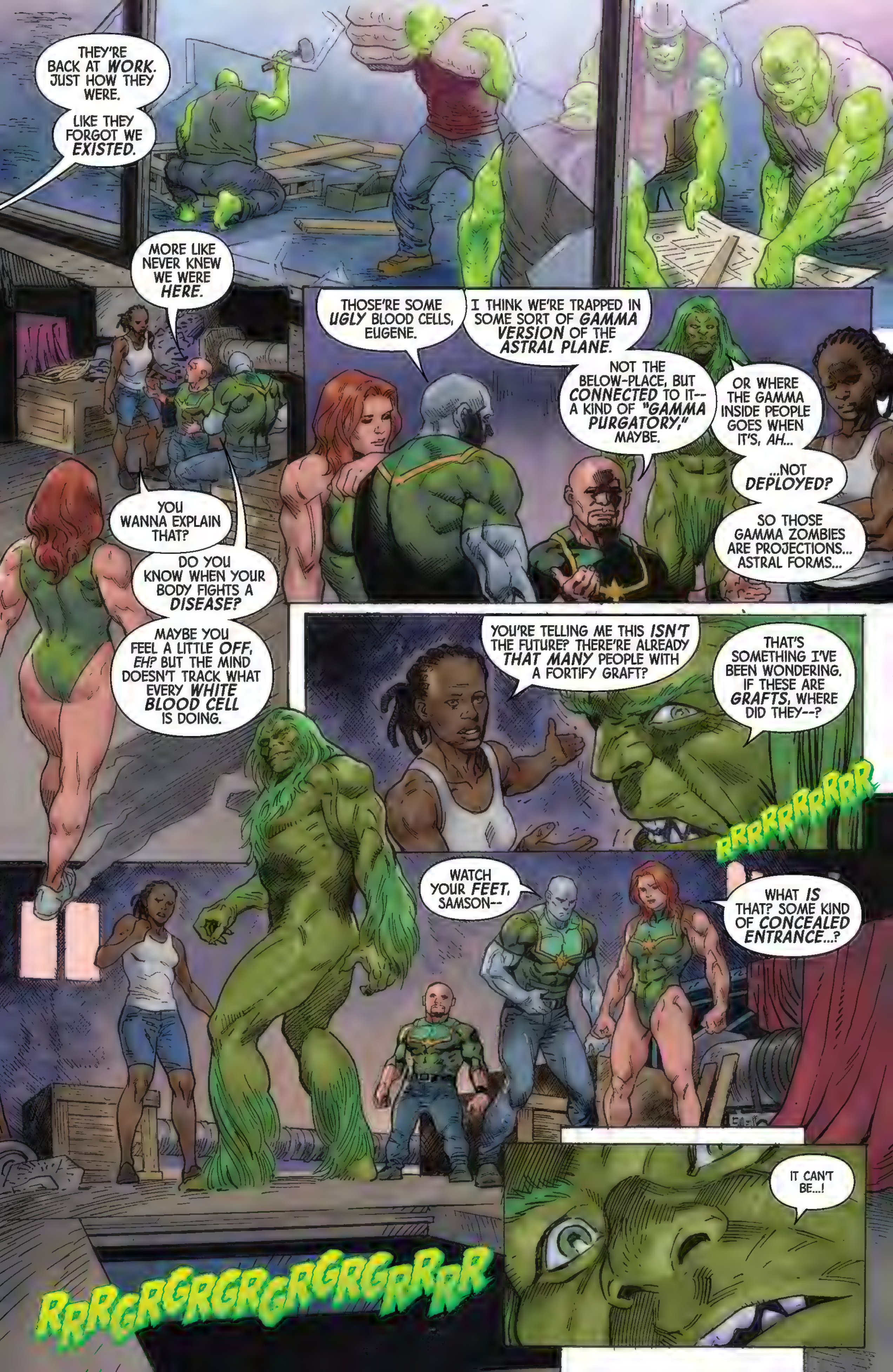

--SO IT'LL BE *EMPTY!*
QUICK--GET *INSIDE.*
JUST GOTTA ABSORB SOME OF THIS *JUNK*...
THEN I CAN *PROCESS* IT...
...*EXTRUDE IT*...
...AND WE CAN GET A SECOND TO *BREATHE.*
NICE WORK, DIONNE.
SO...YOU KNOW THIS PLACE PRETTY *WELL,* IT SEEMS.
WE WERE ALL THINKING OF *HOME* WHEN MR. CREEL *TRANSLOCATED* US...
BUT HOME'S ONLY *BEEN* HOME FOR US FOR A FEW *WEEKS,* EH?
THIS IS *THOMASVILLE, TEXAS.*
I'VE BEEN *STATIONED* HERE THE LAST YEAR OR SO. THE CLOSEST THING TO HOME I *HAD*...
...UNTIL THEY WENT *TOO FAR* AND I WENT *AWOL.*

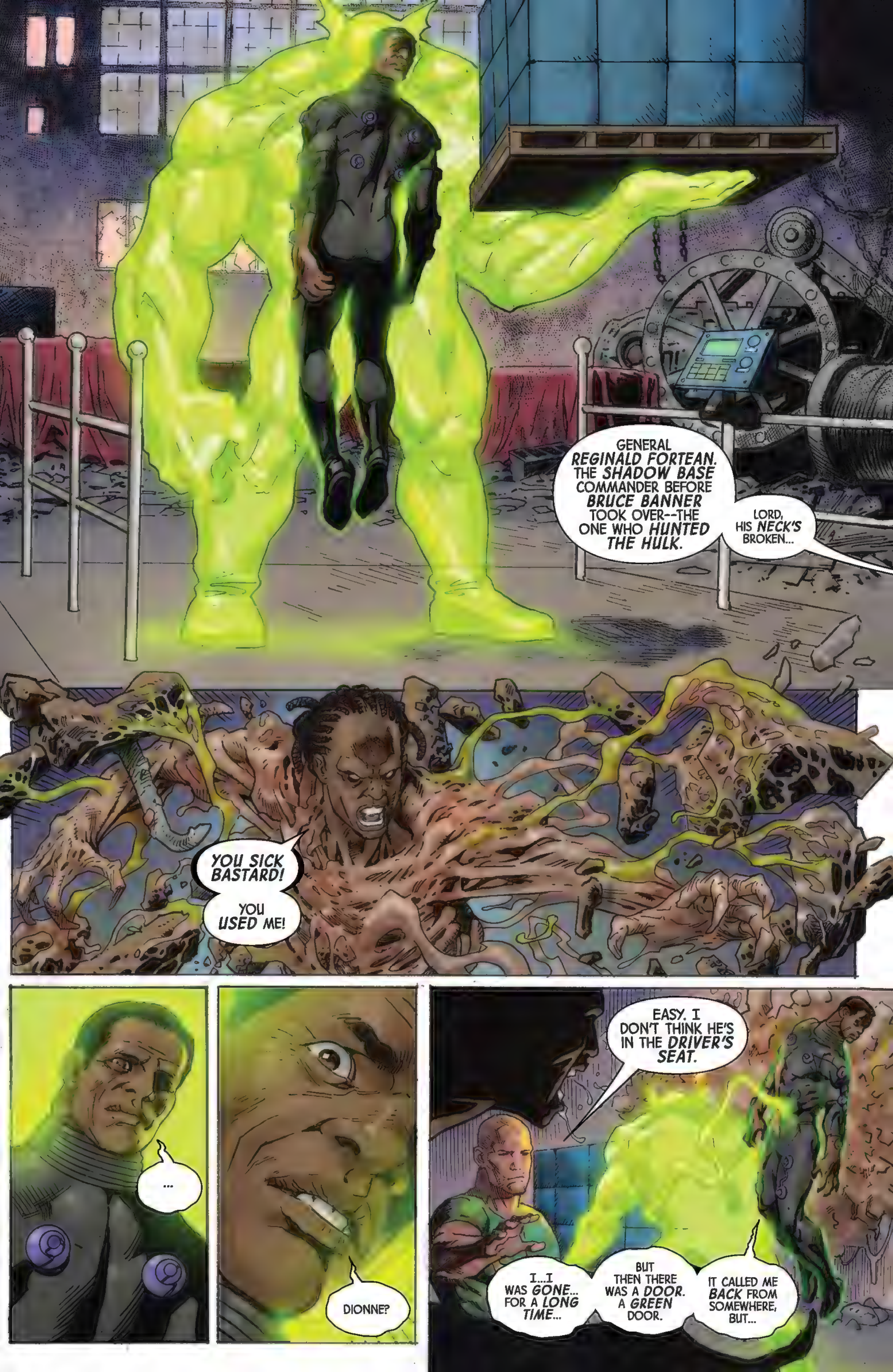

SO WHO'S *THEY?*
THE PEOPLE WHO MADE ME WHAT I *AM.*
THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE *GAMMA GRAFTS.*
PROJECT GREEN SPRING.
THE PROJECT WAS *SOLD* TO ME BY...SOMEONE I *TRUSTED.*
SUPPOSED TO BE A *MILITARY UPGRADE*--SOMETHING THAT'D HELP US COMPETE WITH THE *HYDRAS* AND THE *A.I.M.s*--
--AND THE *HULKS.*
YEAH. AND THE HULKS.
BUT I FOUND OUT THE--THE GUY *BEHIND* IT--HE HAD *OTHER* PLANS.
THAT'S WHEN I RAN.
THERE'S A *CATCH* IN HER VOICE--SHE'S STILL HIDING SOMETHING. BUT LET'S NOT *PUSH.* *EH?*
YOU SAW THE BILLBOARD--*"FORTIFY,"* THEY CALL IT. THEY SELL IT AS A *BRAIN/BODY SUPPLEMENT.*
BUT IT'S THE SAME GRAFTS THEY USED ON ME...
...AND *SKAAR.*
A *SMALLER SIZE* THOUGH. LODGING IN THE BODY LIKE *TAPEWORMS.* RELEASING THE GAMMA *SLOWLY.*
AT FIRST, PEOPLE ARE *STRONGER.* THEY *HEAL* BETTER. BUT THE *LONG-TERM RESULTS*...
...WELL, I GUESS NOW WE KNOW WHAT *THOSE* ARE.
WELCOME TO THE *FUTURE*...
THE FUTURE? MAYBE *SO.*
BUT I STILL HAVE MY *OWN* THEORIES ABOUT *THAT*...

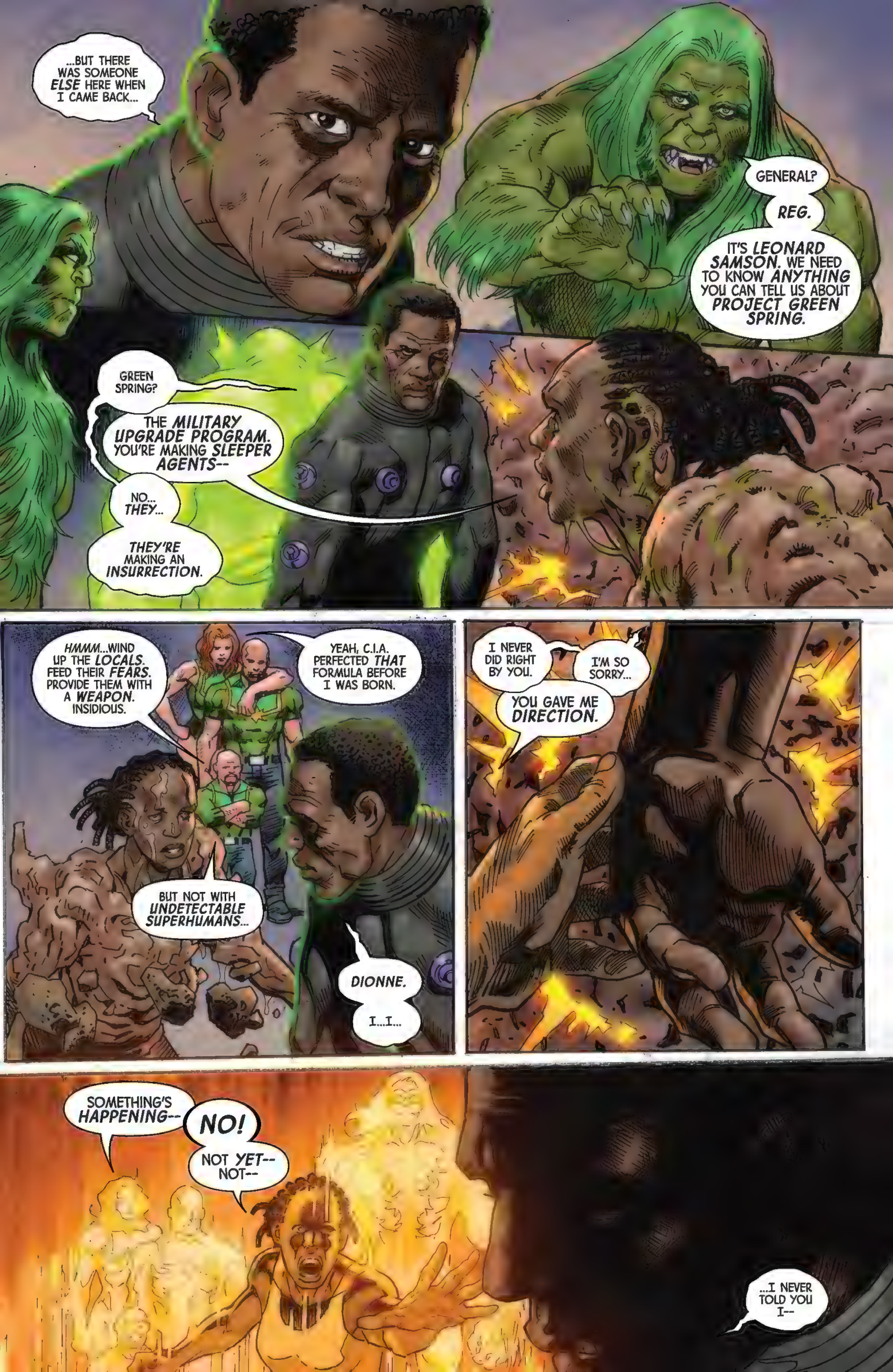

I FEEL THEM.
IN--IN THE SHADOWS.
SHADOWS?
YOU MEAN IT'S DARK WHERE THEY ARE?
IS IT NIGHT? ARE THEY IN--?
NOT LIKE— NO.
HARD TO—TO—
I CAN'T--
—CAN'T THINK!
DOC...
YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEMS...
THEY'RE CONJOINED, AREN'T THEY?
IT'S...LIKE YOUR THOUGHTS ARE JAMMING EACH OTHER'S BRAINS.
WHEN I FIRST CAME OUT AND THINGS GOT BAD...
...I STARTED HAVING PANIC ATTACKS.
EVERY PART OF MY BRAIN, PULLING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

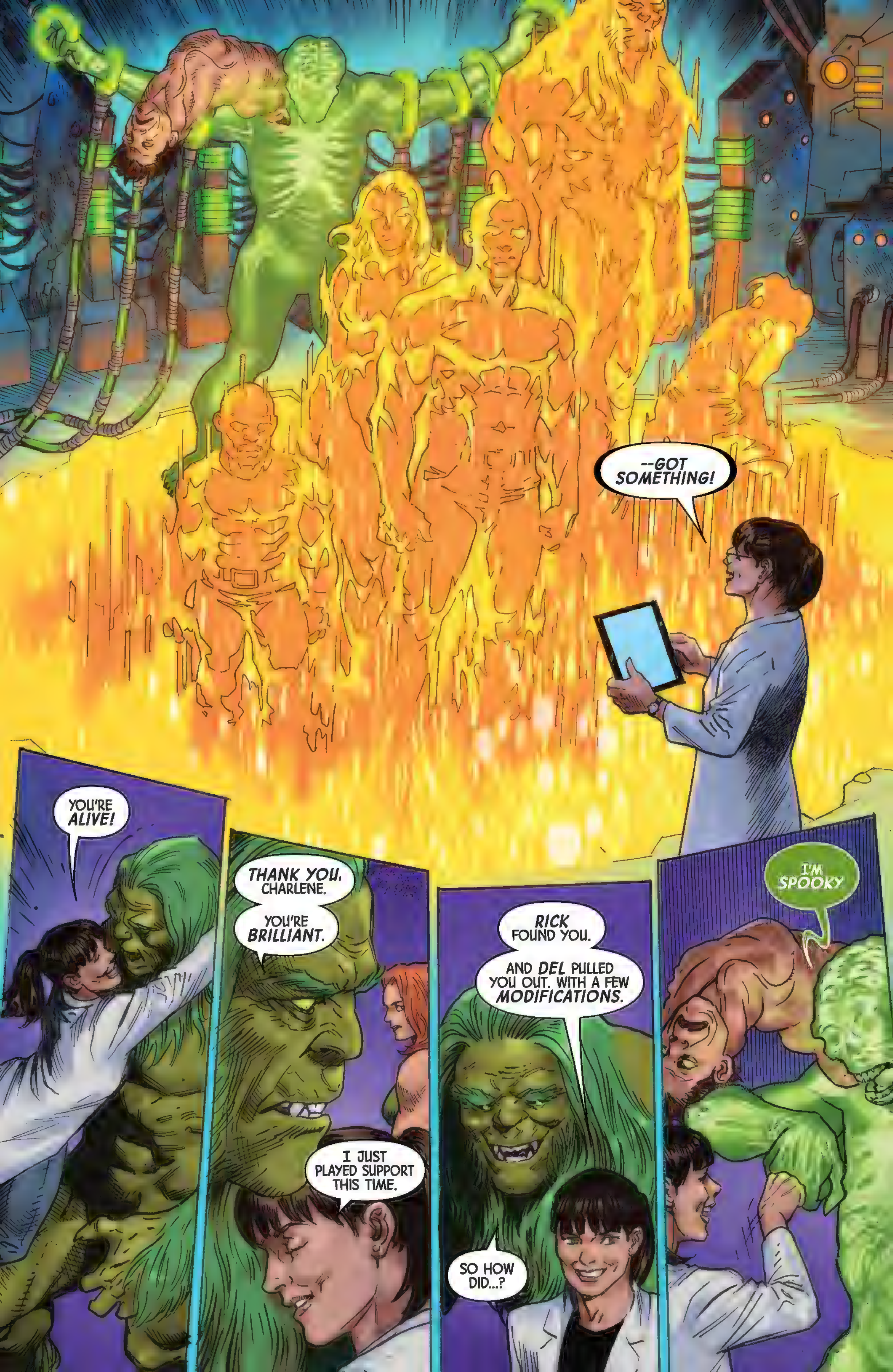

I WANT YOU TO TOSS THIS BALL FROM ONE HAND TO--
I'M NOT A KID!
I KNOW. I KNOW...
WHEN PARTS OF MY MIND WON'T WORK TOGETHER, I GIVE IT SOMETHING SIMPLE TO FOCUS ON...
...AND THE REST STARTS TO SETTLE INTO PLACE.
JUST TALK TO THE BALL.
WHATEVER COMES TO MIND.
I--I CAN FEEL THEM.
LIKE WHEN I FEEL THE GAMMA IN PEOPLE.
IT'S LIKE... THEY'RE GAMMA.
I MISS MY DAD.
'S HE KNOW I'M ALIVE?
I FEEL THEM TOO.
EAST?
OKAY!
THAT'S A START.
I THINK WE'RE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION...

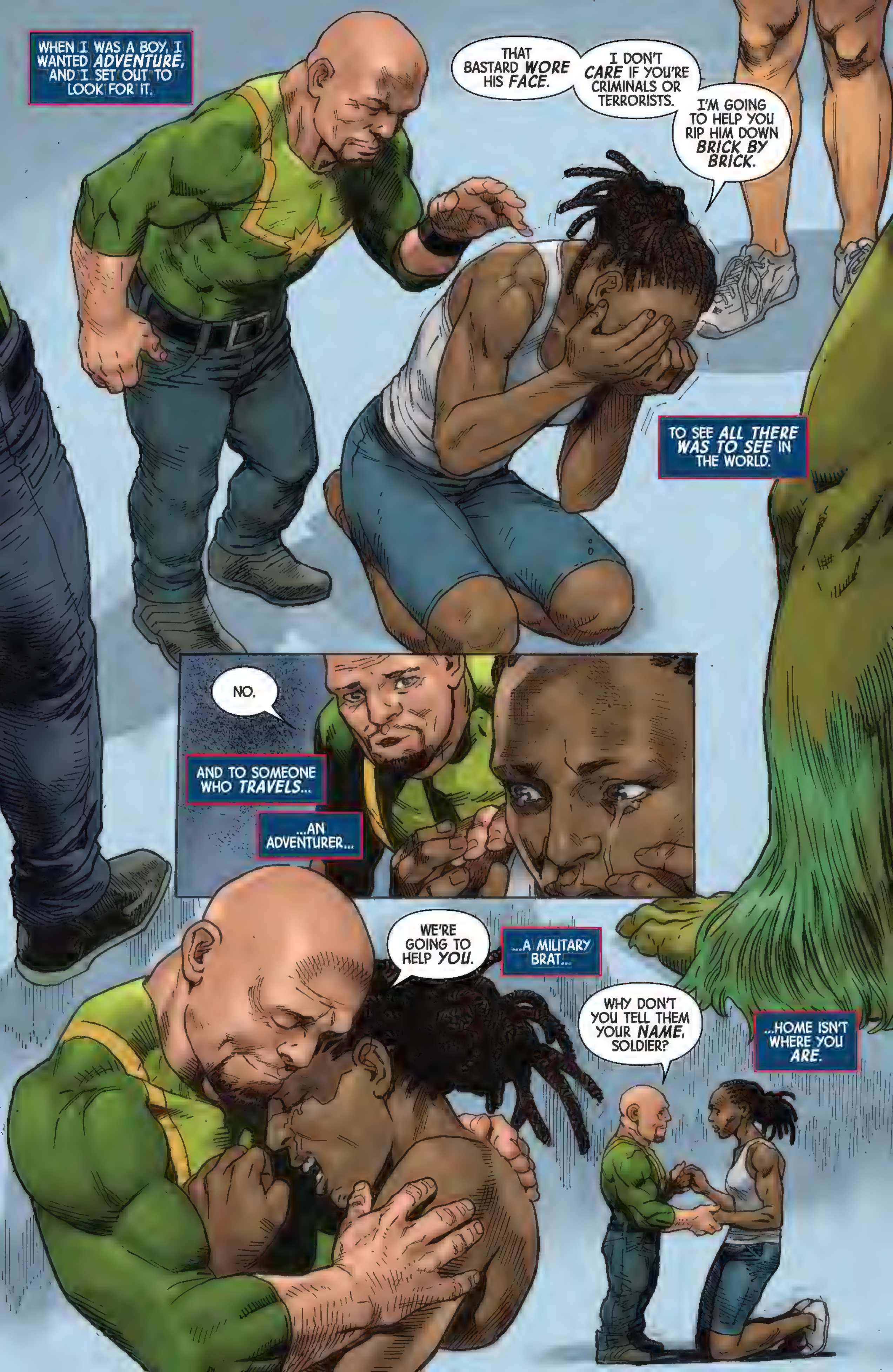

SO I TRANSPORTED US TO SOME KINDA *POST-HULKPOCALYPSE FUTURE?*
NOT *QUITE,* CARL.
I'D LIKE TO *PATCH YOU UP.* UNLESS YOU CAN CHANGE *BACK?*
NAH. IT'S LIKE NOTHING HERE'S GOT ENOUGH *SUBSTANCE* FOR ME TO PULL IT *OUT.*
LIKE TRYIN' TO TUG ON SNOT.
CHARMING. YET *INSIGHTFUL.*
HOLD STILL, *EH?*
JUST HOW MANY OF THEM *FORTIFY ZOMBIES* ARE WE GONNA NEED TO PUNCH OUR WAY THROUGH?
TOWN POPULATION'S *40,000.* IF EVEN *TEN PERCENT* TOOK THE SUPPLEMENT...
...WE MIGHT HAVE TO FIGHT THROUGH *THOUSANDS* OF THOSE THINGS.
MAYBE NOT.

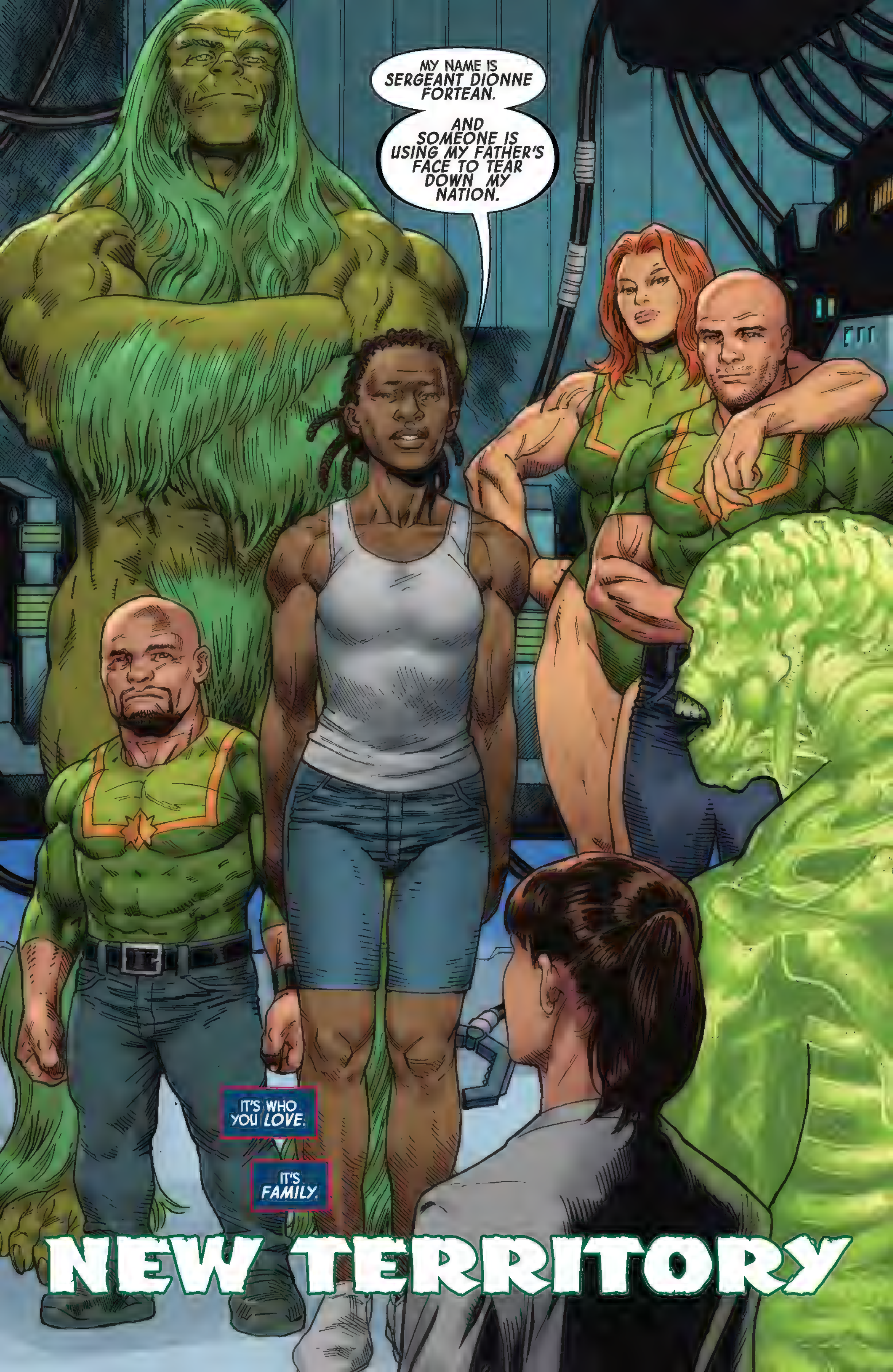

THEY'RE BACK AT WORK. JUST HOW THEY WERE.
LIKE THEY FORGOT WE EXISTED.
MORE LIKE NEVER KNEW WE WERE HERE.
YOU WANNA EXPLAIN THAT?
DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOUR BODY FIGHTS A DISEASE?
MAYBE YOU FEEL A LITTLE OFF, EH? BUT THE MIND DOESN'T TRACK WHAT EVERY WHITE BLOOD CELL IS DOING.
THOSE'RE SOME UGLY BLOOD CELLS, EUGENE.
I THINK WE'RE TRAPPED IN SOME SORT OF GAMMA VERSION OF THE ASTRAL PLANE.
NOT THE BELOW-PLACE, BUT CONNECTED TO IT-- A KIND OF "GAMMA PURGATORY," MAYBE.
OR WHERE THE GAMMA INSIDE PEOPLE GOES WHEN IT'S, AH...
...NOT DEPLOYED?
SO THOSE GAMMA ZOMBIES ARE PROJECTIONS... ASTRAL FORMS...
YOU'RE TELLING ME THIS ISN'T THE FUTURE? THERE'RE ALREADY THAT MANY PEOPLE WITH A FORTIFY GRAFT?
THAT'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN WONDERING. IF THESE ARE GRAFTS, WHERE DID THEY--?
RRRRRRRRRR
WATCH YOUR FEET, SAMSON--
WHAT IS THAT? SOME KIND OF CONCEALED ENTRANCE...?
RRRGRGRGRGRGRGRGRRRR
IT CAN'T BE...!

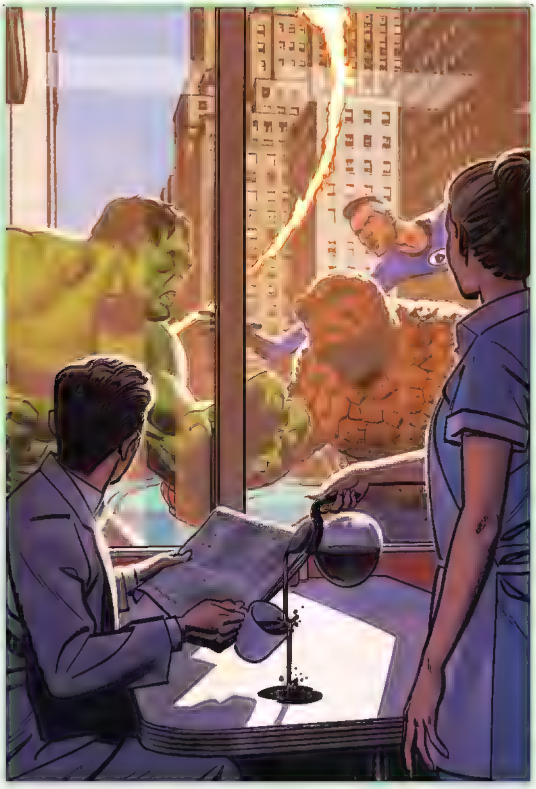

GENERAL REGINALD FORTEAN. THE SHADOW BASE COMMANDER BEFORE BRUCE BANNER TOOK OVER--THE ONE WHO HUNTED THE HULK.
LORD, HIS NECK'S BROKEN...
YOU SICK BASTARD!
YOU USED ME!
...
DIONNE?
EASY. I DON'T THINK HE'S IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT.
I...I WAS GONE... FOR A LONG TIME...
BUT THEN THERE WAS A DOOR. A GREEN DOOR.
IT CALLED ME BACK FROM SOMEWHERE, BUT...


...BUT THERE WAS SOMEONE *ELSE* HERE WHEN I CAME BACK...
GENERAL?
REG.
IT'S *LEONARD SAMSON.* WE NEED TO KNOW *ANYTHING* YOU CAN TELL US ABOUT *PROJECT GREEN SPRING.*
GREEN SPRING?
THE *MILITARY UPGRADE PROGRAM.* YOU'RE MAKING *SLEEPER AGENTS*--
NO... *THEY*...
THEY'RE MAKING AN *INSURRECTION.*
HMMM...WIND UP THE *LOCALS.* FEED THEIR *FEARS.* PROVIDE THEM WITH A *WEAPON.* INSIDIOUS.
YEAH, C.I.A. PERFECTED *THAT* FORMULA BEFORE I WAS BORN.
BUT NOT WITH *UNDETECTABLE SUPERHUMANS*...
DIONNE.
I...I...
I NEVER DID RIGHT BY YOU.
I'M SO SORRY...
YOU GAVE ME *DIRECTION.*
SOMETHING'S *HAPPENING*--
NO!
NOT *YET*-- NOT--
...I NEVER TOLD YOU I--

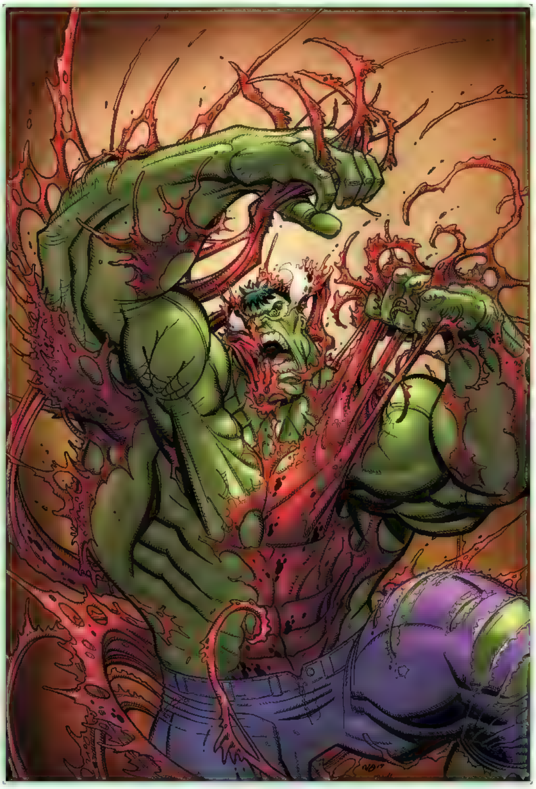

--GOT SOMETHING!
YOU'RE ALIVE!
THANK YOU, CHARLENE.
YOU'RE BRILLIANT.
I JUST PLAYED SUPPORT THIS TIME.
RICK FOUND YOU.
AND DEL PULLED YOU OUT. WITH A FEW MODIFICATIONS.
SO HOW DID...?
I'M SPOOKY


WHEN I WAS A BOY, I WANTED ADVENTURE, AND I SET OUT TO LOOK FOR IT.
THAT BASTARD WORE HIS FACE.
I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE CRIMINALS OR TERRORISTS.
I'M GOING TO HELP YOU RIP HIM DOWN BRICK BY BRICK.
TO SEE ALL THERE WAS TO SEE IN THE WORLD.
NO.
AND TO SOMEONE WHO TRAVELS...
...AN ADVENTURER...
WE'RE GOING TO HELP YOU.
...A MILITARY BRAT...
WHY DON'T YOU TELL THEM YOUR NAME, SOLDIER?
...HOME ISN'T WHERE YOU ARE.

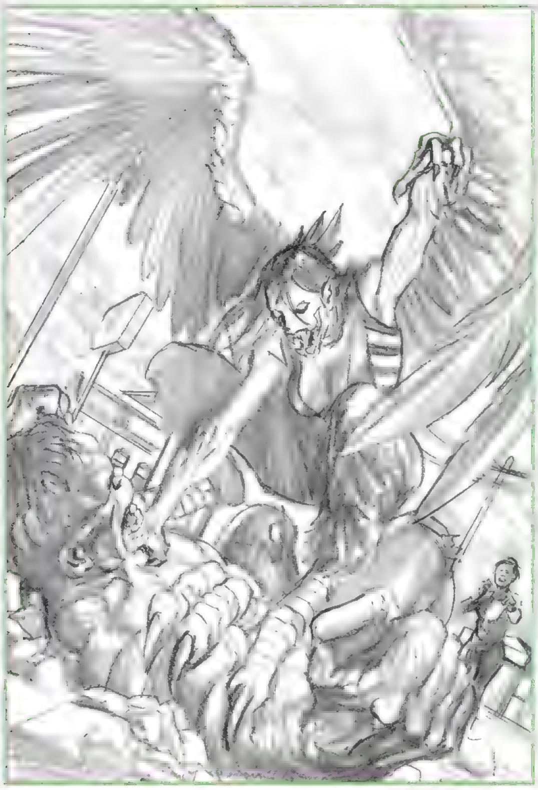

MY NAME IS SERGEANT DIONNE FORTEAN.
AND SOMEONE IS USING MY FATHER'S FACE TO TEAR DOWN MY NATION.
IT'S WHO YOU *LOVE*.
IT'S *FAMILY*.
NEW TERRITORY



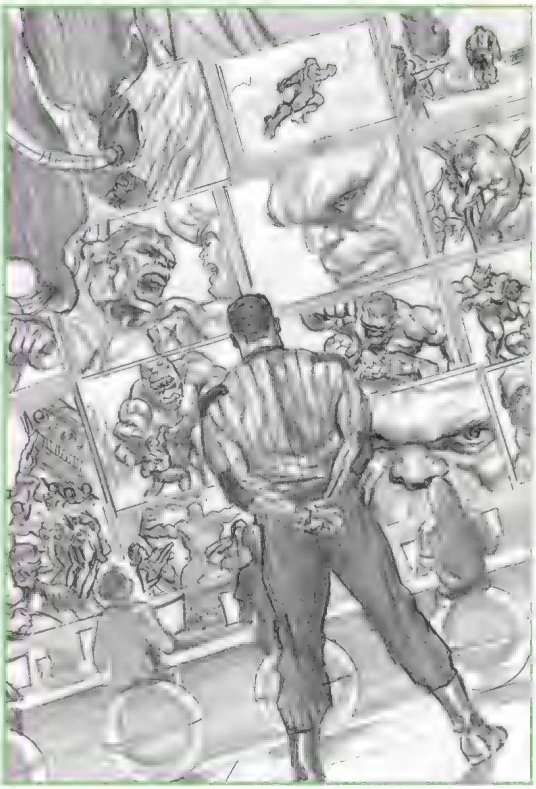
#19 *MARVELS* 25TH TRIBUTE VARIANT BY
GREG SMALLWOOD



#20 CARNAGE-IZED VARIANT BY
NICK BRADSHAW & RACHELLE ROSENBERG

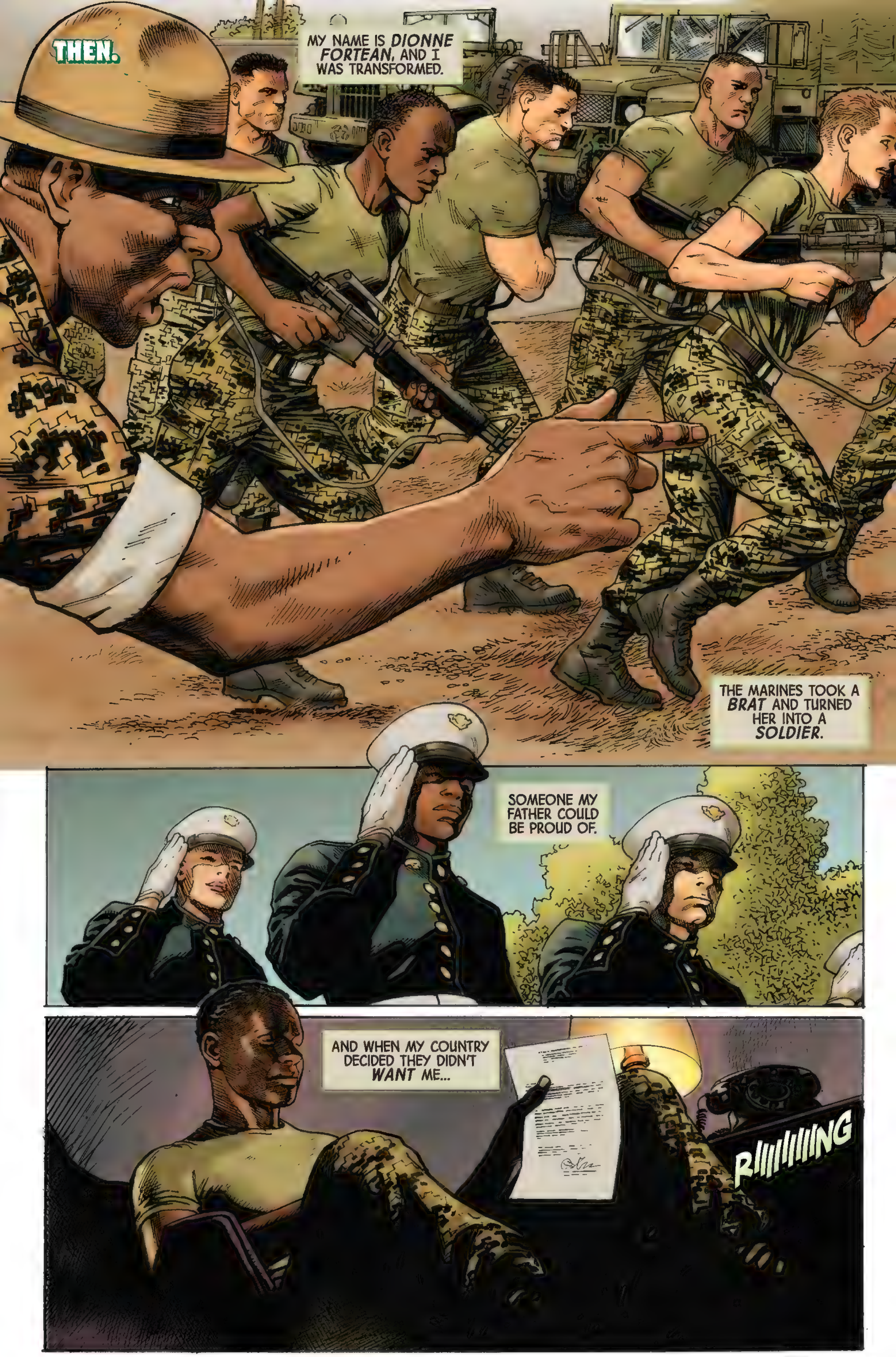


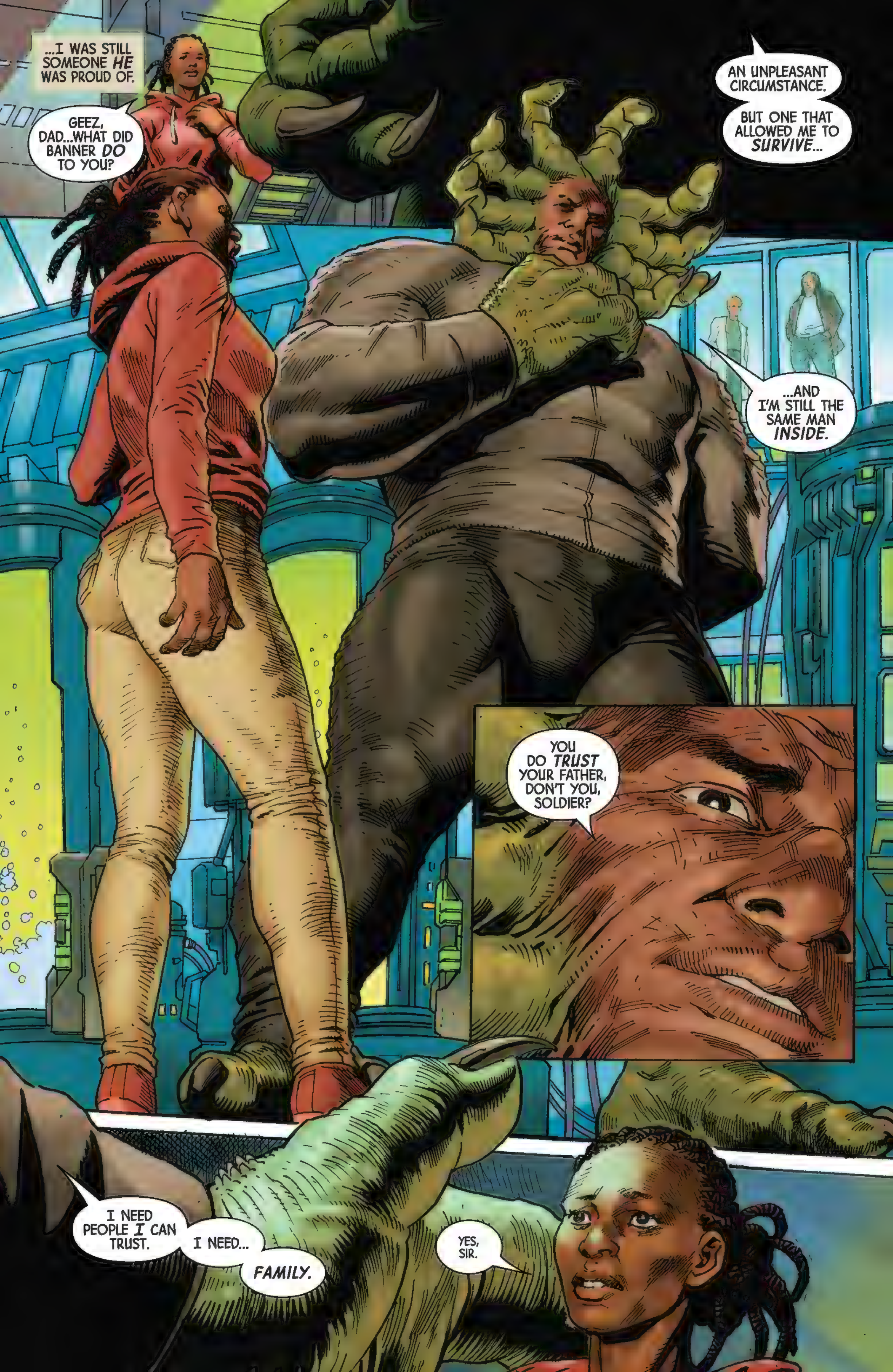
#20 2ND PRINTING VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS

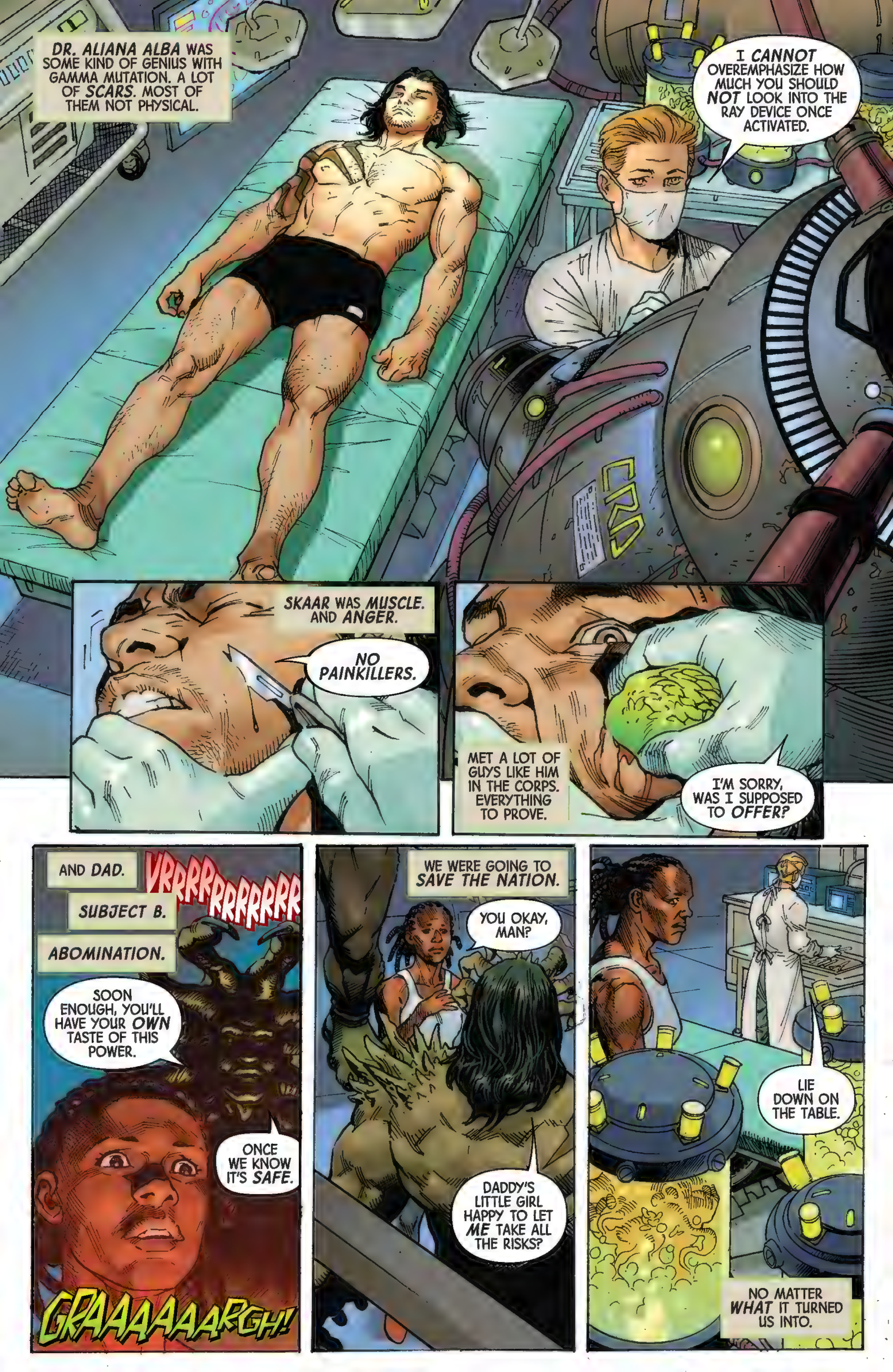


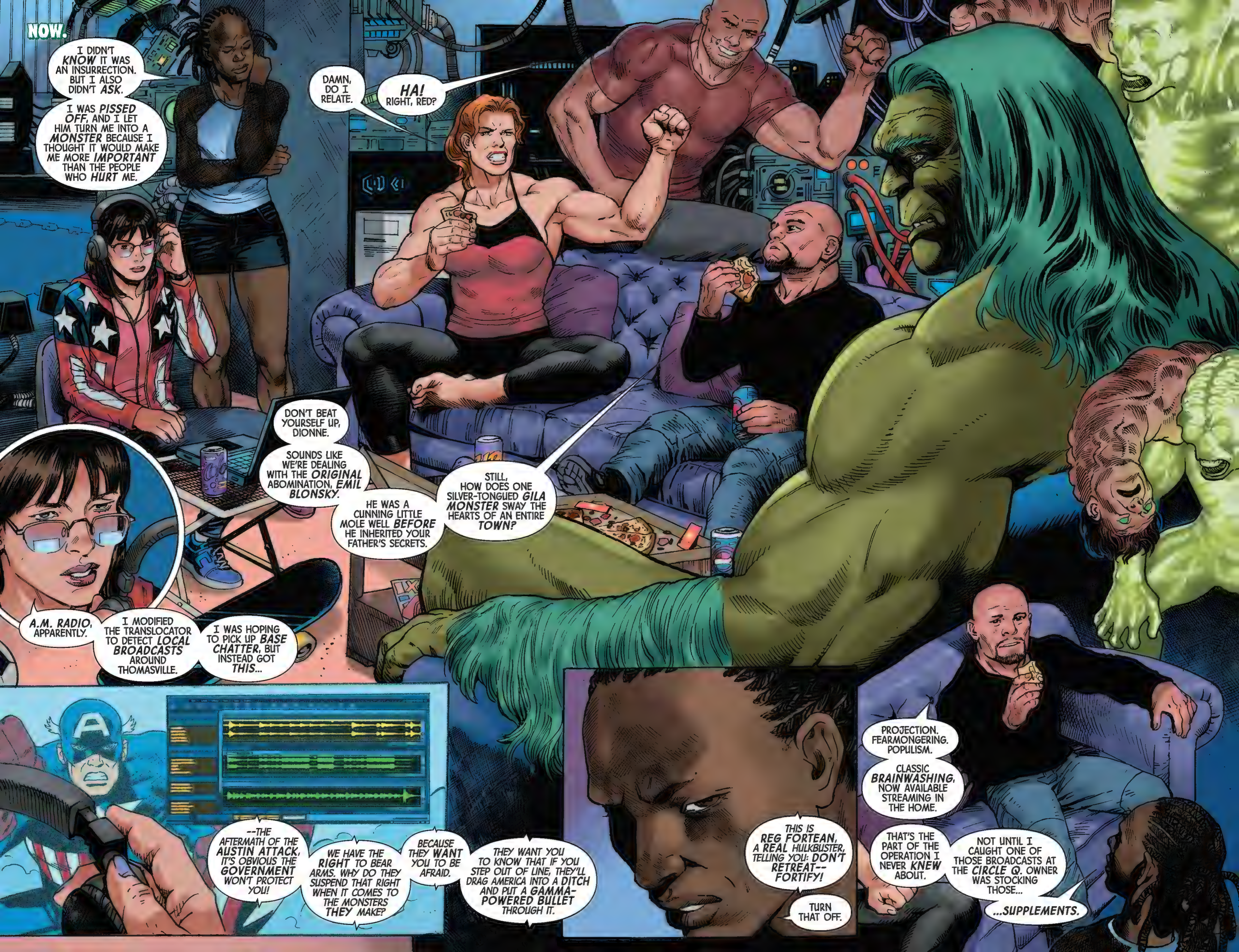
#21 3RD PRINTING VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS

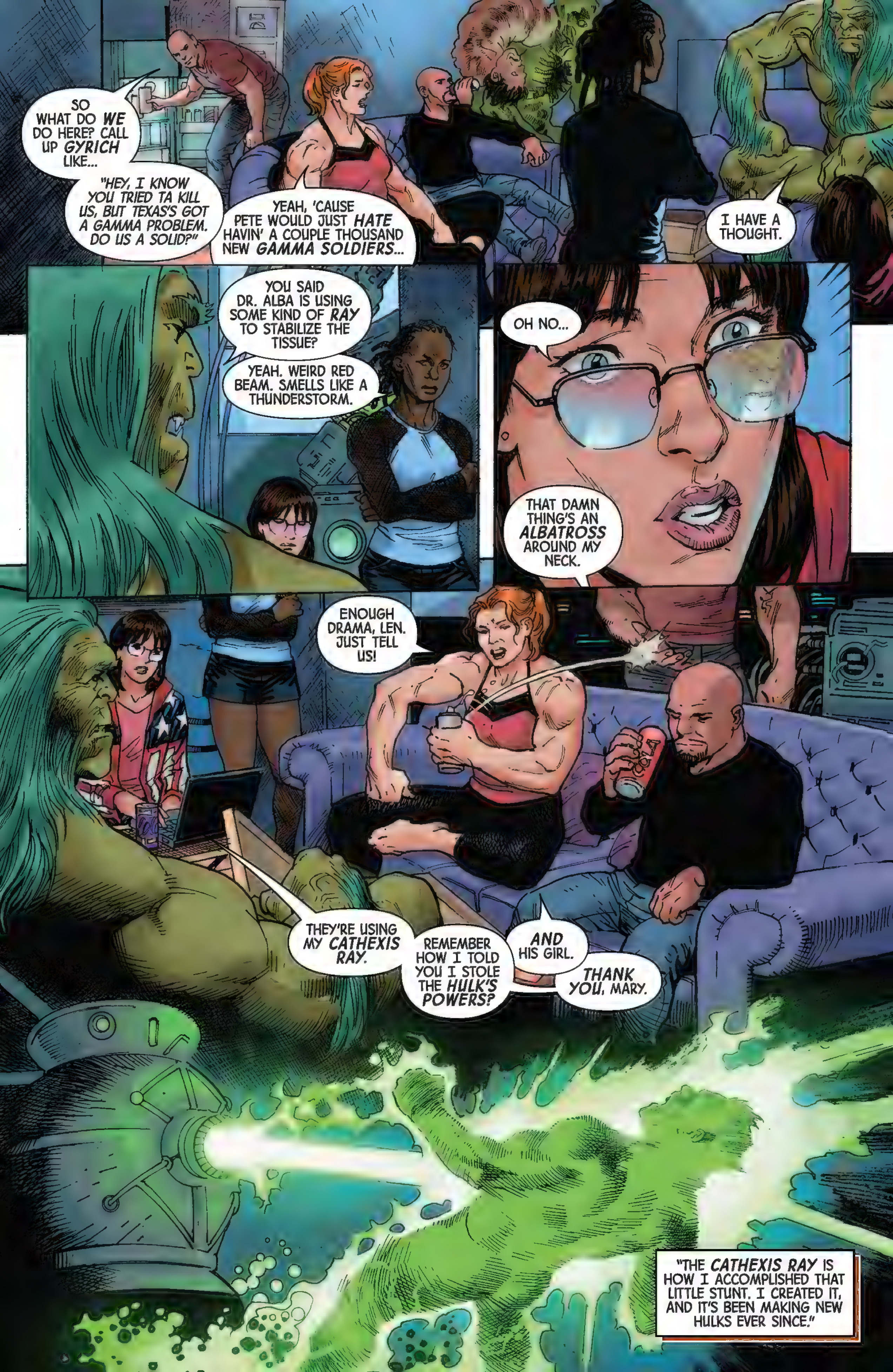
GAMMA FLIGHT 4

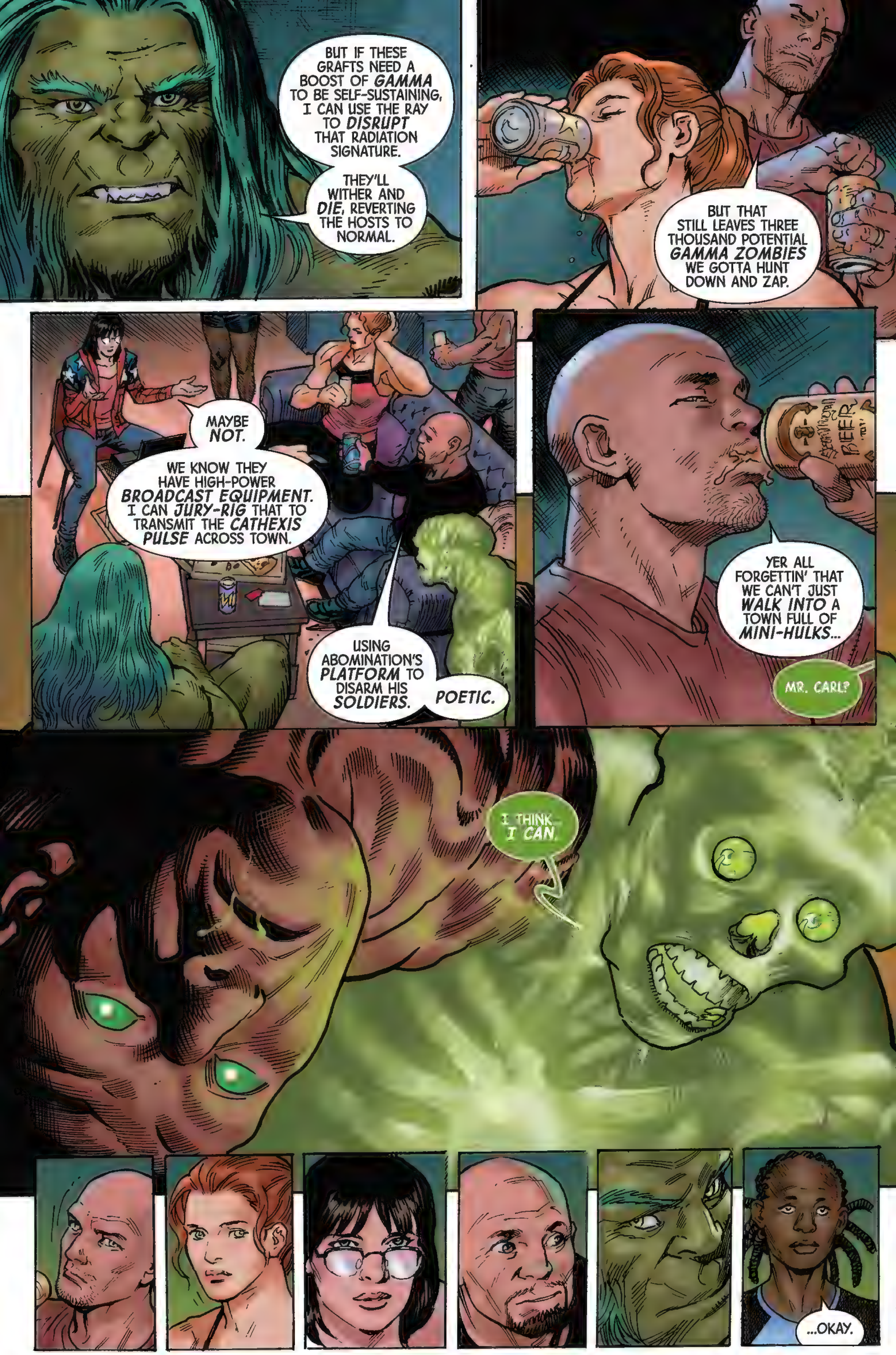

THEN.
MY NAME IS *DIONNE FORTEAN*, AND I WAS TRANSFORMED.
THE MARINES TOOK A *BRAT* AND TURNED HER INTO A *SOLDIER*.
SOMEONE MY FATHER COULD BE PROUD OF.
AND WHEN MY COUNTRY DECIDED THEY DIDN'T *WANT* ME...
RIIIIIIIING

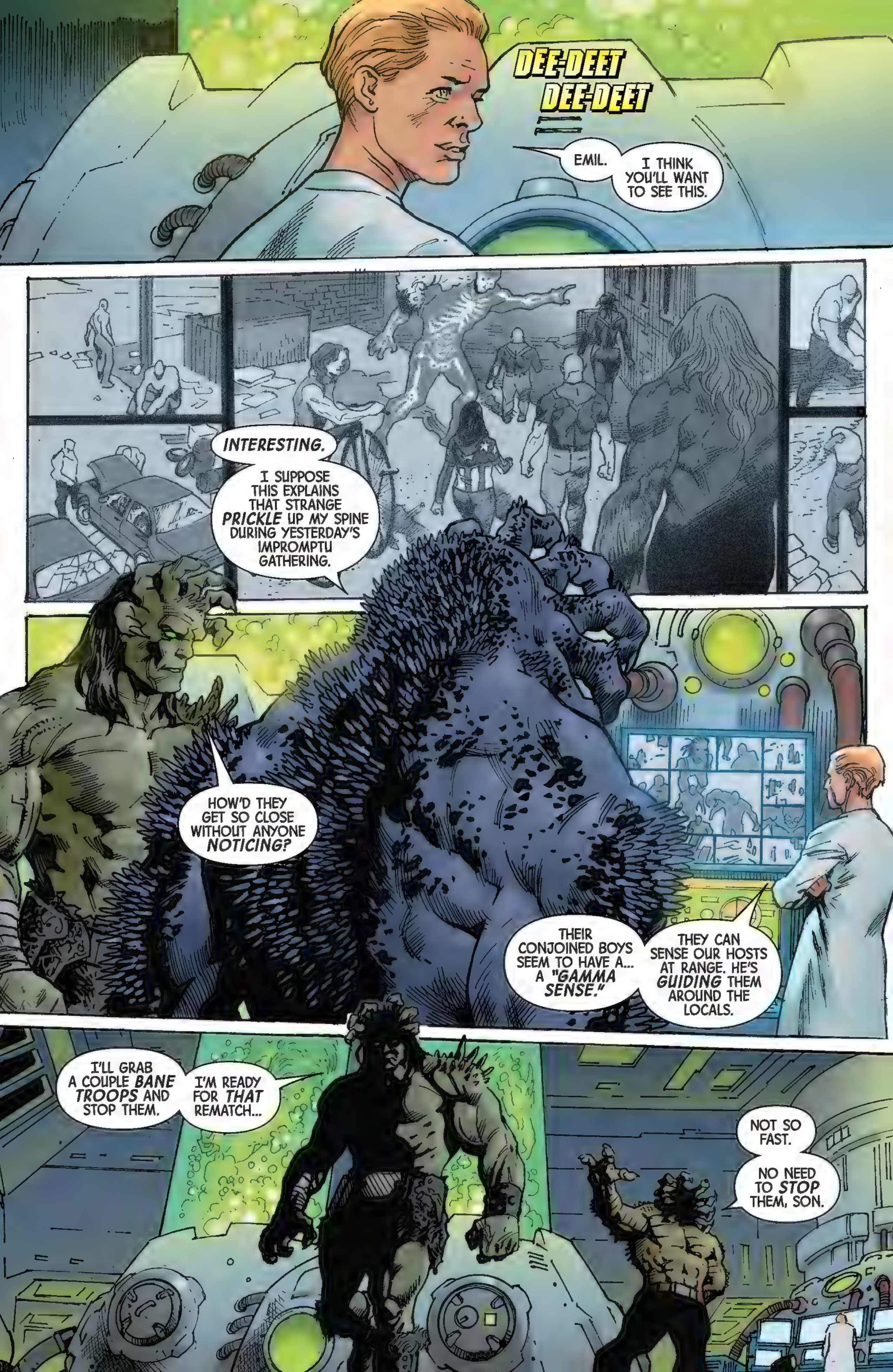

...I WAS STILL SOMEONE *HE* WAS PROUD OF.
GEEZ, DAD...WHAT DID BANNER *DO* TO YOU?
AN UNPLEASANT CIRCUMSTANCE.
BUT ONE THAT ALLOWED ME TO *SURVIVE*...
...AND I'M STILL THE SAME MAN *INSIDE.*
YOU DO *TRUST* YOUR FATHER, DON'T YOU, SOLDIER?
I NEED PEOPLE *I* CAN TRUST.
I NEED...
FAMILY.
YES, SIR.

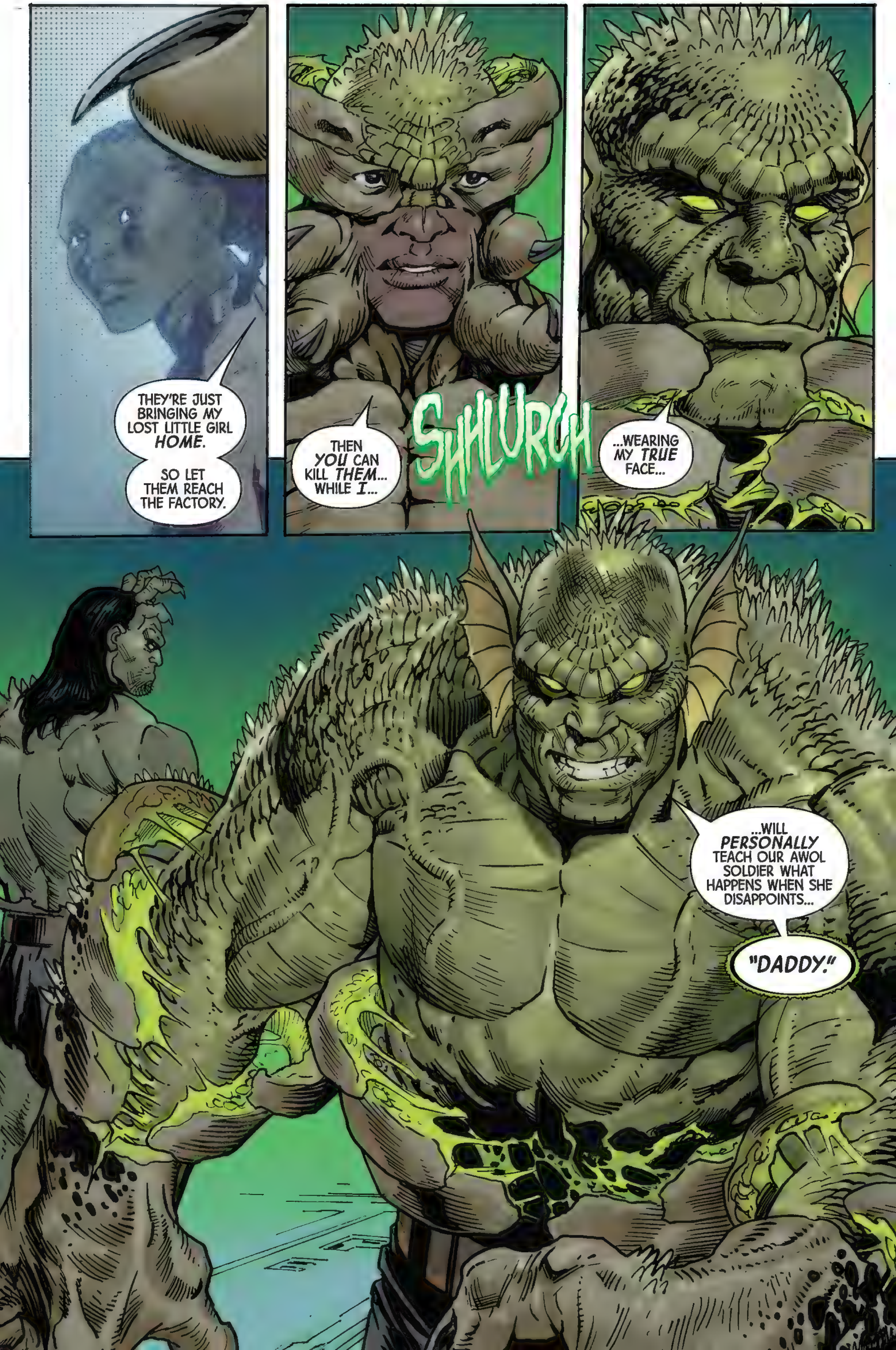

DR. ALIANA ALBA WAS SOME KIND OF GENIUS WITH GAMMA MUTATION. A LOT OF SCARS. MOST OF THEM NOT PHYSICAL.
I CANNOT OVEREMPHASIZE HOW MUCH YOU SHOULD NOT LOOK INTO THE RAY DEVICE ONCE ACTIVATED.
CRD
SKAAR WAS MUSCLE. AND ANGER.
NO PAINKILLERS.
MET A LOT OF GUYS LIKE HIM IN THE CORPS. EVERYTHING TO PROVE.
I'M SORRY, WAS I SUPPOSED TO OFFER?
AND DAD.
VRRRRRRRRRRRR
SUBJECT B.
ABOMINATION.
SOON ENOUGH, YOU'LL HAVE YOUR OWN TASTE OF THIS POWER.
ONCE WE KNOW IT'S SAFE.
GRAAAAAAARGH!
WE WERE GOING TO SAVE THE NATION.
YOU OKAY, MAN?
DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL HAPPY TO LET ME TAKE ALL THE RISKS?
LIE DOWN ON THE TABLE.
NO MATTER WHAT IT TURNED US INTO.

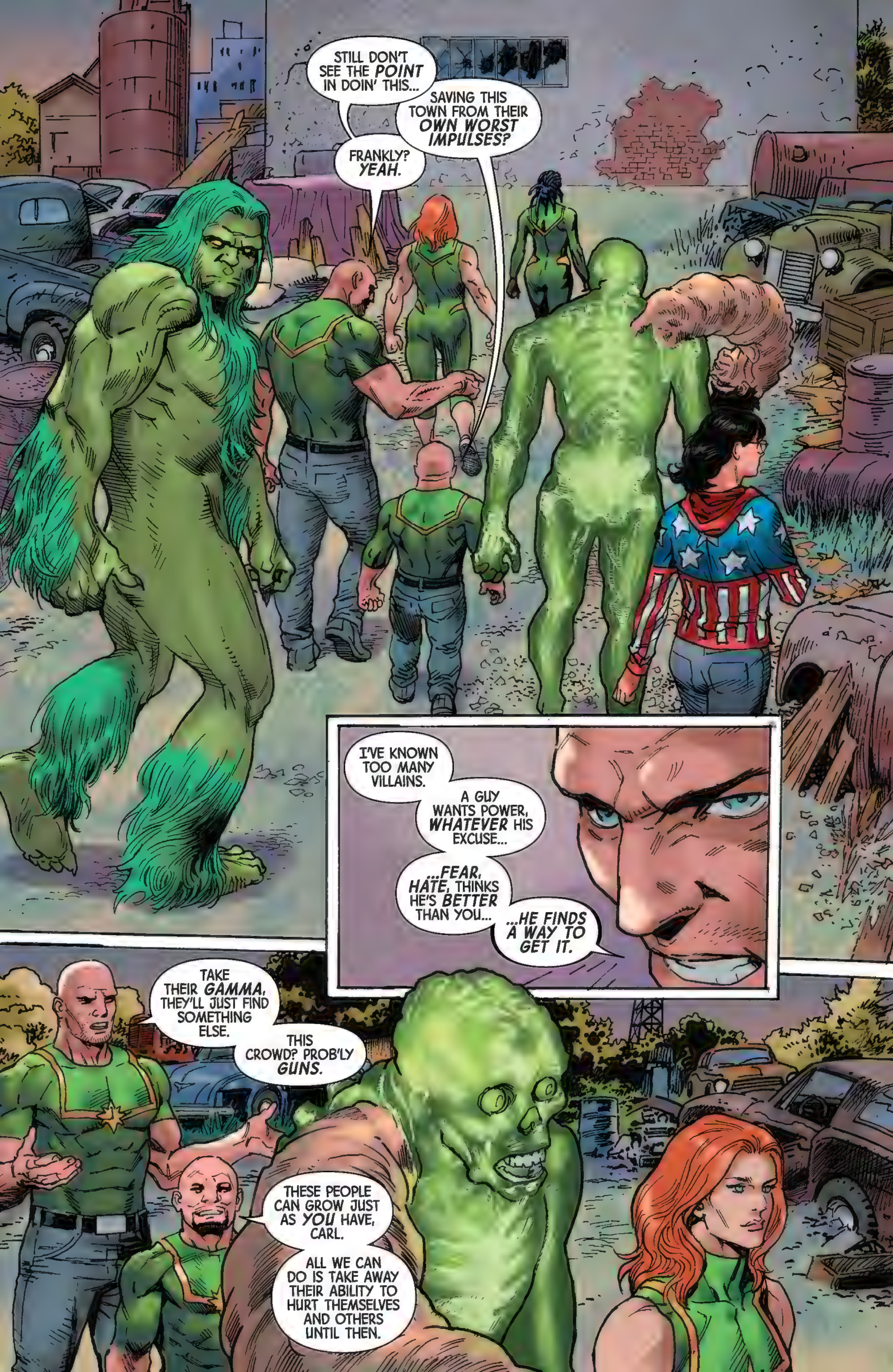

NOW.
I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS AN INSURRECTION. BUT I ALSO DIDN'T ASK.
I WAS PISSED OFF, AND I LET HIM TURN ME INTO A MONSTER BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT WOULD MAKE ME MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE PEOPLE WHO HURT ME.
DAMN, DO I RELATE.
HA! RIGHT, RED?
DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP, DIONNE.
SOUNDS LIKE WE'RE DEALING WITH THE ORIGINAL ABOMINATION, EMIL BLONSKY.
HE WAS A CUNNING LITTLE MOLE WELL BEFORE HE INHERITED YOUR FATHER'S SECRETS.
STILL, HOW DOES ONE SILVER-TONGUED GILA MONSTER SWAY THE HEARTS OF AN ENTIRE TOWN?
A.M. RADIO, APPARENTLY.
I MODIFIED THE TRANSLOCATOR TO DETECT LOCAL BROADCASTS AROUND THOMASVILLE.
I WAS HOPING TO PICK UP BASE CHATTER, BUT INSTEAD GOT THIS...
--THE AFTERMATH OF THE AUSTIN ATTACK, IT'S OBVIOUS THE GOVERNMENT WON'T PROTECT YOU!
WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS. WHY DO THEY SUSPEND THAT RIGHT WHEN IT COMES TO THE MONSTERS THEY MAKE?
BECAUSE THEY WANT YOU TO BE AFRAID.
THEY WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT IF YOU STEP OUT OF LINE, THEY'LL DRAG AMERICA INTO A DITCH AND PUT A GAMMA-POWERED BULLET THROUGH IT.
THIS IS REG FORTEAN, A REAL HULKBUSTER, TELLING YOU: DON'T RETREAT--FORTIFY!
TURN THAT OFF.
PROJECTION. FEARMONGERING. POPULISM.
CLASSIC BRAINWASHING, NOW AVAILABLE STREAMING IN THE HOME.
THAT'S THE PART OF THE OPERATION I NEVER KNEW ABOUT.
NOT UNTIL I CAUGHT ONE OF THOSE BROADCASTS AT THE CIRCLE Q. OWNER WAS STOCKING THOSE...
...SUPPLEMENTS.

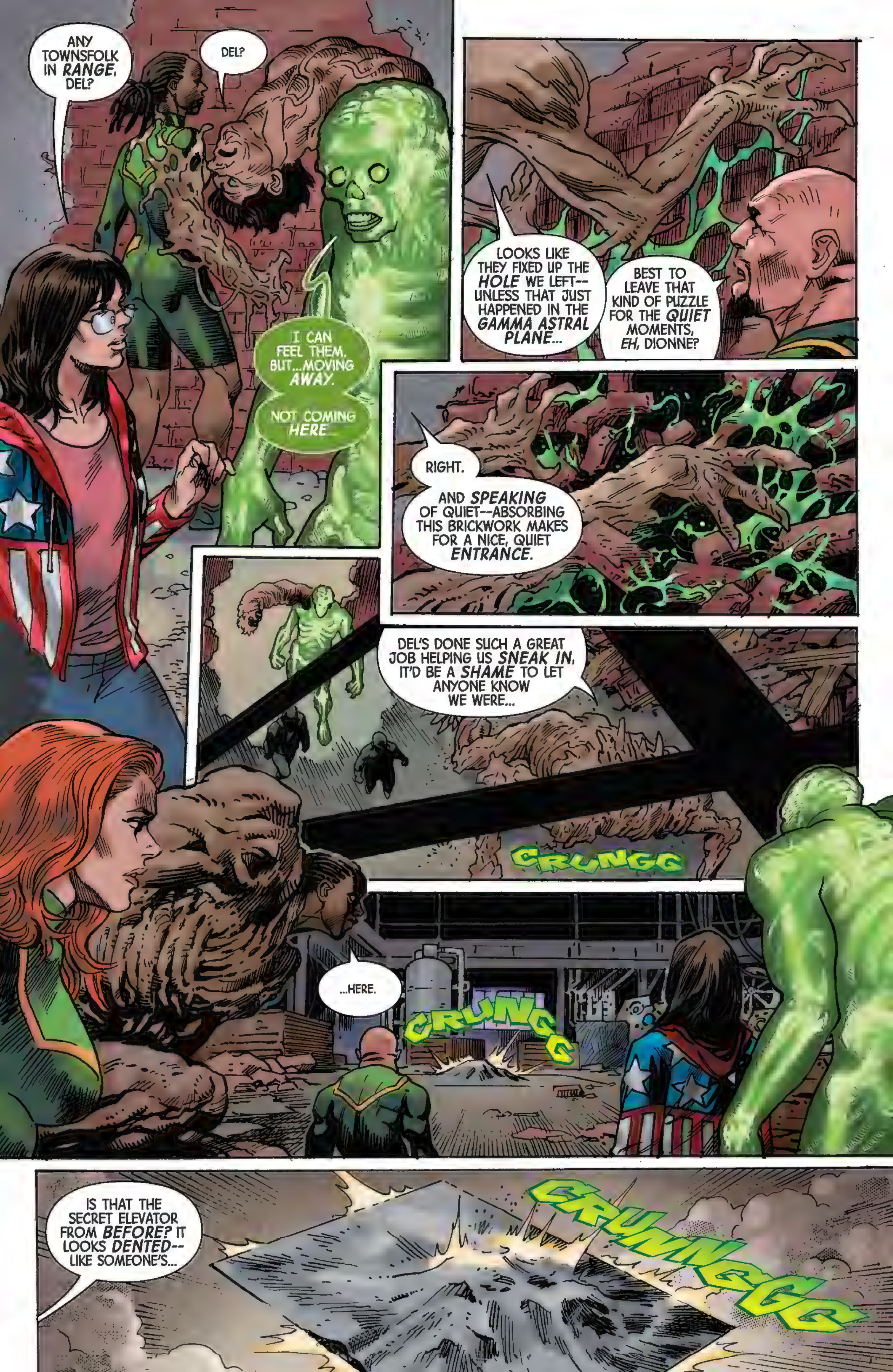

SO WHAT DO WE DO HERE? CALL UP GYRICH LIKE...
"HEY, I KNOW YOU TRIED TA KILL US, BUT TEXAS'S GOT A GAMMA PROBLEM. DO US A SOLID?"
YEAH, 'CAUSE PETE WOULD JUST HATE HAVIN' A COUPLE THOUSAND NEW GAMMA SOLDIERS...
I HAVE A THOUGHT.
YOU SAID DR. ALBA IS USING SOME KIND OF RAY TO STABILIZE THE TISSUE?
YEAH. WEIRD RED BEAM. SMELLS LIKE A THUNDERSTORM.
OH NO...
THAT DAMN THING'S AN ALBATROSS AROUND MY NECK.
ENOUGH DRAMA, LEN. JUST TELL US!
THEY'RE USING MY CATHEXIS RAY.
REMEMBER HOW I TOLD YOU I STOLE THE HULK'S POWERS?
AND HIS GIRL.
THANK YOU, MARY.
"THE CATHEXIS RAY IS HOW I ACCOMPLISHED THAT LITTLE STUNT. I CREATED IT, AND IT'S BEEN MAKING NEW HULKS EVER SINCE."
COLA

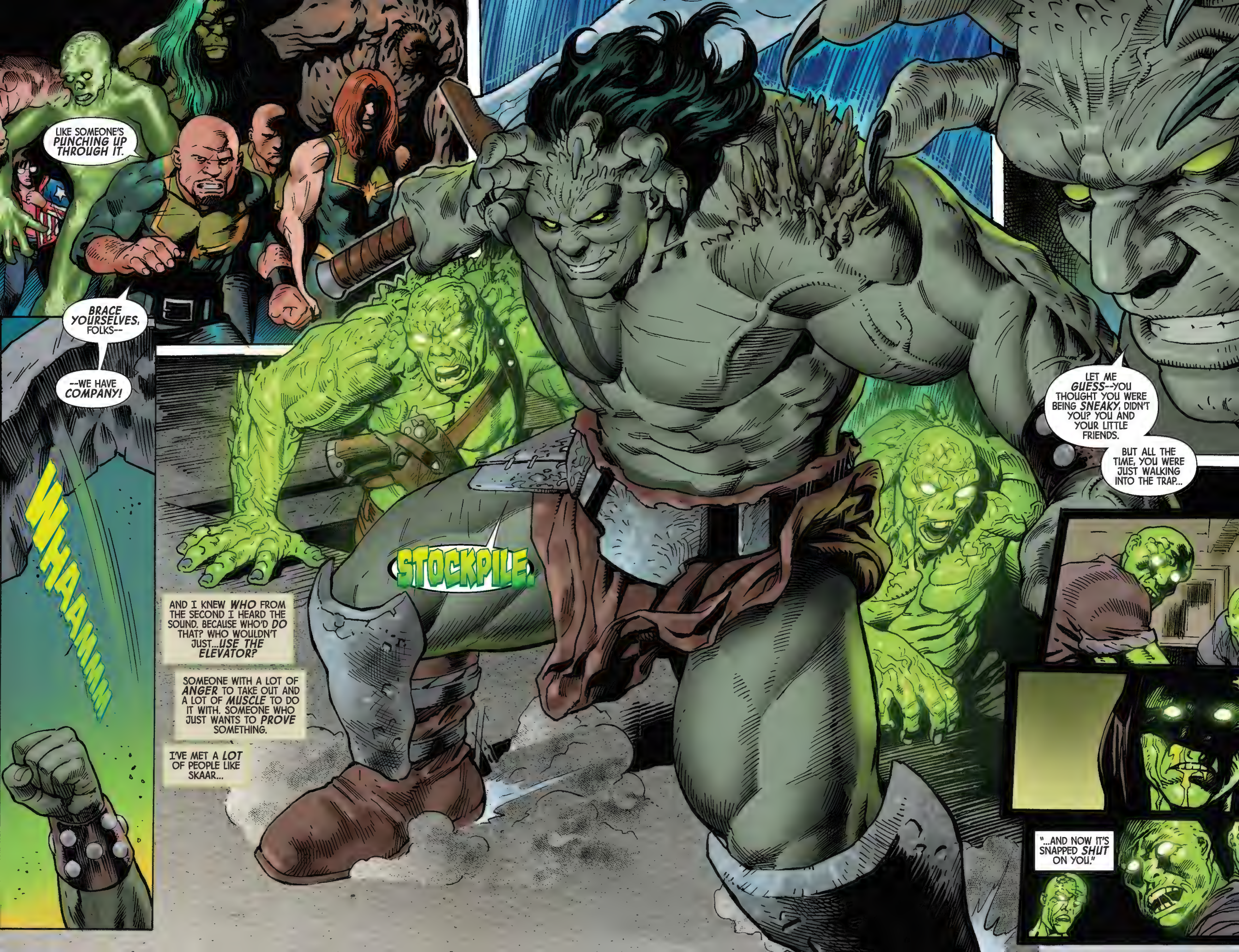

BUT IF THESE GRAFTS NEED A BOOST OF GAMMA TO BE SELF-SUSTAINING, I CAN USE THE RAY TO DISRUPT THAT RADIATION SIGNATURE.
THEY'LL WITHER AND DIE, REVERTING THE HOSTS TO NORMAL.
BUT THAT STILL LEAVES THREE THOUSAND POTENTIAL GAMMA ZOMBIES WE GOTTA HUNT DOWN AND ZAP.
MAYBE NOT.
WE KNOW THEY HAVE HIGH-POWER BROADCAST EQUIPMENT. I CAN JURY-RIG THAT TO TRANSMIT THE CATHEXIS PULSE ACROSS TOWN.
USING ABOMINATION'S PLATFORM TO DISARM HIS SOLDIERS.
POETIC.
BEER
YER ALL FORGETTIN' THAT WE CAN'T JUST WALK INTO A TOWN FULL OF MINI-HULKS...
MR. CARL?
I THINK... I CAN.
...OKAY.

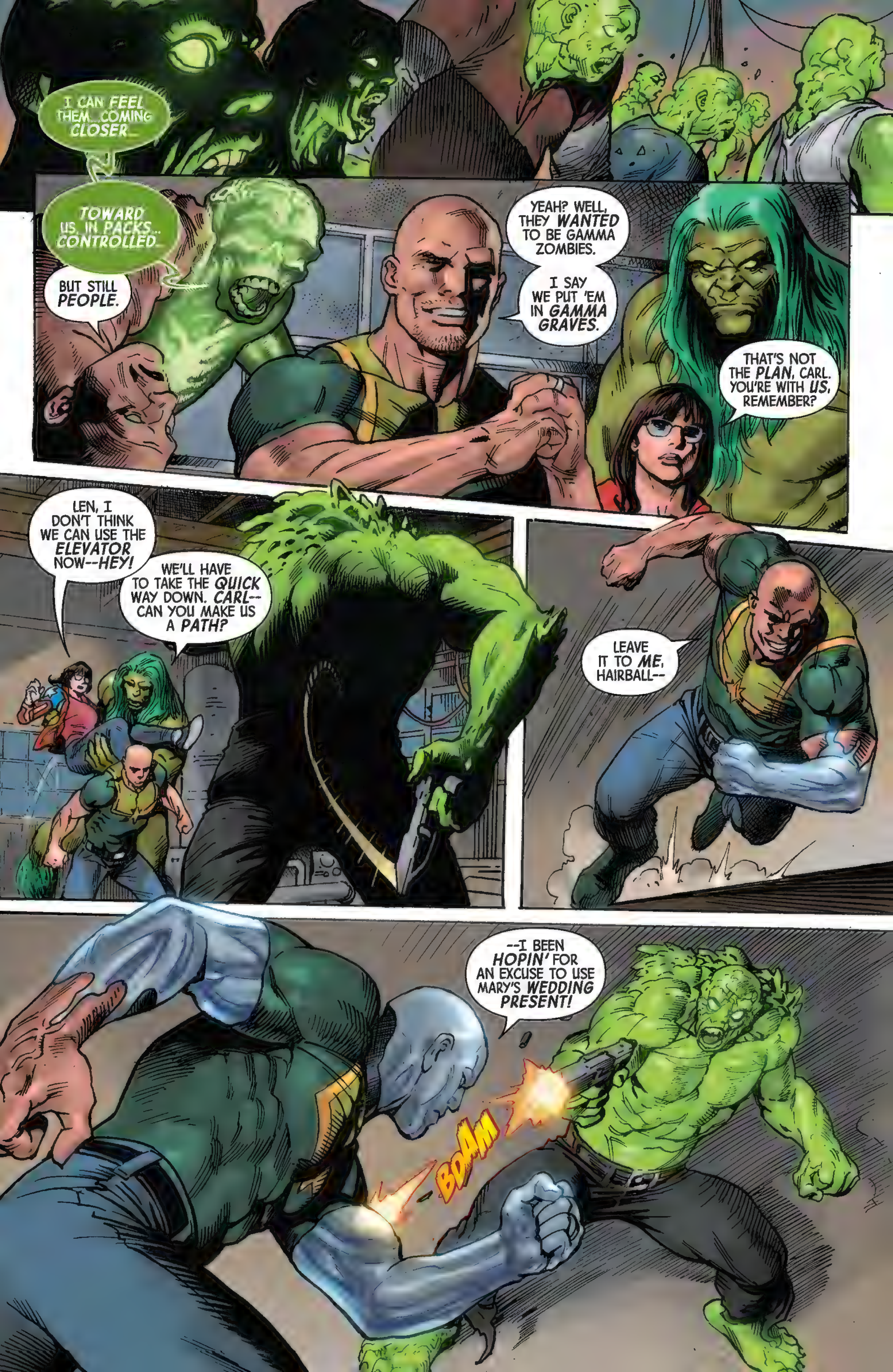

DEE-DEET
DEE-DEET
EMIL.
I THINK YOU'LL WANT TO SEE THIS.
INTERESTING.
I SUPPOSE THIS EXPLAINS THAT STRANGE *PRICKLE* UP MY SPINE DURING YESTERDAY'S IMPROMPTU GATHERING.
HOW'D THEY GET SO CLOSE WITHOUT ANYONE *NOTICING?*
THEIR CONJOINED BOYS SEEM TO HAVE A... A *"GAMMA SENSE."*
THEY CAN SENSE OUR HOSTS AT RANGE. HE'S *GUIDING* THEM AROUND THE LOCALS.
I'LL GRAB A COUPLE *BANE TROOPS* AND STOP THEM.
I'M READY FOR *THAT* REMATCH...
NOT SO FAST.
NO NEED TO *STOP* THEM, SON.

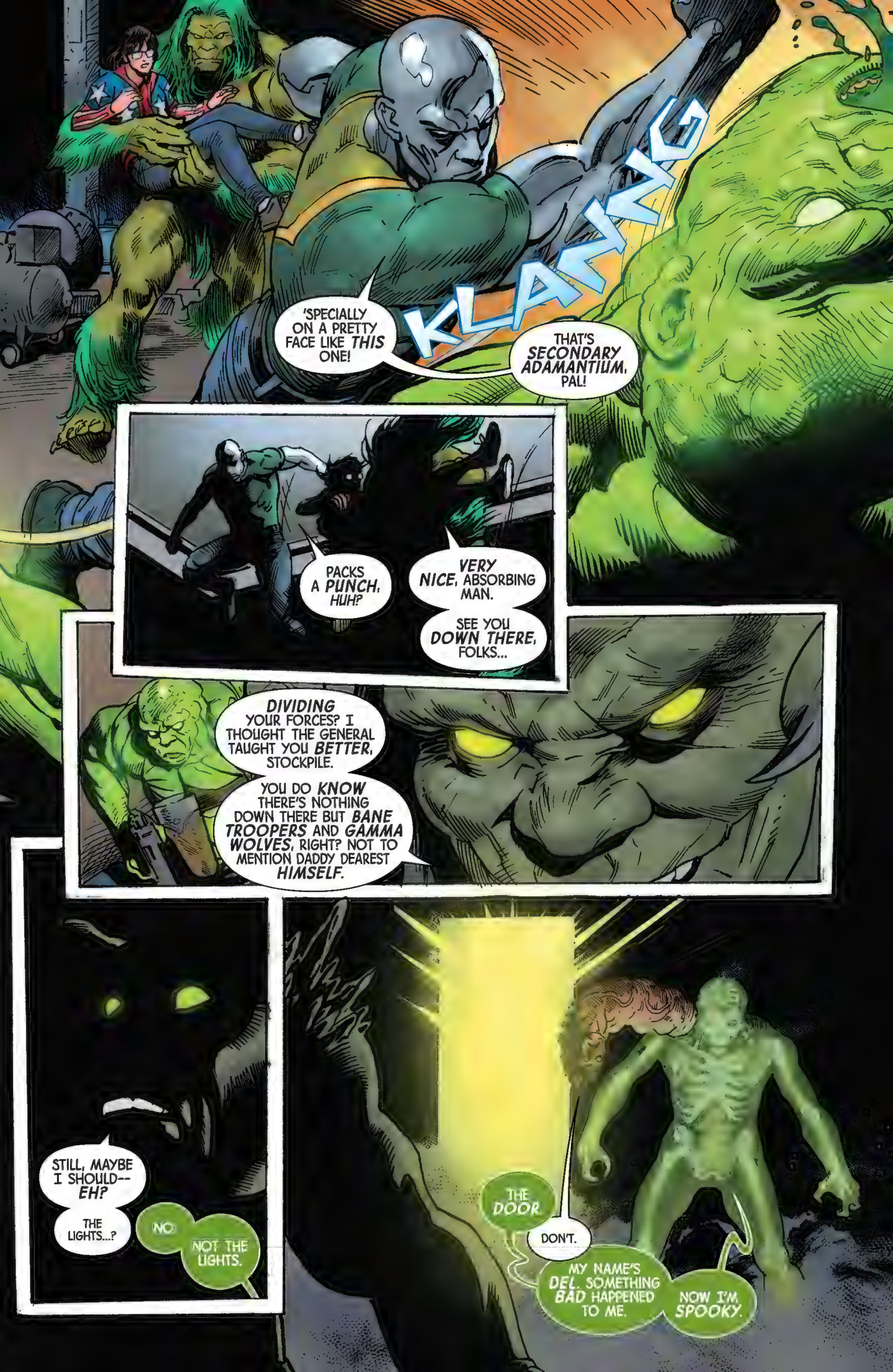

THEY'RE JUST BRINGING MY LOST LITTLE GIRL *HOME*.
SO LET THEM REACH THE FACTORY.
THEN *YOU* CAN KILL *THEM*... WHILE *I*...
SHHLURCH
...WEARING MY *TRUE* FACE...
...WILL *PERSONALLY* TEACH OUR AWOL SOLDIER WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SHE DISAPPOINTS...
"DADDY."

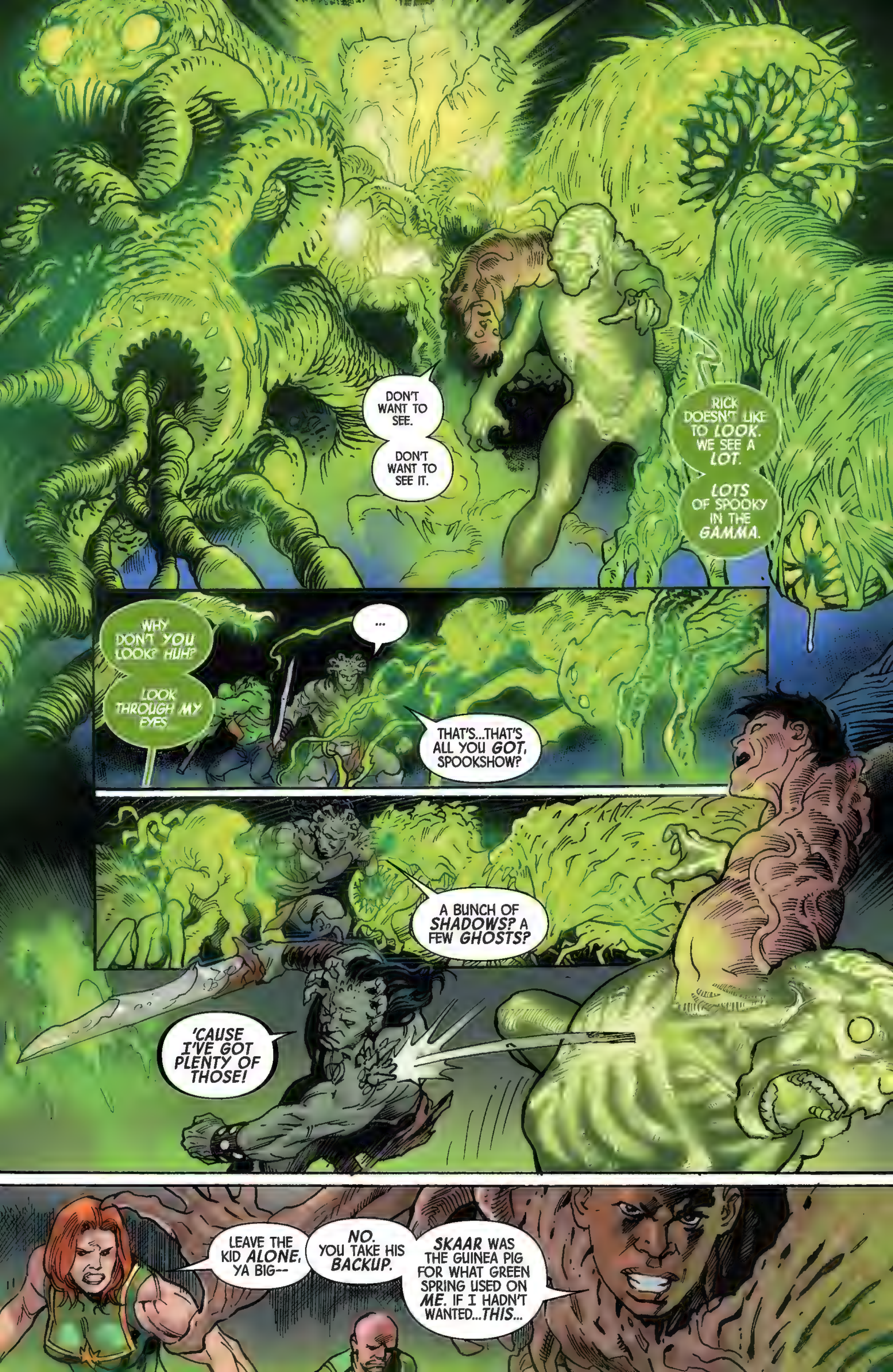

STILL DON'T SEE THE *POINT* IN DOIN' THIS...
SAVING THIS TOWN FROM THEIR *OWN WORST IMPULSES?*
FRANKLY? *YEAH.*
I'VE KNOWN TOO MANY VILLAINS.
A GUY WANTS POWER, *WHATEVER* HIS EXCUSE...
...*FEAR, HATE,* THINKS HE'S *BETTER* THAN YOU...
...HE FINDS A WAY TO GET IT.
TAKE THEIR *GAMMA*, THEY'LL JUST FIND SOMETHING ELSE.
THIS CROWD? PROB'LY *GUNS.*
THESE PEOPLE CAN GROW JUST AS *YOU* HAVE, CARL.
ALL WE CAN DO IS TAKE AWAY THEIR ABILITY TO HURT THEMSELVES AND OTHERS UNTIL THEN.

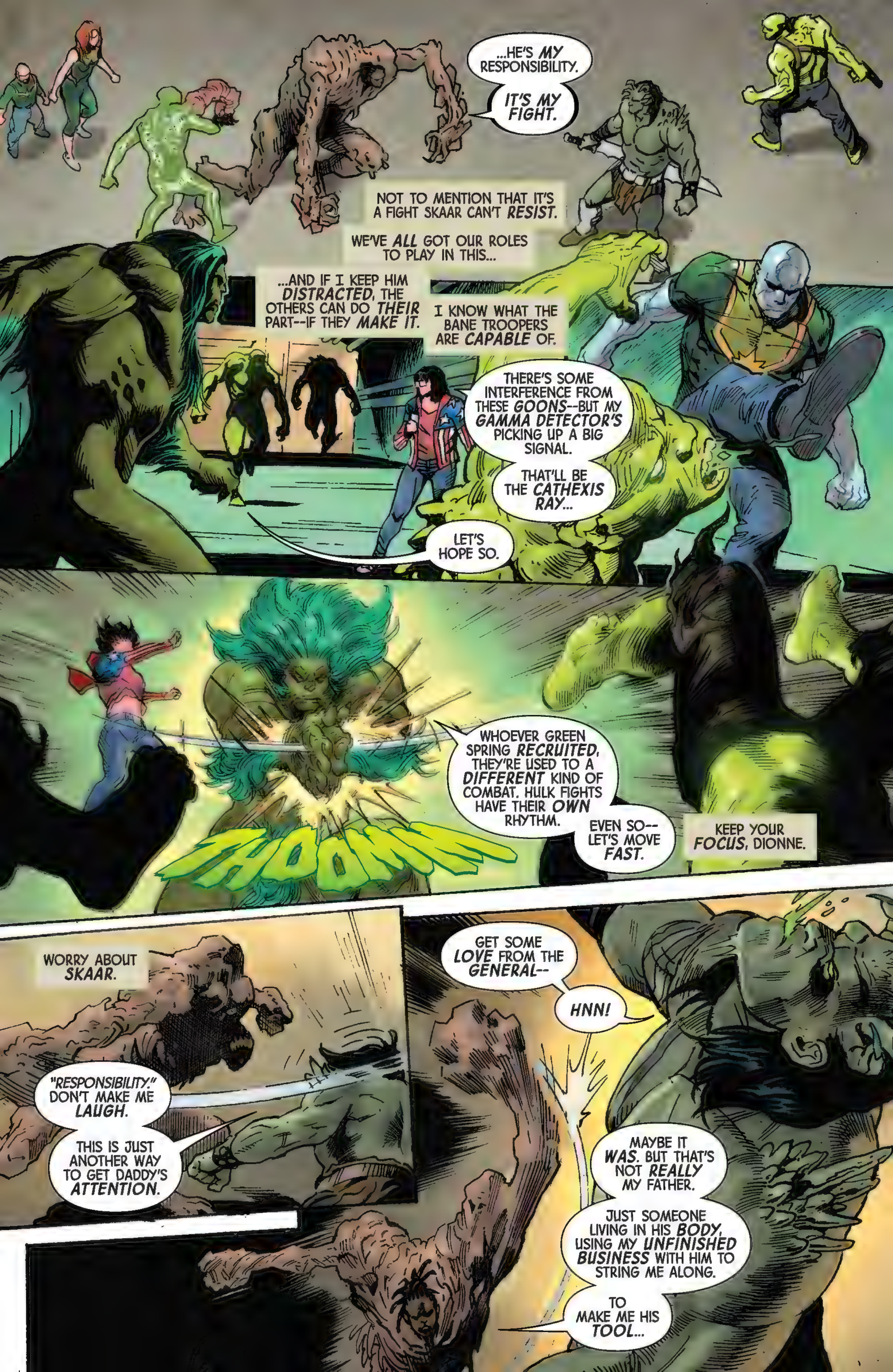

ANY TOWNSFOLK IN *RANGE*, DEL?
DEL?
I CAN FEEL THEM. BUT...MOVING *AWAY*.
NOT COMING *HERE*.
LOOKS LIKE THEY FIXED UP THE *HOLE* WE LEFT-- UNLESS THAT JUST HAPPENED IN THE *GAMMA ASTRAL PLANE*...
BEST TO LEAVE THAT KIND OF PUZZLE FOR THE *QUIET* MOMENTS, *EH*, DIONNE?
RIGHT.
AND *SPEAKING* OF QUIET--ABSORBING THIS BRICKWORK MAKES FOR A NICE, QUIET *ENTRANCE*.
DEL'S DONE SUCH A GREAT JOB HELPING US *SNEAK IN*, IT'D BE A *SHAME* TO LET ANYONE KNOW WE WERE...
CRUNGG
...HERE.
CRUNGG
IS THAT THE SECRET ELEVATOR FROM *BEFORE?* IT LOOKS *DENTED*-- LIKE SOMEONE'S...
CRUNNGGG

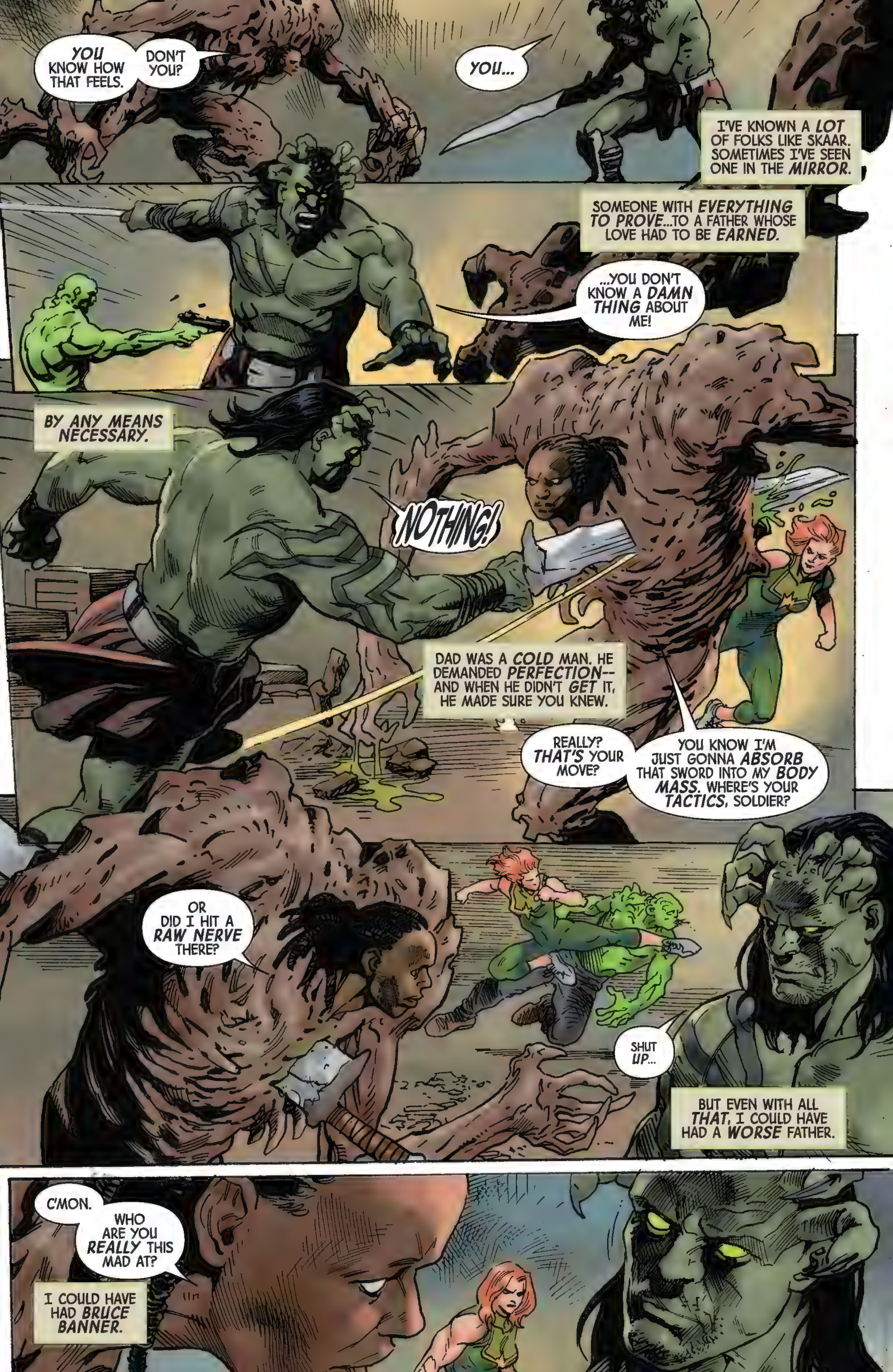

LIKE SOMEONE'S PUNCHING UP THROUGH IT.
BRACE YOURSELVES, FOLKS--
--WE HAVE COMPANY!
WHAAMMM
STOCKPILE.
AND I KNEW WHO FROM THE SECOND I HEARD THE SOUND. BECAUSE WHO'D DO THAT? WHO WOULDN'T JUST...USE THE ELEVATOR?
SOMEONE WITH A LOT OF ANGER TO TAKE OUT AND A LOT OF MUSCLE TO DO IT WITH. SOMEONE WHO JUST WANTS TO PROVE SOMETHING.
I'VE MET A LOT OF PEOPLE LIKE SKAAR...
LET ME GUESS--YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE BEING SNEAKY, DIDN'T YOU? YOU AND YOUR LITTLE FRIENDS.
BUT ALL THE TIME, YOU WERE JUST WALKING INTO THE TRAP...
"...AND NOW IT'S SNAPPED SHUT ON YOU."

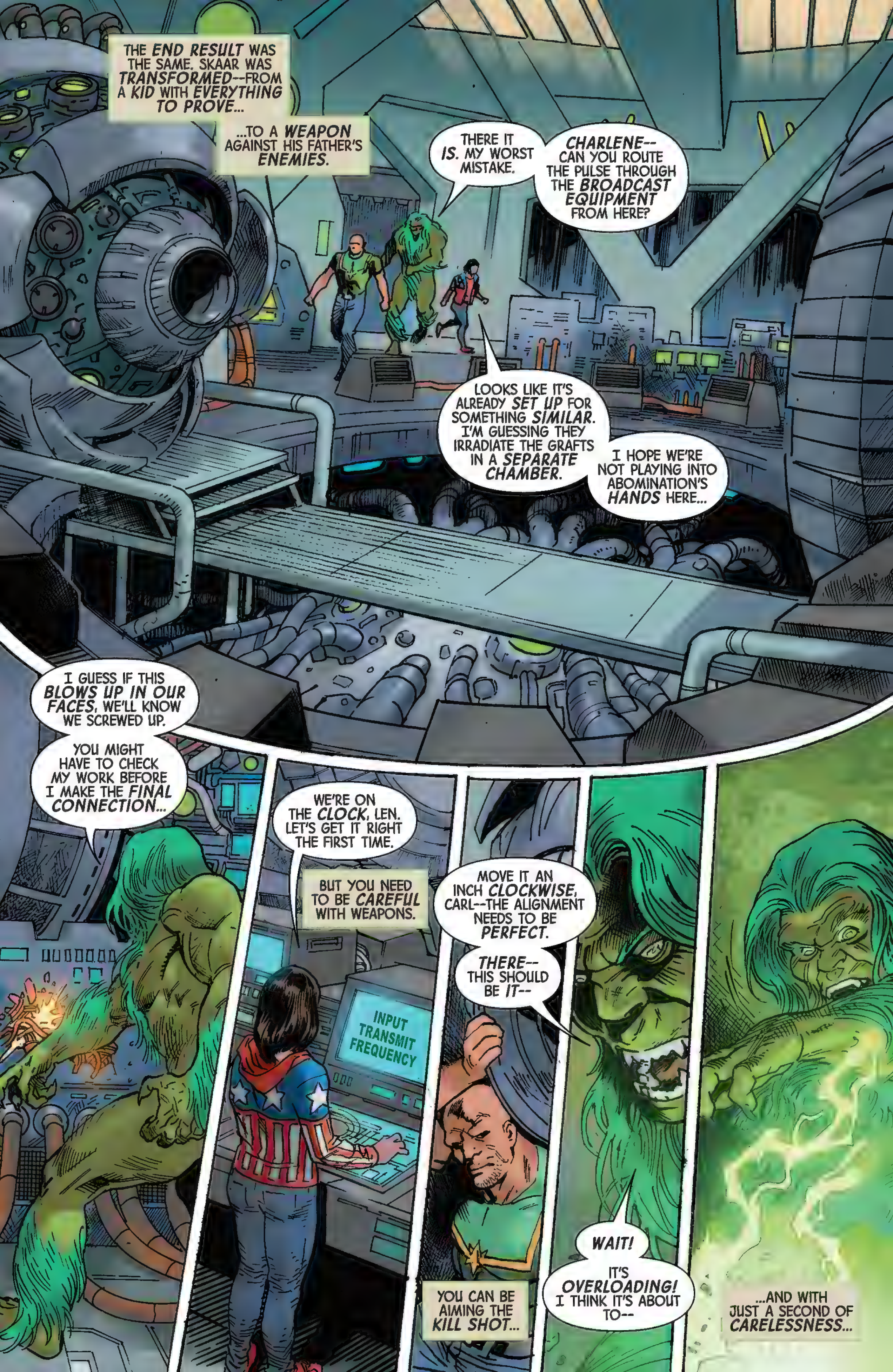

I CAN FEEL THEM...COMING CLOSER...
TOWARD US, IN PACKS... CONTROLLED...
BUT STILL PEOPLE.
YEAH? WELL, THEY WANTED TO BE GAMMA ZOMBIES.
I SAY WE PUT 'EM IN GAMMA GRAVES.
THAT'S NOT THE PLAN, CARL. YOU'RE WITH US, REMEMBER?
LEN, I DON'T THINK WE CAN USE THE ELEVATOR NOW--HEY!
WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE THE QUICK WAY DOWN. CARL-- CAN YOU MAKE US A PATH?
LEAVE IT TO ME, HAIRBALL--
--I BEEN HOPIN' FOR AN EXCUSE TO USE MARY'S WEDDING PRESENT!
BDAM

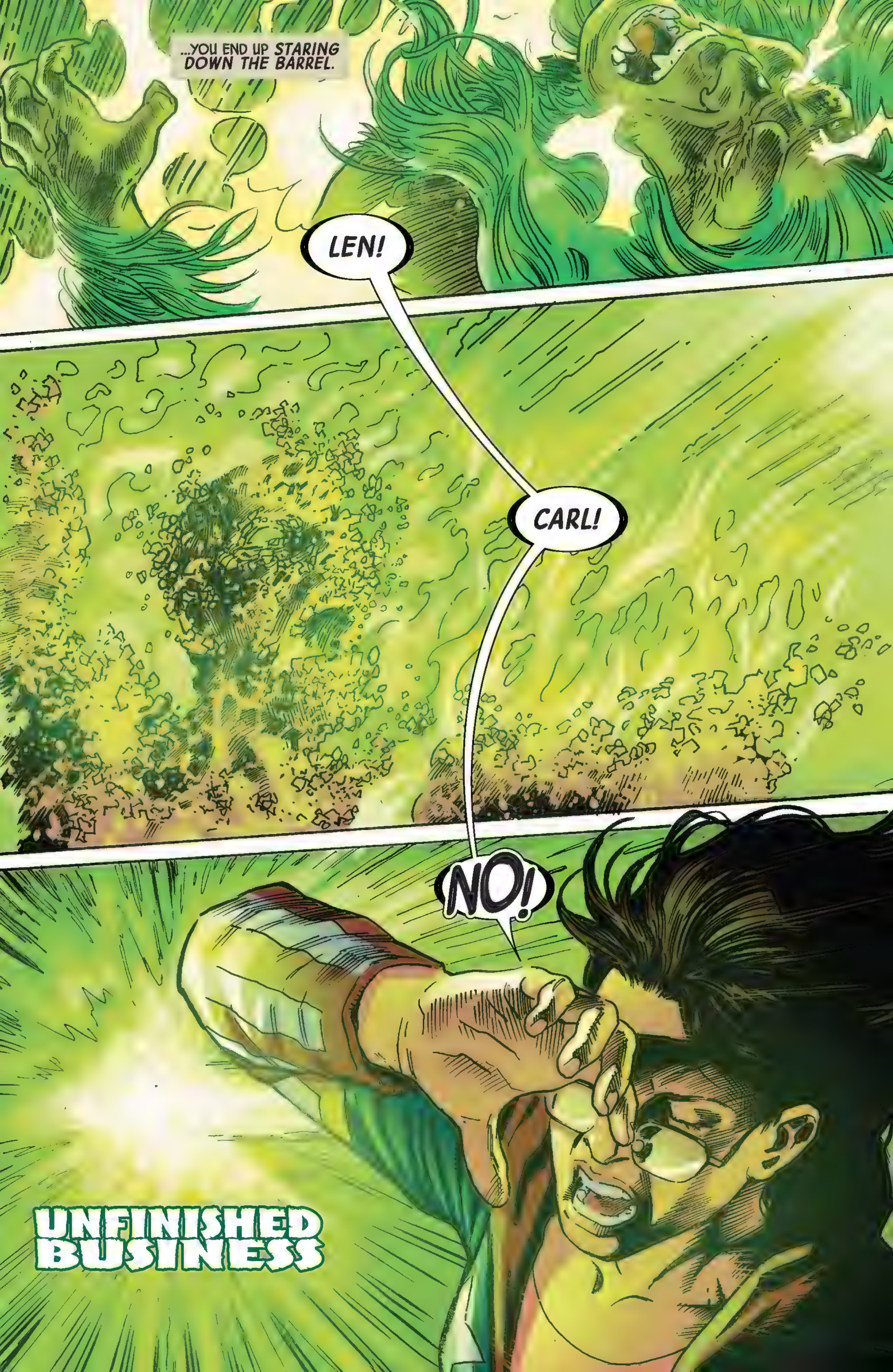

KLANNG
THAT'S *SECONDARY ADAMANTIUM,* PAL!
'SPECIALLY ON A PRETTY FACE LIKE *THIS* ONE!
PACKS A *PUNCH,* HUH?
VERY NICE, ABSORBING MAN.
SEE YOU *DOWN THERE,* FOLKS...
DIVIDING YOUR FORCES? I THOUGHT THE GENERAL TAUGHT YOU *BETTER,* STOCKPILE.
YOU DO *KNOW* THERE'S NOTHING DOWN THERE BUT *BANE TROOPERS* AND *GAMMA WOLVES,* RIGHT? NOT TO MENTION DADDY DEAREST *HIMSELF.*
STILL, MAYBE I SHOULD-- *EH?*
THE LIGHTS...?
NO.
NOT THE LIGHTS.
THE *DOOR.*
DON'T.
MY NAME'S *DEL.* SOMETHING *BAD* HAPPENED TO ME.
NOW I'M *SPOOKY.*

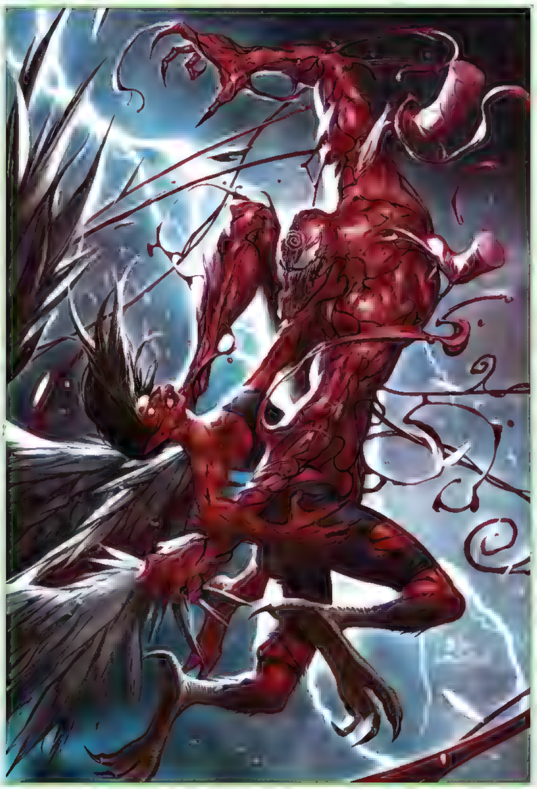

DON'T WANT TO SEE.
DON'T WANT TO SEE IT.
RICK DOESN'T LIKE TO LOOK. WE SEE A LOT.
LOTS OF SPOOKY IN THE GAMMA.
WHY DON'T YOU LOOK? HUH?
LOOK THROUGH MY EYES.
...
THAT'S...THAT'S ALL YOU GOT, SPOOKSHOW?
A BUNCH OF SHADOWS? A FEW GHOSTS?
'CAUSE I'VE GOT PLENTY OF THOSE!
LEAVE THE KID ALONE, YA BIG--
NO. YOU TAKE HIS BACKUP.
SKAAR WAS THE GUINEA PIG FOR WHAT GREEN SPRING USED ON ME. IF I HADN'T WANTED...THIS...


...HE'S MY RESPONSIBILITY.
IT'S MY FIGHT.
NOT TO MENTION THAT IT'S A FIGHT SKAAR CAN'T RESIST.
WE'VE ALL GOT OUR ROLES TO PLAY IN THIS...
...AND IF I KEEP HIM DISTRACTED, THE OTHERS CAN DO THEIR PART--IF THEY MAKE IT.
I KNOW WHAT THE BANE TROOPERS ARE CAPABLE OF.
THERE'S SOME INTERFERENCE FROM THESE GOONS--BUT MY GAMMA DETECTOR'S PICKING UP A BIG SIGNAL.
THAT'LL BE THE CATHEXIS RAY...
LET'S HOPE SO.
THOOMM
WHOEVER GREEN SPRING RECRUITED, THEY'RE USED TO A DIFFERENT KIND OF COMBAT. HULK FIGHTS HAVE THEIR OWN RHYTHM.
EVEN SO-- LET'S MOVE FAST.
KEEP YOUR FOCUS, DIONNE.
WORRY ABOUT SKAAR.
"RESPONSIBILITY." DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.
THIS IS JUST ANOTHER WAY TO GET DADDY'S ATTENTION.
GET SOME LOVE FROM THE GENERAL--
HNN!
MAYBE IT WAS. BUT THAT'S NOT REALLY MY FATHER.
JUST SOMEONE LIVING IN HIS BODY, USING MY UNFINISHED BUSINESS WITH HIM TO STRING ME ALONG.
TO MAKE ME HIS TOOL...

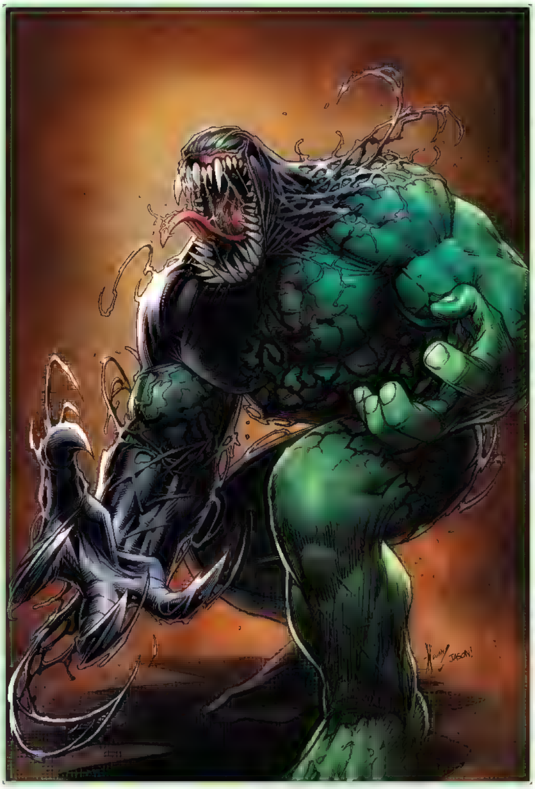

YOU KNOW HOW THAT FEELS.
DON'T YOU?
YOU...
I'VE KNOWN A LOT OF FOLKS LIKE SKAAR. SOMETIMES I'VE SEEN ONE IN THE MIRROR.
SOMEONE WITH EVERYTHING TO PROVE...TO A FATHER WHOSE LOVE HAD TO BE EARNED.
...YOU DON'T KNOW A DAMN THING ABOUT ME!
BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.
NOTHING!
DAD WAS A COLD MAN. HE DEMANDED PERFECTION-- AND WHEN HE DIDN'T GET IT, HE MADE SURE YOU KNEW.
REALLY? THAT'S YOUR MOVE?
YOU KNOW I'M JUST GONNA ABSORB THAT SWORD INTO MY BODY MASS. WHERE'S YOUR TACTICS, SOLDIER?
OR DID I HIT A RAW NERVE THERE?
SHUT UP...
BUT EVEN WITH ALL THAT, I COULD HAVE HAD A WORSE FATHER.
C'MON.
WHO ARE YOU REALLY THIS MAD AT?
I COULD HAVE HAD BRUCE BANNER.


THE END RESULT WAS THE SAME. SKAAR WAS TRANSFORMED--FROM A KID WITH EVERYTHING TO PROVE...
...TO A WEAPON AGAINST HIS FATHER'S ENEMIES.
THERE IT IS. MY WORST MISTAKE.
CHARLENE--CAN YOU ROUTE THE PULSE THROUGH THE BROADCAST EQUIPMENT FROM HERE?
LOOKS LIKE IT'S ALREADY SET UP FOR SOMETHING SIMILAR. I'M GUESSING THEY IRRADIATE THE GRAFTS IN A SEPARATE CHAMBER.
I HOPE WE'RE NOT PLAYING INTO ABOMINATION'S HANDS HERE...
I GUESS IF THIS BLOWS UP IN OUR FACES, WE'LL KNOW WE SCREWED UP.
YOU MIGHT HAVE TO CHECK MY WORK BEFORE I MAKE THE FINAL CONNECTION...
WE'RE ON THE CLOCK, LEN. LET'S GET IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME.
BUT YOU NEED TO BE CAREFUL WITH WEAPONS.
INPUT TRANSMIT FREQUENCY
MOVE IT AN INCH CLOCKWISE, CARL--THE ALIGNMENT NEEDS TO BE PERFECT.
THERE--THIS SHOULD BE IT--
YOU CAN BE AIMING THE KILL SHOT...
WAIT!
IT'S OVERLOADING! I THINK IT'S ABOUT TO--
...AND WITH JUST A SECOND OF CARELESSNESS...

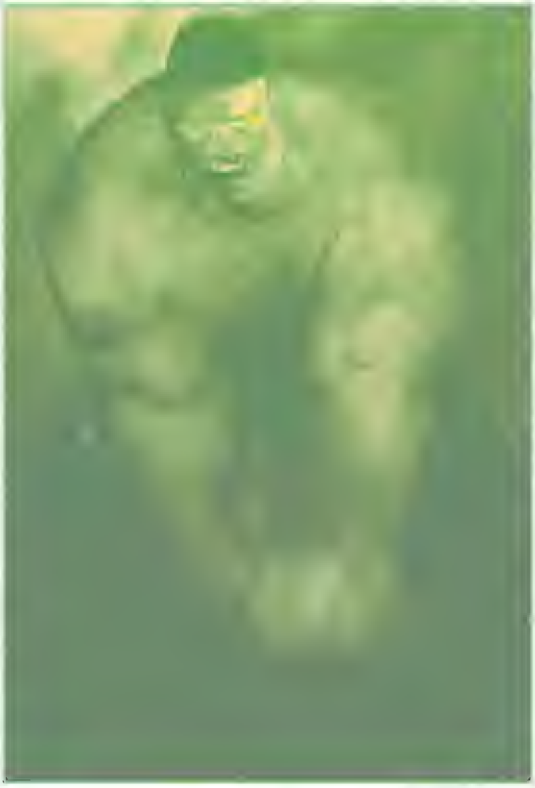

...YOU END UP STARING DOWN THE BARREL.
LEN!
CARL!
NO!
UNFINISHED BUSINESS



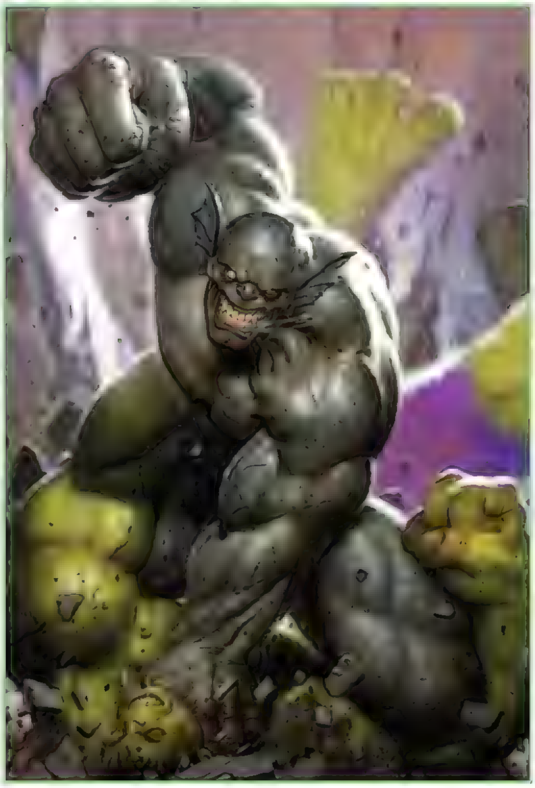
ABSOLUTE CARNAGE: IMMORTAL HULK
VARIANT BY INHYUK LEE



ABSOLUTE CARNAGE: IMMORTAL HULK CODEX
VARIANT BY DALE KEOWN & JASON KEITH

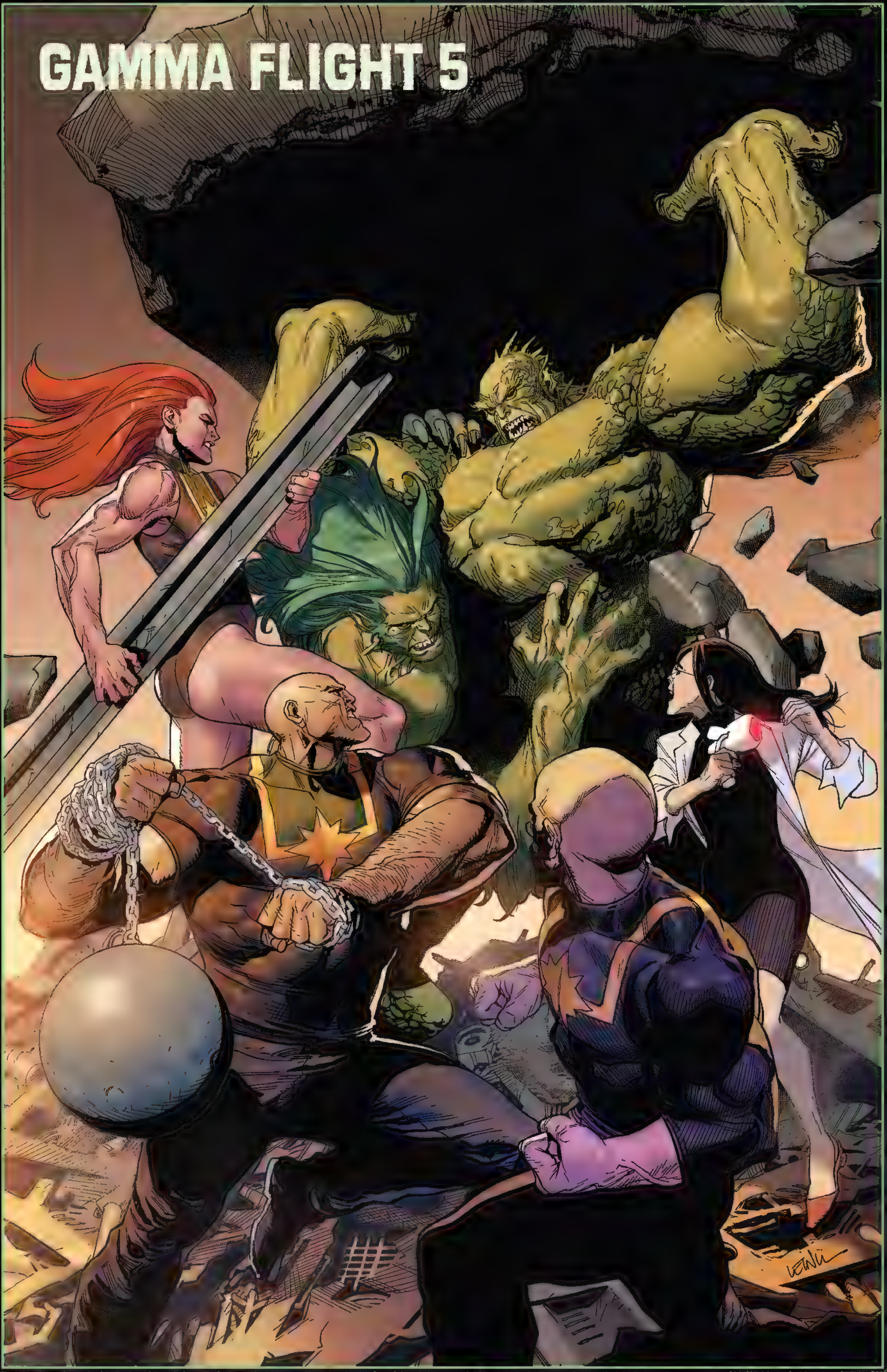


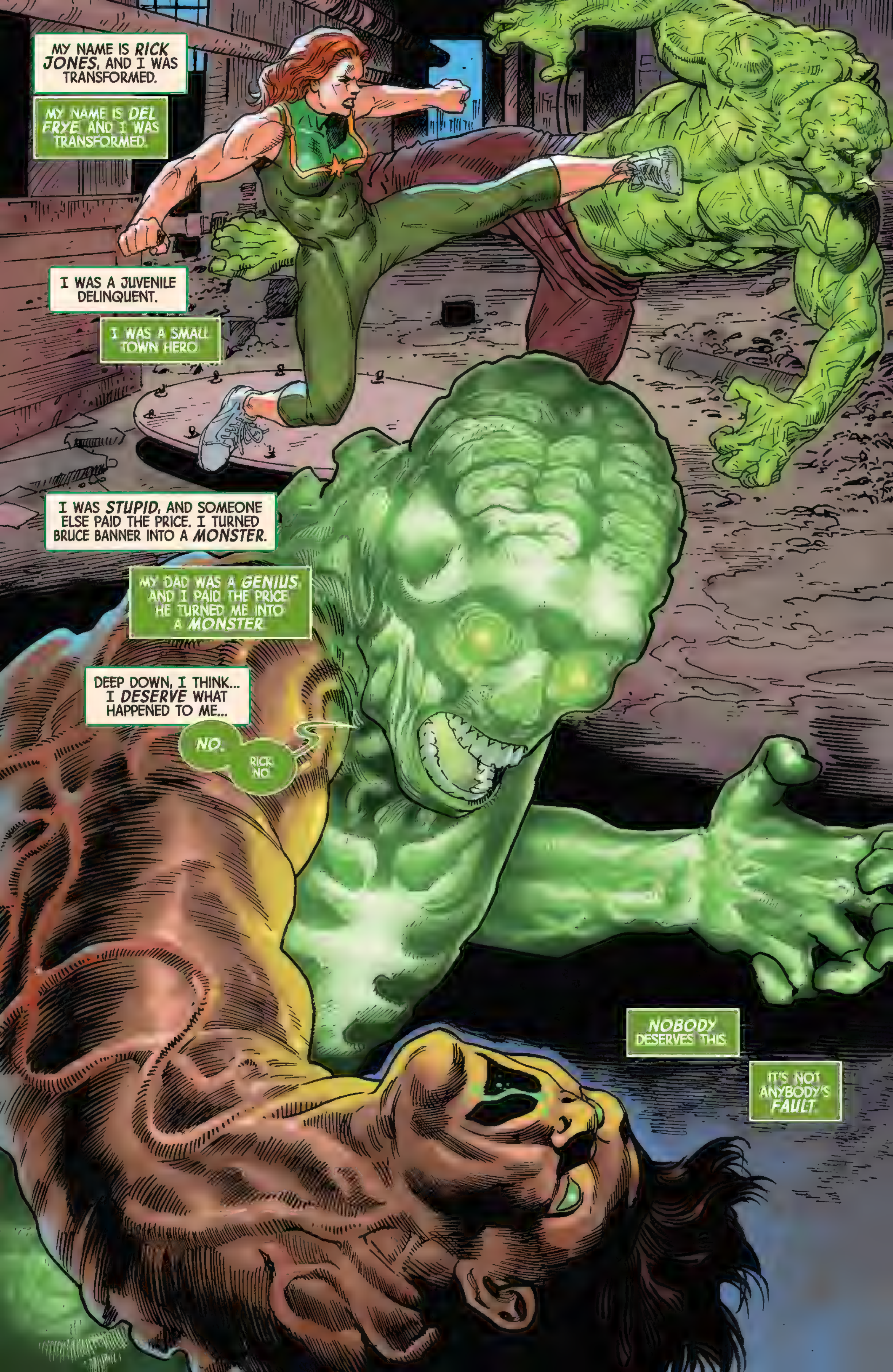
#21 2ND PRINTING VARIANT BY
ANDREA SORRENTINO

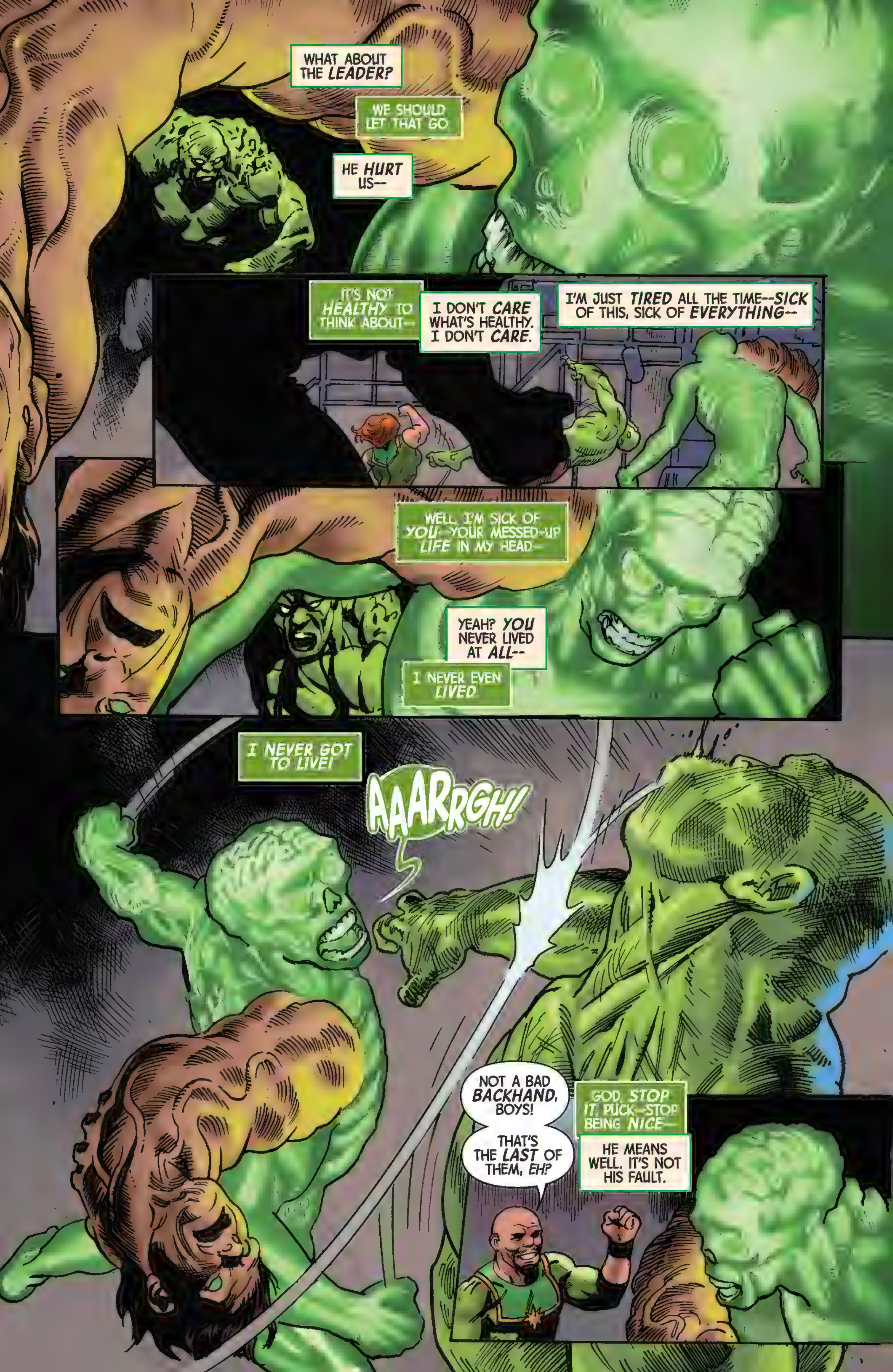


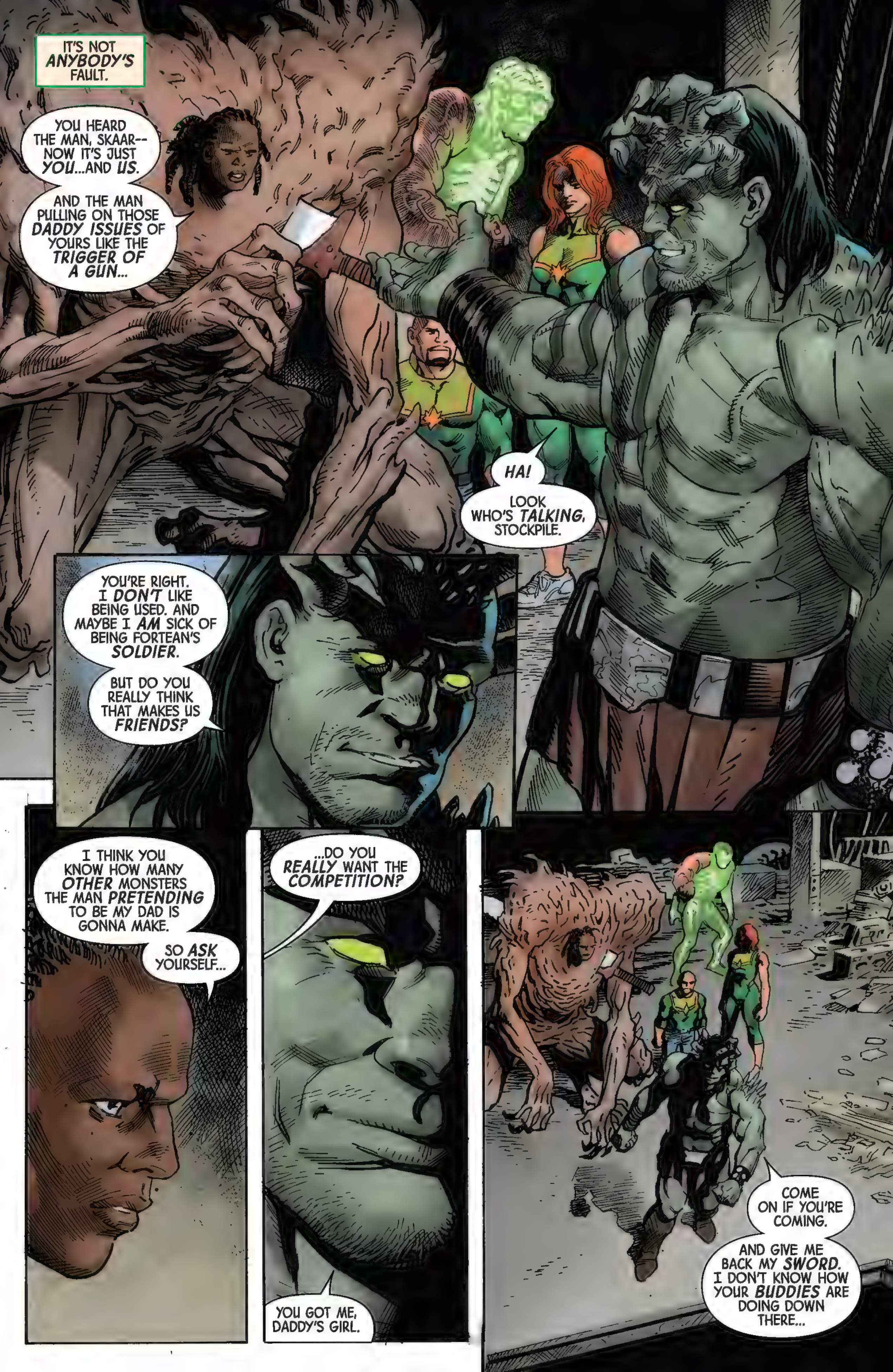
#22 BRING ON THE BAD GUYS VARIANT BY
RYAN BROWN

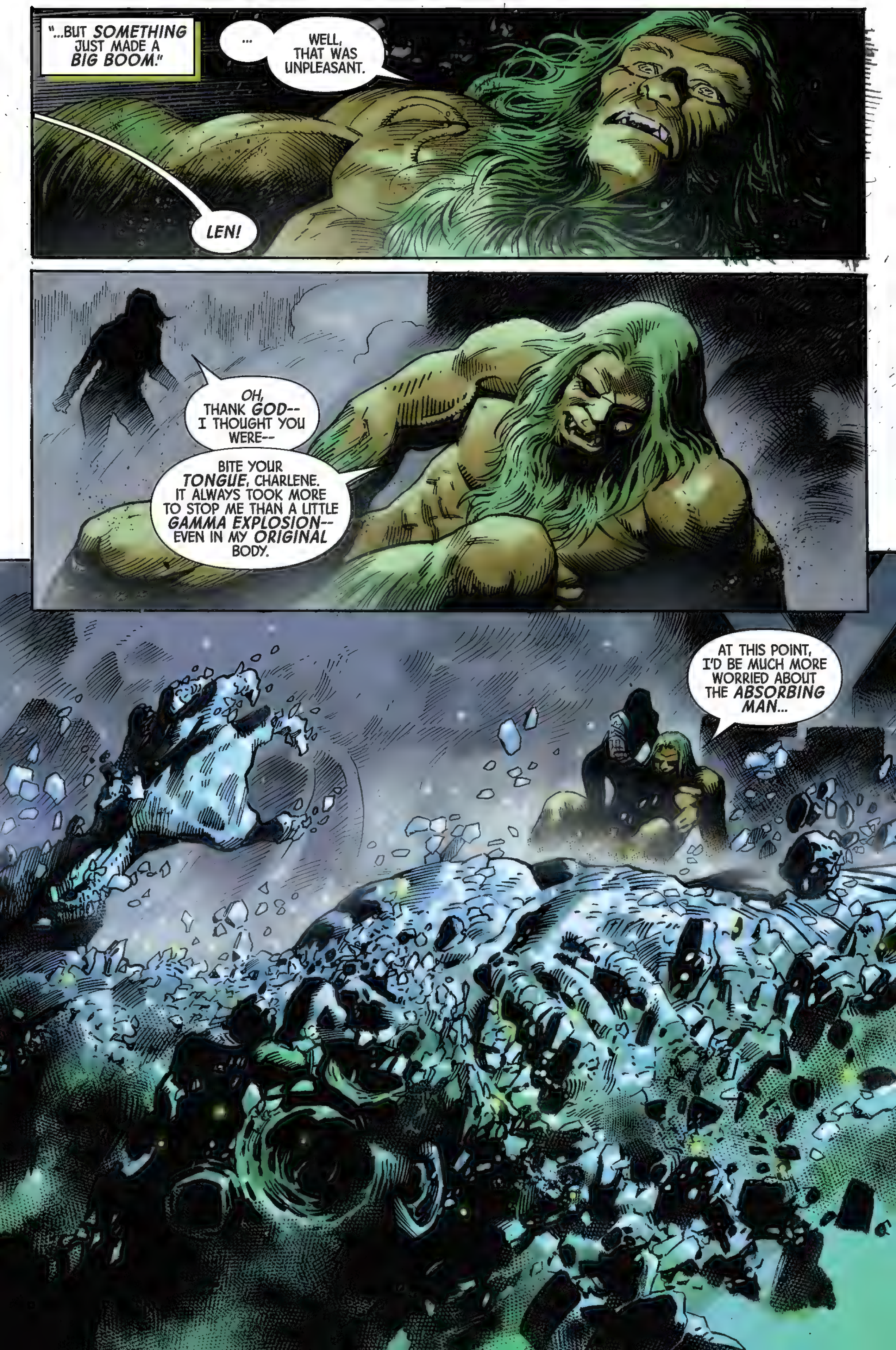
GAMMA FLIGHT 5

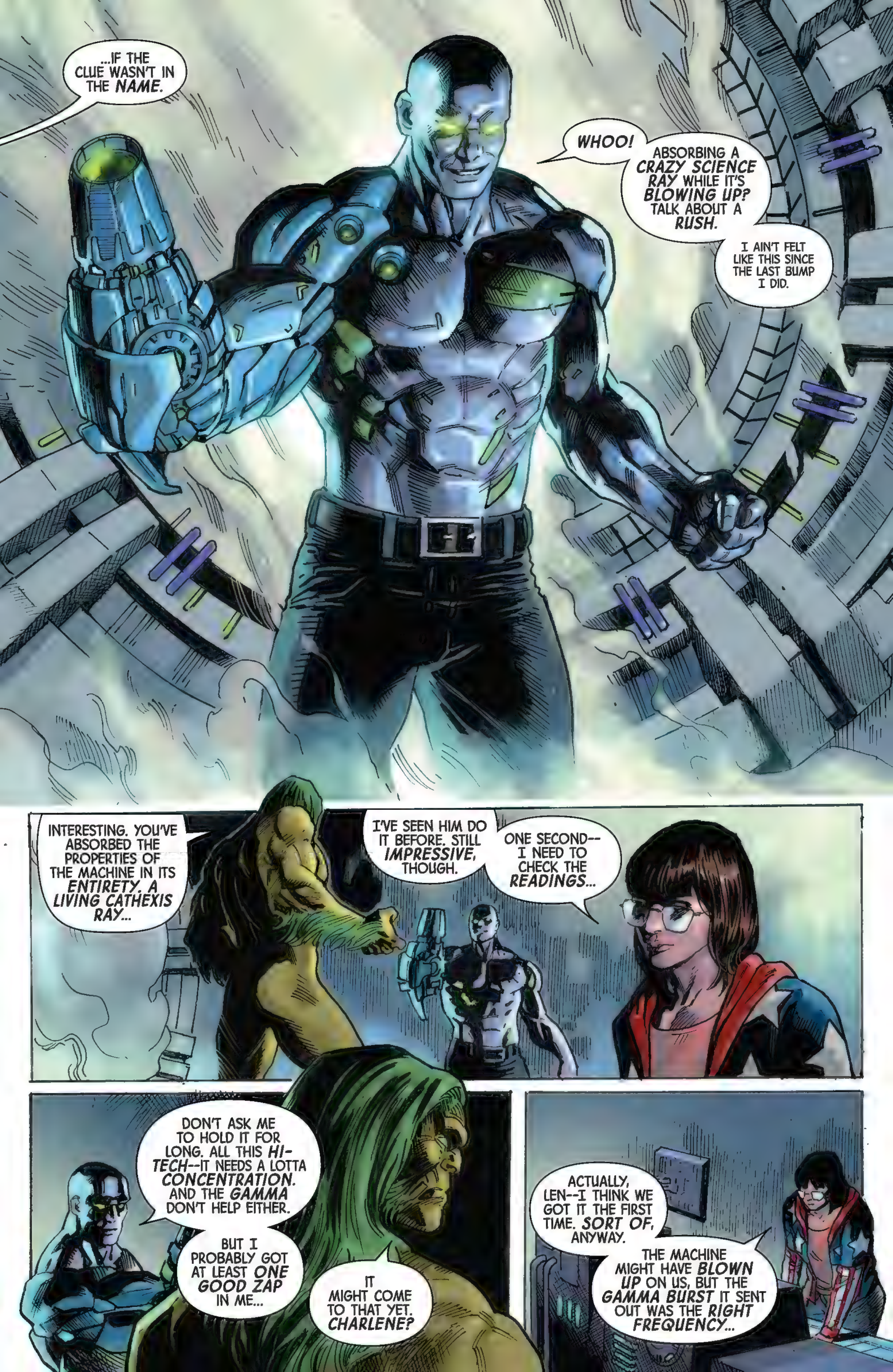


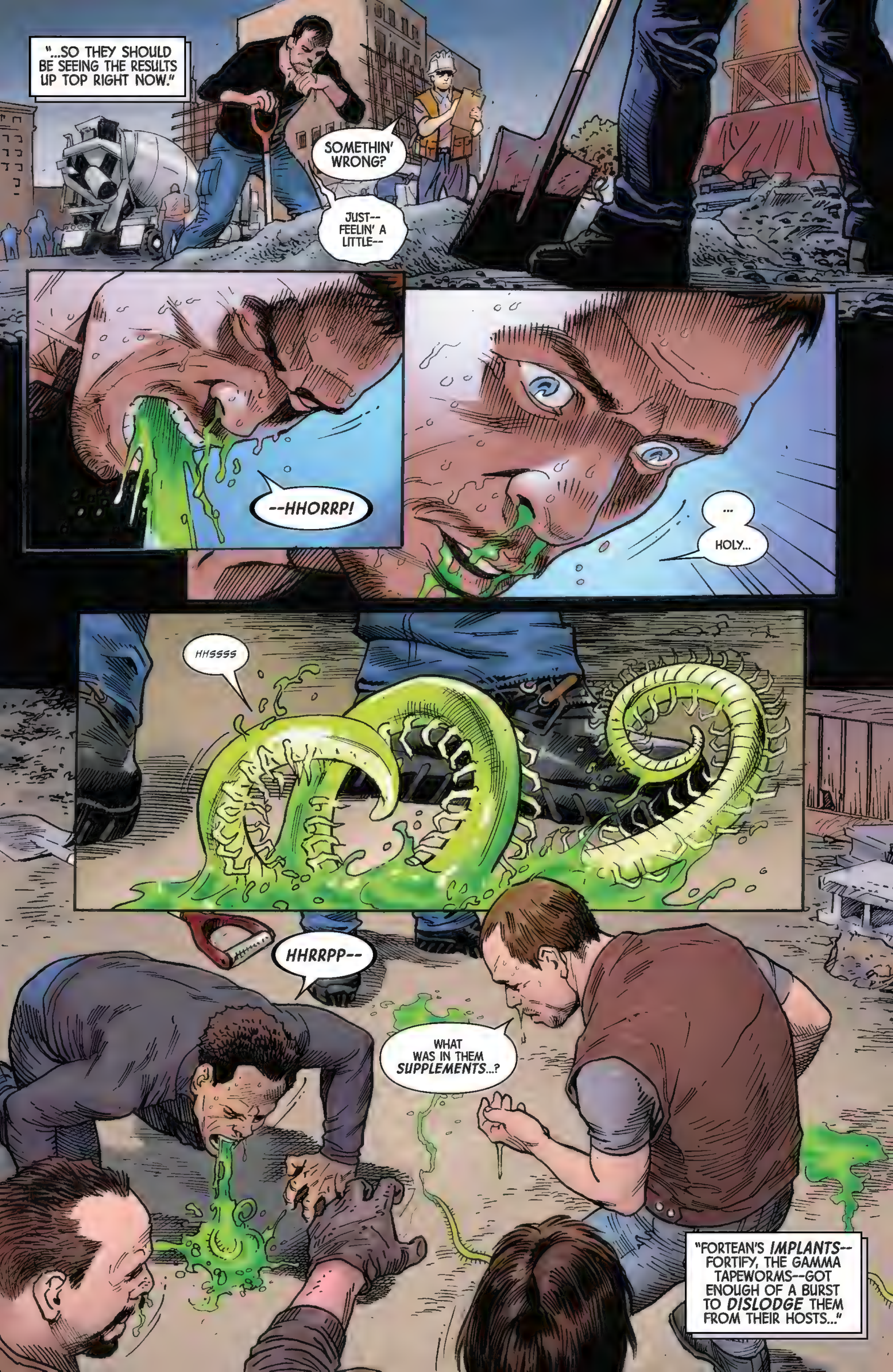

MY NAME IS *RICK JONES*, AND I WAS TRANSFORMED.
MY NAME IS *DEL FRYE*, AND I WAS TRANSFORMED.
I WAS A JUVENILE DELINQUENT.
I WAS A SMALL TOWN HERO.
I WAS *STUPID*, AND SOMEONE ELSE PAID THE PRICE. I TURNED BRUCE BANNER INTO A *MONSTER*.
MY DAD WAS A *GENIUS*, AND I PAID THE PRICE. HE TURNED ME INTO A *MONSTER*.
DEEP DOWN, I THINK... I *DESERVE* WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...
NO. RICK NO.
NOBODY DESERVES THIS.
IT'S NOT ANYBODY'S *FAULT*.

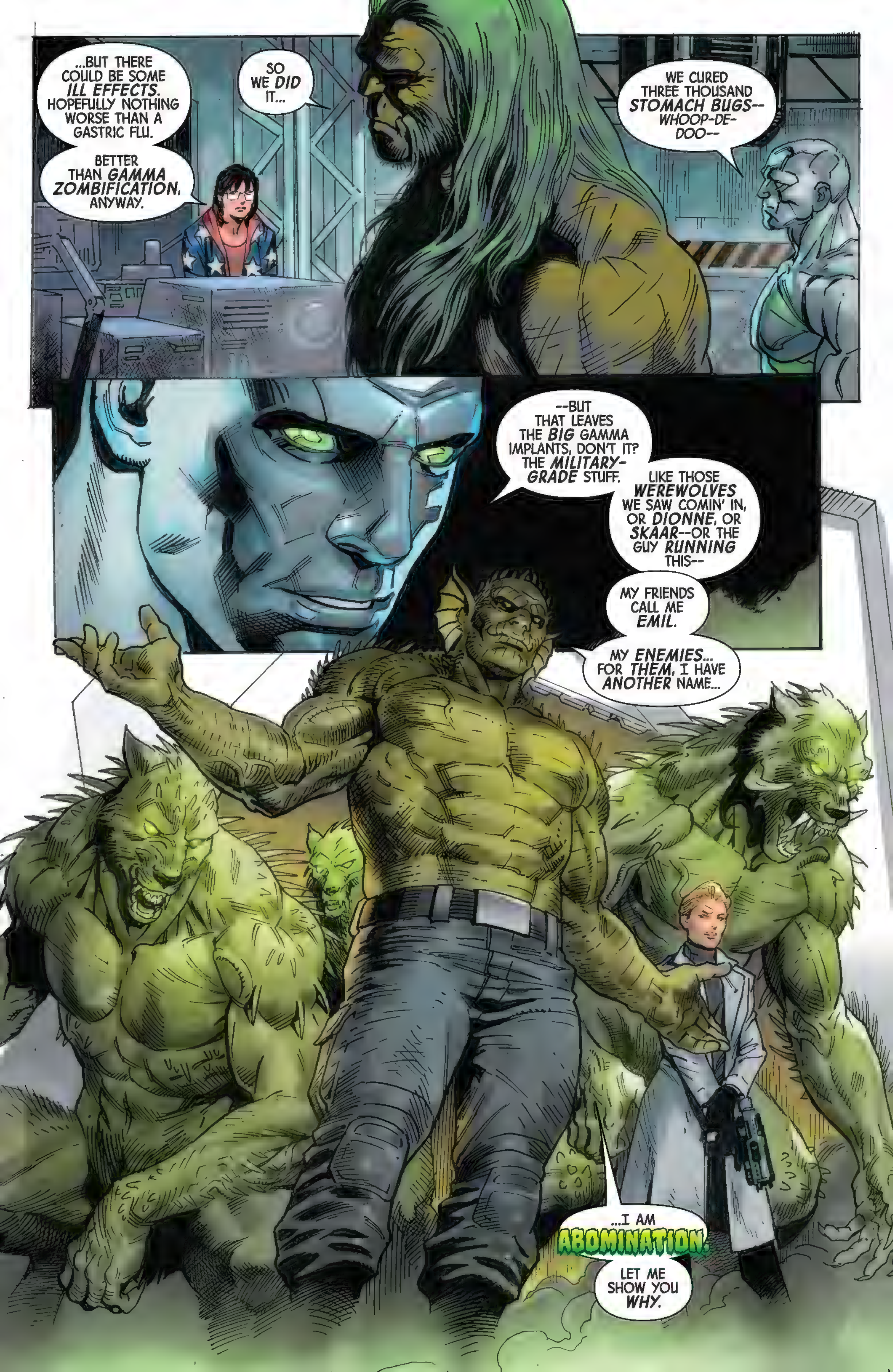

WHAT ABOUT THE *LEADER?*
WE SHOULD LET THAT GO
HE *HURT* US--
IT'S NOT *HEALTHY* TO THINK ABOUT--
I DON'T *CARE* WHAT'S HEALTHY. I DON'T *CARE.*
I'M JUST *TIRED* ALL THE TIME--*SICK* OF THIS, SICK OF *EVERYTHING--*
WELL, I'M SICK OF *YOU*--YOUR MESSED-UP *LIFE* IN MY HEAD--
YEAH? *YOU* NEVER LIVED AT *ALL--*
I NEVER EVEN *LIVED*
I NEVER GOT TO LIVE!
AAARRGH!
NOT A BAD *BACKHAND,* BOYS!
THAT'S THE *LAST* OF THEM, *EH?*
GOD, *STOP IT,* PUCK--STOP BEING *NICE--*
HE MEANS WELL. IT'S NOT HIS FAULT.

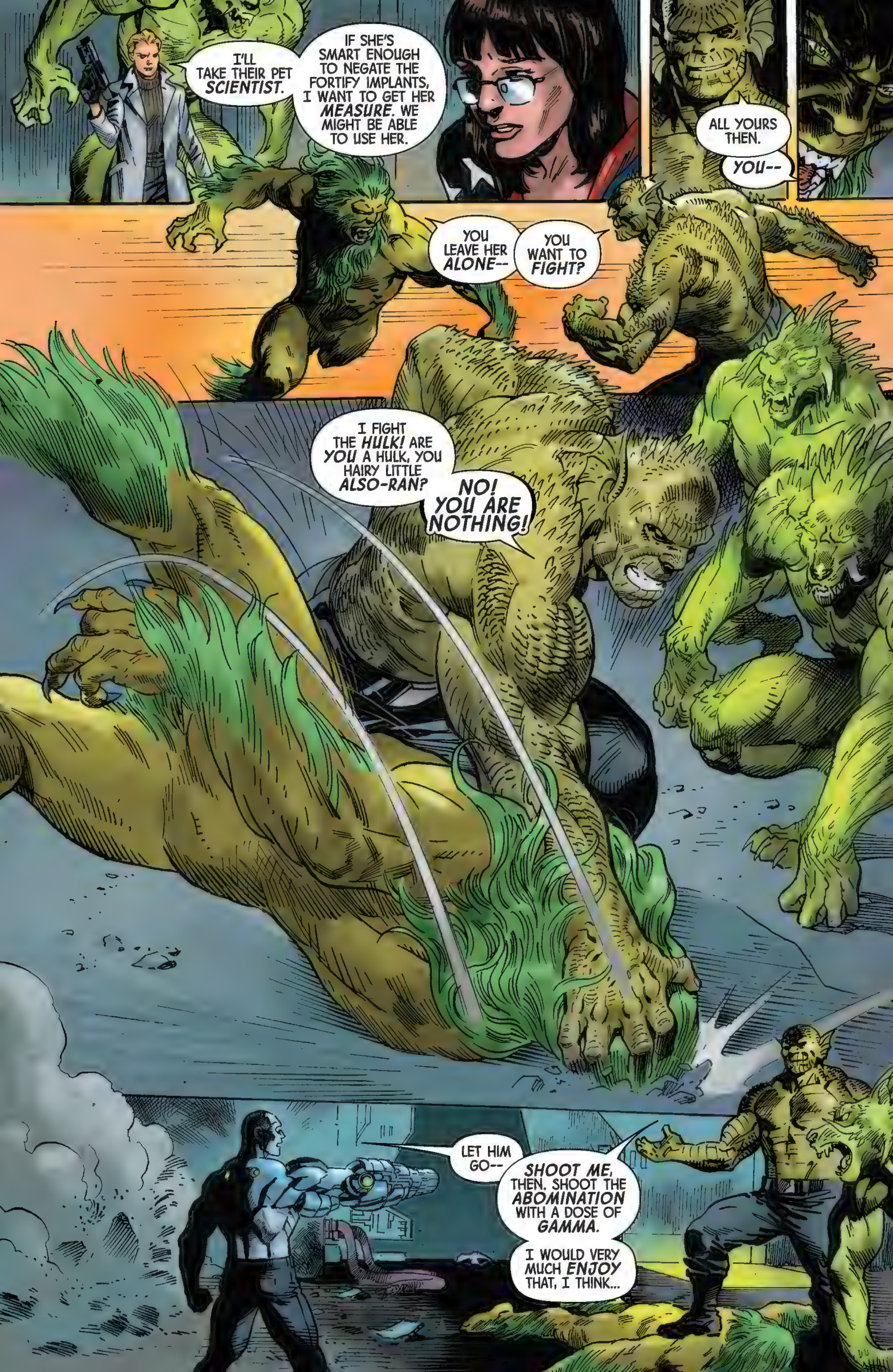

IT'S NOT *ANYBODY'S* FAULT.
YOU HEARD THE MAN, SKAAR-- NOW IT'S JUST *YOU*...AND *US*.
AND THE MAN PULLING ON THOSE *DADDY ISSUES* OF YOURS LIKE THE *TRIGGER OF A GUN*...
HA!
LOOK WHO'S *TALKING*, STOCKPILE.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I *DON'T* LIKE BEING USED. AND MAYBE I *AM* SICK OF BEING FORTEAN'S *SOLDIER*.
BUT DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT MAKES US *FRIENDS?*
I THINK YOU KNOW HOW MANY *OTHER* MONSTERS THE MAN *PRETENDING* TO BE MY DAD IS GONNA MAKE.
SO *ASK* YOURSELF...
...DO YOU *REALLY* WANT THE *COMPETITION?*
YOU GOT ME, DADDY'S GIRL.
COME ON IF YOU'RE COMING.
AND GIVE ME BACK MY *SWORD*. I DON'T KNOW HOW YOUR *BUDDIES* ARE DOING DOWN THERE...

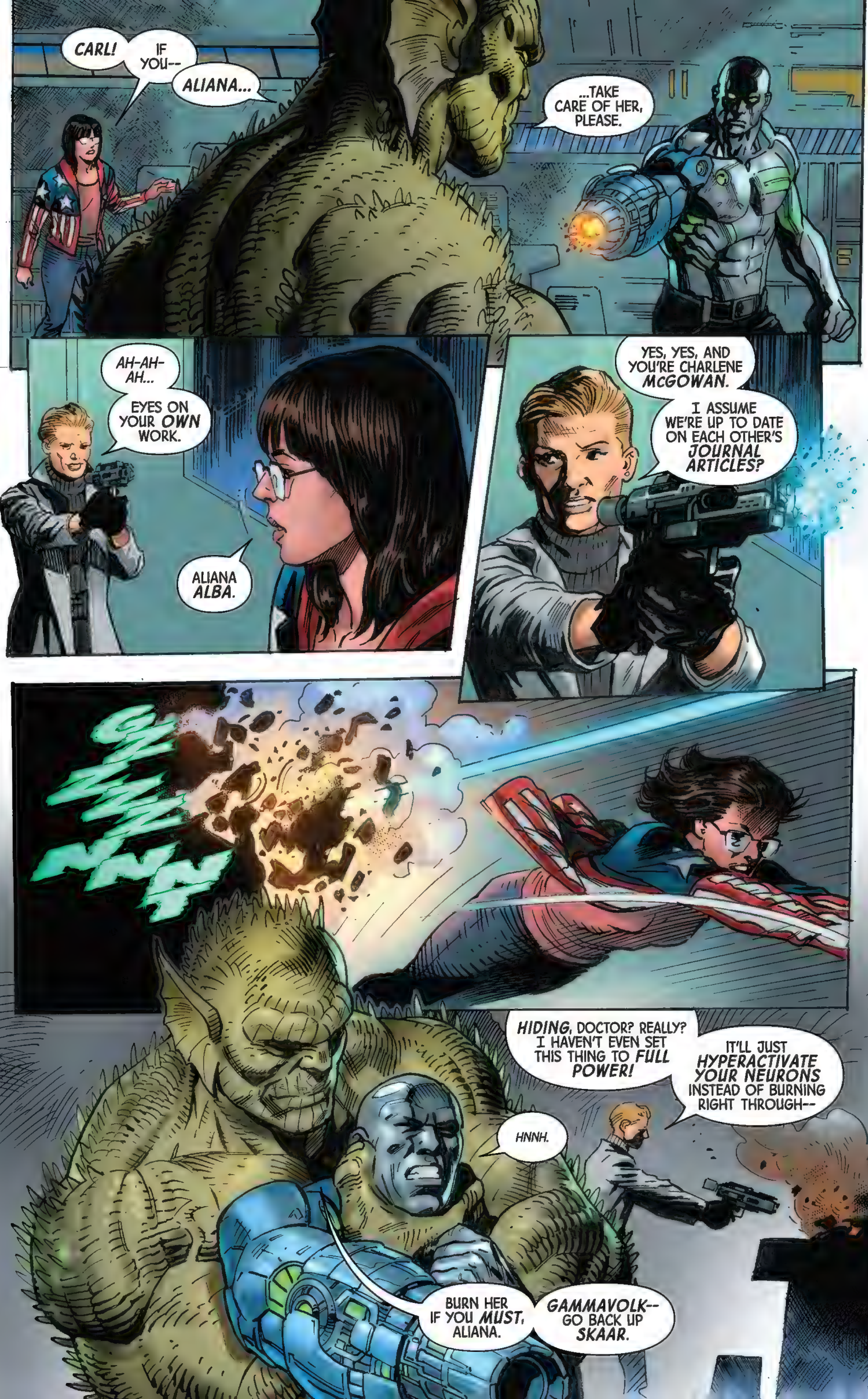

"...BUT *SOMETHING* JUST MADE A *BIG BOOM.*"
...
WELL, THAT WAS UNPLEASANT.
LEN!
OH, THANK *GOD*-- I THOUGHT YOU WERE--
BITE YOUR *TONGUE*, CHARLENE. IT ALWAYS TOOK MORE TO STOP ME THAN A LITTLE *GAMMA EXPLOSION*-- EVEN IN MY *ORIGINAL* BODY.
AT THIS POINT, I'D BE MUCH MORE WORRIED ABOUT THE *ABSORBING MAN*...

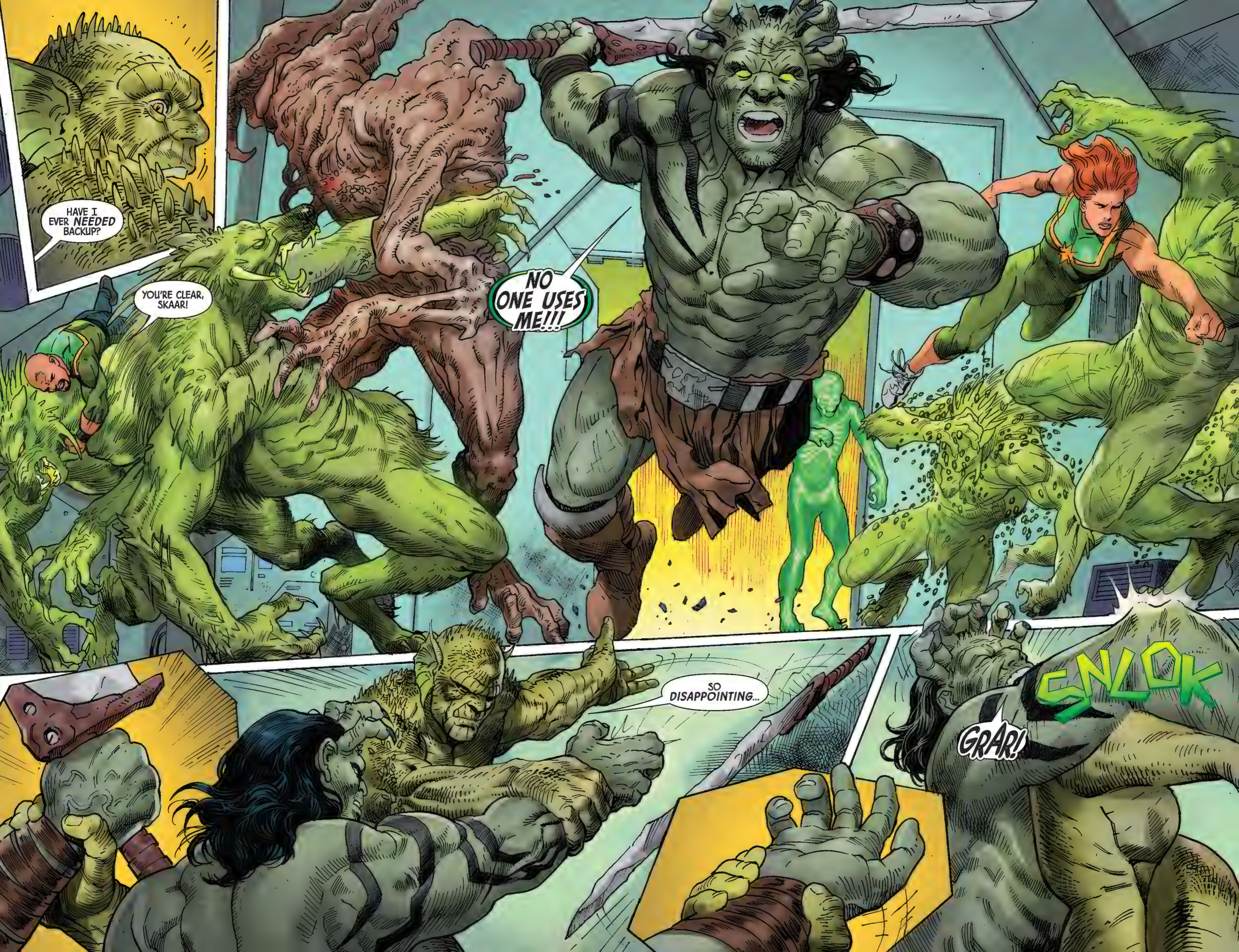

...IF THE CLUE WASN'T IN THE *NAME*.
WHOO!
ABSORBING A *CRAZY SCIENCE RAY* WHILE IT'S *BLOWING UP?* TALK ABOUT A *RUSH*.
I AIN'T FELT LIKE THIS SINCE THE LAST BUMP I DID.
INTERESTING. YOU'VE ABSORBED THE PROPERTIES OF THE MACHINE IN ITS *ENTIRETY. A LIVING CATHEXIS RAY*...
I'VE SEEN HIM DO IT BEFORE. STILL *IMPRESSIVE,* THOUGH.
ONE SECOND-- I NEED TO CHECK THE *READINGS*...
DON'T ASK ME TO HOLD IT FOR LONG. ALL THIS *HI-TECH*--IT NEEDS A LOTTA *CONCENTRATION*. AND THE *GAMMA* DON'T HELP EITHER.
BUT I PROBABLY GOT AT LEAST *ONE GOOD ZAP* IN ME...
IT MIGHT COME TO THAT YET. *CHARLENE?*
ACTUALLY, LEN--I THINK WE GOT IT THE FIRST TIME. *SORT OF,* ANYWAY.
THE MACHINE MIGHT HAVE *BLOWN UP* ON US, BUT THE *GAMMA BURST* IT SENT OUT WAS THE *RIGHT FREQUENCY*...

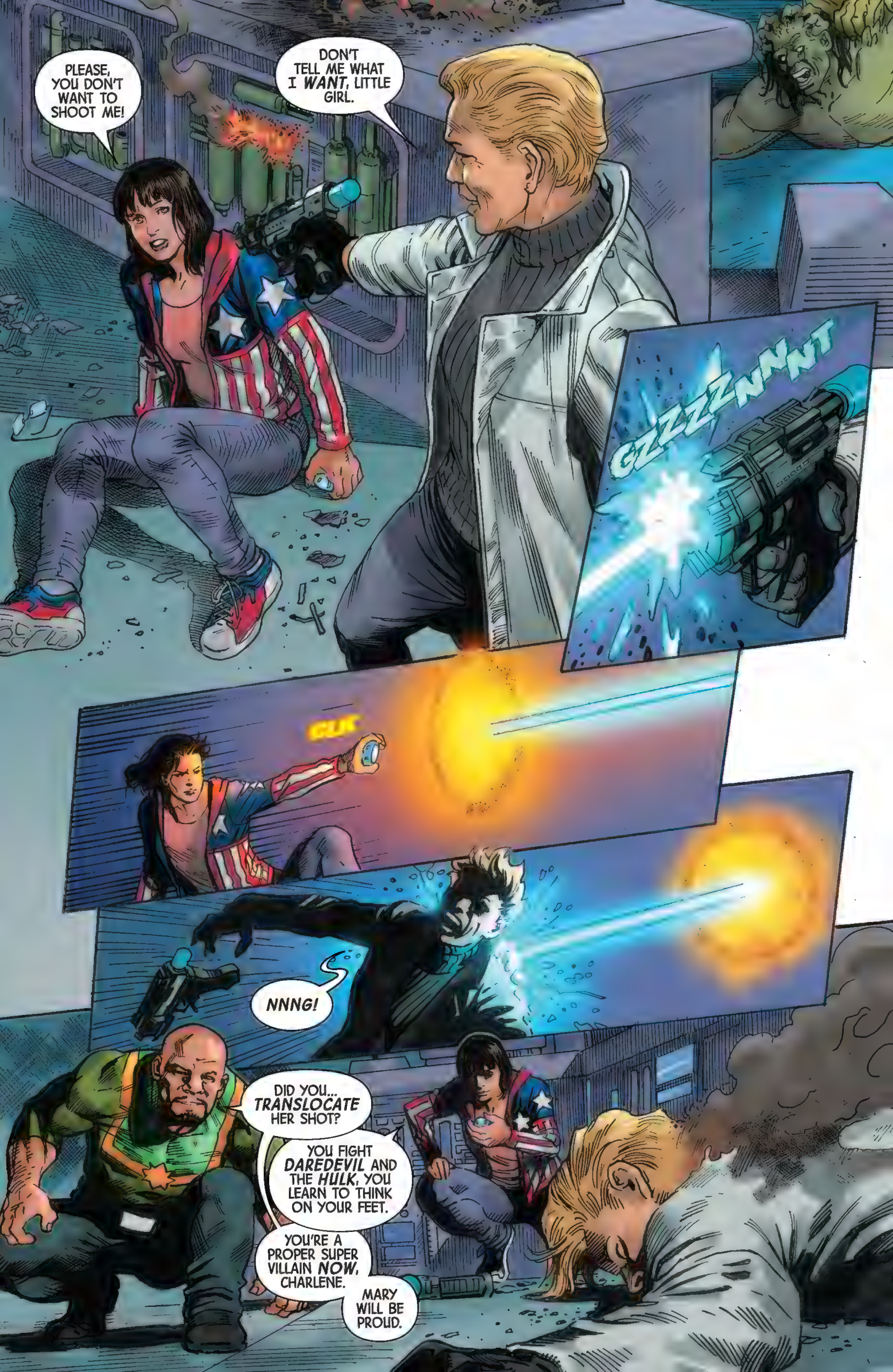

"...SO THEY SHOULD BE SEEING THE RESULTS UP TOP RIGHT NOW."
SOMETHIN' WRONG?
JUST-- FEELIN' A LITTLE--
--HHORRP!
...
HOLY...
HHSSSS
HHRRPP--
WHAT WAS IN THEM *SUPPLEMENTS*...?
"FORTEAN'S *IMPLANTS*--FORTIFY, THE GAMMA TAPEWORMS--GOT ENOUGH OF A BURST TO *DISLODGE* THEM FROM THEIR HOSTS..."

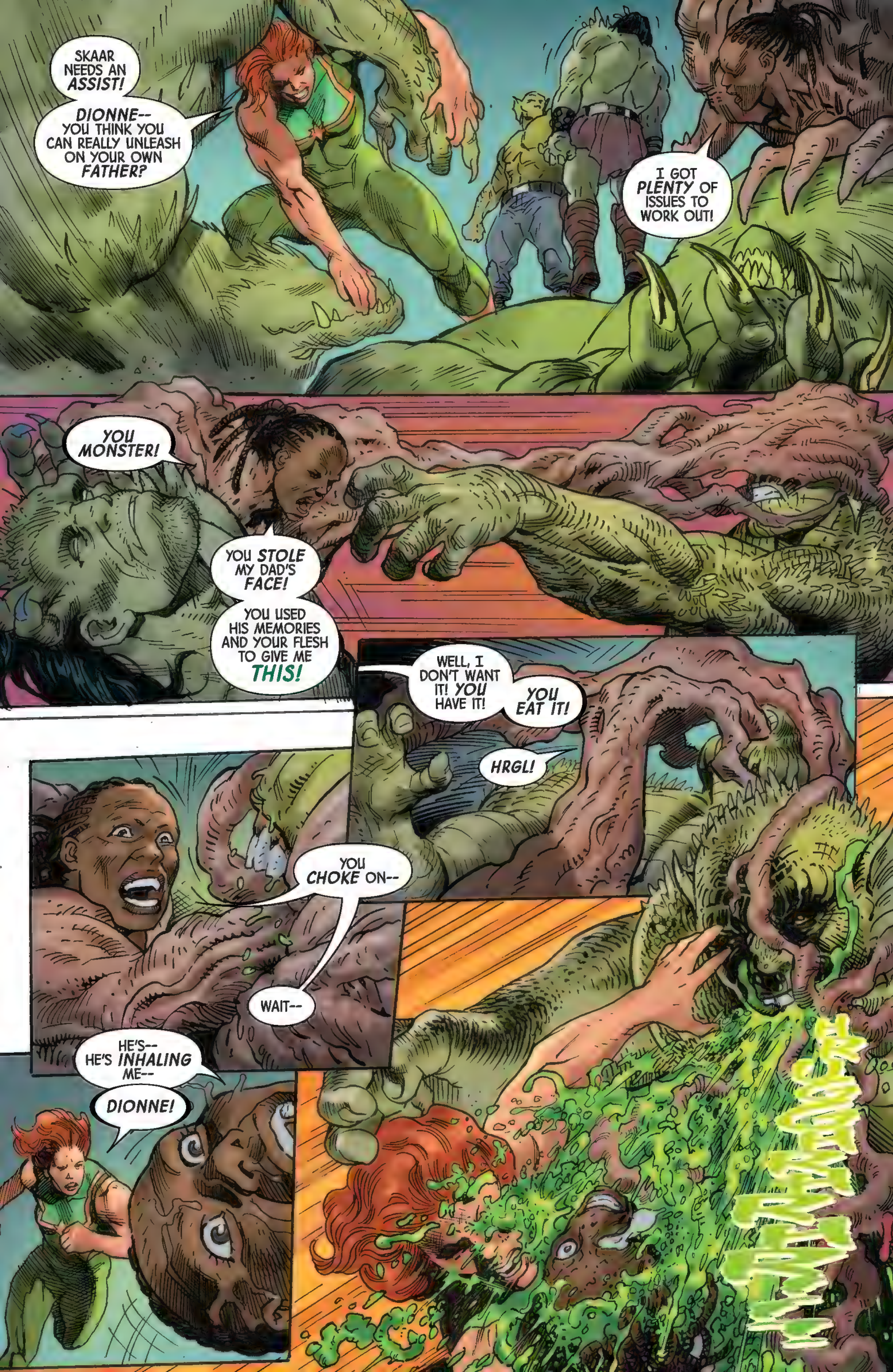

...BUT THERE COULD BE SOME *ILL EFFECTS*. HOPEFULLY NOTHING WORSE THAN A GASTRIC FLU.
BETTER THAN *GAMMA ZOMBIFICATION*, ANYWAY.
SO WE *DID* IT...
WE CURED THREE THOUSAND *STOMACH BUGS*-- *WHOOP-DE-DOO*--
--BUT THAT LEAVES THE *BIG* GAMMA IMPLANTS, DON'T IT? THE *MILITARY-GRADE* STUFF.
LIKE THOSE *WEREWOLVES* WE SAW COMIN' IN, OR *DIONNE*, OR *SKAAR*--OR THE GUY *RUNNING* THIS--
MY FRIENDS CALL ME *EMIL*.
MY *ENEMIES*... FOR *THEM*, I HAVE *ANOTHER* NAME...
...I AM ABOMINATION.
LET ME SHOW YOU *WHY*.

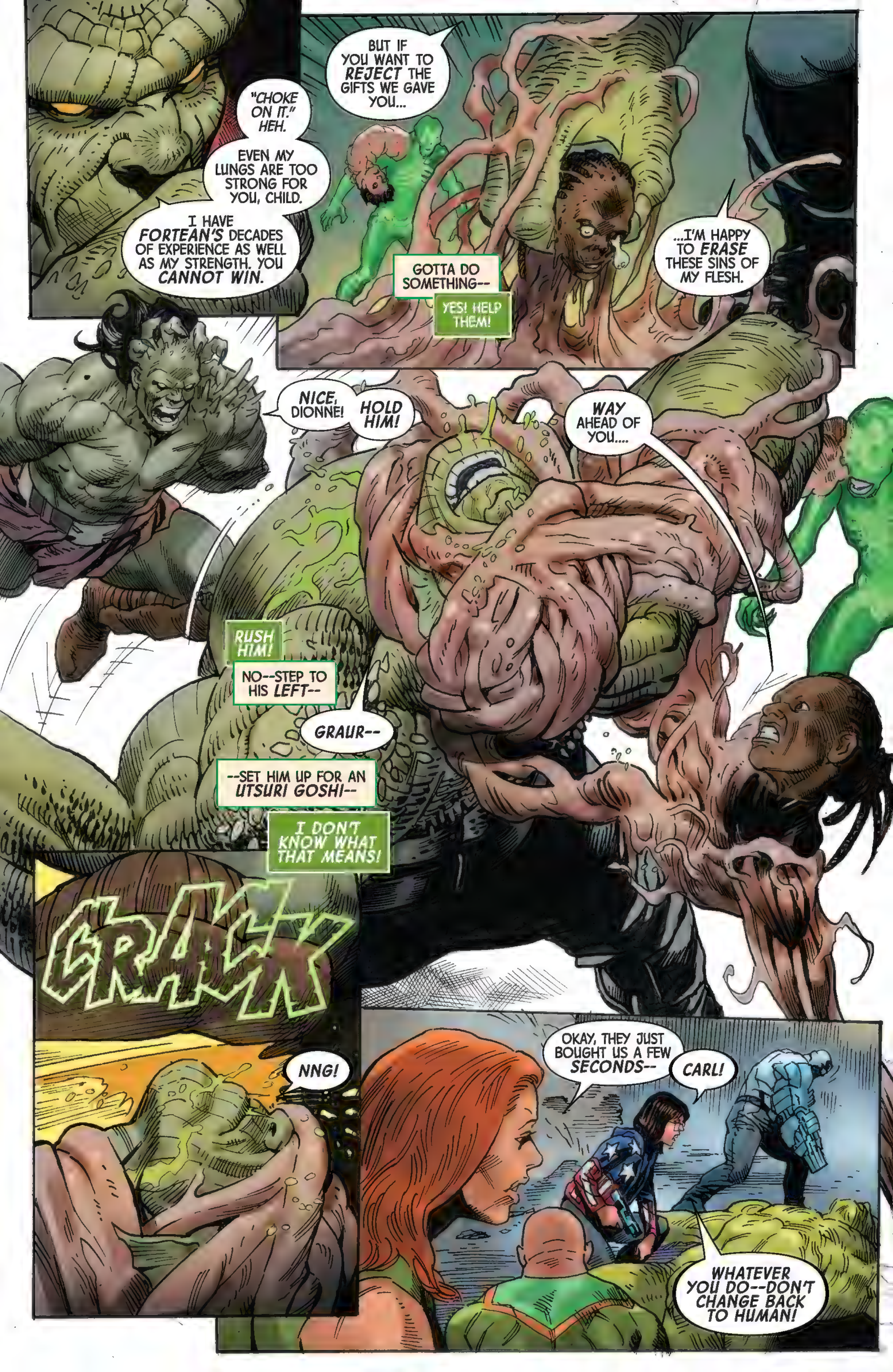

I'LL TAKE THEIR PET *SCIENTIST.*
IF SHE'S SMART ENOUGH TO NEGATE THE FORTIFY IMPLANTS, I WANT TO GET HER *MEASURE.* WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE HER.
ALL YOURS THEN.
YOU--
YOU LEAVE HER *ALONE--*
YOU WANT TO *FIGHT?*
I FIGHT THE *HULK!* ARE *YOU* A HULK, YOU HAIRY LITTLE *ALSO-RAN?*
NO! YOU ARE NOTHING!
LET HIM GO--
SHOOT ME, THEN. SHOOT THE *ABOMINATION* WITH A DOSE OF *GAMMA.*
I WOULD VERY MUCH *ENJOY* THAT, I THINK...

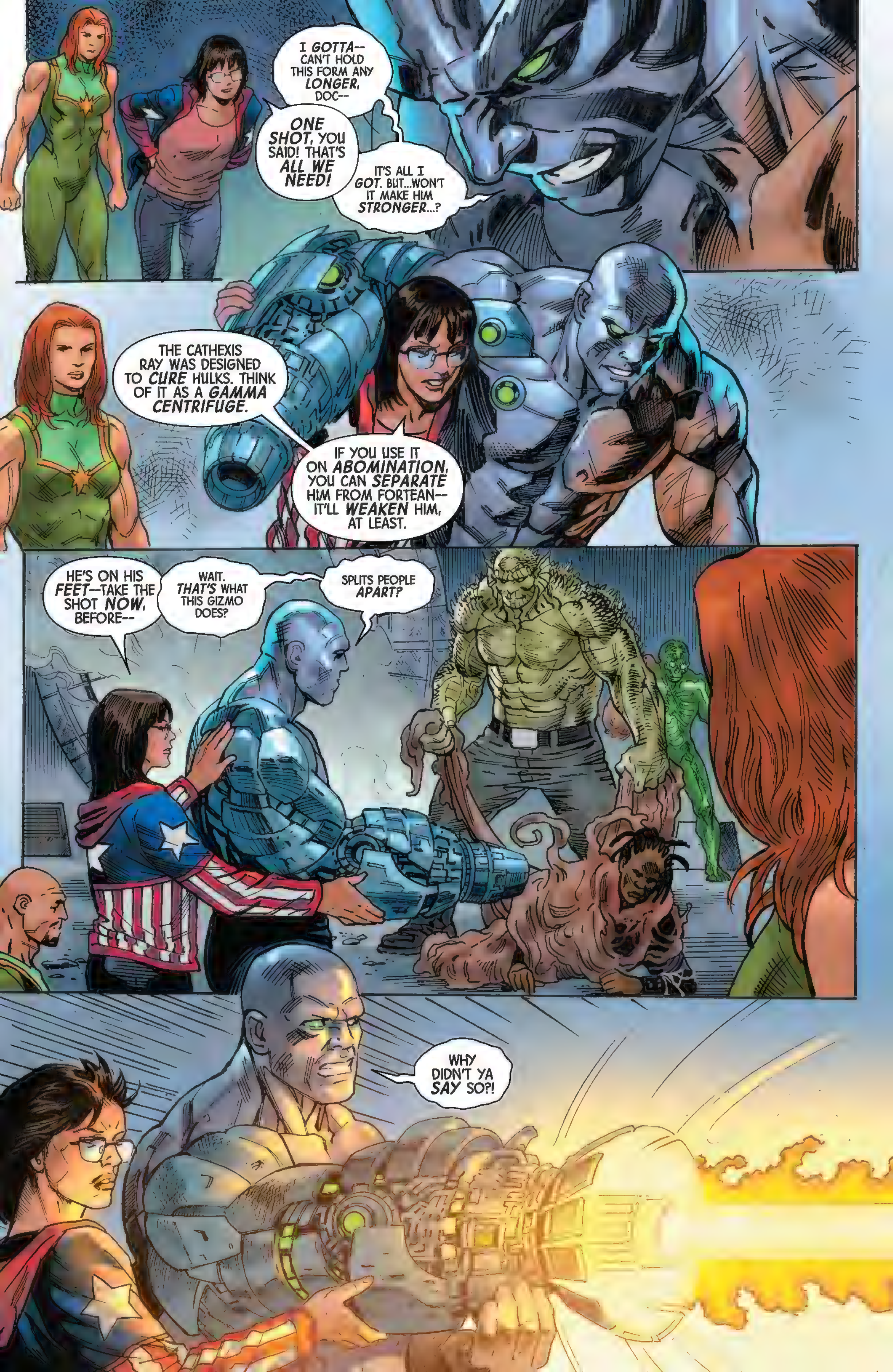

CARL!
IF YOU--
ALIANA...
...TAKE CARE OF HER, PLEASE.
AH-AH-AH...
EYES ON YOUR *OWN* WORK.
ALIANA *ALBA.*
YES, YES, AND YOU'RE CHARLENE *McGOWAN.*
I ASSUME WE'RE UP TO DATE ON EACH OTHER'S *JOURNAL ARTICLES?*
HIDING, DOCTOR? REALLY? I HAVEN'T EVEN SET THIS THING TO *FULL POWER!*
IT'LL JUST *HYPERACTIVATE YOUR NEURONS* INSTEAD OF BURNING RIGHT THROUGH--
HNNH.
BURN HER IF YOU *MUST,* ALIANA.
GAMMAVOLK-- GO BACK UP *SKAAR.*

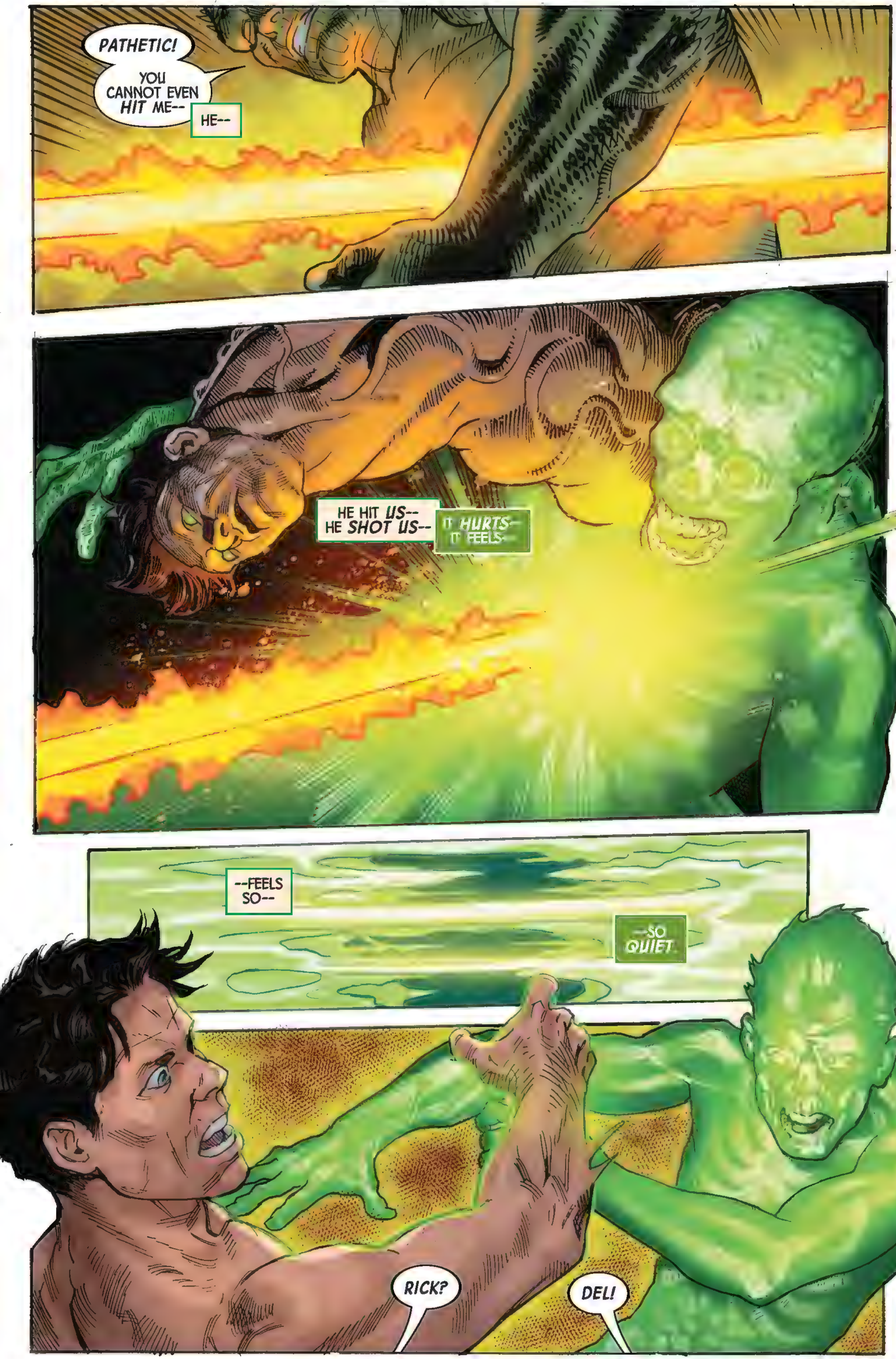

HAVE I EVER *NEEDED* BACKUP?
YOU'RE CLEAR, SKAAR!
NO ONE USES ME!!!
SO DISAPPOINTING...
SNLOK
GRAR!

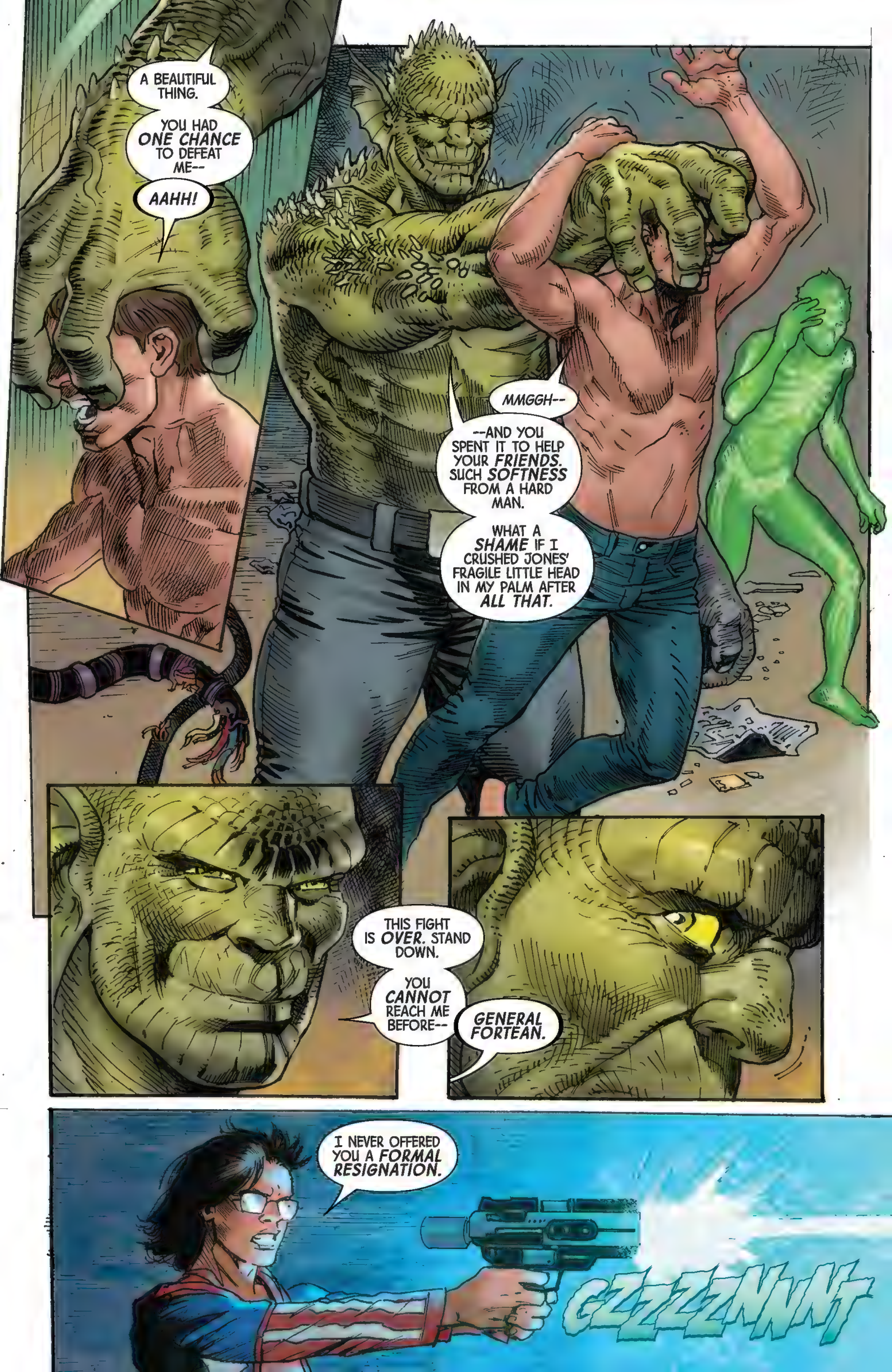

PLEASE, YOU DON'T WANT TO SHOOT ME!
DON'T TELL ME WHAT I *WANT*, LITTLE GIRL.
CZZZZNNNNT
GLK
NNNG!
DID YOU... *TRANSLOCATE* HER SHOT?
YOU FIGHT *DAREDEVIL* AND THE *HULK*, YOU LEARN TO THINK ON YOUR FEET.
YOU'RE A PROPER SUPER VILLAIN *NOW*, CHARLENE.
MARY WILL BE PROUD.

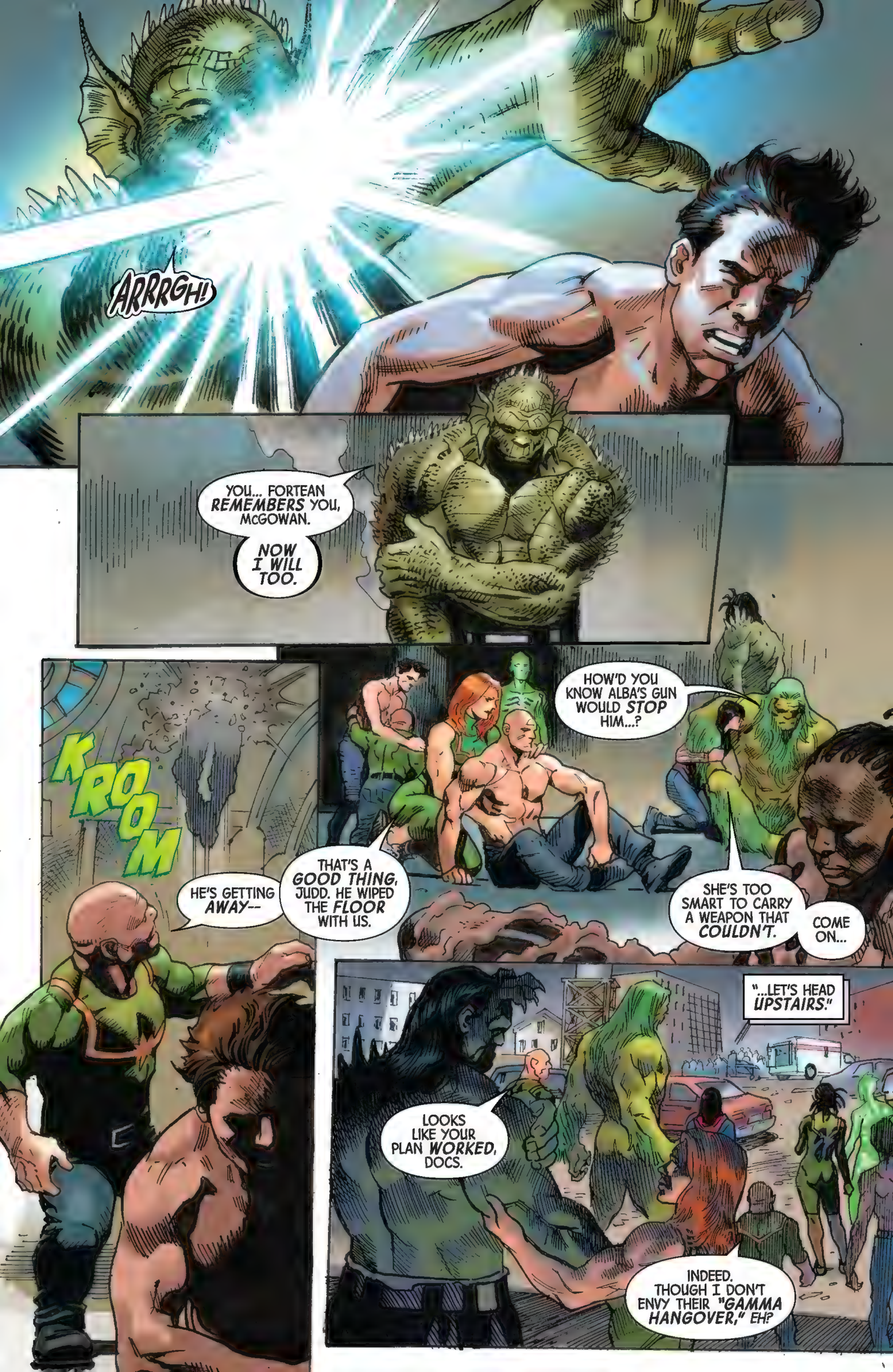

SKAAR NEEDS AN *ASSIST!*
DIONNE-- YOU THINK YOU CAN REALLY UNLEASH ON YOUR OWN *FATHER?*
I GOT *PLENTY* OF ISSUES TO WORK OUT!
YOU MONSTER!
YOU *STOLE* MY DAD'S *FACE!*
YOU USED HIS MEMORIES AND YOUR FLESH TO GIVE ME *THIS!*
WELL, I DON'T WANT IT! *YOU* HAVE IT!
YOU EAT IT!
HRGL!
YOU *CHOKE* ON--
WAIT--
HE'S-- HE'S *INHALING* ME--
DIONNE!

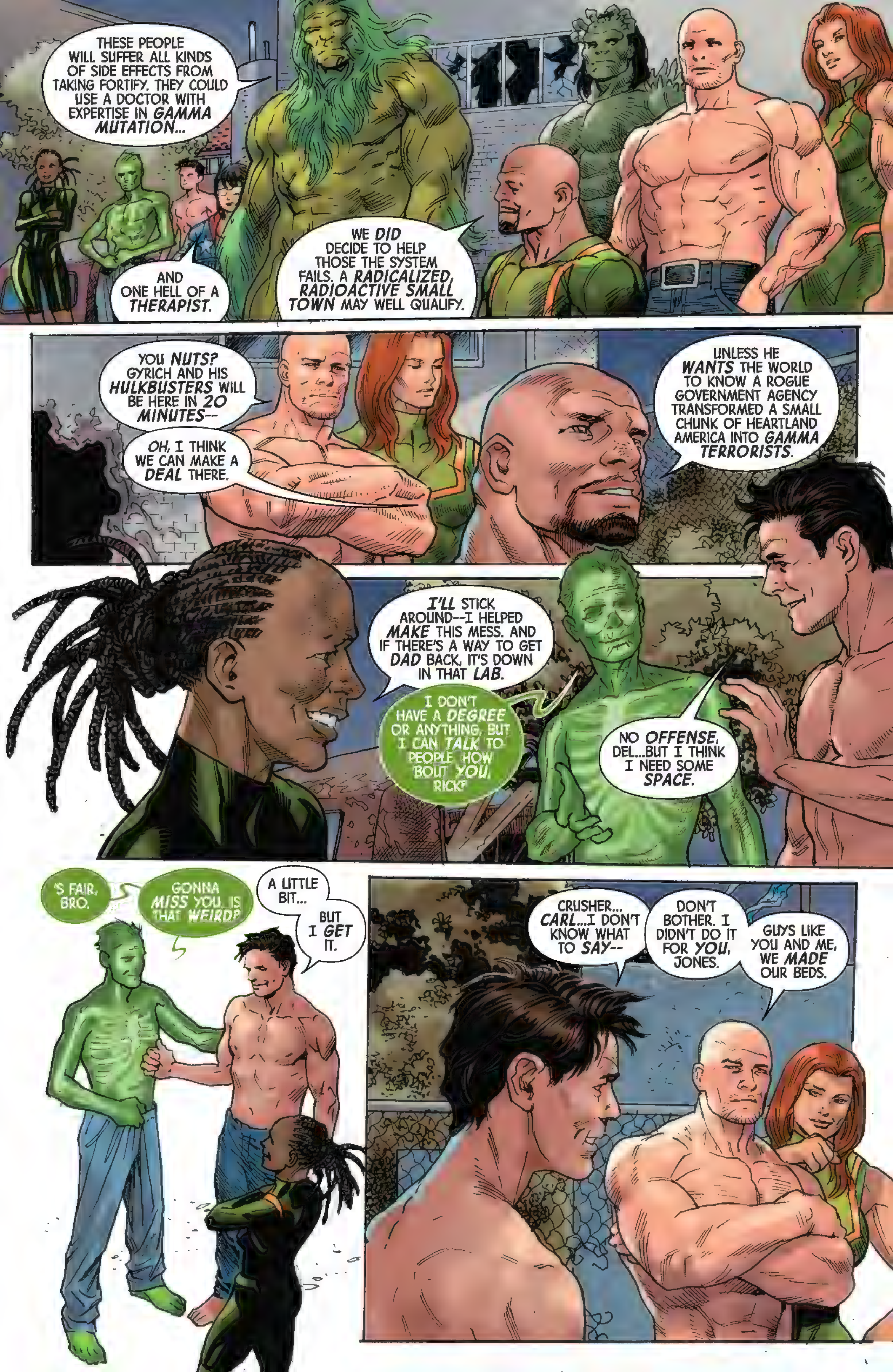

"CHOKE ON IT." HEH.
EVEN MY LUNGS ARE TOO STRONG FOR YOU, CHILD.
I HAVE FORTEAN'S DECADES OF EXPERIENCE AS WELL AS MY STRENGTH. YOU CANNOT WIN.
BUT IF YOU WANT TO REJECT THE GIFTS WE GAVE YOU...
GOTTA DO SOMETHING--
YES! HELP THEM!
...I'M HAPPY TO ERASE THESE SINS OF MY FLESH.
NICE, DIONNE!
HOLD HIM!
WAY AHEAD OF YOU....
RUSH HIM!
NO--STEP TO HIS LEFT--
GRAUR--
--SET HIM UP FOR AN UTSURI GOSHI--
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS!
CRACK
NNG!
OKAY, THEY JUST BOUGHT US A FEW SECONDS--
CARL!
WHATEVER YOU DO--DON'T CHANGE BACK TO HUMAN!

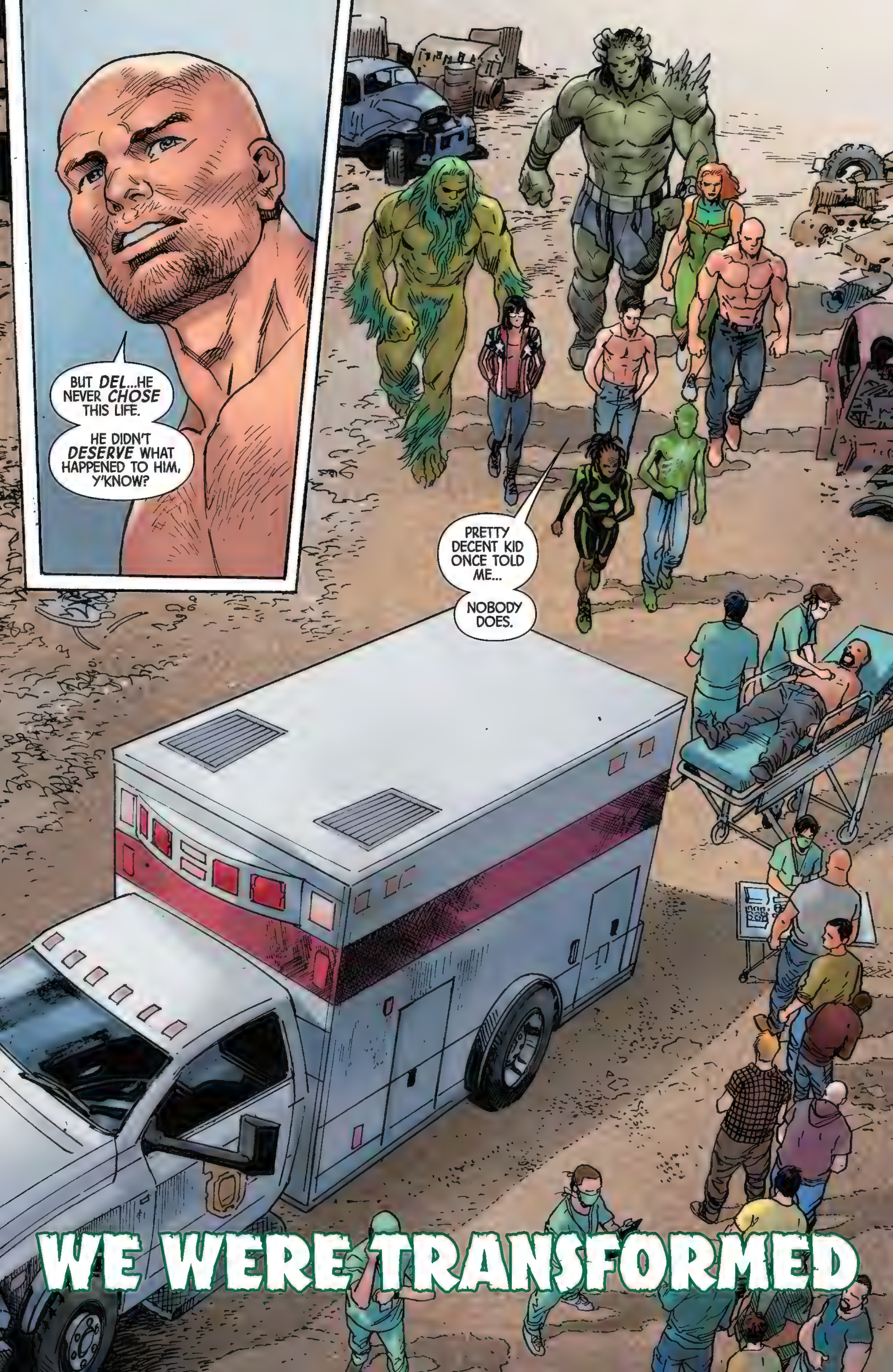

I GOTTA-- CAN'T HOLD THIS FORM ANY LONGER, DOC--
ONE SHOT, YOU SAID! THAT'S ALL WE NEED!
IT'S ALL I GOT. BUT...WON'T IT MAKE HIM STRONGER...?
THE CATHEXIS RAY WAS DESIGNED TO CURE HULKS. THINK OF IT AS A GAMMA CENTRIFUGE.
IF YOU USE IT ON ABOMINATION, YOU CAN SEPARATE HIM FROM FORTEAN-- IT'LL WEAKEN HIM, AT LEAST.
HE'S ON HIS FEET--TAKE THE SHOT NOW, BEFORE--
WAIT. THAT'S WHAT THIS GIZMO DOES?
SPLITS PEOPLE APART?
WHY DIDN'T YA SAY SO?!


PATHETIC!
YOU CANNOT EVEN HIT ME--
HE--
HE HIT US-- HE SHOT US--
IT HURTS-- IT FEELS--
--FEELS SO--
--SO QUIET.
RICK?
DEL!


A BEAUTIFUL THING.
YOU HAD *ONE CHANCE* TO DEFEAT ME--
AAHH!
MMGGH--
--AND YOU SPENT IT TO HELP YOUR *FRIENDS.* SUCH *SOFTNESS* FROM A HARD MAN.
WHAT A *SHAME* IF I CRUSHED JONES' FRAGILE LITTLE HEAD IN MY PALM AFTER *ALL THAT.*
THIS FIGHT IS *OVER.* STAND DOWN.
YOU *CANNOT* REACH ME BEFORE--
GENERAL FORTEAN.
I NEVER OFFERED YOU A *FORMAL RESIGNATION.*
GZZZZNNNT


ARRRGH!
YOU... FORTEAN REMEMBERS YOU, McGOWAN.
NOW I WILL TOO.
KROOM
HE'S GETTING AWAY--
THAT'S A GOOD THING, JUDD. HE WIPED THE FLOOR WITH US.
HOW'D YOU KNOW ALBA'S GUN WOULD STOP HIM...?
SHE'S TOO SMART TO CARRY A WEAPON THAT COULDN'T.
COME ON...
"...LET'S HEAD UPSTAIRS."
LOOKS LIKE YOUR PLAN WORKED, DOCS.
INDEED. THOUGH I DON'T ENVY THEIR "GAMMA HANGOVER," EH?


THESE PEOPLE WILL SUFFER ALL KINDS OF SIDE EFFECTS FROM TAKING FORTIFY. THEY COULD USE A DOCTOR WITH EXPERTISE IN *GAMMA MUTATION*...
AND ONE HELL OF A *THERAPIST*.
WE *DID* DECIDE TO HELP THOSE THE SYSTEM FAILS. A *RADICALIZED, RADIOACTIVE SMALL TOWN* MAY WELL QUALIFY.
YOU *NUTS?* GYRICH AND HIS *HULKBUSTERS* WILL BE HERE IN *20 MINUTES*--
OH, I THINK WE CAN MAKE A *DEAL* THERE.
UNLESS HE *WANTS* THE WORLD TO KNOW A ROGUE GOVERNMENT AGENCY TRANSFORMED A SMALL CHUNK OF HEARTLAND AMERICA INTO *GAMMA TERRORISTS*.
I'LL STICK AROUND--I HELPED *MAKE* THIS MESS. AND IF THERE'S A WAY TO GET *DAD* BACK, IT'S DOWN IN THAT *LAB*.
I DON'T HAVE A *DEGREE* OR ANYTHING, BUT I CAN *TALK* TO PEOPLE. HOW 'BOUT *YOU*, RICK?
NO *OFFENSE*, DEL...BUT I THINK I NEED SOME *SPACE*.
'S FAIR, BRO.
GONNA *MISS* YOU. IS THAT *WEIRD?*
A LITTLE BIT...
BUT I *GET* IT.
CRUSHER... *CARL*...I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO *SAY*--
DON'T BOTHER. I DIDN'T DO IT FOR *YOU*, JONES.
GUYS LIKE YOU AND ME, WE *MADE* OUR BEDS.


BUT *DEL*...HE NEVER *CHOSE* THIS LIFE.
HE DIDN'T *DESERVE* WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM, Y'KNOW?
PRETTY DECENT KID ONCE TOLD ME...
NOBODY DOES.
WE WERE TRANSFORMED

INTRODUCTION FROM *IMMORTAL HULK VOL. 1 HC* BY JEFF LEMIRE

I *REALLY* USED TO WANT TO WRITE THE HULK ONE DAY. I DON'T ANYMORE.

A few years back, when I was working exclusively as a writer for Marvel, I used to lobby then-editor in chief Axel Alonso to let me take a crack at ol' Jade Jaws. For one reason or another it never worked out and I never got a shot at writing Hulk. But nonetheless, I used to have an idea of how I would approach the character if given the chance. Of all the Marvel heroes, Hulk was the one I coveted the most. (Well, maybe Frank Castle too, but let's stay on point.) So yeah, I really used to want to write the Hulk, but I don't anymore. And you know why? Because Al Ewing has gone and ruined it for me and all other writers by writing the *perfect* Hulk comic book. So what's the point now? As a writer, when you take on an established Marvel or DC character, it's usually because you feel like you have something new to say with them. Some new angle or take on the character that will feel fresh or expose some as-yet-undeveloped aspect of them. Well, if I were suddenly handed the Hulk today, I would be at a total loss. When trying to think of anything to do with Green Jeans I'd just point to *Immortal Hulk* and say "That."

Now, I know that Mr. Ewing has not done this feat alone. There is his main collaborator, Joe Bennett, as well as a host of talented inkers, artists, colorists and editors. And I'll get to them too, but let's start with Al's approach to building *Immortal Hulk* and why it is so damn brilliant. First, Al tore everything down and brought the Hulk back down to his essential components. I know that there have been a lot of incredible Hulk stories where the character has been a "super hero." But to me, at his very core, Hulk is a *monster,* and monsters should be *scary.* And Al has made Hulk scary again. One of the smartest things Al did was throw the Hulk rule book out the window. Suddenly we don't know what his full powers are or how they work. And as a result of this unpredictability, he becomes terrifying again. So this, first and foremost, is a horror book, and it's all the better for it.

Secondly, Al has constructed the series so that each issue feels like a contained, satisfying story while also building a larger narrative. This is really not easy to do. In today's marketplace of decompressed storytelling and writing for the trade, doing done-in-one stories has gone out of vogue. And I think the big reason for that is because it is *hard* to do. But Ewing and company have succeeded in doing this, and the result is a book that you feel like you *have* to buy every month. You don't want to wait for the trade to come out…you need to see what happens this issue. Speaking for myself, this book has almost single-handedly got me back into the comic shop every month to grab the new issue. And each issue continues to be compelling and satisfying.

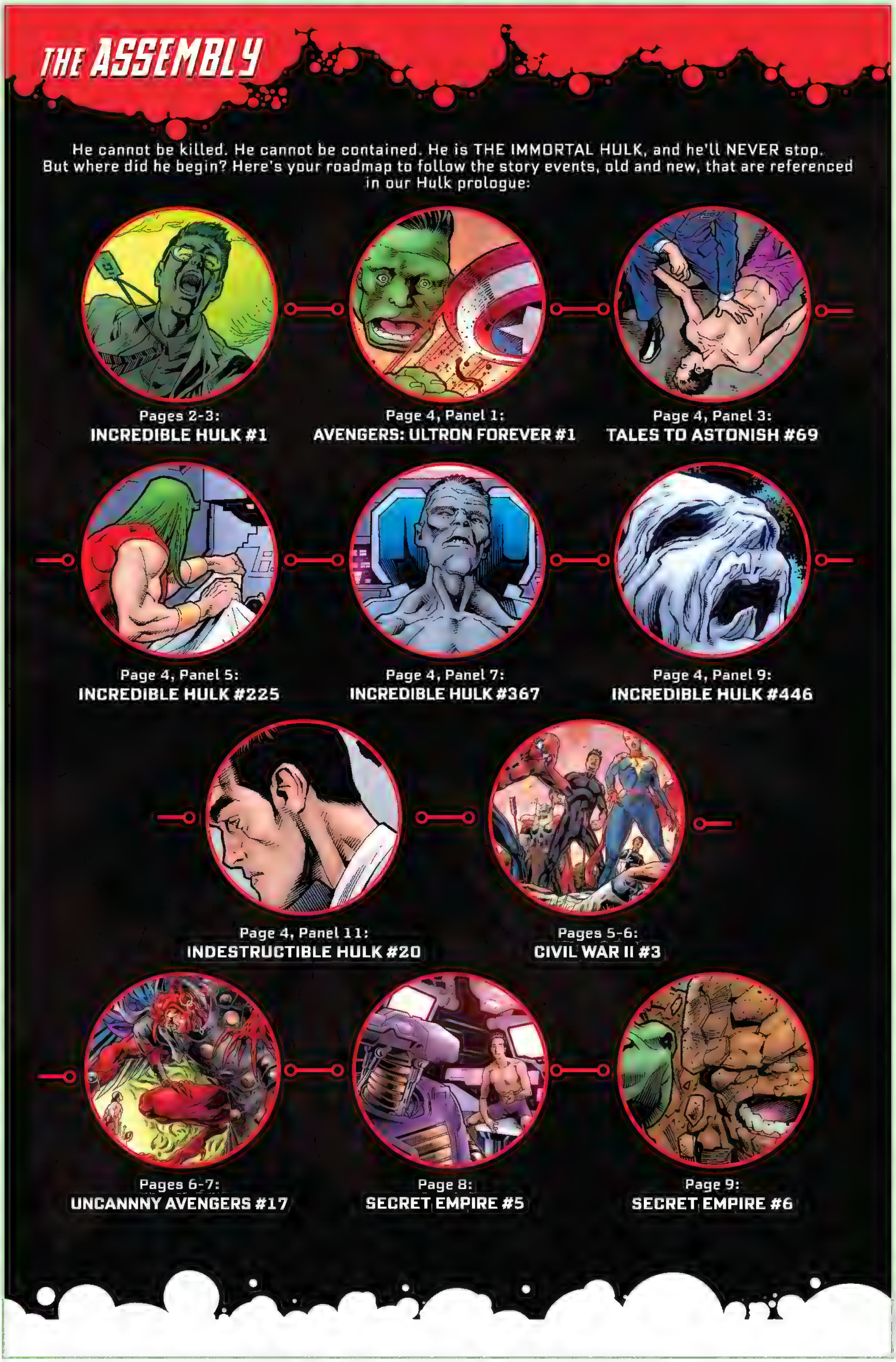
Okay, I can't go any further without getting into the artwork. The visual rock of this series is obviously Joe Bennett. I have been lucky enough to work with Joe myself, and I know that he is the consummate professional. He's extremely generous and reliable. But the artwork in *Immortal Hulk* goes far beyond just reliable; it is downright terrifying and brilliant. Along with inker Ruy José, Joe has taken his work to a whole new level. He has turned the Hulk into a mesmerizing portrait of body horror worthy of John Carpenter. The way he twists and contorts the Hulk's body and the bodies of his many adversaries, finding new ways to express the torment and power of these characters, is nothing short of breathtaking.

Another wonderful thing Al, Joe, Ruy and the whole team do is *build.* Stripping a character down to its core is great, but it is only phase one. Once you've exposed the foundation, you need to start building on it again, and this is where *Immortal Hulk* really hooks you. Over the course of this series, the creative team is building a whole new horror-focused mythology around the Hulk and his past. It's mysterious, chilling and groundbreaking. And I am not going to spoil any of it by saying any more here. But you are in for *one hell* of a ride. And it's not just Hulk, it's the supporting cast that Ewing and Bennett build and surround the Hulk with that gives this book real life. From reporter Jackie McGee to Puck and Sasquatch from Alpha Flight to the cool rogues' gallery of monsters new and old that Hulk comes up against, the cast just keeps growing and growing, but it never becomes unwieldy. Everyone has their place and their purpose in the story, and it just works so damn well.

I don't really know what else to say. Like I said, Al Ewing, Joe Bennett and all the gifted artists, colorists, letterers and editors who built *Immortal Hulk* have pretty much said it all. You just need to read it. Then reread it. This is as perfect a monthly comic book as you are going to find. I may not have gotten the chance to write the Hulk, but I did get a chance to read *Immortal Hulk.* And I am all the better for it. And you will be too. As a writer, this is the kind of book that inspires me to be better and to try new things. As a reader, it's the kind of book that excites me and reminds me over and over again why I love comics so much.

JEFF LEMIRE
TORONTO, MAY 2019

HULK TIMELINE FROM *AVENGERS #684*



THE ASSEMBLY

He cannot be killed. He cannot be contained. He is THE IMMORTAL HULK, and he'll NEVER stop. But where did he begin? Here's your roadmap to follow the story events, old and new, that are referenced in our Hulk prologue:

Pages 2-3:
INCREDIBLE HULK #1

Page 4, Panel 1:
AVENGERS: ULTRON FOREVER #1

Page 4, Panel 3:
TALES TO ASTONISH #69

Page 4, Panel 5:
INCREDIBLE HULK #225

Page 4, Panel 7:
INCREDIBLE HULK #367

Page 4, Panel 9:
INCREDIBLE HULK #446

Page 4, Panel 11:
INDESTRUCTIBLE HULK #20

Pages 5-6:
CIVIL WAR II #3

Pages 6-7:
UNCANNNY AVENGERS #17

Page 8:
SECRET EMPIRE #5

Page 9:
SECRET EMPIRE #6

HULK THOUGHTS

Initial series editor Tom Brevoort compiled these thoughts about the Hulk when developing the series with writer Al Ewing.

Banner is spiritual, not materialistic—can't be, can own nothing. He is about experiences, the one thing that he can carry with him.

The Hulk is a condition, like having diabetes. Banner is actively living with his condition. He's trying to do good with it, to balance the scales overall, to lead a moral life despite the fact that there's this part of him that he cannot control. He's trying to atone, to even the scoreboard, to leave more good in the world than bad.

The Hulk is an outsider, counterculture. He represents the underdog, the strange, the ill fit. He doesn't like institutions, he's anti-civilization. Tribal. Primal. Aggressive like a hunter. But if you leave him be, he'll leave you be.

The Hulk should be a little bit nasty. A feeling of the caged animal within. A *dollop* of Wolverine. Nobody including the reader should ever feel 100% safe in the Hulk's presence.

New cast.

Worth researching bipolar behavior—seems like there could be a key into the Banner/Hulk psyche there, in that the two seem like the opposite ends of a bipolar personality.

Banner travels the world. He can go anywhere in relative safety. He seeks out those that need his help. He's about protecting and raising up the underdog as well. The Hulk destroys, Banner builds.

Jekyll/Hyde.

We need a thought process analogous to Alan Moore on *Swamp Thing*. Rather than doing the same stories again and again, how can we think about the skeleton of this series and build it up in a different way into something new?

The Hulk is as much a suspense/horror comic as it is a super-hero comic. Like in *Swamp Thing*, super heroes who come into the series should be presented through the particular lens of its worldview.

Thought: As a release, Banner lets the Hulk out at night to relieve the tension, hearkening back in a way to his earliest appearances while helping to sustain Banner's regular day life.

PROTOTYPIC HULK SERIES OPENING:

PAGE 1

Open on a rally/gathering for some nefarious group. I'm going to use Hydra as a placeholder here, simply because most of our best-known nefarious groups have been put through the wringer of late. But the identity of the group isn't important, the moment is. It's the culmination of readiness of some evil plan—some thing they're going to be doing, some act of terror on a massive scale that they intend to perpetrate. The First Order rally from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. And the main guy is firing up the troops for action, holding his own Hitler rally, his own Patton fire-up speech. But then he's interrupted by a voice from the wings. His eyes cut.

(THOUGHT: Could this be corporate? Something like Roxxon about to do drilling or displace Indigenous peoples so that they can pillage the land? So less James Bond and more real-world, and more about the themes of the series.)

PAGE 2

And he sees Bruce Banner. Perhaps Banner is slow-clapping. He's hesitant, a little bit awkward, but firm. And Banner begins to tell them that their plan, their operation, sounds very good, very interesting, but there's a variable in the equation that they haven't considered. See, he's heard about them and what they've been doing in this region, and it makes him angry. It makes him very angry indeed. But, being a moral man, he needs to give them one warning, one chance to—and then a gunshot explodes Banner's head and he falls backward, sudden and shocking.

PAGE 3

Cut back, and the Leader has a smoking gun, having just shot down this absurd intruder. The crowd goes wild, they're ready to fight, to kill, to carry out their mission, and the Leader is swept up in their zeal and capitalizes on the moment to drive their passions ever higher. But as we follow this rhetoric for a panel or two, we see a large mass, a shadow, beginning to rise up on the wall behind the Leader, growing ever larger, until the Leader or the crowd begins to notice that something is happening and their attention shifts…

PAGES 4-5

Double-page spread. And it's the Hulk, just filling the page, looking as angry and as unstoppable as we've ever seen him before. Perhaps the Leader is still in this shot to give us a sense of scale. The Hulk bellows his rage—we can see some small evidence of his rapidly diminishing head wound, the green blood of the wound receding. But this is an impact moment, the first time we see our creature-protagonist, so it's all about impact.

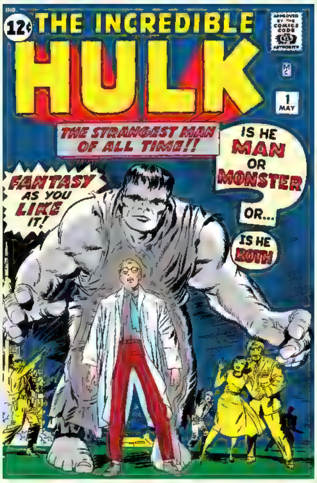
PAGE 6

And we immediately cut to the aftermath. It's carnage and destruction as far as the eye can see. Men and machines strewn and mangled—the men look like they've been beaten half to death but not actually dead, not bloody or torn apart or anything. But it's the aftermath of a bomb strike. And at the center of the blast radius, there's the tiny figure of Bruce Banner. Banner wakes, gets up unsteadily, dusts himself off—he's in the tatters of his clothes at this point—he half-glances around, mutters that he tried to warn them and shuffles off into the night.

My guess is that PAGE 7 would be Banner meeting with whatever people or group were going to be displaced or ravaged by these guys, who would give him their thanks as he told them that the problem had been taken care of and the bad guys wouldn't be coming back again. He'd be dressed in new clothes, probably with some local flavor and probably piled with small gifts of food or other trinkets. He'd accept the food but gently turn down the objects, explaining that material goods hold no appeal for him—he cannot keep anything save the clothes on his back (and often not even those). But he thanks them for their hospitality and prepares to move on.

#1 LETTERS PAGE

"WHAT DO YOU THINK?"


12¢
THE INCREDIBLE
HULK
1 MAY
THE STRANGEST MAN OF ALL TIME!!
IS HE MAN OR MONSTER
OR...
IS HE BOTH
FANTASY AS YOU LIKE IT!

When I was small — 7, maybe 8 — my school library had, squirreled away on a bookshelf like a hidden secret, a pocket-sized reprint of the first six issues of *Incredible Hulk*. A comic about my favorite super hero that I could read during actual reading period! As if it were a real book! Truly, this was buried treasure!

And it was. Those first six issues are the primal meat, a bubbling primordial soup of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, all trying to work out exactly what kind of monster they've made. It was a horror book, to begin with — Bruce Banner, sitting and waiting for the night to come. Waiting to change into his terrifying opposite, the Jungian shadow-side — everything he hid from the world and tried to pretend wasn't inside him. "How do I know I won't keep changing," he breathes, with a thousand-year stare that's a strange mix of fear and desire, "into that brutal, bestial mockery of a human — that creature which fears nothing — which despises reason and worships power!"

Who was this nighttime Lord of Misrule, this shambling monstrosity pretending to be the gentle giant from my TV cartoons? What had he done with the Hulk I knew?

Even the cover of issue #1 — faithfully reproduced — seemed strange and sinister. "The Strangest Man of All Time!!" howled the strapline, a promise of something weirder and more eldritch than the jolly green goliath I knew. But what really grabbed the eye was a stylish question-mark caption, asking "is he MAN or MONSTER or..." — a break in the caption, a pregnant pause — "is he BOTH." No punctuation — the caption itself was the question mark at the end of the sentence — and that made it seem even more ominous and significant to my child eyes. It felt like a key.

These are the things that echo in your head for thirty years and change.

And thirty-years-and-change later, through luck and synchronicity — and, yes, the hard graft of pitching and competing and turning down other work to make room for it — I got the job of writing the Hulk. A Hulk who was ping-ponging back and forth from death like a yo-yo. A Hulk who was technically dead...but whom no writer seemed to be able to leave that way. How could they? The Hulk was too powerful. Too vivid. The Hulk just couldn't be dead.

The Hulk couldn't die.

Imagine a Hulk like that. A massive breathing engine of muscle and power, that we only saw in mirrors, or in the darkest corner of the night. As immense and potent as a childhood symbol. The strongest there is. The strangest man of all time.

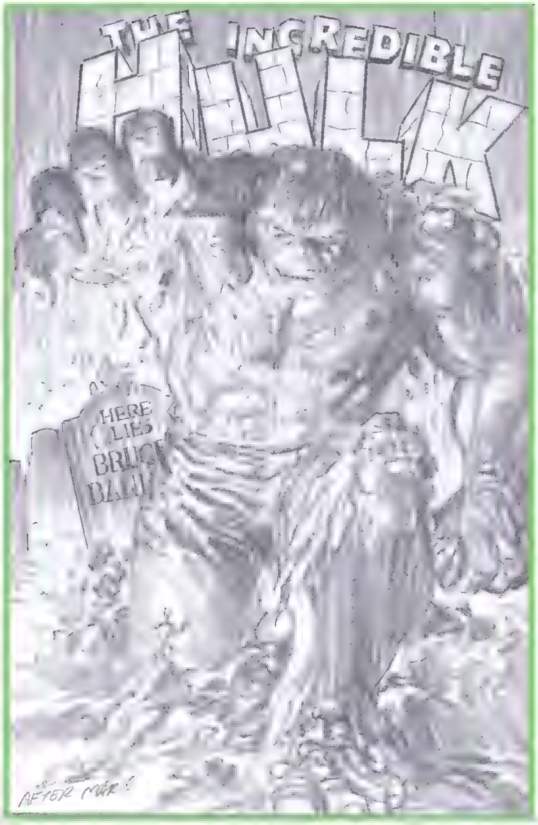
When that Hulk looks back at us — can it see what we are? See our souls as clearly as our bodies? Smell our lies as we tell them? Does it know everything we've done, everything we are? And when it speaks — in that terrible voice, like granite crumbling, like the tomb breaking open — what judgment will it pass upon us?

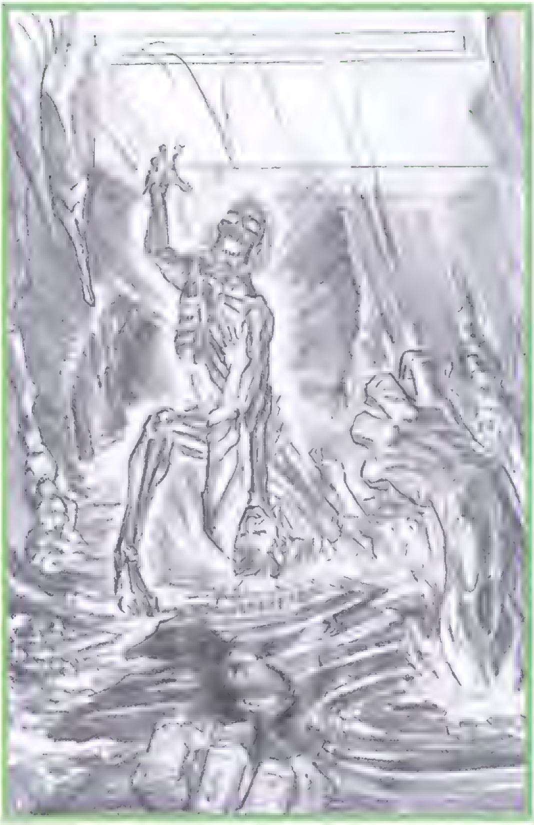
Are we man or monster or...are we both?

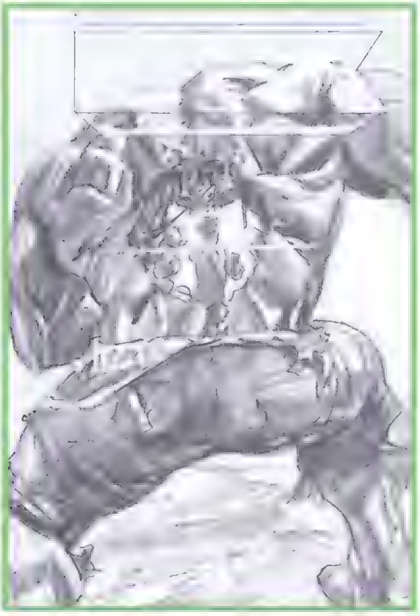
What do you think?

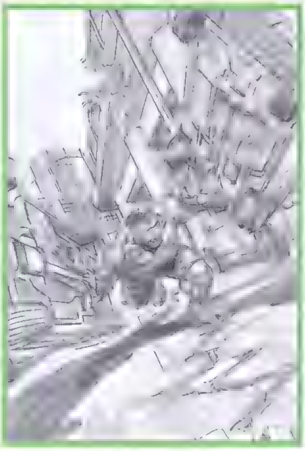
— AL EWING

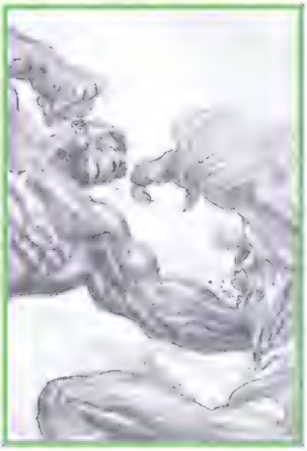
COVER SKETCHES AND LOGO DESIGN BY ALEX ROSS

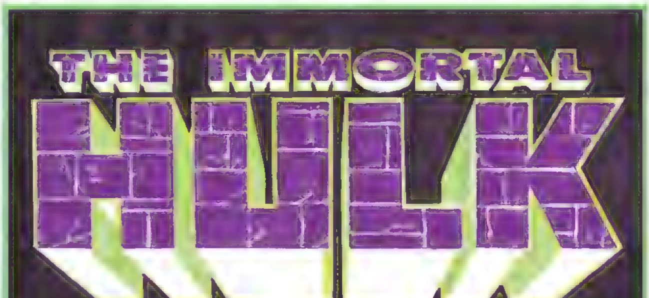

THE INCREDIBLE
HULK
HERE LIES BRUCE BANN
AFTER MAR!



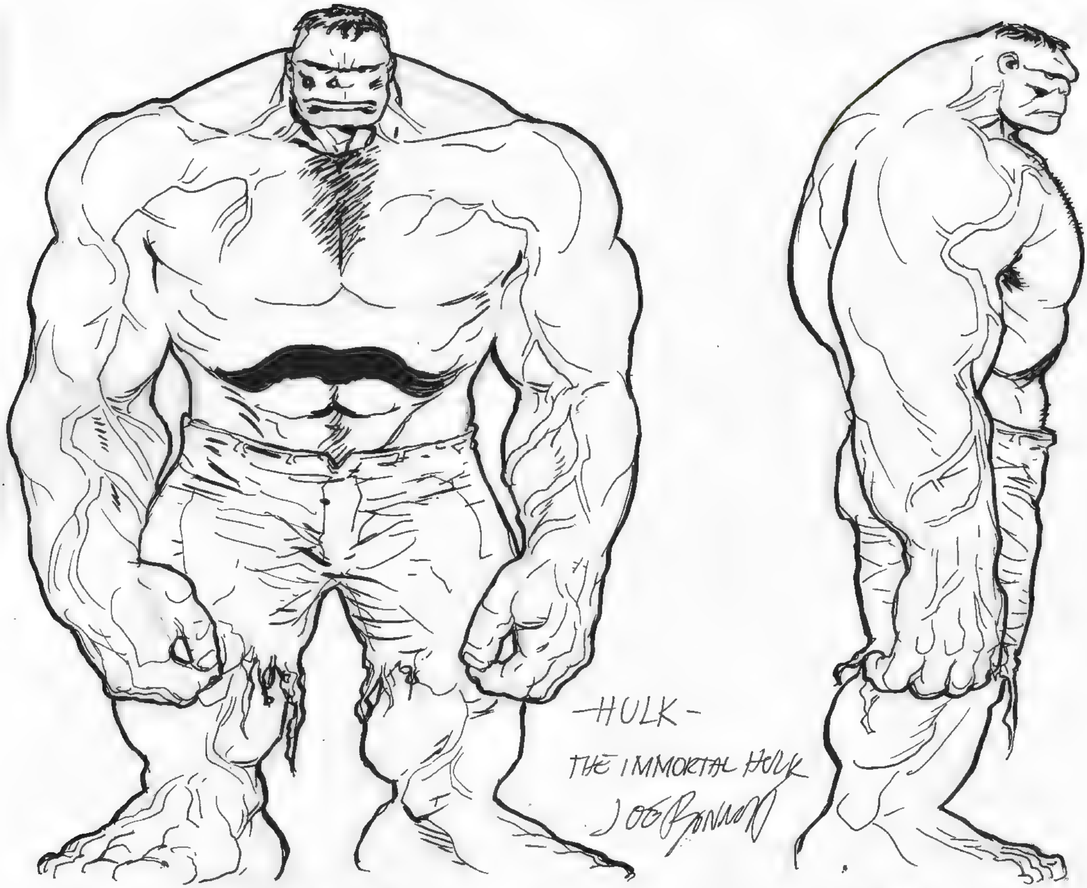


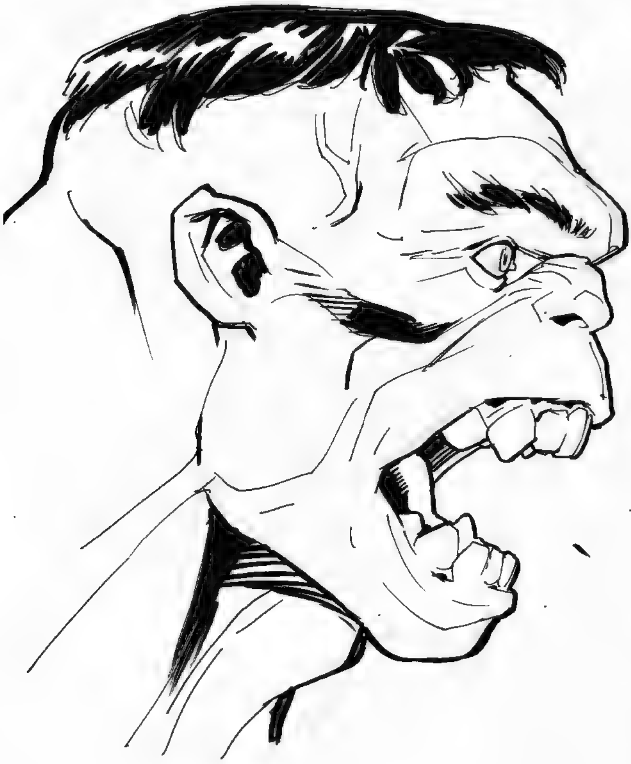


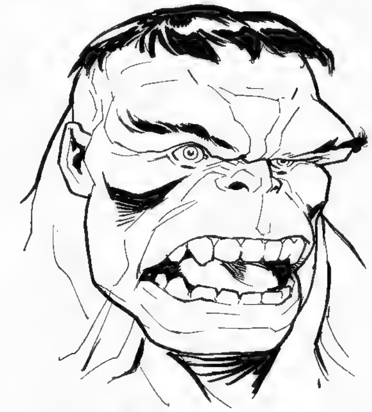


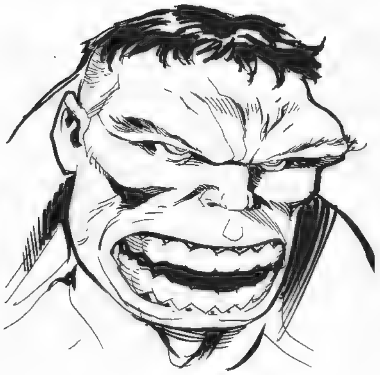

THE IMMORTAL
HULK

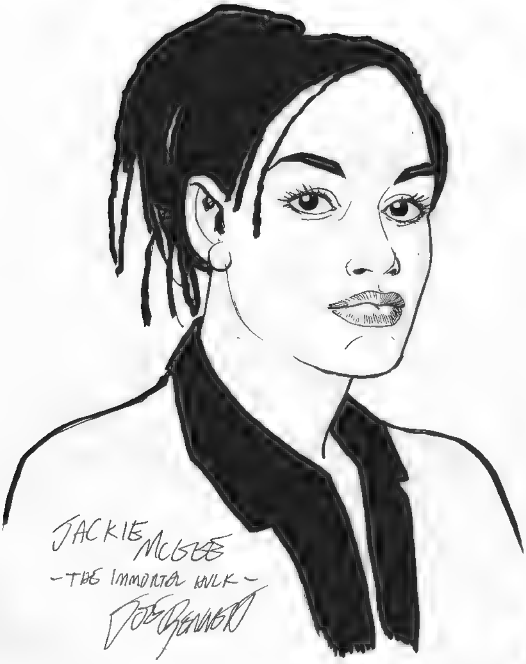
CHARACTER DESIGNS BY JOE BENNETT

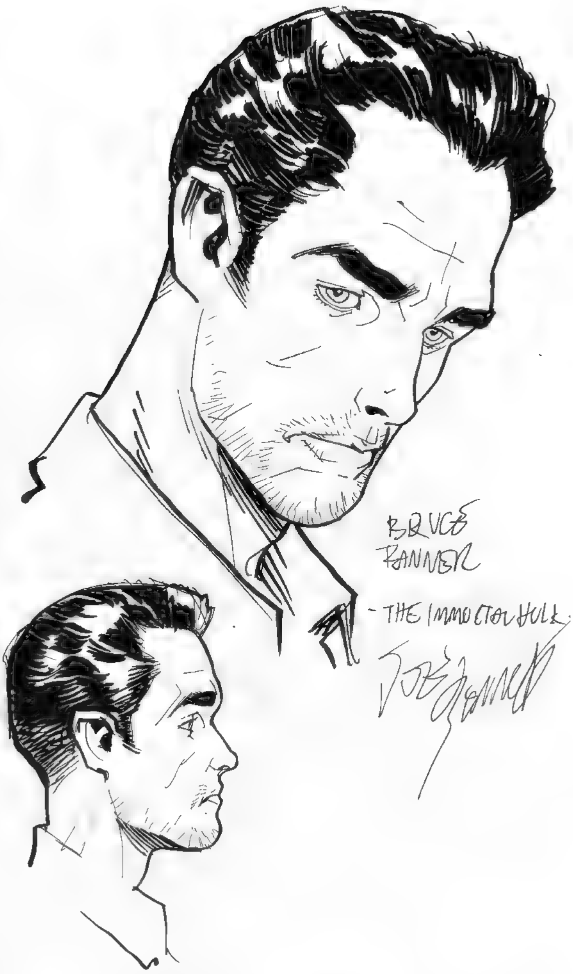

-HULK-
THE IMMORTAL HULK
Joe Bennett

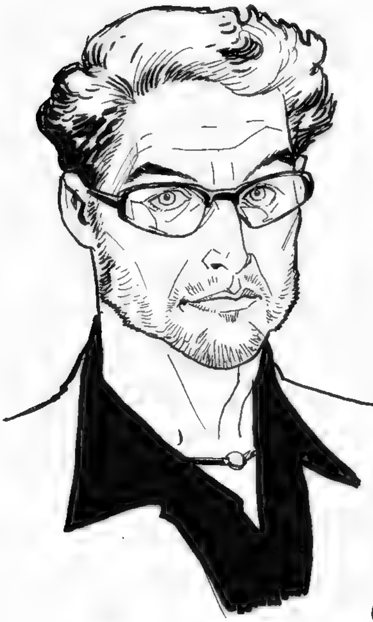


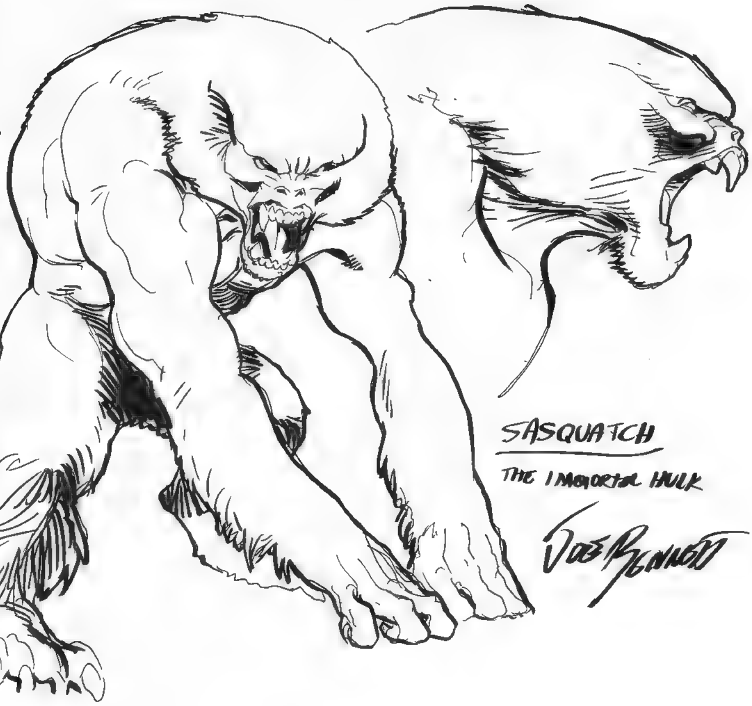





JACKIE McGEE
- THE IMMORTAL HULK -
JOE BENNETT

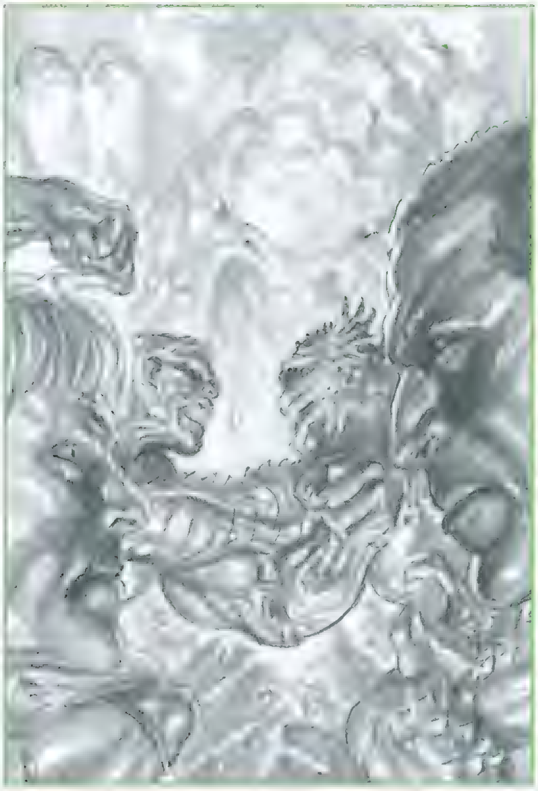

BRUCE BANNER
- THE IMMORTAL HULK -
JOE BENNETT


WALTER LANGKOWSKI
- THE IMMORTAL HULK -
JOE BENNETT

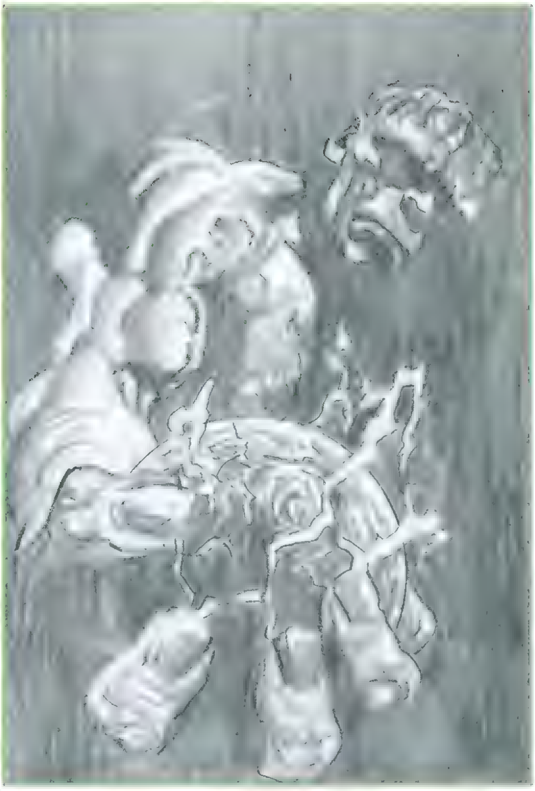

SASQUATCH
THE IMMORTAL HULK
JOE BENNETT

#23 IMMORTAL VARIANT BY DALE KEOWN **&** JASON KEITH

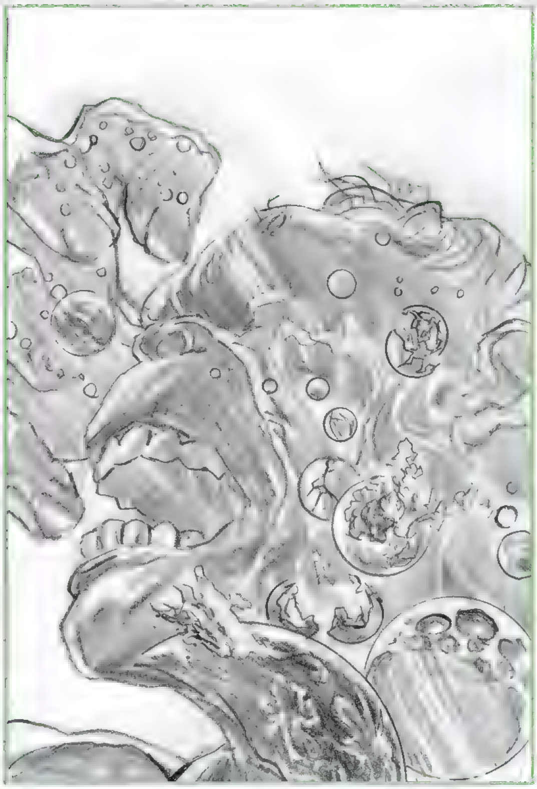
#24 VARIANT BY JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ **&** DEAN WHITE



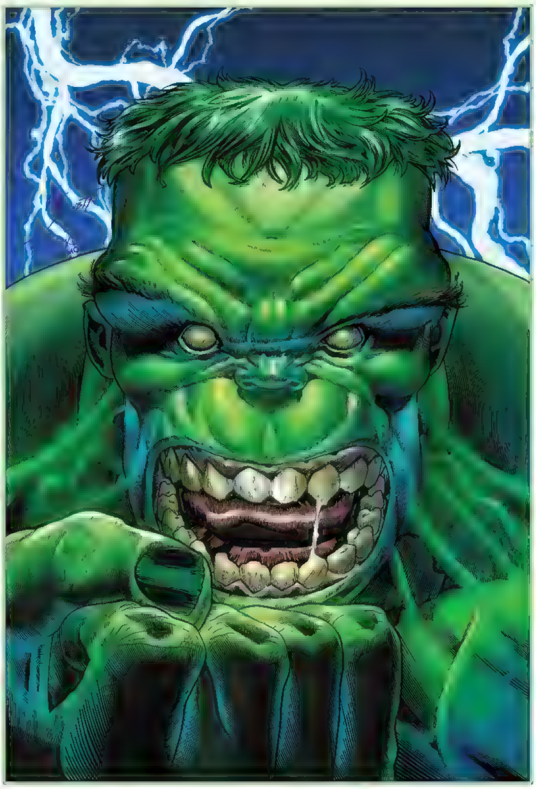
#23 2ND PRINTING VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS



#24 2ND PRINTING VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS

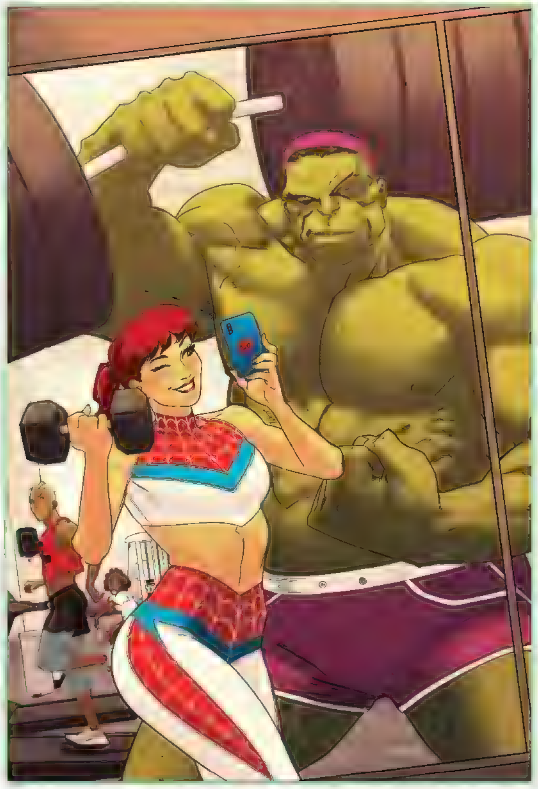


#25 2ND PRINTING VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS



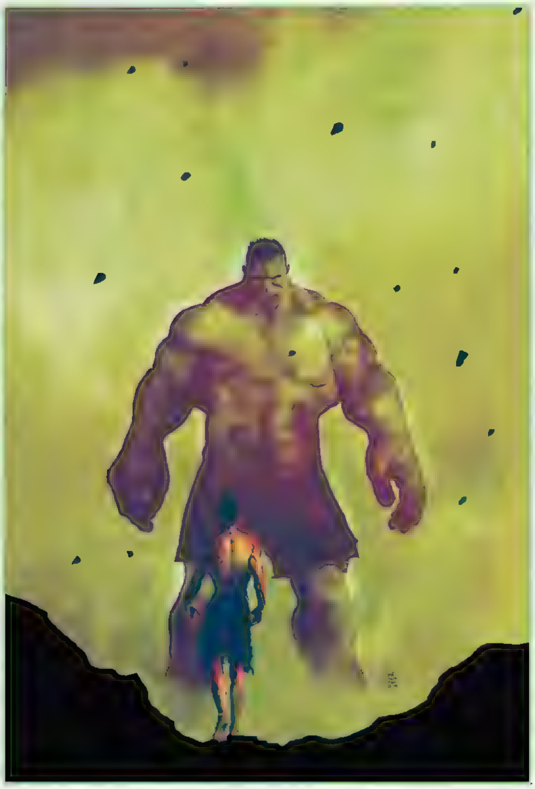
#25 VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & DEAN WHITE

#25 HIDDEN GEM VARIANT BY
GENE COLAN, RUDY NEBRES & JASON KEITH

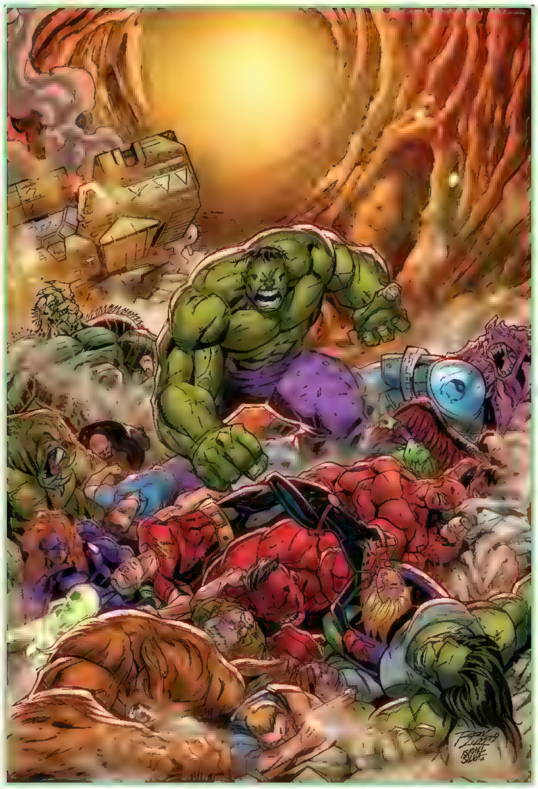


#25 MARY JANE VARIANT BY
KRIS ANKA

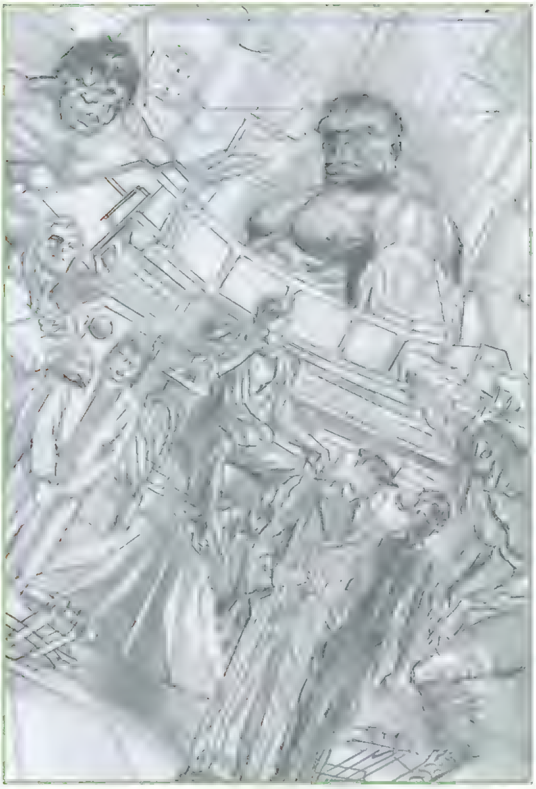
#25 VARIANT BY
ED McGUINNESS & DAVID CURIEL



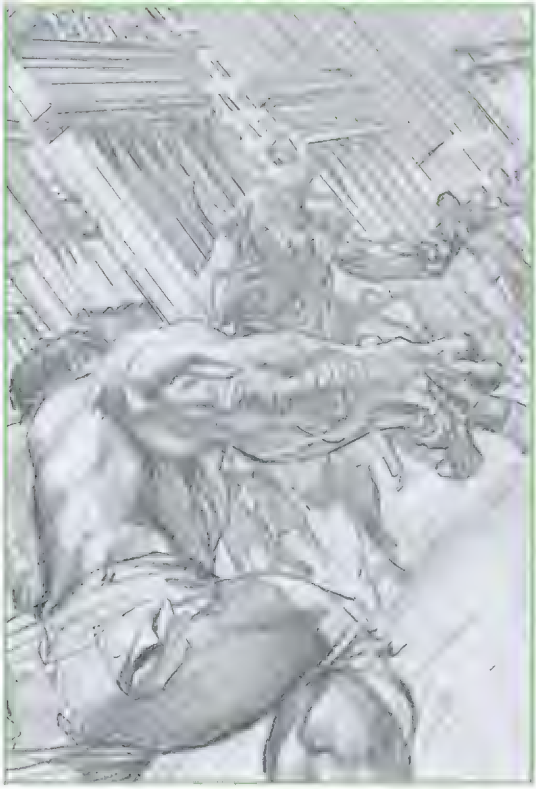
#25 VARIANT BY
ANDREA SORRENTINO



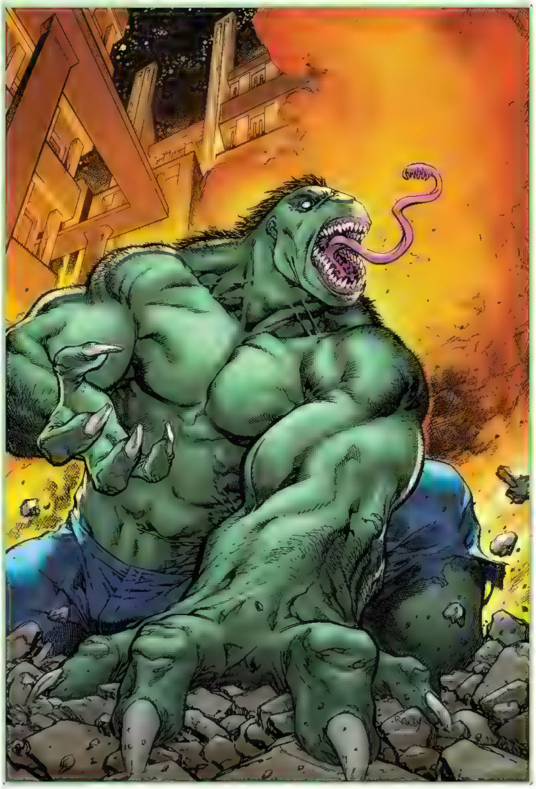
#25 VARIANT BY
RON LIM & ALEX ROSS



#26 2ND PRINTING VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS



#27 2ND PRINTING VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS



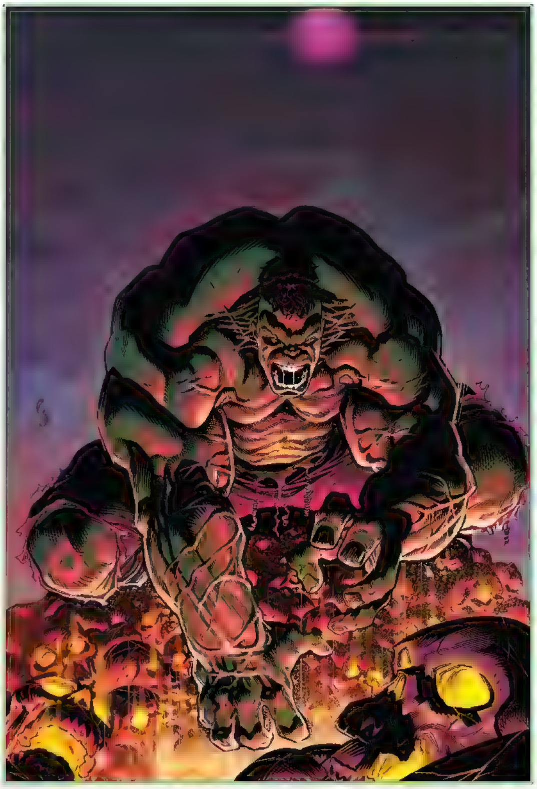
#27 2099 VARIANT BY
TOM RANEY & RACHELLE ROSENBERG

#28 2020 VARIANT BY
DALE KEOWN & JASON KEITH

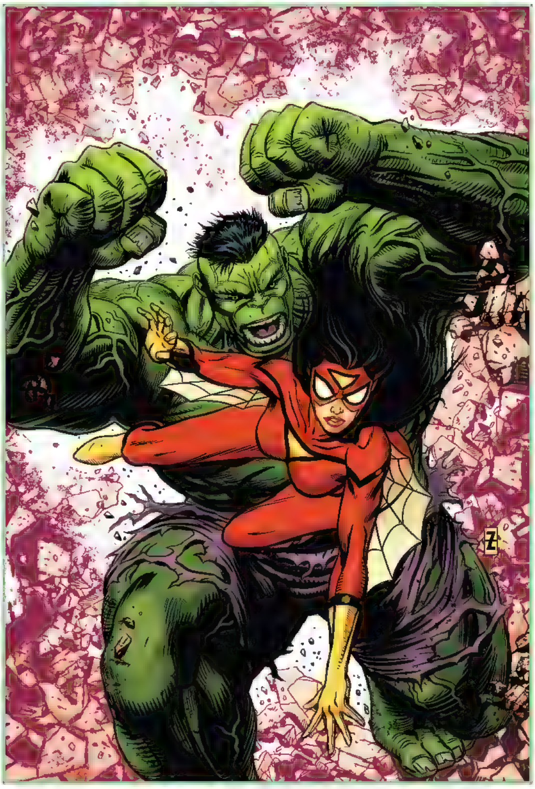
#29 MARVELS X VARIANT BY
NICK BRADSHAW & JASON KEITH

#30 MARVELS X VARIANT BY
MIKE DEL MUNDO

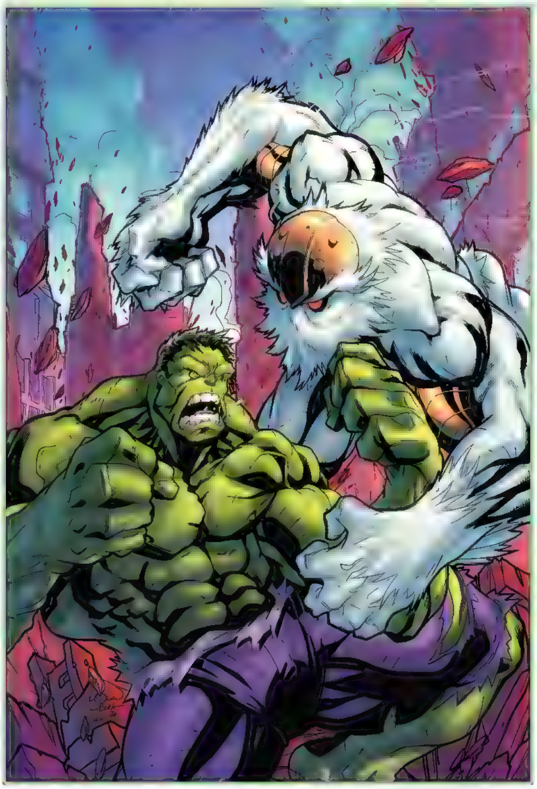
#31 GWEN STACY VARIANT BY
DAVID NAKAYAMA



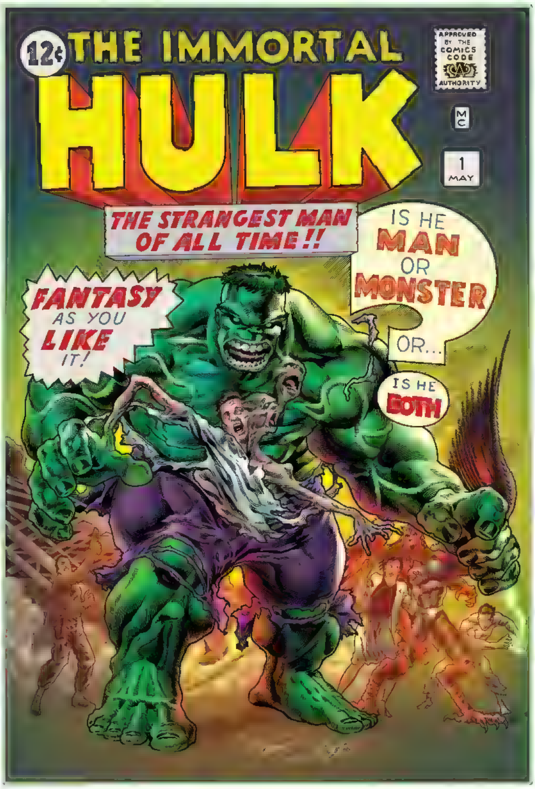
#31 VARIANT BY
GEOFF SHAW & DEAN WHITE



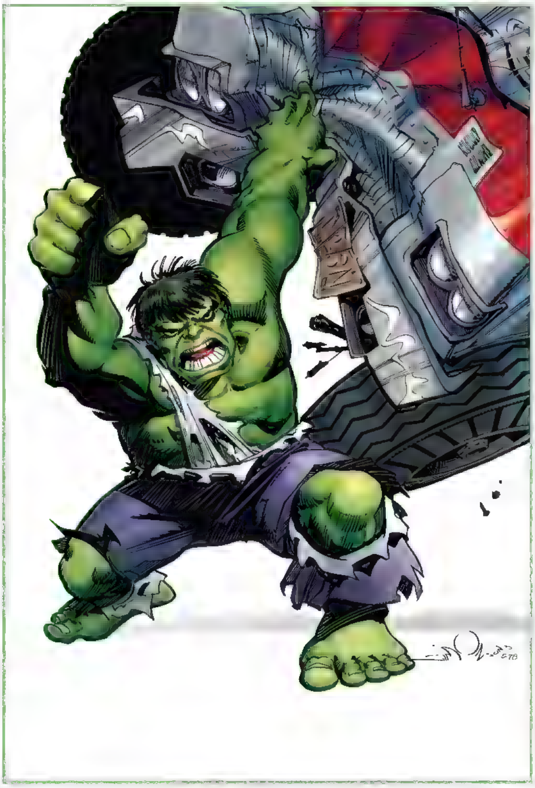
#32 SPIDER-WOMAN VARIANT BY
PATCH ZIRCHER & DAVE McCAIG



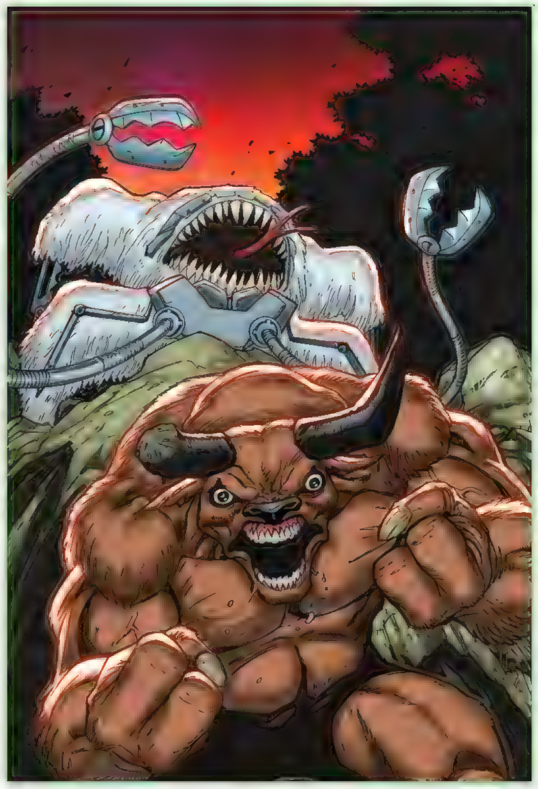
#33 VARIANT BY
LOGAN LUBERA & RACHELLE ROSENBERG


12¢
THE IMMORTAL
HULK
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MC
1 MAY
THE STRANGEST MAN OF ALL TIME!!
IS HE MAN OR MONSTER
OR...
IS HE BOTH
FANTASY AS YOU LIKE IT!

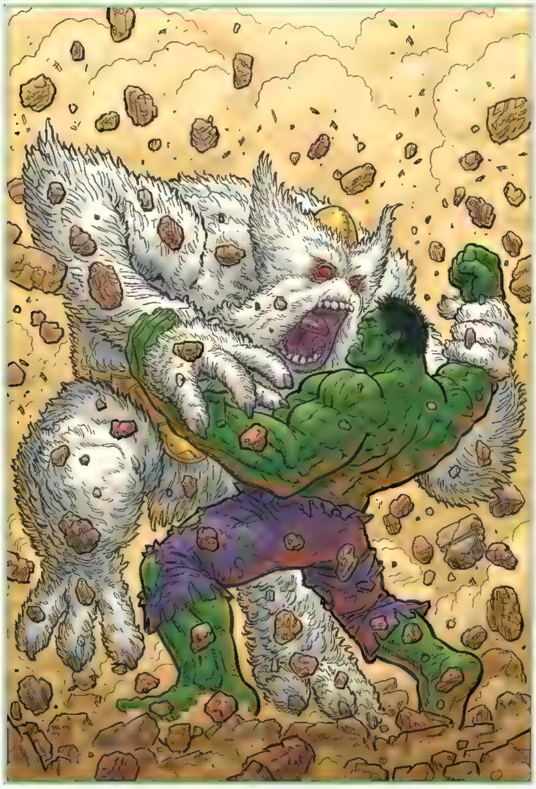
#33 HOMAGE VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS



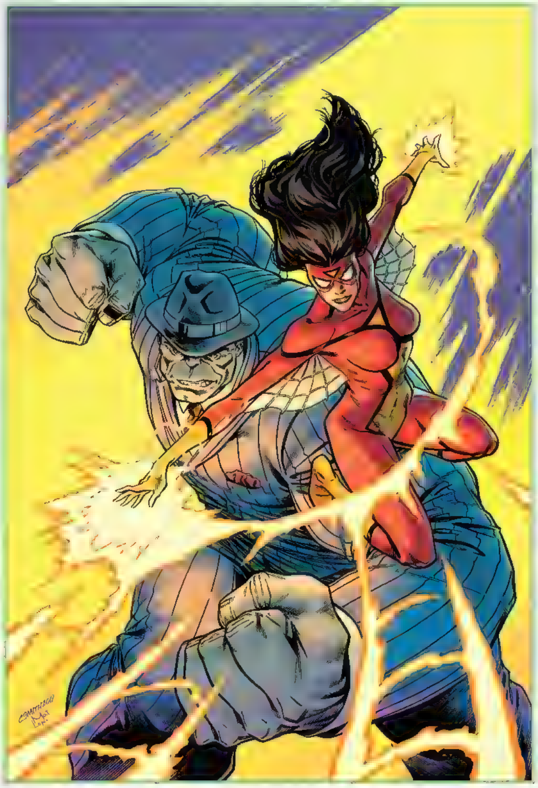
#33 HIDDEN GEM VARIANT BY
WALTER SIMONSON & JASON KEITH



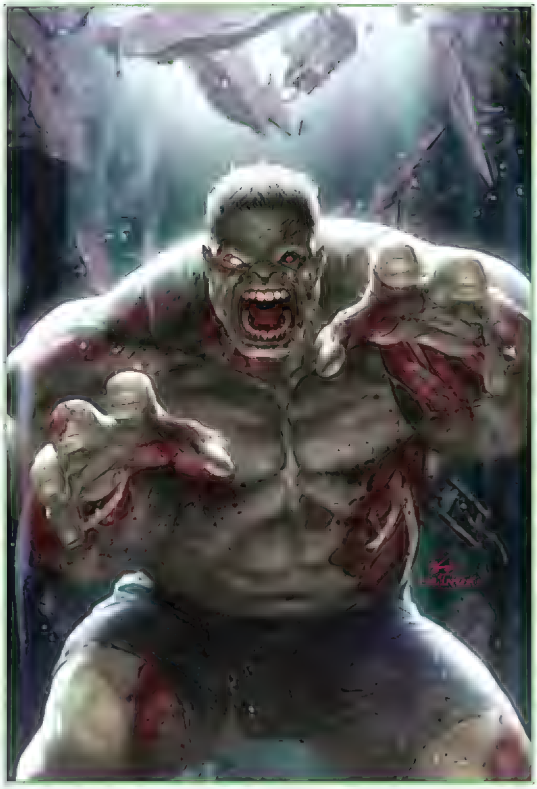
#33 VARIANT BY
RON LIM & ISRAEL SILVA



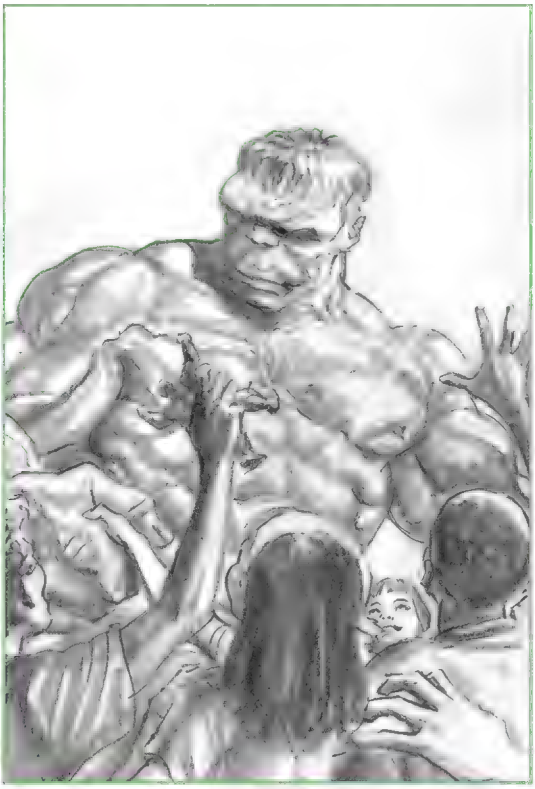
#33 VARIANT BY
STEVE SKROCE & DAVE STEWART



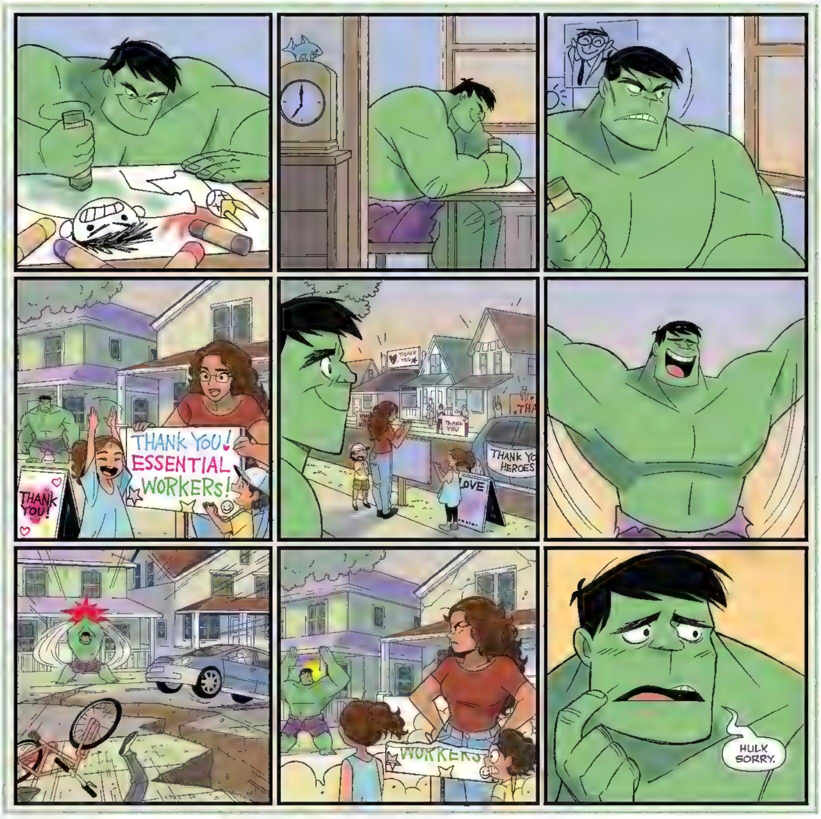
#33 SPIDER-WOMAN VARIANT BY
CORY SMITH & MATHEUS LOPES



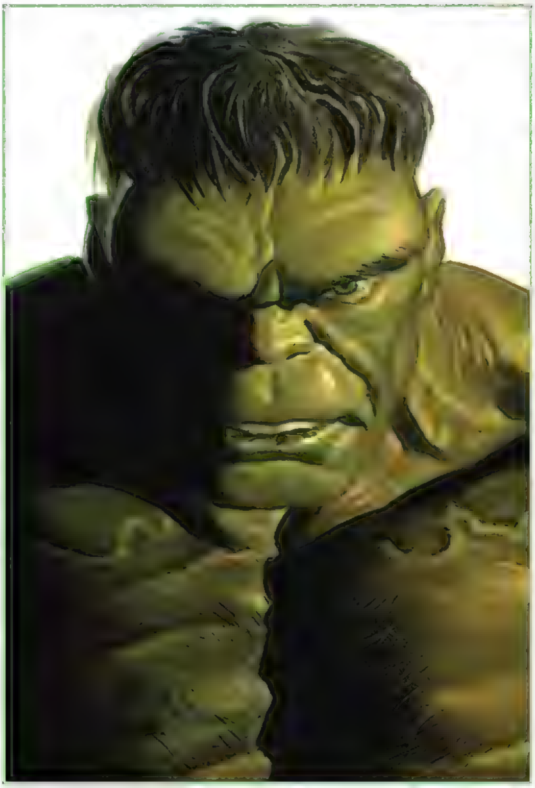
#34 MARVEL ZOMBIES VARIANT BY
INHYUK LEE



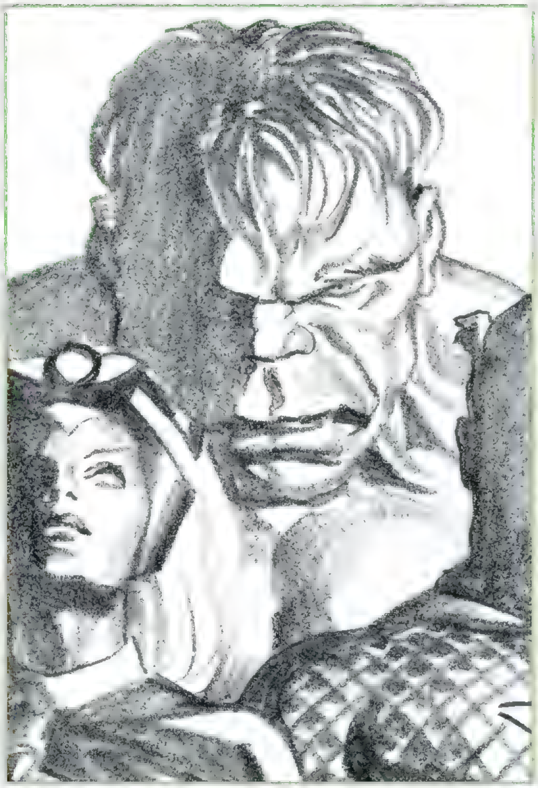
#35 2ND PRINTING VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS


THANK YOU! ESSENTIAL WORKERS!
THANK YOU!
THANK YOU
THANK YOU HEROES
LOVE
WORKERS
HULK SORRY.

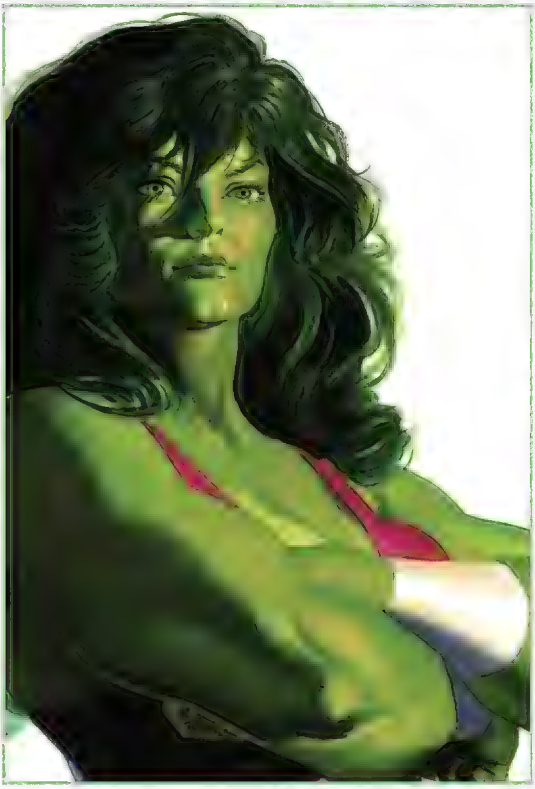
#37 HEROES AT HOME VARIANT BY GURIHIRU & ZEB WELLS



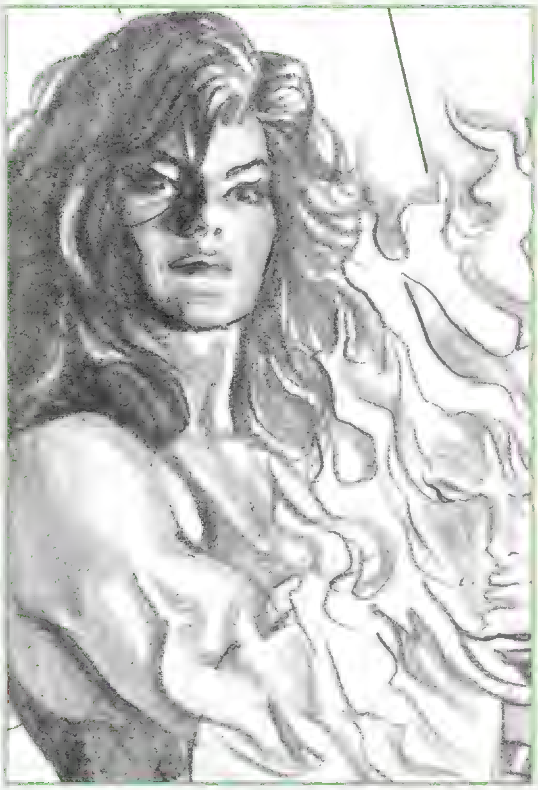
#37 TIMELESS VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS



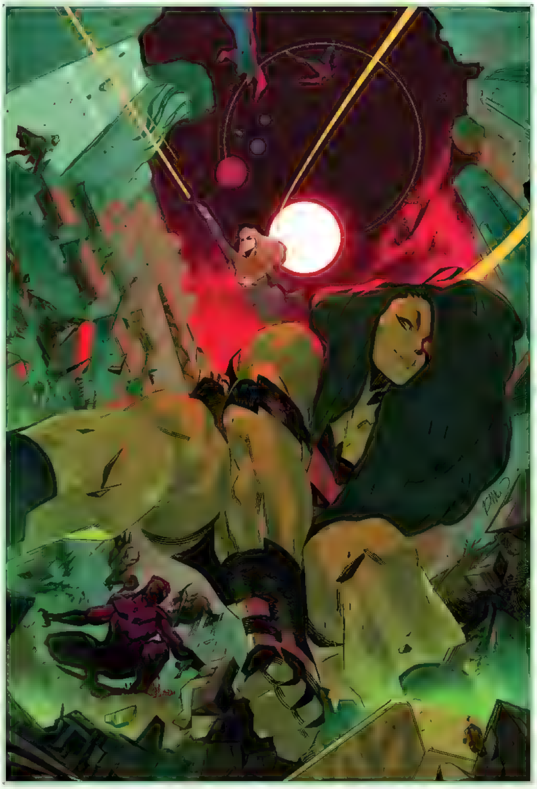
#37 TIMELESS SKETCH VARIANT BY
ALEX ROSS



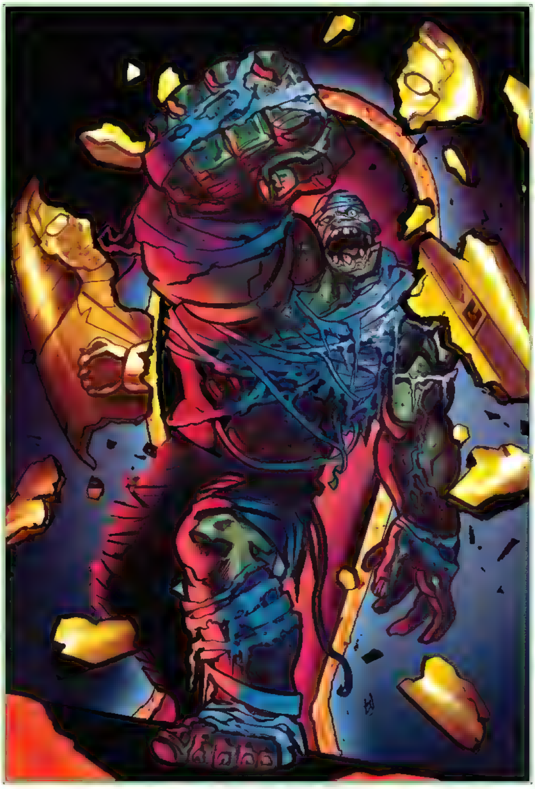
IMMORTAL SHE-HULK TIMELESS
VARIANT BY ALEX ROSS



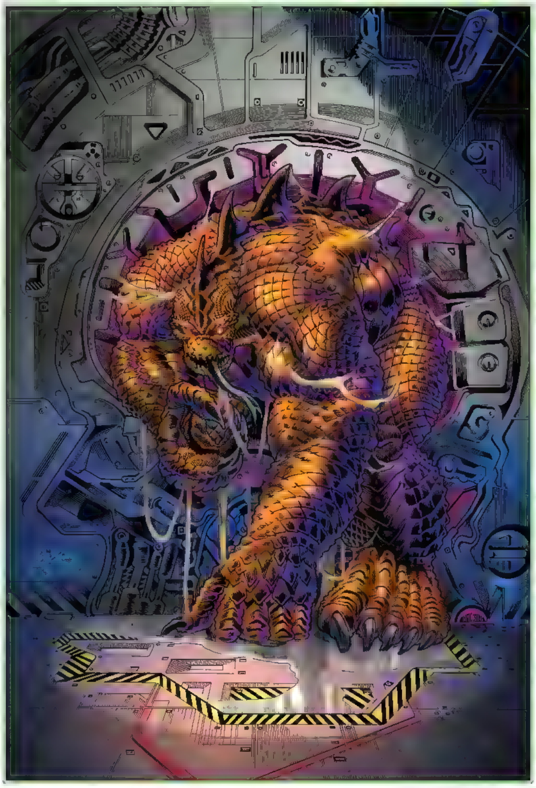
IMMORTAL SHE-HULK TIMELESS SKETCH
VARIANT BY ALEX ROSS



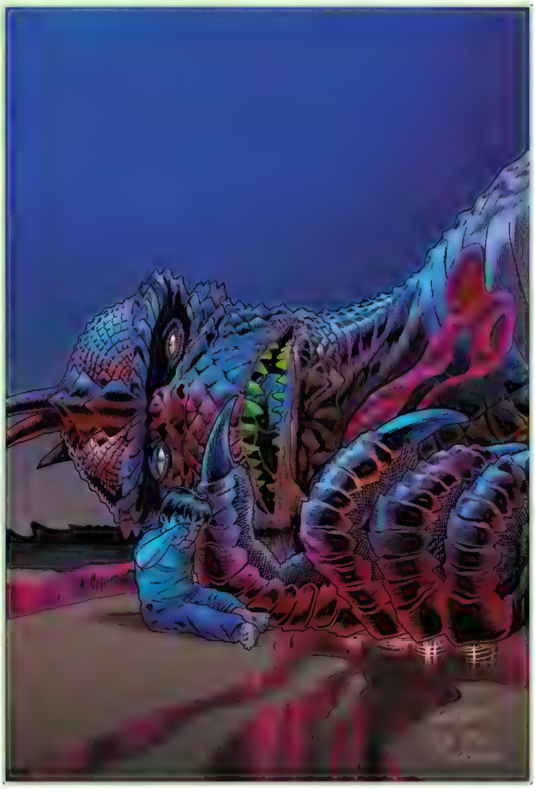
IMMORTAL SHE-HULK EMPYRE
VARIANT BY SIMONE DI MEO



#38 LIVING HULK HORROR VARIANT BY
MIKE DEL MUNDO



#38 VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS



#39 VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS

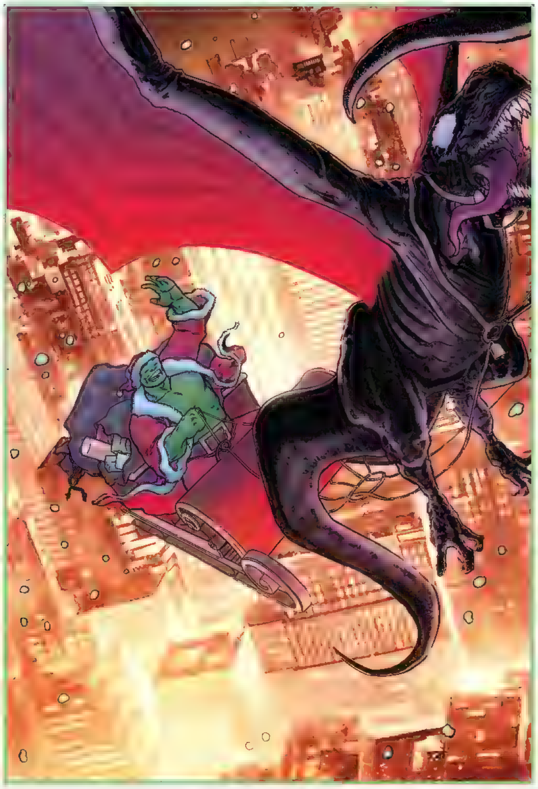
R.I.P
SKOTTIE YOUNG 2020

#40 SPOILER VARIANT BY
SKOTTIE YOUNG

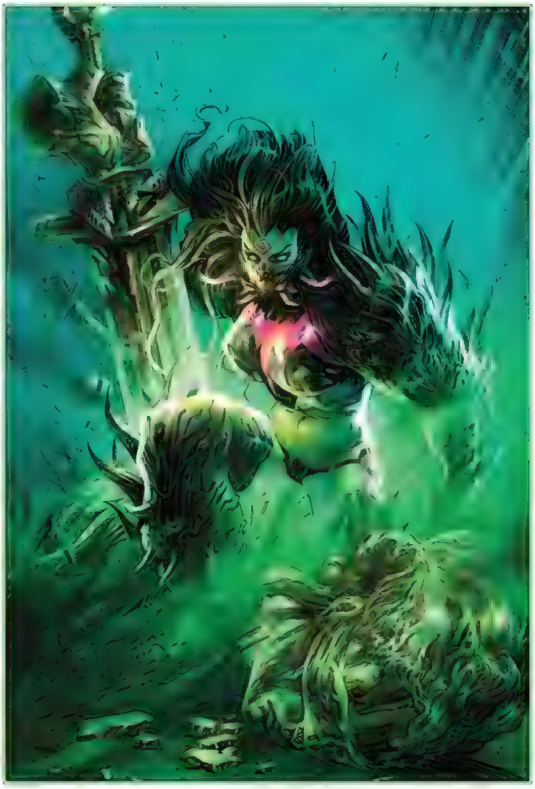
#40 SHE-HULK PHOENIX VARIANT BY
TAURIN CLARKE

#40 VARIANT BY
JEFFREY VEREGGE

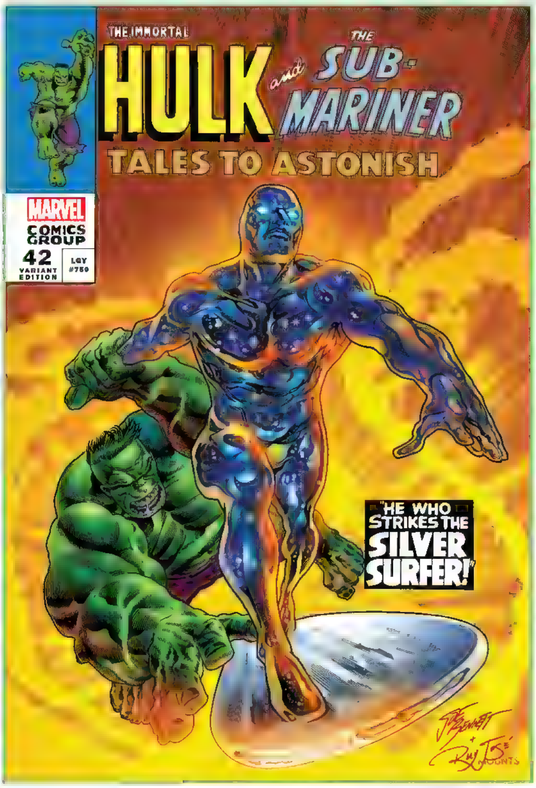
***KING IN BLACK: IMMORTAL HULK* VARIANT BY**
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS



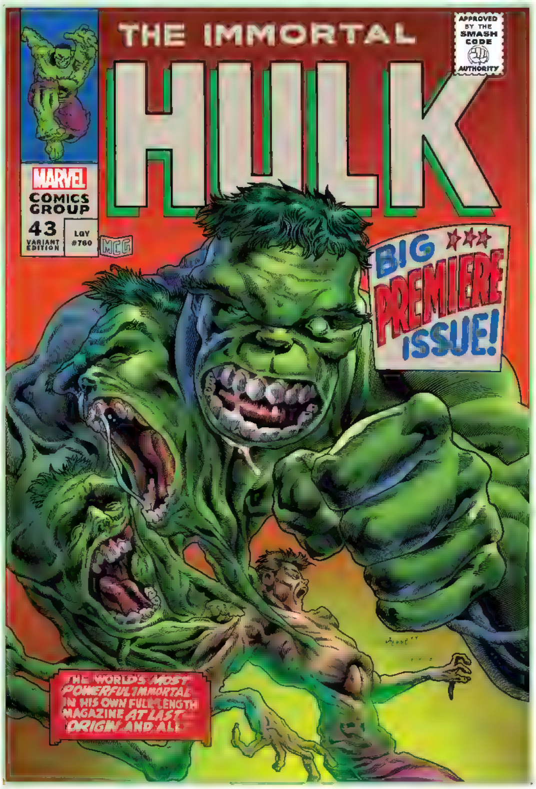
KING IN BLACK: IMMORTAL HULK SANTA CLAUS VARIANT BY AARON KUDER & MATTHEW WILSON



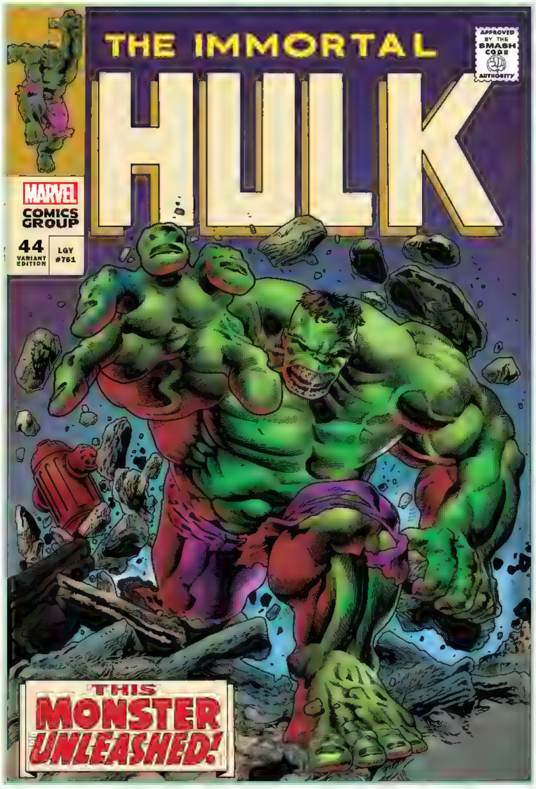
#42 KNULLIFIED VARIANT BY ALEXANDER LOZANO


THE IMMORTAL
HULK and THE SUB-MARINER
TALES TO ASTONISH
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
42 VARIANT EDITION
LGY #759
"HE WHO STRIKES THE SILVER SURFER!"

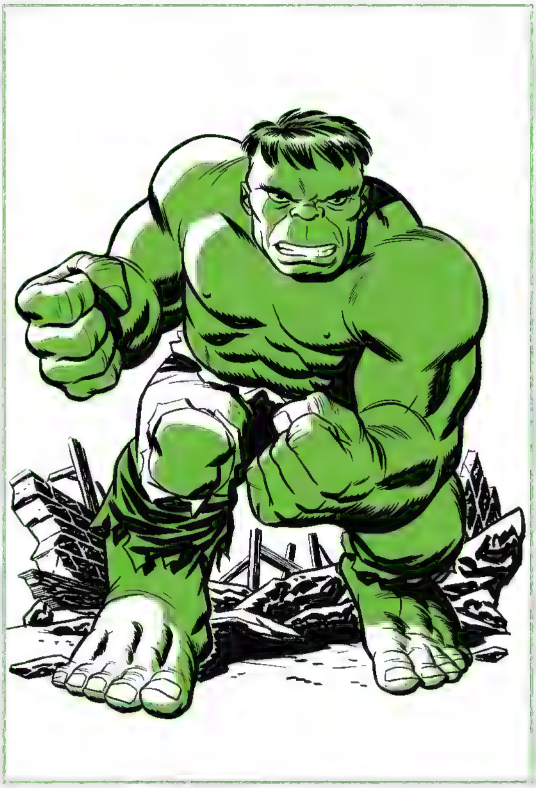
#42 HOMAGE VARIANT BY JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS


THE IMMORTAL
HULK
APPROVED BY THE SMASH CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
43 VARIANT EDITION
LGY #760
MCG
BIG PREMIERE ISSUE!
THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL IMMORTAL IN HIS OWN FULL-LENGTH MAGAZINE AT LAST! ORIGIN AND ALL!

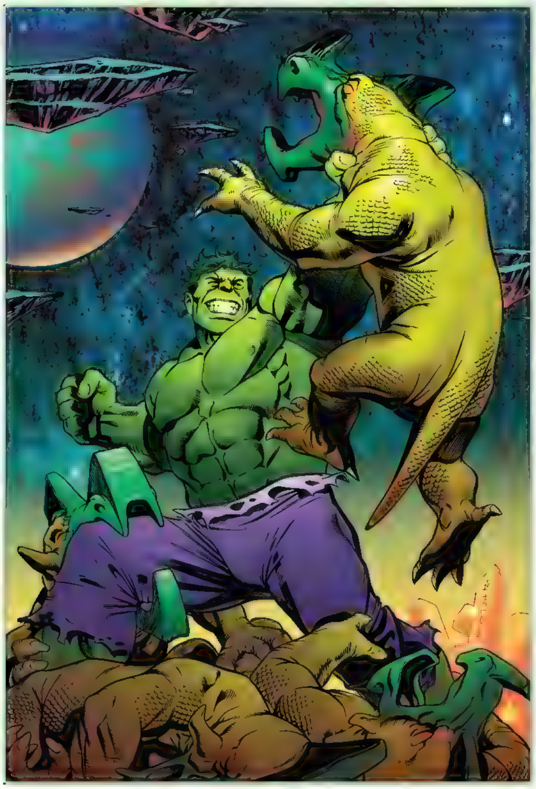
#43 HOMAGE VARIANT BY JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS


THE IMMORTAL
HULK
APPROVED BY THE SMASH CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL
COMICS GROUP
44
VARIANT EDITION
LGY #761
THIS MONSTER UNLEASHED!

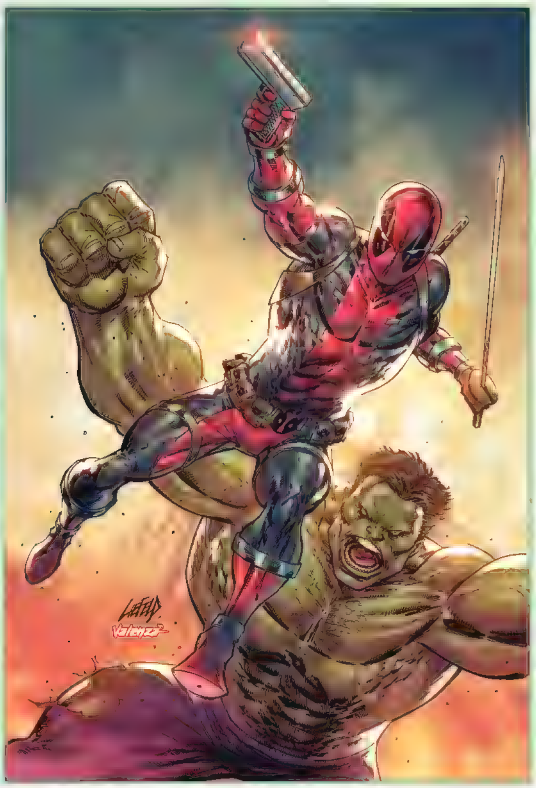
#44 HOMAGE VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS



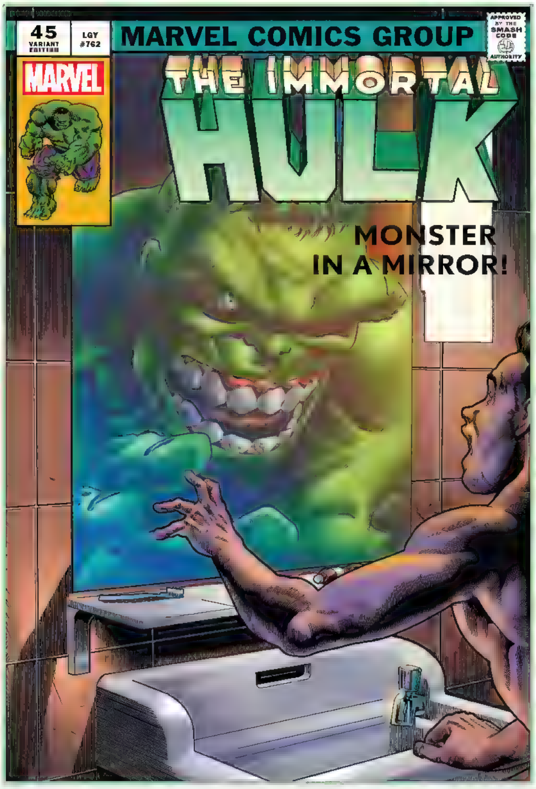
#44 TWO-TONE VARIANT BY
MICHAEL CHO



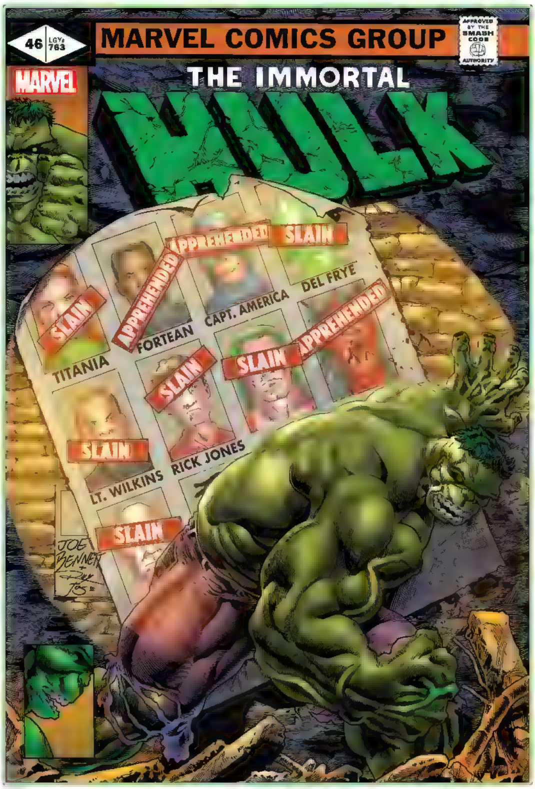
#45 HEROES REBORN VARIANT BY
CARLOS PACHECO, RAFAEL FONTERIZ & MATT MILLA



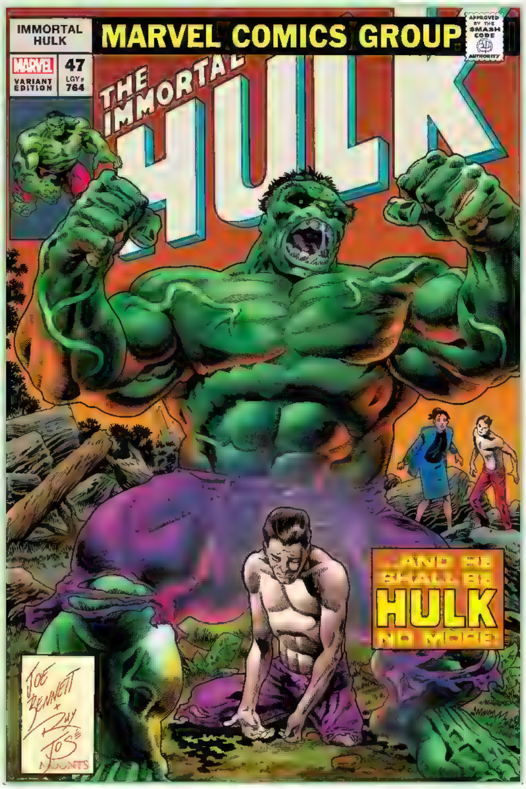
#45 DEADPOOL 30TH ANNIVERSARY
VARIANT BY ROB LIEFELD


45 VARIANT EDITION
LGY #762
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
APPROVED BY THE SMASH CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL
THE IMMORTAL HULK
MONSTER IN A MIRROR!

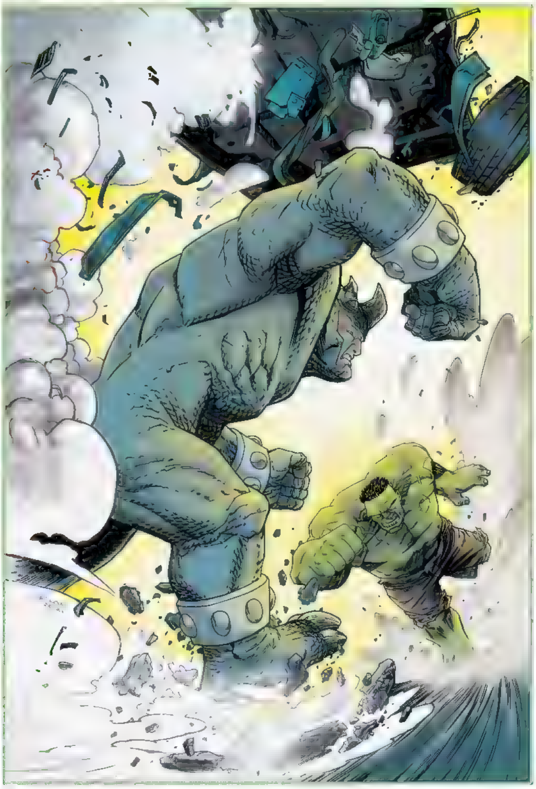
#45 HOMAGE VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS


46
LGY# 763
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
APPROVED BY THE SMASH CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL
THE IMMORTAL HULK
SLAIN
APPREHENDED
APPREHENDED
SLAIN
TITANIA
FORTEAN
CAPT. AMERICA
DEL FRYE
SLAIN
SLAIN
APPREHENDED
SLAIN
LT. WILKINS
RICK JONES
SLAIN
JOE BENNETT

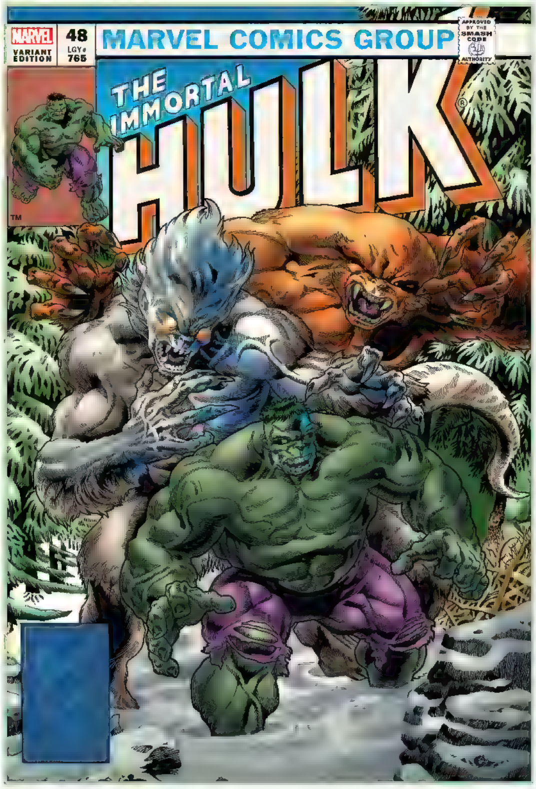
#46 HOMAGE VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS


IMMORTAL HULK
MARVEL
47
VARIANT EDITION
LGY# 764
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
APPROVED BY THE SMASH CODE AUTHORITY
THE IMMORTAL HULK
...AND HE SHALL BE HULK NO MORE!
JOE BENNETT RUY JOSÉ MOUNTS

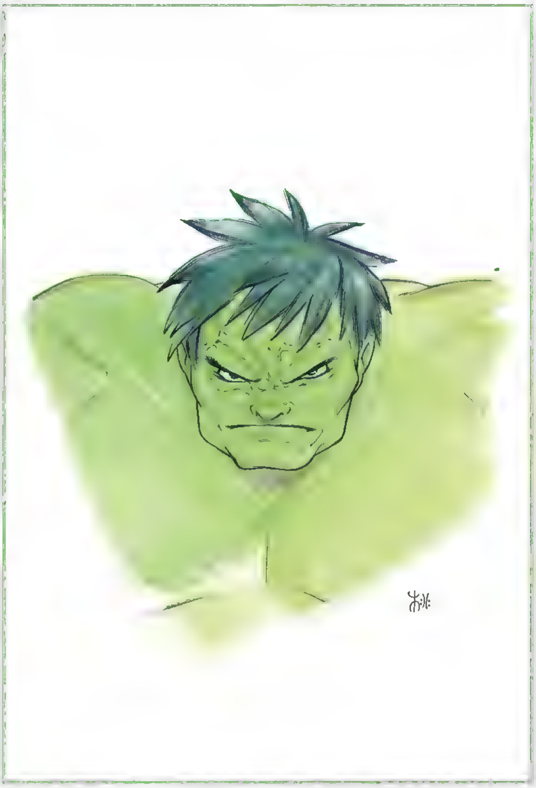
#47 HOMAGE VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS



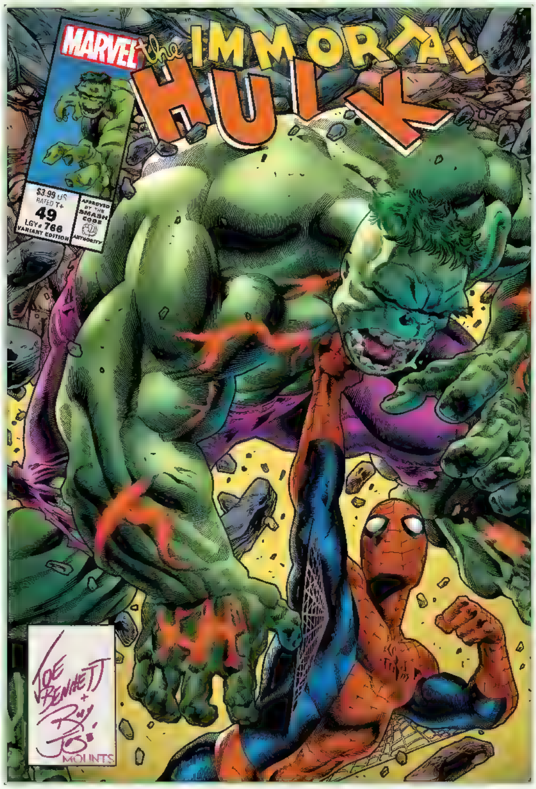
#47 SPIDER-MAN VILLAINS VARIANT BY
DECLAN SHALVEY


MARVEL
48
VARIANT EDITION
LGY# 765
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
APPROVED BY THE SMASH CODE AUTHORITY
THE IMMORTAL HULK
TM

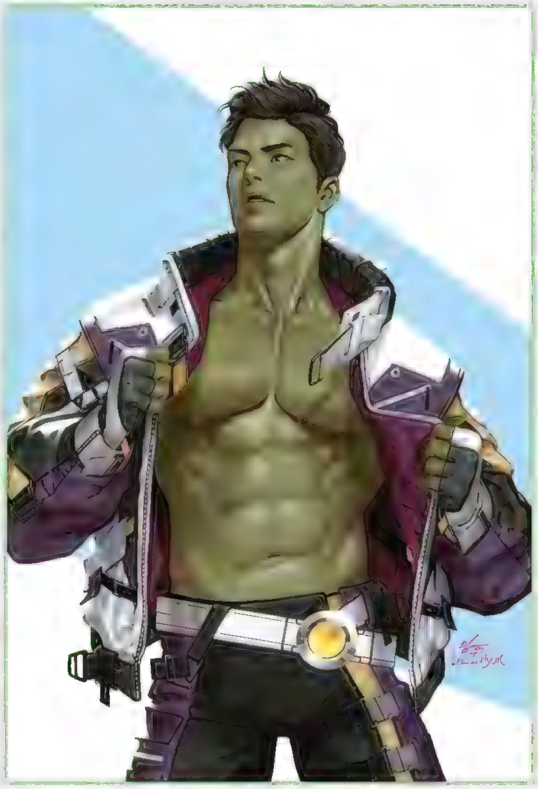
#48 HOMAGE VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS



#48 MARVEL ANIME VARIANT BY
PEACH MOMOKO


MARVEL
the IMMORTAL HULK
$3.99 US
RATED T+
49
LGY# 766
VARIANT EDITION
APPROVED BY THE SMASH CODE AUTHORITY
JOE BENNETT + RUY JOSÉ
MOUNTS

#49 HOMAGE VARIANT BY
JOE BENNETT, RUY JOSÉ & PAUL MOUNTS



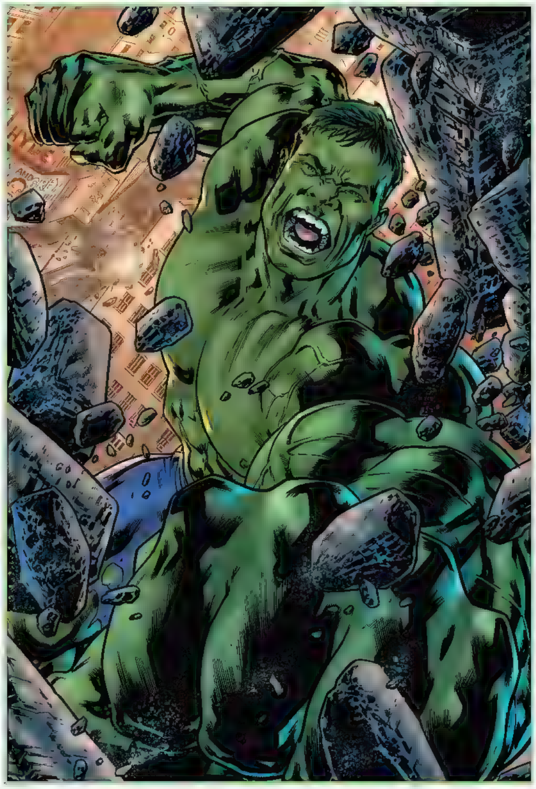
#49 AMADEUS CHO ASIAN VOICES
VARIANT BY INHYUK LEE

#50 VARIANT BY
JEN BARTEL

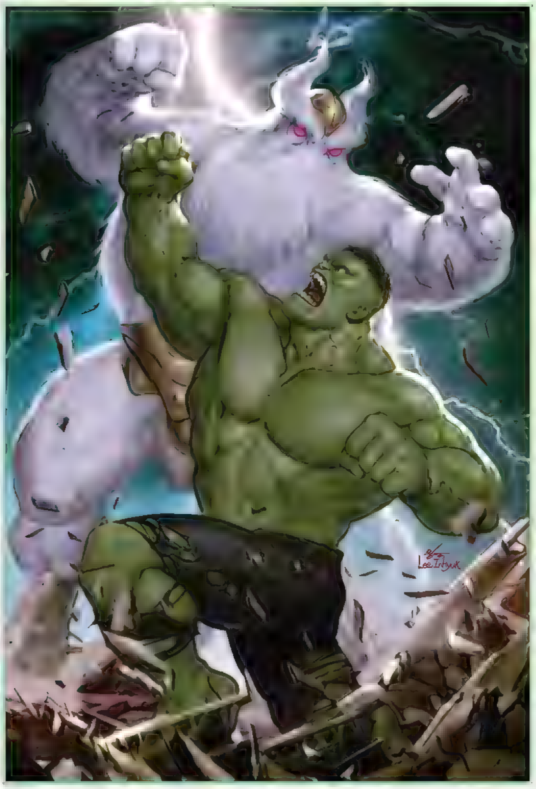
#50 VARIANT BY
CREEES LEE & JESUS ABURTOV

#50 VARIANT BY
GARY FRANK & BRAD ANDERSON

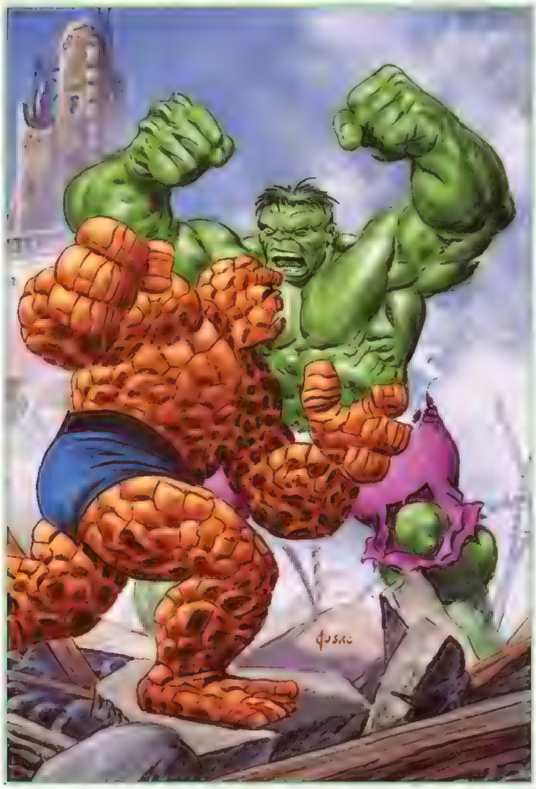
#50 VARIANT BY
SANFORD GREENE



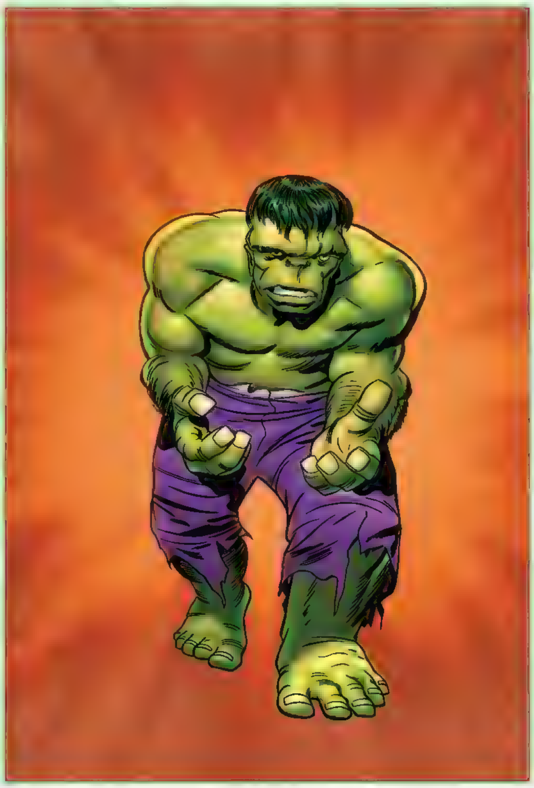
#50 VARIANT BY
BRYAN HITCH & ALEX SINCLAIR



#50 VARIANT BY
INHYUK LEE

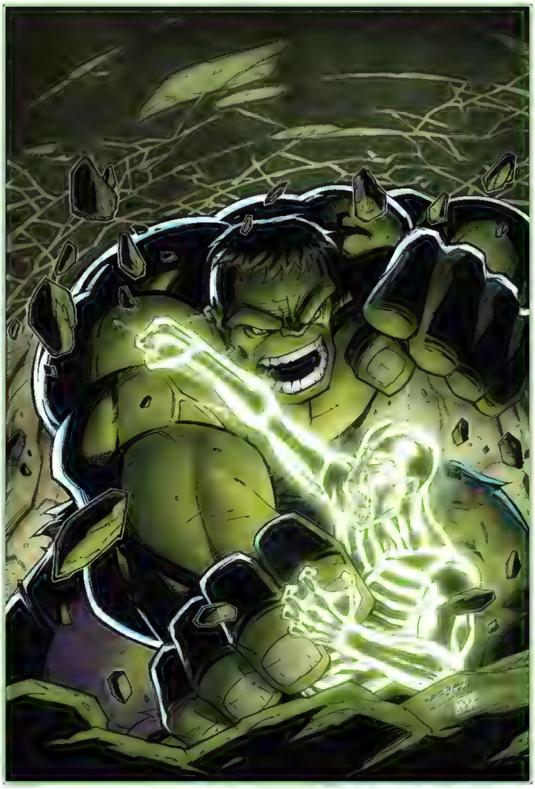


#50 MARVEL MASTERPIECES VARIANT BY
JOE JUSKO



#50 HIDDEN GEM VARIANT BY
JACK KIRBY & JASON KEITH

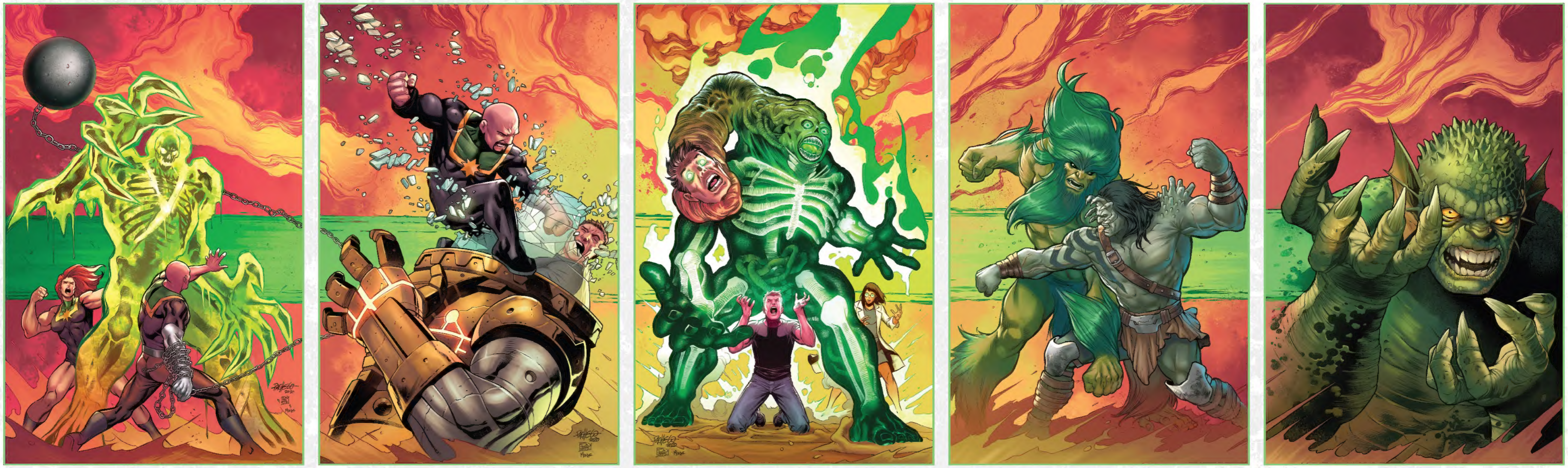
#50 VARIANT BY
ED McGUINNESS & LAURA MARTIN



#50 VARIANT BY
RON LIM & ISRAEL SILVA

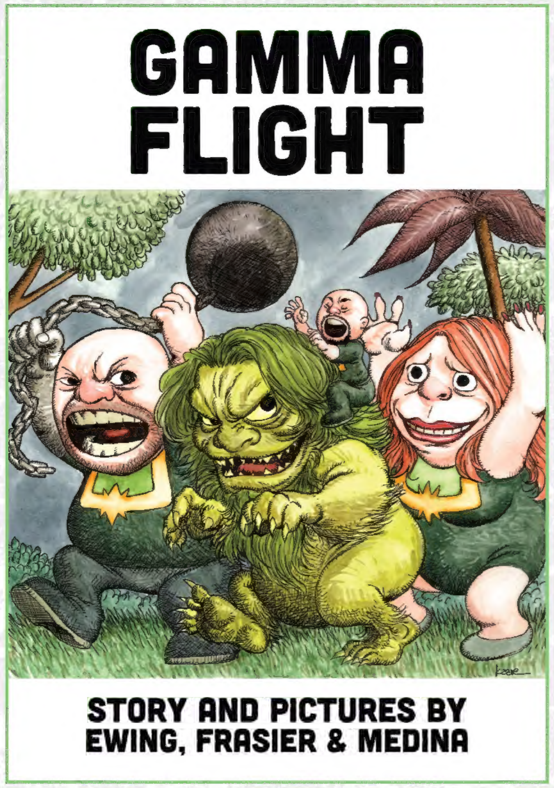
#50 VARIANT BY CARLOS PACHECO,
RAFAEL FONTERIZ & MARCIO MENYZ

#50 FORESHADOW VARIANT BY
RYAN STEGMAN, JP MAYER & JASON KEITH

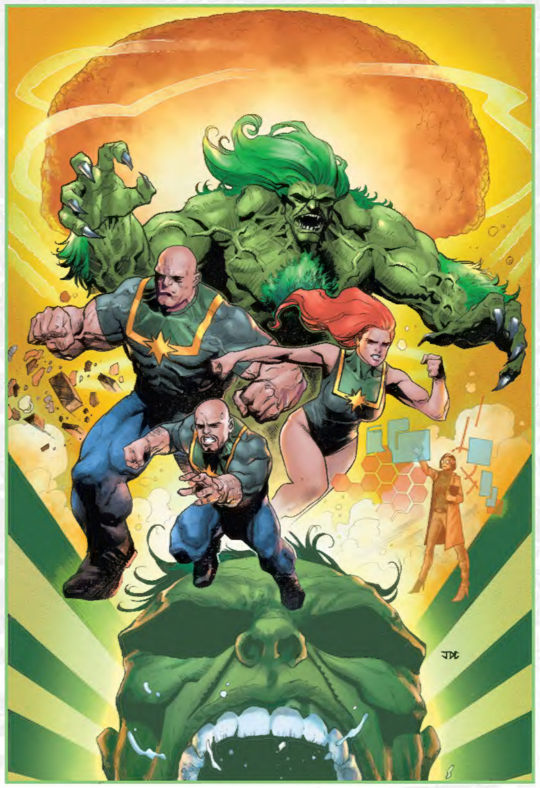


GAMMA FLIGHT #1-5 CONNECTING VARIANTS

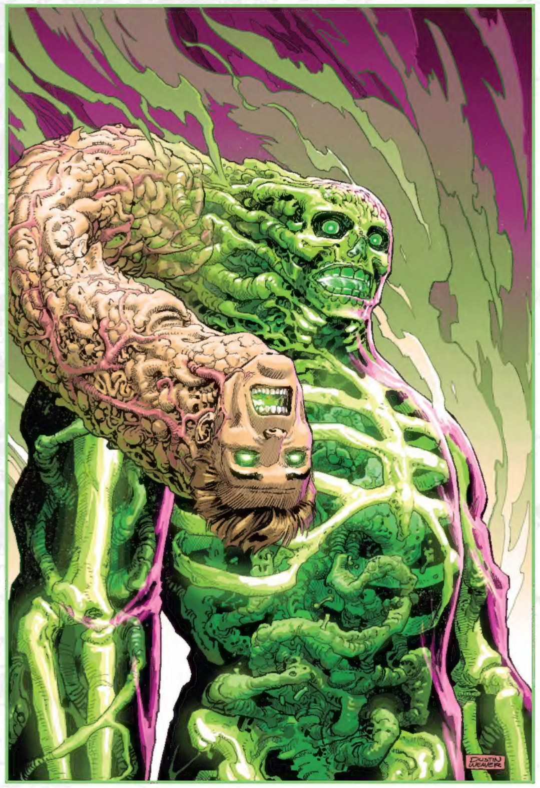
BY CARLOS PACHECO, RAFAEL FONTERIZ & MARCIO MENYZ


GAMMA FLIGHT
STORY AND PICTURES BY EWING, FRASIER & MEDINA

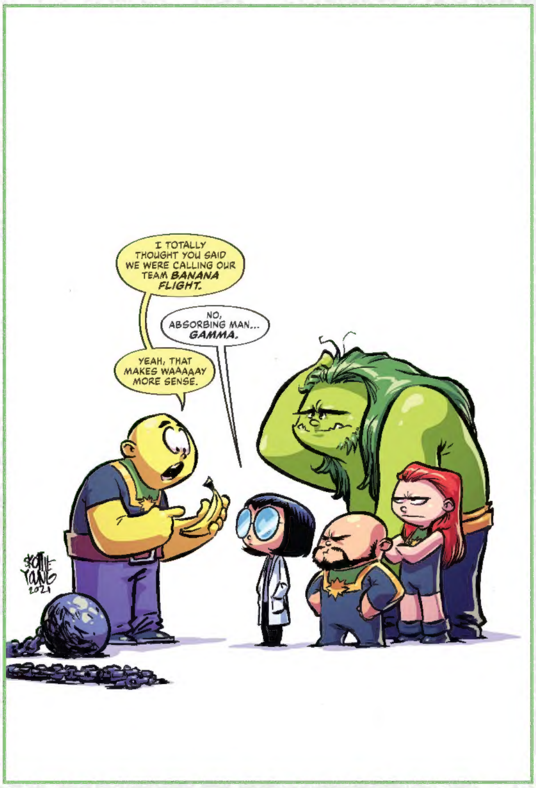
GAMMA FLIGHT #1 VARIANT BY
KAARE ANDREWS



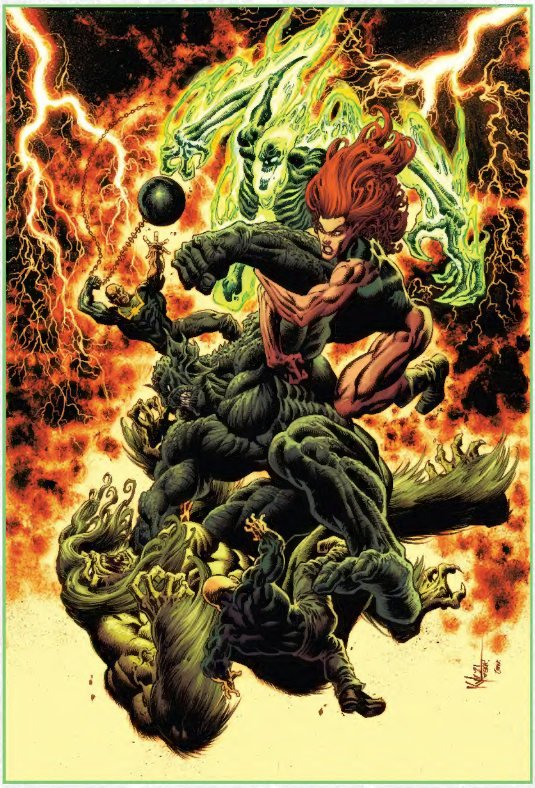
GAMMA FLIGHT #1 STORMBREAKERS VARIANT BY
JOSHUA CASSARA & ALEX SINCLAIR



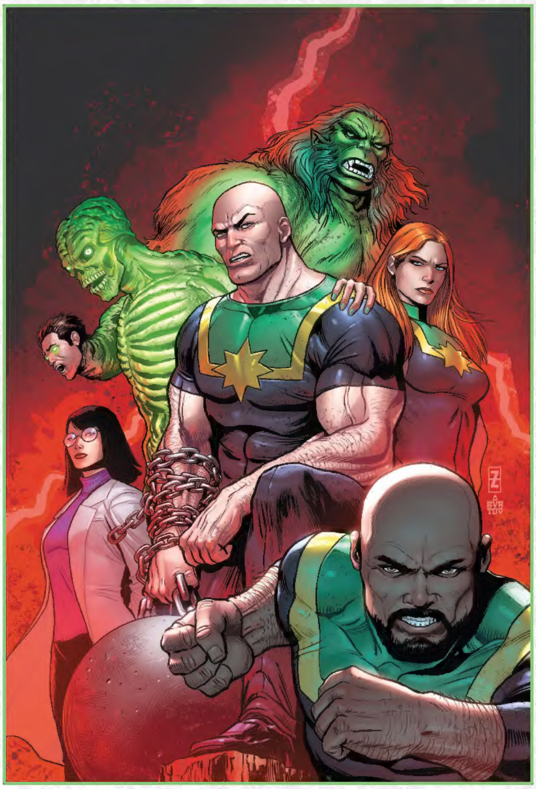
GAMMA FLIGHT #1 VARIANT BY
DUSTIN WEAVER


I TOTALLY THOUGHT YOU SAID WE WERE CALLING OUR TEAM BANANA FLIGHT.
NO, ABSORBING MAN... GAMMA.
YEAH, THAT MAKES WAAAAAY MORE SENSE.
SKOTTIE YOUNG 2021

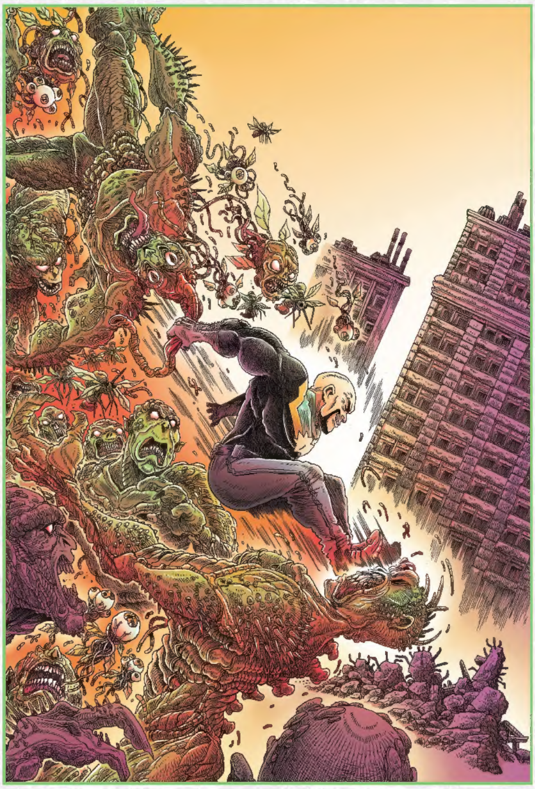
***GAMMA FLIGHT* #2 VARIANT BY**
SKOTTIE YOUNG



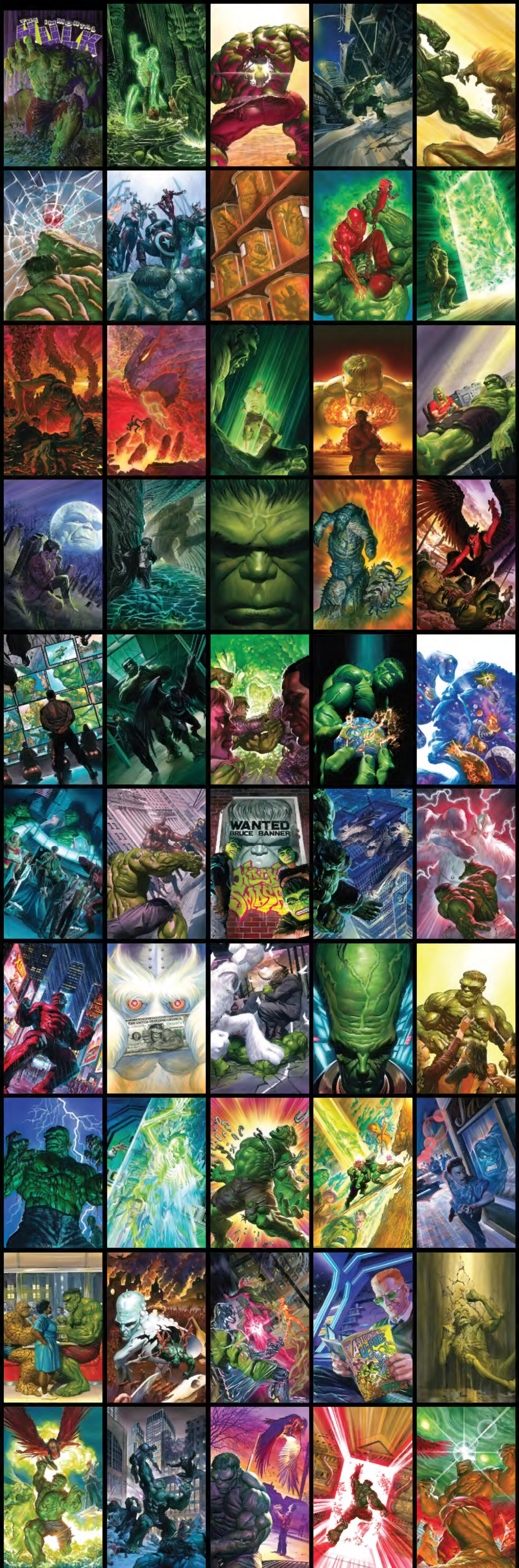
***GAMMA FLIGHT* #3 VARIANT BY**
KYLE HOTZ & FRANK MARTIN



***GAMMA FLIGHT* #4 VARIANT BY**
PATCH ZIRCHER & JESUS ABURTOV



***GAMMA FLIGHT* #5 VARIANT BY**
JAMES STOKOE



“Exceptional.”
— The A.V. Club

“The strongest super-hero comic there is.”
— ComicBook.com

WITNESS THE FULL HORROR OF THE HULK!

EVERY TIME BRUCE BANNER DIES, he rises again — as an unstoppable, gamma-powered force of nature. The Hulk is being hunted by the government, by the mysterious Shadow Base, even by the Avengers. But Bruce has even bigger problems. Something terrible has infected him. Something with unspeakable plans for humanity. And the answers lie beyond…the Green Door! Al Ewing and Joe Bennett reinvent a Marvel icon in terrifying fashion, resulting in a Hulk comic unlike anything you have ever read before!

Collecting *Immortal Hulk #1-50* and *#0*, *Immortal Hulk: The Best Defense*, *Defenders: The Best Defense*, *Absolute Carnage: Immortal Hulk*, *Immortal She-Hulk #1*, *King in Black: Immortal Hulk*, *Gamma Flight #1-5*, and material from *Avengers (2018) #684* and *Immortal Hulk: Time of Monsters*.

T+

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